

The Apocalypse: A Series of Special Lectures on the Revelation of Jesus Christ-Volume 2- Joseph Seiss

THE APOCALYPSE A SERIES OF SPECIAL LECTURES ON THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST WITH REVISED TEXT

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Unabridged and Umutilated Edition.

LONDON: JAMES NISBET & CO., No. 21 Bebbeks Stbeet. 1882.

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EDITORIAL NOTE: The reader must be a Berean when reading Seiss' comments on Revelation 12 as he sees the WOMAN as the church and not as Israel. Here are notes from Dr Tony Garland regarding the interpretation of the WOMAN in Revelation 12...

Among those commentators which manage to steer clear of interpreting this woman from a background of pagan sources, another error beckons: that of pouring the Church into every passage of Scripture from the beginning of Genesis through the end of Revelation and everywhere in between. Clear clues in the text which preclude an interpretation of the woman as the Church are ignored in favor of a preunderstanding that since this woman appears to be glorious, she *must* denote the "Church Triumphant!" But this view runs roughshod over the many interpretive clues in the text before us:

"By far the majority interpretation is that the woman is 'the church' which is entirely unsatisfactory and ignores all sorts of basic interpretive cues:

(1) Christ birthed the church (Mat. 16:18), not the other way around.

(2) The sun/moon/stars have a direct corollary in Joseph's dream (Gen. 37:9). Sun = Joseph's Father (Jacob), moon = Jacob's mother, 11 stars = brothers (12 stars meaning all twelve tribes). Hence a strong reference to Israel.

(3) The reference to 'clothed with the sun' and 'the moon under her feet' refer to many passages which declare that the promises made to Israel (especially for a Davidic ruler and the continuation of the nation) can be thwarted only if the sun and moon can be made to cease from before God (Ps. 89:35-37; Jer. 31:36). Hence the reference is to the permanence of Israel and its promises in the mind of God as evidenced by His oaths involving the sun and moon.

(4) The woman travails to give birth to the manchild (singular, male) who is caught-up. This would seem a clear allusion to the promise of the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15) and the man-child is obviously Christ and not [the Rapture of] the church." (Source: Elwood McQuaid - Israel My Glory)

See Garland's full Commentary on Revelation 12

THE publication of the second volume of these Lectures has been delayed quite beyond what was contemplated. From the commencement of the undertaking, it was meant and stated that the Lectures would be written and delivered at different intervals of time, as might be found convenient; but it was not supposed that the work would linger as it has. The slowness in the matter has been owing in part to the numerous other engagements of the author preoccupying his attention, and in part to avoid dwelling too constantly upon one theme, which, though intensely important, is not much relished by some modern Christians.

At length, however, the second volume is complete. The concluding volume is also already so far prepared, that the expectation is to finish the entire work by the early spring of 1880.

Thus far these studies have given the author much satisfaction. His estimate of the worth and necessity of this Book to complete the Canon of the Holy Scripture, has increased as he has proceeded. And his conviction of the certainty of the intention of God to have it understood as a veritable Revelation and Chart of the great events which make up the Day of the Lord, or the Judgment period, have also deepened with each successive chapter.

From the beginning, the author of these Lectures was led to take the inspired title of this Book as the proper key to its contents, and to that he has adhered throughout. "The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ," does not mean a communicated message, but the coming, appearing, manifestation, uncovering, presentation, of JESUS CHRIST in person. Dr. Ebrard remarks in his Commentary, that the word apokalupsis should be translated enthüllung, unveiling, uncovering. Dr. Bleek admits, in his Lectures on the Apocalypse, that "the genitive after apokalupsis stands in the New Testament (even in this combination with Christou, 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; Pet. 1:7-13), as a genitive of the object of what comes forth, as being revealed." Here Jesus Christ is the genitive of object. The Apocalypse would therefore be the coming, revealing, appearing, or manifestation of Himself, the Revelation of Him, not to Him. Dr. Lücke, in his work on the Apocalypse, for the same grammatical reasons, considers that "The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ" means "the unveiling of Christ in His majesty, as His glorious appearing." So also Dr. Heinrichs. And there is every reason for the conclusion that the great theme and subject of this Book is the Coming of Christ, the Apocalypse of Himself, His own personal manifestation and unveiling in the scenes and administrations of the great Day of the Lord. When men speak of "the death of Jesus Christ," their language inevitably conveys the idea that it is Christ who experiences the death affirmed; and so when the Holy Ghost speaks of "The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ," by the same necessity of language the only admissible idea is, that it is Christ who experiences or undergoes the Apocalypse affirmed. The only Apocalypses of Jesus Christ that we read of in the New Testament, are personal manifestations of Himself. And it is thus against all the laws of speech, and against the whole usus loquendi of the sacred writers, to understand the inspired title of this Book as referring to anything but the revelation, or personal manifestation, of Jesus Christ in the great Day of Judgment, as everywhere foretold in the holy Scriptures.

So the Book's own description of its subject-matter pronounces, and to this every succeeding vision accords when taken in the plain straightforward sense of the record. It is thus unmistakably proven that we have here a portrayal, not of a few dim outlines of the fortunes of the Church in its march through this present world, but a scenic account of the actual occurrences of that period "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed (ὁ κύριος ἀποκαλύψει τὸ κυρίου—in the Apocalypse of the Lord Jesus) from heaven with His mighty Angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day." (2 Thess. 1:7-10.) This is The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ, expressly so called in the passage; and this it is that John was made to see, and commanded to write, that all might learn exactly how things are then to be ordered.

A tremendous Revelation is therefore brought before men in this Book. And if any one would fully profit by it, let him bear with him this one vital and all-conditioning thought, that he is here dealing with Christ's own infallible foreshowings of the style, manner, and succession of events in which the Apocalypse awarded to Him by the Father is to take place. He who fails in this, misses the kernel of the Book, and must fail of the blessing of those who read, hear, and observe the things which are written in it.

And may the good Lord so bless and further these humble attempts to vindicate and set forth His Word, that many may find occasion to thank His holy Name that these Lectures have been written.

Advent Season, 1879.

LECTURE 17

SILENCE IN HEAVEN—ITS MEANING AND DURATION—THE SEVEN ANGELS OF GOD'S PRESENCE—THE HIGHEST CREATED BEINGS—ECONOMY OF THE HEAVENS—THE SEVEN TRUMPETS—SIGNIFICANCE OF TRUMPETS—ORIGINALS OF THE ANCIENT RITES—"ANOTHER ANGEL"—REASONS FOR REGARDING HIM AS THE SAVIOUR—WHY THE PRAYERS OF SAINTS ARE HERE OFFERED—THEIR GREAT BURDEN—THEIR ACCEPTANCE—THE POWER OF PRAYER—THE FIRE

OF JUDGMENT—WHY MEN ARE DAMNED—THE FIRE CAST INTO THE EARTH—ITS EFFECTS—A VINDICATION OF THE STUDY OF THESE THINGS.

REV. 8:1–5. (Revised Text.)—And when he opened the seventh seal, there followed a silence in the heaven, as it were half as hour.

And I saw the seven angels who stand in the presence of God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood over the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him many incenses, that he might offer [then] for [or with] the prayers of all the saints on the altar of gold before the throne. And the smoke of the incenses went up for [or with the prayers of the saints, out of the hand of the angel, in the presence of God. And the angel took the censer and filled it out of the fire of the altar, and cast into the earth; and there followed thunderings, and lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake.

THERE has been a somewhat protracted silence in the continuity of these lectures. In breaking that silence this evening, we come upon another silence—a silence in heaven. The rapt apostle is still in heaven. What he describes is viewed altogether from a heavenly point of observation. The subject is still the ongoing of the judgment. The roll, which was taken up amid thrills of celestial adoration, is still in the hands of the Lamb. He has broken six of its seals, and the action resulting we have considered. The breaking of the only remaining one, and the most momentous of them all, now comes before us. It will occupy us for some time before it is finally disposed of. Even the seven trumpets and the seven vials come under it. The immediate sequences of the breaking of it, we have in the text, in which we observe

- I. A MYSTERIOUS SILENCE IN HEAVEN.
- II. SEVEN ANGELS OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE.
- III. ANOTHER ANGEL OFFERING THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS.

To God, then, let us look for grace to understand these things according to the intent of the record, giving praise to His holy Name forever and ever.

When the first seal was broken, a voice like thunder was heard, saying, Go! It was the same at the opening of the three succeeding ones. At the breaking of the fifth, there was a great cry from beneath the altar. And when the sixth was broken, a fearful tremor ran through the whole frame of nature, filling the earth with consternation. But, at the opening of the seventh, not a voice is heard; not a motion is seen; an awful pause ensues, and all heaven is silent. A little while ago everything was ringing with triumphant exultation over the multitude which no man could number, but now silence takes the place of songs, and everything is mute and motionless.

This silence, nevertheless, has made a good deal of noise in the world, especially among commentators. It would be difficult to find another point upon which there have been so many different and discordant voices. Indeed, Hengstenberg gives it as the general rule, that when expositors come to this silence they break out into all sorts of contradictory conjecture. Though the marks of historic continuity are as distinct as it is possible to make them, some take this silence as a full stop to the chain of apocalyptic predictions, and so treat what follows as a mere rehearsal, in another form, of what had preceded. Others regard it as a blank, leaving everything belonging to the seventh seal unrevealed, so that its action can only be known when we come to the immortal life. Some pronounce it a mere poetic invention to heighten the dramatic effect, but having no particular significance. Others treat it as a prophetic symbol of scenes and experiences in the earthly history of man; some, as the suspension of divine wrath in the destruction of Jerusalem; some, as the freedom granted to the Church under the reign of Constantine; some, as the interval of repose enjoyed by Christians between the persecutions by Dioclesian and Galerius in A.D. 311, and the beginning of the civil wars toward the end of the same year; some, as the disappearance of human strivings against God and his Christ; others, as a lull in earthly revolt and persecution, equivalent to a jubilee for the truth among men; others, as the millennium of peace and righteousness to be induced by the triumphs of evangelic effort and the progress of liberty; and yet others, as the everlasting rest of the saints. And yet there is not a word in the record about the Church, nor about the earth. The whole thing is distinctly located “in heaven,” and its duration is specifically limited to “about half an hour.”

Others find in this silence a mystic connection with Jewish rites, and the silent prayers commonly joined with the incense oblation. This is the more insisted on, as there is a subsequent reference to an incense offering. Even if such a connection could be made out, it is difficult to see what is thereby to be gained for an interpretation. But it cannot be made out. The facts prove that there is no such connection. The Jewish silent prayers occurred while the offering was in the act of being made; but here the silence occurs before the offering, and before ever the angel that makes it appears or takes his station at the altar. Nay, there is a distinct and separate vision intervening between this silence and the offering by the angel. It is also plain that this silence is connected with the breaking of the seal, and is the direct result of that act, whilst the incense offering connects with the series of actions by which the stillness is interrupted. It is impossible, therefore, for this silence to be a part of the ceremony of the offering by the angel, or that it should mean any of the things to which reference has been made. Nor can we but wonder that such wild and far-fetched conjectures should ever have found place in men's minds. The language is all simple and plain, and means exactly what is written. There is silence. It is in heaven. It lasts for about half an hour. It is a silence of intense interest and awful expectancy with reference to the

results of the breaking of the seventh seal. And this is the whole of it.

We read in Acts of "a great silence," induced by Paul, as he waved his hand to his boisterous accusers, from the stairs of the castle at Jerusalem, and began to speak to them in their sacred tongue. It was the silence of surprise, wonder, and interest to catch what was being said. It is written in the Psalms: "Praise waiteth—is silent—for thee, O God, in Zion." It was the silence of adoring expectancy waiting for the manifestations of the Divine presence. When Numa was made King of Rome, and the august ceremony had reached the moment that he was to look for the birds by which the gods were expected to foreshow his fate, the priest's hand was laid devoutly on his head, and "an incredible silence reigned among the people." It was the silence of anxious expectation. It was the result of an intense interest and awe, with reference to what the gods had decreed, and were about to reveal, concerning the destiny of their new king. And so here. The Lion-Lamb of God has been engaged breaking the seals of the mysterious roll, which He only was worthy to touch or look upon. Six of those seals had been broken, enacting events of the most stupendous moment. But one more remained—the last in the series—and involving the final consummation of the great mystery of God. And as that seal is broken, an interest and awful expectancy rises in the hearts of the celestial orders, which renders them as silent as the grave. All heaven becomes mute and breathless. Saints and angels hush their songs to look and wait for the results. And even the Almighty pauses before the action proceeds.

It is not figure—not symbol—not extravagant rhetoric—not mere poetic delineation of something else. It is history—the literal narration of literal fact;—for fact it was to John in the vision. It is the natural expression of the deep sympathy of all-glorified existence with the momentousness of the occasion—a voiceless utterance more powerful than words, of the yearning awe of heaven at the arrival of the climacteric of the ages, and the forthcoming events which characterize it. Hence a motionless stillness, more awful, and fuller of thrilling import, than that overwhelming wave of adoration which went over the universe of holy beings when the Lamb first took the book.

"As it were half an hour," this solemn stillness lasted. A half hour is not long in itself; but time is longer or shorter according to what is transpiring, or what the circumstances are. Moments of agonizing suspense stretch out into hours and days, in comparison with moments of ordinary life. Two minutes of delay, when a man is drowning, is an awful period to have to wait. A stoppage of ten minutes between the words I am speaking, would be an intolerable interval. When on the margin of the realization of great expectations, or interrupted in the midst of what has been absorbing the intensest interest of the soul, every instant of delay expands into hours, and even ages. And when we consider the circumstances of this case—the world in which this pause occurs—the sort of occupations which it interrupts—the kind and number of beings it affects—the nature of the feelings, interests, and expectations which it holds in suspense—and the awfulness of the stillness itself—there is everything to make this half hour a thing so tremendous that we may be sure there never was the like before, and never will be again thereafter. Nor is the length of it the least remarkable of its features.

II. After this awful pause, the action of the throne is resumed. A company of angels make their appearance on the heavenly arena. They are seven in number. They are of particular rank and distinction, for not all angels are of the same dignity and office. Paul enumerates "dominions, principalities, and powers" among the celestial orders. Daniel speaks of some chief princes. Paul and Jude refer to archangels. Angelic beings are not, therefore, of one and the same grade. The sons of God, in general, come before him only at appointed times (Job 1:6), but the Saviour speaks of some angels who "do always behold the face of the Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 18:10.) And the sublime agents which John beheld after the opening of the seventh seal, are described as "the seven angels who stand in the presence of God."

The Jews were familiar with seven angels of this particular class. Gabriel is one of them, as he himself said to Zacharias: "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God." (Luke 1:19.) Michael is another, as he is ranked with Gabriel in the book of Daniel, and there pronounced one of the princes, even "the great prince" of the prophet's people. In the Apocryphal book of Tobit, Raphael is named as still another, where he announces himself, and says, "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and which go in and out before the glory of the Holy One." Whether we take this book as inspired, as the Romanists do, or as not inspired, as the Protestants generally regard it, there is no matter touching this point. The passage referred to (Tob. 12:15) shows what the ancient people of God held for truth, and the representation harmonizes with the text and with the accepted books of Holy Scripture. The ancients believed that there are seven presence angels, and the Apocalypse ratifies that belief.*

These presence-angels are the highest and mightiest of created beings. It is their privilege to "stand in the presence of God." They stand; this is the posture of service; but standing in the presence of God, is to be above all other servants. The seven Persian princes who "saw the king's face," were the highest officers of the realm, and next to the monarch in rank and power. (Esth. 1:14.) And what these princes were to the Persian kings, these presence-angels are to God.

We thus get a glance into the economy of heaven. A democratic chaos for the state, and a Laodicean herd for the Church, constitute the world's ideal of perfection in these days. But the heavenly state is very different. It is not a monotonous and lawless commonalty, but a complete organism, in which each has his prescribed sphere and office, in orders towering above orders, and principedoms over principedoms, till we reach the seven archangels standing in the immediate presence of God, and holding place next to the eternal throne itself.

And these sublimest ministers of God appear here as the prime executors of the oncoming administrations. The Saviour Himself

said: "In the end of this world, the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire." (Matt. 13:40–42.) And here John beholds those angels—the glorious septemvirate of celestial archregents—the mightiest and the highest creatures in the universe—presenting themselves for the momentous work.

"And to them were given seven trumpets."—Trumpets are expressive instruments. The voice of the trumpet is the most significant voice known to the Holy Scriptures. God Himself gave His ancient people very special directions with regard to the use of the trumpet. It is itself described as a cry—a loud and mighty cry—which related only to important occasions. The time for the blowing of trumpets was always a time of moment—a time of solemnity—a time for men to bestir themselves greatly in one way or another.

Trumpets connect with war. The command was: "If ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets." Jeremiah cries: "O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war!" (Numb. 10:9; Jer. 4:19.)

Trumpets were for the convocation of the people, and the moving of the camps of Israel. This is minutely prescribed in Numbers 8.

Trumpets proclaimed the great festivals. "Ye shall blow with the trumpets over burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifice of your peace-offerings." "Ye shall have a Sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation." "Thou shalt cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout the land." And so "when the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets." (Numb. 10:10; Lev. 23:24; 25:9; 2 Chron. 29:27.)

Trumpets also related to the announcements of royalty. Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet were directed to anoint Solomon king over Israel, and blow with the trumpet, and say, God save King Solomon. It is also written: "They hastened greatly, ... and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king." (1 Kings 1:34, 39; 2 Kings 9:13.)

Trumpets are also associated with the manifestation of the terrible majesty and power of God. When the Almighty appeared on Mount Sinai, there was "the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled." And Amos says: "Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?" (Ex. 19:16; Amos 3:6.)

Trumpets connect with the overthrow of the ungodly. It was at the blowing of the trumpets that the walls of Jericho fell down, and the city was given into the hands of Joshua. (Josh. 6:13–16.)

Trumpets also proclaimed the laying of the foundations of God's temple. (Ezra 3:10.)

With these facts before us, we are already in a degree prepared to anticipate what these seven trumpets are to bring forth. Their number is the complete number, and we may expect from them everything to which trumpets stand related in the Scriptures. Are they related to war? Then war is coming; yea, "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Are they for the calling of convocations and signals for motion? Then we may look for great gatherings and mighty changes. Do they herald great solemnities and blessed feasts and sacrifices? Then may we anticipate the sublimest festivals, and victories, and jubilee, and burning up of the victims of sin, that the world has ever yet seen. Do they declare investiture with dominion and the commencement of a new reign? Then may we look for the setting up of a new administration, and the opening of the reign of the true David, the greater than Solomon. Do they declare the presence of God in His awful majesty? Then may we expect a revelation of Divine power and Godhead which shall fill heaven and earth with trembling. Do they bring the fall of the cities of the wicked and the destruction of their inhabitants? Then we may look for the end of great Babylon and the sweeping of the dominion of Antichrist and all his confederates from the earth. Do they tell of the founding and building of the permanent temple of the Lord? Then may we look for the incoming of that true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man, and of that firmly-founded city whose maker and builder is God. And all this accords entirely with what John subsequently describes as resultant from the sounding of these seven trumpets.

We thus also come upon an important fact, which is, for the most part, very strangely perverted. Writers on the Apocalypse generally treat it as if it depended for its imagery and materials upon the ancient Jewish regulations. They thus put the copy for the original, and deal with the original as if it were the copy. All the ancient regulations were nothing but copies and types. They were commanded to be made after some heavenly model, of which they were to be the remembrancers and prophecies. They were not the true—the real—but only earthly imitations of it. The true ideal is what John beholds in this book. These seven presence-angels, with their seven trumpets, are the true heavenly realities, with reference to which all the ancient laws relating to trumpets were ordained. What we here have, is not the work of John elaborating a dramatic poem out of the elements of the ancient ritual, but an Apocalypse of the great realities themselves, with reference to which those old appointments were constructed, as earthly pictures and mimic predictions. We go back to the ancient laws, and we there see reflected in earthly forms what John beholds in heavenly reality; and we reverse the whole order and involve ourselves in inextricable confusion, when we take the images in his visions as mere earthly and Jewish drapery, and not rather as the very things from which those Jewish ceremonies took their existence and peculiarities. The Apocalypse is not a poem in Jewish dress, but the Jewish ceremonies were an earthly poem of the Apocalypse. Let this be understood, and much of the darkness hanging over the meaning of this book will at once disappear.

III. But, before these presence-angels sound their trumpets, "another angel" appears, and another scene intervenes, to which our attention must be given.

Many understand by this angel, the Lord Jesus himself—the Jehovah-Angel of the Old Testament, and the same referred to in the preceding chapter as the Sealer of the 144,000. In both instances the officer is called "another angel," which, whilst it associates him with angels as to ministry, seems to imply some Being very different from angels as to nature. This angel has a censer of gold, an

implement belonging to the Holy of holies, and used only by the high priest; which would seem to indicate our great High Priest that has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God. This angel casts fire into the earth; and Jesus says of Himself: "I came to cast fire into the earth; and what could I wish if it were already kindled?... Suppose ye that I came to give peace in the earth? I tell you nay, but rather division." (Luke 12:49–52.) This is in some sense realized in the course of the history and doings of the Church; but we know that it is to be much more literally and terribly fulfilled in the day of judgment; and here would seem to be its exact accomplishment. This angel offers the prayers of all the saints, and renders them savory before God. Such an office is nowhere in the Scriptures assigned to angels proper, but is everywhere assigned to the Lord Jesus Christ.

There would seem to be strong reason, therefore, for supposing that this Angel is really the Jehovah-Angel, and none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, in His capacity of our great High Priest. Primasius says: "The Angel here is our Lord, by whom all our prayers have access to God (Eph. 2:18; 3:12), and therefore the Apostle says, through Him we offer sacrifices of praise to God continually (Heb. 13:15; 1 Pet. 2:5); and St. John says, He is our Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1)." Wordsworth affirms that "this interpretation is sanctioned by other ancient interpreters, such as Augustine and Bede, and by Vitranga, Böhmer, and others, of later date;" and that "Christ, in His human character and priestly office, may be called another Angel," as the high priest on the day of atonement is called an angel with reference to his ministrations, and as he believes Christ is called in chapters 10:1; 14:17; 18:1; 20:1. Cocceius was of the same opinion.

Neither does it overthrow this view, that the incenses offered up by this angel are represented as "given to Him." If the incenses here are to be taken as explained in chap. 5:8, that is, as the prayers themselves, of course they are given to Him, for he offers no prayers of saints which have not been put into His hands. And if it is the virtue of His Mediatorship that is to be understood by the incenses, there is still an important sense in which that is given to Him. It is given to Him in the sense of award, both by saints themselves, who credit and trust in Him as able to do for them, and by Sovereign Majesty, who adjudges Him entitled to exercise such offices and powers. Even all the glories of His Apocalypse are represented (chap. 1:1) as given to Him, though they are equally His own right, and the result of His personal obedience unto death, with His merits as our Advocate and Intercessor. It was no evidence that a champion in the ancient games had not lawfully and in his own person entitled himself to the honors of the victory, when the rightful judges and all Greece gave him those honors. It was rather a demonstration that he had justly merited and won them. And so, in the sense of judicial award, and general credit, confidence and acknowledgment, the intercessorial prerogatives and mediatorial earnings of Christ may be spoken of as given to Him. He glorified not himself to be made an high priest; and the more excellent ministry of his mediatorship of the better covenant is everywhere spoken of as having been "obtained" by Him. (Heb. 5:5; 8:6.) All has really been given to Him—given to Him us the just due of His own perfect fulfilment of all righteousness—given to Him by eternal Deity and all saints. And such a giving to this Angel-Priest no more necessarily excludes him from being rightfully taken as the Christ, than the giving of the Spirit, or the giving of the kingdom, or the giving of the possession of the nations to the Saviour, proves that He is not the only begotten Son of God.

The object of the giving of these incenses was, "that He might offer [them] for the prayers of all the saints." Not for those prayers in the sense of in their stead, but in the sense of furthering them, benefiting them, and prospering them; for the prayers themselves are included in the offering. Strictly rendered, he was to offer them to the prayers; but τὰς προσευχὰς is a dativus commodi, and rather gives the sense of in behalf of—with—as a helper of their success. The idea is complex. There is an offering of incenses; those incenses come to the prayers—to enrich and forward them; and the incenses imparted to the prayers are offered as the prayers. They are given to the prayers, and with the prayers, and for the prayers.

But why this offering just here, as the trumpets are about to be sounded? Many have taken it as denoting a state of much prayerfulness in the earthly Church about this time. But there is not a word said about an earthly church. Indeed, the Church proper is no longer on earth at the time to which these trumpets belong. There are still true worshippers of God on earth—the two olive trees—and those who refuse to adore the Beast; but their prayers cannot be taken for "the prayers of all the saints." The words are very comprehensive, and take in all the holy prayers ever offered.

We had an allusion to these precious treasures in chapter 5, where the account is given of the Living ones and Elders falling down before the Lamb, and holding up golden bowls full of incenses. Those incenses, like these of the text, were the prayers of the saints. There the saints themselves hold them up before the Lamb, as an adoring act of confidence that He was now about to enter upon their complete fulfilment, and as yet backstanding and waiting for an answer. Here Christ offers them, as the Great High Priest. He bears them in the golden censer, and perfumes them with the precious fragrance of His own meritorious favor and righteousness, and sanctifies them with the sacred fire, and presents them upon the golden altar before the throne of infinite Godhead. Not one of them is forgotten or lost. Those that came up when time was young, and those offered but yesterday, are all present and in hand. Jesus Himself is not ashamed of them, and handles them with holy care. He bears them in a heavenly vessel of gold, and presents them on the highest altar in the universe. He offers them as approved and indorsed by Himself, and for such acceptance that their fulfilment may no longer be delayed. He presents them now, because the fulness of the time has come for them to be brought into remembrance, seeing that all things are in final readiness to execute what is to satisfy them forever.

I have heretofore referred to the great burden of all holy prayer.* As put by Christ Himself into the lips and hearts of His people, it is: **THY KINGDOM COME! THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN!** This is verily the sum and substance of all saintly supplication, the very crown and goal of all holy prayer. And for what purpose are those trumpets in the hands of the seven angels? To what intent is this calling forward of such mighty ones to pour out blasts over the earth? What is to be achieved by the sublime

activities in which they stand ready to move? What, but the revelation of the power and the glory of that very Kingdom, for the coming of which the saints have never ceased to pray? What, but the enforcement of the reign of God where iniquity and usurpation now hold jubilee? What, but the dethronement of sin, and death, and hell, and the setting up in their place of a heavenly order, in which God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven?

Need any one ask, then, why this sublime offering of the prayers of all the saints is made just here, as the presence-angels are about to put their awful trumpets to their lips? When prayers are to be answered, then is the time for them to be brought into remembrance. That which results from the sounding of those trumpets, is to fulfil what has been the great burden of the Church's prayers in all ages. Those prayers, therefore, have a most profound connection with the sounding of these mighty trumpets. And hence it is that they here come into view, and appear upon the golden altar of God.

Nor are they offered in vain. The ascension of their sweet vapor into the presence of God is equivalent to an announcement that they are heard. The coming up before God of the prayers and alms of Cornelius, was the good pleasure of God toward what thus ascended; and the like ascent of the sweet vapor of these perfumed prayers is the token of a like approval and a like speedy answer. It is the effectual going up of the voices of them that cry day and night unto God. It is the signal that the time has come to avenge His own elect. And at once the mighty action begins.

"And the Angel took the censer, and filled it out of the fire of the altar, and cast into the earth." The Saviour himself thus initiates the oncoming climax of the day of wrath. The people under the sixth seal thought the last and worst had come, but it was only the herald of still greater things which now begin.

Nor is it to be overlooked, that all this occurs in answer to the prayers of the saints. There are those who think meanly of prayer, and are always asking: "What profit should we have if we pray unto the Almighty?" (Job 21:15.) The true answer is, "much every way."

There is an eye that never sleeps
Beneath the wing of night;
There is an ear that never shuts
When sink the beams of light.

There is an arm that never tires
When human strength gives way;
There is a love that never fails
When earthly loves decay.

That eye is fixed on seraph throngs;
That arm upholds the sky;
That ear is filled with angel songs;
That love is throned on high.

But there's a power which man can wield,
When mortal aid is vain,
That eye, that ear, that love to reach,
That listening ear to gain.

That power is PRAYER, which soars on high,
Through Jesus, to the throne;
And moves the hand which moves the world,
To bring salvation down!

Here, prayer moves the Son of God—moves eternal Majesty upon His everlasting seat—sets the highest angels in motion—brings on the awful scenes of the day of judgment—influences the administrations in the heavens and induces wonders upon the earth.

And as these climaxes of judgment come in answer to "the prayers of all the saints," the implication also is, that where there is no prayer there is no piety, no holiness, no salvation, and that people who do not wait, and long, and pray for the coming again of the Lord Jesus and this consummation are not saints, but belong to the population against whom these fiery revelations occur.

Fire is the great consumer. It always bespeaks wrath, torture, and destruction to the wicked. It tells of burning fury and the most dismal effects—even "vengeance upon them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the common figure of divine terribleness toward the guilty—one of the great agents in the administrations of the great day—the chief torment of the lost. And when the sublime Priest-Angel of heaven turns His fire-filled censer on the earth, we have come to the day that shall burn as an oven, in the which all the proud and ungodly shall be as stubble to the devouring flames. (Mal. 4:1.)

This fire is taken from the altar. It is one of the fearful characteristics of God's gracious operations, that they breed and heighten the damnation of the disobedient and the unbelieving. It is not Adam's guilt, for there is full remedy in Christ against that. It is not the condemnation in which the Gospel finds them, for it comes with a full and everlasting reprieve. But here is the mischief, that when

the great and costly salvation of God is carried to them they despise it, and make light of it, and go their way as if it were nonsense or nothing. It is not that their sins are too great for them to be saved, but because they tread under foot the Son of God, and count His sanctifying blood an unholy thing, and render despite to the Spirit of grace. Out of the very altar of sacrifice, therefore, comes their damnation. It is the saving word refused, which is a savor of death unto death in them that perish. The same fire which wafts the devotions of the obedient into the presence of God, kindles the hell of the unbelieving and the neglectful. Perdition is simply abused or perverted grace. It is the same censer, filled with the same ingredients, only turned downward in the case of those who believe not.

And when the glorious Angel of intercession emptied the fiery contents of his censer toward the earth, "there followed thunderings, and lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake." These are the signs and instruments of God's judgments upon His foes. No age has ever been entirely without them, as no age has ever been without earnestness and foretokens of the great day. But they mistake, who think to find the description fulfilled in events of the past, or in anything but the scenes which are to terminate the history of this present world. Indeed, it is the very climacteric of the day of judgment which is here betokened.

John perceives the awful effects before they have passed into actual fact on earth. We read and know things only from their outward symptoms, in or after their accomplishment. In heaven they read and know things from their inward principles, even before they have been wrought into historic fact. It is under the action of the trumpets that these thunderings, lightnings, voices, and convulsions are worked into the experiences of the earth and its inhabitants; and it is only according to the interior view of them, from the heavenly standpoint, that the events to be achieved are thus summarily described. As the trumpets are sounded, and we come to consider the scenes they develop, we will see these thunderings, and lightnings, and voices, and convulsions, as they manifest themselves on the earthly theatre.

Meanwhile, I suggest just one thought more. It is in reference to the interest which holy beings take in these subjects of sacred prophecy. There is a very sublime picture, presented by the Apostle Peter in his first epistle, where he represents the ancient prophets as "inquiring and searching diligently" to understand "what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow;" and the angels of heaven bending from their lofty thrones, desiring to look into these things. It is a masterly touch, to set forth the greatness, majesty, and glory of the Gospel, which makes us feel as we read, that here is a theme at once the wonder of the universe, and challenging the profoundest attention and study of man. It is an overwhelming vindication of any amount of absorbing captivation by the topics referred to. All agree to this, But what shall we say, then, for the themes with which the text stands connected? Here is a subject which has engaged the devotions of "all the saints," and been the grand goal of all their holy desires since time began. Here are transactions which fill heaven with awe, and turn the songs of eternity into silence! Here are administrations which call the seven archangels into action, and for looking after the results of which, the universe is spellbound and mute with solemn expectation! Here are things, the mere prayers for which the Son of God holds in the golden censer, and offers on the golden altar, and sends up with awful solemnity into the presence of eternal Majesty! Is not this, then, a subject to command and justify the holiest and profoundest interest, study, and attention of rational beings! And yet there are people—men claiming to be Christiana—leaders of religious thought—ministers ordained to teach the way of God truly—who have not hesitated to sneer at it as the theme of fools, the hobby of enthusiasts, or the plaything of religious idiots! You may agree with them if you like. But, while I find these things treated with all soberness in the Scriptures, and blessing spoken from heaven upon those who give them devout and studious attention, and the Holy Ghost interpreting them as involving the highest hopes and prayers of "all the saints," and the whole celestial world becoming mute and motionless in the intensity of its interest as they unfold into fact, and prophets of God, and angels of glory, and Archangels of the Almighty's presence, and the blessed Christ at the heavenly altar, and the universe of holy beings, occupied with heart and soul with reference to them, I must persist in a different judgment, and ask to be excused for believing that we have here, not only a legitimate and fitting theme for our devoutest study, but one as high and momentous as ever was presented to the contemplation of man, which grasps deep into everything dear to us for time or eternity, and which he who willfully ignores, has reason to fear for his safety against the terrific plagues written in this book, and for the security of his part in the holy city.

May God, in mercy, save us from such dangerous unseemliness. Amen.

LECTURE 18

PREPARATION OF THE ANGELS—ADJUSTMENT OF THE ORDER OF PROCEEDING—FIRST TRUMPET—A TEMPEST OF HAIL, FIRE, AND BLOOD—CONTRADICTORY VIEWS OF SYMBOLISTIC INTERPRETERS—NO CERTAINTY BUT IN THE LITERAL SENSE—SECOND TRUMPET—A METEOR STRIKES THE SEA, TURNS IT TO BLOOD, DESTROYS LIVING THINGS AND SHIPPING—A LITERAL PROPHECY—THIRD TRUMPET—A METEOR OR COMET FALLS ON THE EARTH, POISONS THE WATERS, AND CAUSES MANY TO PERISH—ALSO LITERAL—FOURTH TRUMPET—THE SUN, MOON, AND STARS OBSCURED—ALSO LITERAL.

REV. 8:6–12. (Revised Text.)—And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves that they might sound.

And the first sounded; and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and it was cast into the earth; and the third of the earth was burned, and the third of the trees was burned, and all green grass was burned.

And the second angel sounded; and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third of the sea became blood; and the third of the creatures in the sea, the things which had lives [Gr. souls], died; and the third of the ships was destroyed.

And the third angel sounded: and there fell out of the heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon a third of the rivers, and upon the springs of the waters; and the name of the star is called wormwood; and the third of the waters was turned into wormwood; and many of men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.

And the fourth angel sounded; and the third of the sun was smitten, and the third of the moon, and the third of the stars, so that the third of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine for the third of it, and the night likewise.

WE have reached a point in the history of the Apocalypse, at which everything stands in solemn readiness for those final blasts of judgment which bring the grand consummation. The last seal is broken. Heaven is in suspense to see the result. The prayers of all the saints have come up with acceptance before God, who has promised to avenge them. The coals and ashes of holy indignation have dropped from the golden censer to lodge upon the doomed world. In short, the time has come for the action of the great day to be hurried to its completion. May the Lord Almighty give us grace to contemplate the awful scenes foreshown, as becomes both the subject and ourselves!

I. THE PREPARATION

“And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves that they might sound.”

Most of our apocalyptic interpreters tell us that “the angels preparing themselves to sound, signifies the difference in posture observable between one carelessly holding a trumpet by his side, and the bending of the arm, the erecting of the figure, the inflating of the lungs, and swelling of the lips and cheeks, as the trumpet is pressed firmly against the mouth.” To me this appears a sorry way of dealing with grave records of such momentous things. It is plainly said that these angels sounded their trumpets. From this we know, in advance, that they lifted the instruments to their lips and blew into them. All such accidents of posture and gesture are already necessarily implied. Besides, many of these interpreters extend these trumpets over long series of years; and if each angel put himself on a strain for a blast before either sounded, the last had his cheeks and lungs inflated very long before his turn came to sound! We had better exercise a little consideration, and not make these solemn things ludicrous by the way we handle them. The rapt apostle had greater things to engage him than to be dwelling on such puerilities. There was occasion also for a more significant preparation.

Not all seven of these angels were to sound at once. Mighty events of varied character were also to be induced by their several soundings. It was necessary, therefore, that there should be some prearrangement, both as to the order of time for each to sound, and the particular class of results each one’s sounding should control. Their soundings were not haphazard things; neither were these sublime archangels mere machines, moving like puppets, only as they were moved by a superior will. No attentive reader can fail to observe a complete and forestudied system and order in these trumpets and their successive effects. No two of them are alike, and yet there is a gradual rising, one over the other, to the end. One touches the ground, the trees, and the green grass. Another touches the sea, the ships, and the creatures in the sea. A third touches the rivers and the springs of water. A fourth touches the sun, moon, and stars. A fifth breaks open the door of separation between earth and hell. A sixth unlooses the dreadful army of horses and horsemen, the seven thunders, and the mighty struggle and murder of the two witnesses. And the last brings on “the battle of the great day of God Almighty.” There is a particular distinction between the first four and the last three; and again between the last of the three and the two which immediately precede it.

To refer all this to mere accident, or to the artistic skill of the narrator of the events, is unreasonable. Such system and order do not come of nothing, and a faithful recorder must enter events as they occur. Great intelligence and prearrangement are manifest in the transactions themselves, apart from any art of the writer who describes, them. Either, then, this was the work of the seven angels or that of the supreme Mind. And as we cannot conceive of such sublime beings as these seven archangels, going forward with the control of such mighty operations, without also exercising their own personal intelligence as to the manner of their proceeding; when it is said that they “prepared themselves that they might sound,” we are not to think of the mere mechanical accidents pertaining to the act of sounding a trumpet, but of a deliberative adjustment among themselves of the place and subject which each one was to take in the work.

We thus have a very significant hint respecting angelic ministrations, to wit: that the affairs of men and nations are much more under

the influence of the thinking and deliberation of angels, and wear much more of the impress of angelic management, than we are accustomed to suppose. Even men, in the narrow spheres and powers assigned to mortals, have constant occasion to think, deliberate, consult, and judge. It is, therefore, reasonable to believe that angels, and particularly the seven archangels, in their high places and with their sublime intelligence, do also have need to confer, deliberate, and arrange for their proceedings, especially in cases so extraordinary as this. It was nothing less than the closing up of the affairs of a world that was here committed to them; and they were all seven to be equally concerned in the tremendous administrations. The word ετοιμ ζω, which is used to describe their ready-making, is also often employed to denote predeterminations of what is to be done, and the settling of appointments and designs before they are carried into effect. And it is but natural and just, and harmonizes best with the character of both the agents and the business assigned to them, to interpret their making of themselves ready as referring to their mutual adjustment of the method by which they would conduct the awful transactions.

II. THE SOUNDING OF THE FIRST TRUMPET

“And the first sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and it was cast into the earth; and the third of the earth was burned, and the third of the trees was burned, and all green grass was burned.”

Here is the first touch of what fell from the censer of the Priest-Angel. I take the language as it stands. This book does not give things veiled, but unveiled. It is the Apocalypse, the uncovering. The results here described are heralded by the sound of a trumpet; what is published by a trumpet is no longer a secret. The phenomena are of a very stupendous sort; but the actors are Archangels, the occasion is the day of judgment, and the business is the closing up of the history of a doomed world. In such a case we may well look for wonders. God has also declared His purpose to renew the miracles of Egypt, and to do “marvellous things” like unto what He did in the days of Israel’s deliverance. (See Micah 7:15; Jer. 23:7, 8.) The plagues of Egypt were literal realities. They were miracles of judgment, such as have never been since on earth. And if it is the design of God to repeat them on a larger scale, or to do again what at all corresponds to that which He then did, the world has yet to witness just such scenes as are literally described under these trumpets. And “as it was in the day that Israel came up out of Egypt,” so it is in what John beheld under the sounding of this first trumpet. Then “the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt, since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.” (Ex. 9:23–28.) Here we have a corresponding visitation, only the fire is more destructive, and there is the further element of blood mingled with the fire and hail.

The whole picture is that of a tremendous tempest of hailstones, lightnings, and bloody products of the infuriated elements. Blood-red rains and blood-red snows are not unknown to the world. We occasionally hear of them. On the 17th of August, 1819, Captain Ross saw the mountains at Baffin’s Bay covered for eight miles with blood-red snow, many feet in depth. Saussure found it on Mount St. Bernard, in 1778. Ramond found it on the Pyrenees, and Summerfield in Norway, and others have told of it in other places. So blood-rain has more than once fallen. It is recorded by Cicero, that word was brought to the Roman Senate, on one occasion, that it had rained blood; also that the river Atratus had flowed with a bloody stream. (De Div. 2:27.) Slight falls of this kind have occurred in the Cape Verd Islands, at Lyons, at Genoa, and in the southwest of our own country, to the great alarm of the people of the vicinity. But whether the like of what John describes ever happened before or not, God has said, concerning the great day: “I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath, blood and fire.” (Joel 2:30.) And the manner in which He will do it is here unveiled. A storm of hail, and fire, and bloody interminglings, shall fall upon and envelop the world.

The effects are correspondingly dreadful. At an earlier stage, under the sixth seal, the four angels at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds, were charged not to injure the earth, nor the trees, till the servants of God were sealed. That sealing being accomplished, the prohibition ceases, the spirit of storms is let loose, and the earth and the trees are hurt. Bloody hail and fire pour upon the world with such fury that the third of the earth is burned. Our English version says nothing of the burning of the earth. It speaks only of trees and grass. The best manuscripts specify the earth also. Modern critics agree that the omission is unwarranted. “The third of the earth was burned”—set on fire and charred by the fierce lightnings of heaven, and a corresponding destruction was, of course, wrought among buildings, flocks, herds, and human life.

“The third” is mentioned, not with rigid strictness, as absolutely just that proportion, but, as we would say in general terms, one-third of the earth was burned. And so also “the third of the trees.” The Egyptian plague “smote and brake every tree of the field;” this destroys many more in the aggregate, because the visitation is so much more widespread, but it does not consume all. It carries fearful havoc among the forests, orchards, and timber-lands of the earth, but still the major part of the trees escape. Not so, however, with the grass and the more tender portions of vegetation. The Egyptian plague destroyed “every herb of the field,” and it is the same in this case. “All green grass was burned.” A scene of distressing and far-reaching desolation is thus foreshown, in which a large portion of the earth’s surface is charred with fire, many towns, cities, forests, and plantations reduced to ashes, every field and meadow stripped of its growing crops, and bloody and putrid blackness spread over all the smitten world.

But most interpreters object to the taking of this as a literal description. If their objection is valid, they must be able to show a

different meaning, and one on which we may reasonably rest with greater certainty. If earth does not mean earth, then what does it mean? And if earth means earth, then the trees must mean trees, and the grass grass. If not, why not? And if trees and grass do not mean trees and grass, the burden is upon those who so affirm to furnish the evidence of some other meaning. But, alas, for such attempts! Wordsworth says the trees mean princes and great men, and grass the glory and power of men. Lord says the trees mean stronger men, and the grass the young, the feeble, and the aged. Hengstenberg and Williams say the trees mean great men, and the grass people generally. Wetstein says the trees mean apostles and great doctors, and the grass common Christians. Durham says the earth means the visible Church, the trees what seems most strong in it, and the grass its lesser excellencies. The truth is, if earth, trees, and grass do not mean earth, trees, and grass, no man can tell what they mean. Letting go the literal signification of the record, we launch out upon an endless sea of sheer conjecture, turn the whole Apocalypse into an incomprehensible riddle, and force the conclusion that God was mistaken when He named it the lifting off of the veil; nay, that, if it is a revelation, it has not yet become manifest what that revelation is, and never will, by the light which we now possess.

A large number of writers on this book agree, indeed, that the downfall of the Roman power in the West is at least the most prominent subject of the trumpets: and, as far as that downfall is included in the great day of judgment, and, as far as one judgment is a type of another, they are correct, but no further. Referring these foreshowings to the decline and fall of the Roman empire, there are not two expositors who concur as to the distribution of events under the several trumpets. Each has a different theory, and each finds the same particular predictions fulfilled in things the most diverse in character and the most widely separated in time. And if we must go to symbol and figure for the meaning, I find one theory about as respectable and well sustained as the other. It is mainly fancy and guesswork from first to last, as full of self-contradiction as destitute of solid foundation. Thus, Elliott, who has written with so much learning and pains on the subject, finds the fulfilment of this first trumpet in the wars of Alaric the Goth and Rhadagaisus the Vandal, against the Western Roman Empire. But this gives us two storms instead of the one which John beheld, and the blood of men on earth instead of the bloody substance which the record describes as falling from the sky, and fixes on events which suit as well for either of the first four trumpets instead of something as distinctive and peculiar as this trumpet is from all the rest. And so the thing works in every other instance. The law of departure from the direct sense of the record, is the law of uncertainty, of irreconcilable contradictions, of the substitution of human vagaries for the clear revelations of God, and there is no remedy for the chaos of opinions that obtains under it. As well might we look for the laws of symbolization to interpret the plagues of Egypt of the discovery and settlement of America, as to find such laws for the interpretation of the seals, trumpets, and vials of this book of anything but the great day of God Almighty. But, carrying them forward where they belong, and where God himself has so explicitly put them,—to that day beyond all other days of literal realities and astounding marvels,—there is no more hindrance to the literal acceptance of what is written here, than to such an acceptance of what is written concerning the life and deeds of Jesus, or concerning the acts of His apostles, whilst it gives us solid ground to stand on, and involves us in no bewildering uncertainties and discomfiting self-contradictions.

I must, therefore, take these descriptions in the only really ascertainable sense of them, and insist that a mighty storm of hail and fire mingled with blood means a storm of hail and fire mingled with blood; that earth, trees, and all green grass means earth, trees, and all green grass; and that the burning, and scorching, and destruction means burning, scorching, and destruction. And, after wading through piles of volumes intended to prove and demonstrate the contrary, I come back to this, as fully persuaded, as I am convinced that the Bible is of God, that there can be no interpretation of the Apocalypse, as an intelligible revelation, on any other principle. There are, indeed, symbols and figures in it, as in all other portions of the Scriptures. But when they occur here, as in every other place, the distinct intimations to that effect are given; and, in all other instances, we are to interpret precisely the same as in any other piece of serious writing intended for the instruction and enlightenment of men.

III. THE SOUNDING OF THE SECOND TRUMPET

“And the second angel sounded; and, as it were, a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third of the sea became blood; and the third of the creatures in the sea, the things which had lives, died; and the third of the ships was destroyed.”

Here is one of the hints I speak of as indicating that a thing is not to be literally taken. The image of a burning mountain is before the writer. But it is not literally a mountain; it is only something having the general appearance of a mountain; and he plainly tells us so. He saw— ζ —as it were a mountain. Of course, then, we are to take it, not as a real mountain, but as something resembling a mountain. A certain writer insists that the plague under this trumpet is not to be taken literally, because a mountain falling into the sea could never turn it into blood. But John does not say it was a mountain. He says that it was something that looked like a burning mountain. Exactly what it was, he could no better tell us, except that its effect upon the waters of the sea was, that it turned them into blood. An ordinary mountain would not do this; but that falling, fiery mass, which had the appearance of a burning mountain, did it.

Some conceive of this fiery mass as a volcano, but neither is this the exact image. John says nothing of a mountain vomiting fire, but of a mountain burning with fire, which might be a volcanic mountain, or it might not. When God descended on Sinai, “the mountain burned with fire unto the heart of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness” (Deut. 4:11); but there is no evidence that it was a volcanic eruption. The idea of John’s language is rather that of a great mountainous mass of matter falling from the sky,

clothed in seething, thundering, and flashing flames, and dashing into the ocean. The whole image is meteoric, rather than volcanic. The plunging of this awful fiery mass into the sea, affects it wonderfully. It turns the waves to blood. And if any are disposed to doubt the possibility of such a thing, let them turn to the account of the exode of Israel from Egypt, where it is written that Moses "lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants, and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood." (Ex. 7:20.) In the Psalms also (105:29), it is written: "He turned their waters into blood;" and again (78:44): "He turned their rivers into blood, and their floods, that they could not drink." It was fresh water in that case, and it is sea or salt water in this; but if God could work such changes by the staff of Moses, what is to hinder him from producing like changes, even on all the waters of the ocean, by means of this fiery mass, as it were a burning mountain? And if the one was literal, as all admit, why not the other, although upon a mightier scale, corresponding to the momentousness of the great day?

Suppose, however, that we follow the common course of expositors, and say that this whole matter is figurative or symbolical; then what? Some understand the mountain to mean heresy; the sea, the Church with its baptismal waters; its change to blood, the effect of deadly error; the death of the fishes of the sea, the perdition of souls; the destruction of the ships, the overthrow of churches. Others say the fiery mountain is Satan; the sea, the nations; its change into blood and the dying of the fishes, the persecution and slaughter of Christians; the wreck of the ships, the extinction of congregations. Others tell us that this fiery mountain was Genseric with his Vandals, forced from their native seat by the Huns, and plunging through France and Spain into Africa, conquering the Carthaginians, settling themselves upon the conquered territory, and thence harassing the neighboring islands and shores of the Mediterranean. Still others affirm that the sea is the sea of Galilee, figuratively considered; the fiery mountain, Vespasian; the fishes, the Jews; the ships, the cities of Palestine. And again others interpret the picture of the overthrow of Jerusalem and the temple, and the dissolution of the Jewish polity; the dying of the fishes, the relapses of men from Christianity to Gentilism; the loss of the ships, the subversion of synagogues and churches. Nor is the list yet exhausted. To some, the sea is pure doctrine; the mountain, aspiring prelates; the fire, their ambition; the discoloration of the waters, the introduction of false doctrine; the fishes, the lower orders of ecclesiastics and monks; the ships, the bearers of the Gospel. To others, the mountain is Rome; its burning, the conflagration of that city by Alaric; the destruction of the ships, the plunder of its wealth. Still others see in the record, a symbol of the ravages by Attila. And I only wonder that no one has discovered that it denotes the settlement of the Mormons in Salt Lake Territory! The simple truth is, that if it does not mean what it says, as men ordinarily use language, no man can tell what it does mean; and the opinion of one is just as good, and just as bad, as that of another.

I, therefore, take it as it is written, because there is no other way of taking it which yields any certain or reliable sense. What do we want with Vespasian, Alaric, Rhadagaisus, Attila, Genseric, Romans, Goths, Vandals, Arians, prelates, or the devil, when the inspired writer tells us it was a fiery meteoric mass,—an aerial mountain,—great and towering, precipitated from the atmosphere into the sea, as one of the great wonders of the day of judgment? Men do but rave and trifle and undertake to make a Bible which God has not made, when they spend their time, and learning, and ingenuity trying to persuade themselves and the world that it was something else than John says it was.

This burning mass is plunged into "the sea." It would seem as if some particular sea was meant. If so, most likely the Mediterranean Sea, around which the greatest recorded events of the world and of the Church have been enacted, and which is the central sea of all history, both sacred and profane. Its very name marks it as the middle of the earth. The result is, that the third of it becomes blood—poisonously bloody—so that a third of the living things in the sea perish.

It would seem, also, as if tempestuous commotion of the elements is to attend this awful precipitation. Both the vastness and the fiery condition of the mass ejected into the sea, naturally suggests such effects. Hence, "the third of the ships was destroyed," burned, sunk, or dashed ashore.

And all this finds place also in some of the plain, old unsymbolic predictions concerning the day of the Lord. Fishes constitute one of God's precious gifts to man. They were among the principal food of Jesus, and were the subjects of some of His most marvellous miracles. And, in punishment of the sins of men, it is but reasonable to expect the fishes of the sea to be smitten, as well as the trees and the fruits of the earth. Hence, in foretelling the Divine judgments, Hosea said: "The fishes of the sea also shall be taken away." (4:1–3.) So the Lord, also, said by Zephaniah (1:3), "I will consume the fowls of heaven, and the fishes of the sea." Isaiah further declares: "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is high and lofty, ... and upon all the ships of Tarshish." (Is. 2:16.) And here, under the second trumpet, the blessed John beholds exactly how these predictions are to be fulfilled.

IV. THE SOUNDING OF THE THIRD TRUMPET

"And the third angel sounded, and there fell out of the heaven a great star, burning as a torch, and it fell upon the third of the rivers, and upon the springs of the waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third of the waters was turned into wormwood; and many of men died from the waters, because they were made bitter."

Here is another marvellous meteoric phenomenon; perhaps a comet striking the earth. But nobody seems to be quite willing to take it for what John says it was. Interpreters tell us, that a star denotes an eminent teacher or angel of the Church. They refer us for proof of this, to the first chapter of this book. But there is one important link lacking in this argument, as applied to the case before us. There Christ himself says, that "the seven stars" beheld by the seer, denote "the angels of the seven churches;" but here He says

no such thing; nor is there any proof that the Church is at all in question. This star falls out of heaven, but there is no evidence whatever that the Church is heaven. Besides, so great a star of the Church, in such lonely distinction, could only be Christ himself, who never falls out of the Church, whose name is not Wormwood, and who does not poison the fountains and rivers of the earth by His teachings. When the Scriptures tell us that a thing is a symbol, we are to take it as such; but when they give no intimation that a thing is other than literal, there is no warrant for making a symbol or figure of it.

But, if this star denotes an apostate teacher, who is that teacher? Some say Simon Magus, Menander, Cerinthus; some, Manes; some, Novatus; some, Montanus; some, Arius; some, Pelagius; some, Origen; some, Mahomet; and one with about as much reason as the other. Some, however, tell us that it does not mean an apostate teacher at all, but a warlike leader. Then, what one? Grotius, Hammond, and Rosenmuller answer: Some actor in the Jewish war, as Eleazar, Josephus, or the like. Others answer, Genseric; others, Attila; others, whole successions of bloody devastators;—and nobody knows who; for, with this mode of interpretation, the vision will fit one as well as the other.

If Attila, King of the Huns, is the star, as the leading modern expositors affirm, then there are some very important questions which yet remain to be solved. What was “the heaven” out of which he fell? What was his fall? How did he burn as a torch? Are the Danube and the Rhine, along which he operated, “the third of the rivers?” How did he embitter the fountains as distinct from the rivers, and make both fountains and rivers bitter like himself? How was his name called Wormwood? Were the deaths under him literal or spiritual deaths? If literal, did they die of the bitterness of the waters? And, if spiritual, did Attila produce any moral mortality among men? O, the sloughs and bogs into which people plunge themselves when they let go the plain and direct sense of what is written! Has not symbol and allegory been tried about long enough on these momentous plagues of the day of judgment?

Apart from his stilted system of symbolization, Lord finds the description of the apostle very plain, and reproduces it in a way which well exhibits its literal import. “The star, obviously, was not a solid globe, but a thin, transparent meteor [or comet], which, as it swept along near the surface and sunk to the ground, still left the objects it enveloped perceptible, to the apostle, and was soon absorbed by the waters and the earth. He beheld the rivers and fountains still running, discerned a change wrought in them by the meteor, and saw that it was the new element infused into them that rendered them deadly to many who drank of them.”

A name is assigned to this meteor, not as though it had previously been known or should become known by this name, but in a way descriptive of its qualities and effects. Properly designated, “the name of the star is called Wormwood;” or, according to some manuscripts, emphatically, “the wormwood.” Wormwood, or absinth, is a bitter, intoxicating, and poisonous herb. Used freely, it produces convulsions, paralysis, and death. And this star is appropriately named “the Absinth” as the embodiment of the very quintessence of all wormwood. It is bitterness itself—the poisonous bitterness of absinth.

And this bitterness is communicated to whatever it touches. It falls upon the third of the rivers, and upon the springs of waters. It sinks into the earth and impregnates the fountains and the wells. Lord suggests that it falls upon the Alps, from whose melting glaciers so many rivers and fountains take their rise. At any rate, it touches the sources of many waters, and turns them into bitterness. Such a thing is by no means impossible. On the 21st of March, 1823, in one of the Aleutian Islands there was a great volcanic explosion, and, as one of the results, the river water assumed the color of beer, and was so extremely bitter as to be unfit for use. God is at no loss for means to effect His ends. And if one meteor could turn the waters of the sea to blood, another may as readily turn the waters of the rivers and wells to the deadly bitterness of absinth. Nay, something of this sort is indicated in the ancient prophecies, where we read: “Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein, but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.” (Jer. 9:13–15.) Even if this was figuratively fulfilled upon the apostate Jews, we are still warranted in counting on a more literal fulfilment in that great day which is to repeat and bring to their fullest consummation all the judgments that have ever gone before it.

The result of this embittering of the waters is fearful distress on account of the absence of wholesome drink, and great mortality among men.

V. THE SOUNDING OF THE FOURTH TRUMPET

“And the fourth angel sounded, and the third of the sun was smitten, and the third of the moon, and the third of the stars, so that the third of them should be darkened, and the day should not shine the third of it, and the night likewise.”

We have seen the judgments of God going forth on the land, with its trees and herbage—on the sea with its fishes and its ships—on the rivers and springs—and everywhere spreading disaster, suffering, and death. This trumpet carries us above, to portents and afflictions from the heavenly bodies. Jesus has told us, “there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars” (Luke 21:25); and here John beholds some of them. We have had some of them before, but they increase and intensify as the end draws near. We shall see more of them hereafter.

But what are we to understand by the sun, moon, and stars? Ask a child, and it will tell you; but ask our Apocalyptic interpreters, and their answers are as various as their names, and all they have to say is nothing but loose conjecture and uncertainty. Grotius says they are the cities of Galilee, and the people of the Jews, destroyed by Vespasian. Hammond says the sun is the Jewish temple; the moon, Jerusalem; the stars, its population; their obscuration, the taking of the city by Titus. Brightman says the sun is the Bible; the

moon, its doctrine; the stars, the ministers of the Church; their obscuration, the persecution of the African Church by the Vandals. Vitringa says the obscuration of the sun is the decay of the imperial government from Valens to the fall of Augustulus; of the moon and stars, the false doctrines and corrupt manners of the patriarchs and bishops after the time of Constantine. Wordsworth sees in it "a prophecy of a great prevalence of errors, defections, apostasies, and confusions in Christendom, such as abounded in the seventh century." And Danbuz, Elliott, Lord, Cumming, Barnes, &c., consider it a picture of the subversion of the Western imperial government and its dependencies, and the setting up of the new rule of the Heruli under Odoacer. Will any one in his senses allow that all these can be true? or that that can be a just way of dealing with the word of God, which gives us such wide-ranging diversity, and about equal reason for either theory?

The application of this trumpet to Odoacer is the favorite modern way of disposing of it. Yet Barnes confessedly adopts it, only because the system on which he interprets the foregoing trumpets leaves him no other alternative, notwithstanding he cannot make the events and the prophecy correspond, except in the vaguest and most general manner. Lord embraces it because "there is no other event that in the slightest degree meets the conditions of the symbol." And so with the rest; though, even as a symbol, this trumpet no more fits the case of Odoacer and the Heruli, than it fits the case of Vespasian or Titus, Napoleon Bonaparte or George Washington. Look at it. John beheld the third of the sun, moon, and stars smitten, and their light one-third diminished, whilst they retained their places, and for two-thirds continued the same as before; but Odoacer made an utter end of the old imperial government of the West, and of all its dependencies, and set up an entirely new sun, moon, and stars in the political heavens. Here is a discrepancy which is eternally irreconcilable with the record, and which, without noting others, is fatal to the theory. And if the system of symbolic interpretation forces us to accept as the fulfilment of holy prediction what is so fundamentally at variance with it, then there remains but one rational alternative: either to surrender our warfare with rationalism and infidelity, or to renounce and denounce that symbolic system as inadequate and false, which it really is, even from foundation to summit. With all the great names by which it is adorned, I charge it, before God and men, with having obscured and sealed up from the view of the Church, some of the plainest and most important revelations from heaven, and hold it responsible for nearly all the uncertainty, doubt, and darkness which hang over this sublime and awful Apocalypse. And as surely as this Book is what God says it is, and as certainly as sun, moon, and stars mean sun, moon, and stars, just so surely this fourth trumpet no more refers to Odoacer, or any other men, events, or disasters of the past, than it does to the writers who have so applied it. It is a judgment scene of the great day that is foreshown, and it is a fearful and disastrous obscuration of the sources of light and heat to our world, so that sun, moon, and stars will shine with only the third of their force, disturbing the seasons, hindering the ripening of fruits and harvests, and filling the world with chilliness and sickening gloom. The same was prophesied by Isaiah (13:9), where it is said: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the earth desolate; and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light, the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible." (Compare Jer. 4:23, 28; Ezek. 32:7, 8; Joel 2:10, 30, 31; 3:15; Amos 5:20; Zeph. 1:14–16; Matt. 24:29.) Nor can we consider this unlikely or improbable, when we call to mind the plague of "thick darkness," for three days, which attended God's judgments upon Egypt.

Thus, then, we have the significance of the first four trumpets. The first angel sounds, and a fearful tempest of hail and fire, mingled with blood, follows. The third of the land is burned, and the third of the trees, and all green grass;—a judgment upon the world for its wickednesses.

The second angel sounds, and a great meteoric mass, like unto a mountain burning with fire, is plunged into the sea, turning the third of its waters to blood, killing the third of all living things in the sea, and utterly destroying the third of the shipping on the sea;—another sore judgment upon the guilty and God-defying children of men.

The third angel sounds, and a great starlike meteor falls out of the sky, blazing like a torch, and is absorbed by the earth and waters, embittering the third of the rivers, and the wells, and fountains, so that large portions of mankind die because of the poison it imparts to the waters;—another sore judgment upon the wicked dwellers upon the earth.

The fourth angel sounds, and calamity befalls the luminaries of the sky. The sun, moon, and stars are one-third obscured, making the days gloominess and the darkness of the nights still darker, with all the attendant distresses of such a beclouded and chilly state of things;—a further judgment upon the generations of the unsanctified.

And yet these are only the preliminaries and preludes of still intenser woes to follow. Ah, yes; sin has a voice that is heard in heaven. Though sentence against an evil work be not executed speedily, it will be executed at last. Jezebel may flourish in her iniquities for many years, but, finally, the horses trample her body in the streets, and the dogs of Jezreel gnaw and crunch her royal bones. Long was the old world left to drive its crimes, jeer at Noah's odd notions, and fling defiance into the face of God; but presently the earth broke down beneath their feet, and their lifeless bodies dashed upon each other amid the waves of an ocean world! The trampled law will assert its rightful honor, and Christ will not endure the smiting, taunts, and wrongs of Pilate's hall forever. And when these trumpets once give out their clangor, the vibrations will run through the universe, and everything created for human blessedness shall turn into a source of disaster and trouble to them that know not God and obey not the Gospel of Christ.

Day of anger, day of wonder!

When the world is driven asunder,
Smote with fire, and blood, and thunder!

And will any one who hears these solemn things go away from the contemplation of them, not caring whether he is involved in these plagues or not? There is now a free salvation from all of them offered through faith in Christ Jesus. Hid and housed in Him and His redeeming grace, not one of these calamities shall ever touch us. Who, then, can reconcile himself to retire from the exhibitions of this hour, without having his heart and mind made up, God being his Helper, never more to neglect or give over his devout endeavors to find the only shelter from the miseries of that terrible day?

King of Majesty tremendous,
Who dost free salvation send us!
Well of Mercy! O befriend us!

LECTURE 19

THE WOE-TRUMPETS—THE EAGLE IN MID-HEAVEN—CLASS TO WHICH HE BELONGS—MERCY IN JUDGMENT—THE FIFTH TRUMPET—THE FALLEN STAR—THE LOCUSTS FROM THE ABYSS—THEIR FORMS, INTELLIGENCE, AND TORMENTS—NOT JEWISH ZEALOTS—NOT GOTHS AND VANDALS—NOT ADHERENTS AND PROPAGATORS OF FALSE DOCTRINE—NOT THE LUTHERANS—NOT THE SARACENS—BELONG TO THE DAY OF THE LORD—HELL TORMENTS A REALITY.

REV. 8:13, 9:1–12. (Revised Text.)—And I beheld, and heard one eagle flying in mid-heaven, saying with a great voice. Woe, woe, woe, to the dwellers on the earth, by reason of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are yet to sound.

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star out of the heaven fallen into the earth; and to him was given the key of the well-pit of the abyss; and he opened the well-pit of the abyss; and there came out of the well-pit smoke, as smoke of a great furnace; and the sun was darkened, and the air, from the smoke of the well-pit. And out of the smoke came forth locusts into the earth; and to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. And it was commanded them that they shall not injure the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads. And it was given to them that they should not kill them, but that they shall be tormented five months; and their torment [is] as the torment of a scorpion when he hath struck a man. And in those days the men shall seek death, and they shall not find it; and they shall fervently desire to die, and death fleeth from them.

And the forms of the locusts [are] like unto horses prepared for war; and on their heads as it were crowns like unto gold, and their faces as it were faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as of lions. And they had breast-plates, as breast-plates of iron; and the sound of their wings, as the sound of chariots of many horses running into battle. And they have tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and in their tails their power to injure the men five months. They have over them a king, the angel of the abyss, his name in Hebrew, Abaddon, and in the Greek he hath name Apollyon.

The one woe is past; behold, there cometh yet two woes after these things.

FOUR trumpets have been considered. The three most distinguished ones yet remain. They have a special preface, consisting of a heavenly proclamation of woe, woe, woe to the dwellers on the earth. It is a pre-announcement of the general character of what is to come, and a merciful forewarning of the judgments which these remaining trumpets are to bring. It is from this that they have the name of woe-trumpets. Let us then look—

- I. AT THIS PRELIMINARY PROCLAMATION.
- II. AT THE NATURE OF THE FIRST WOE.

I. Our English version describes this proclamation as made by an angel. This is admitted to be an erroneous reading. It is not sustained by the best and oldest manuscripts. The Codex Sinaiticus, the Codex Alexandrinus, and the Codex Vaticanus, the very best and most reliable authorities on the true reading of the New Testament, have ετοϋς, eagle, instead of γγελοϋς, angel. The Syriac has eagle. Griesbach, Scholz, Lachman, Van Ess, Hengstenberg, Stuart, Tischendorf, Tregelles, Wordsworth, Ewald, Alford, and the best critics in general, accept eagle as the proper and original reading. Bengel, a century and a half ago, wrote “the Italian version, and other most ancient authorities, widely separated from each other in age and clime, and in very great numbers, clearly vindicate

the reading of ερου, eagle, from all suspicion of gloss." As this agent is in heaven and speaks intelligent words, it is easily to be seen how interpreters and transcribers, on the ground of congruity, might be tempted to read angel instead of eagle; but, on the supposition that the original was angel, it is impossible to explain how the best, and the vast majority of ancient copies, came to have it eagle. I, therefore, take the true reading, and the only one critically defensible, to be eagle.

Are there, then, rapacious birds in heaven? No; nothing of the kind. There are other eagles besides birds. The Saviour himself has spoken of them in more than one place. Speaking of the day of His future coming, He said to His disciples: "I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where [whither], Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will THE EAGLES be gathered together." (Luke 17:34–37.)

Here, then, those ready and watching saints, who are to be mysteriously conveyed away from the earth upon the first manifestation of the day of the Lord, are called eagles. We find them spoken of also in the Saviour's great prophetic discourse in Matt. 24:26–28, where He admonishes His people not to trouble or disturb themselves to find Him in the day of His coming, and not to heed those who shall say, Behold, He is here, or there; "for," says He, "as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be; for wheresoever the carcass [slain body] is, there will THE EAGLES be gathered together." Here, as Hilary observes, "He calls His saints eagles, soaring, as it were, to Him, the body, by a spiritual flight."

There are some who take these eagles to mean the Roman armies, which bore the eagle on their standards; and consider the carcass to be the corrupt Jewish population and state which the Romans destroyed. But the whole face and intent of the passage, and the common voice of antiquity, and of the great reformers, unite in referring the description to Christ and His people, at the time of the second Advent. We are naturally repelled from the idea that Christ should be represented as a dead body, or that His meek followers should be likened to birds of prey. But when more carefully considered, there appears eminent propriety in the figure.

Jesus is the Saviour, most of all by His death. It is by His fall that we rise, and by His death that we live. "He that was dead" is one of His particular titles, though He is alive forevermore. He gave His flesh for the life of the world. His own word is: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day: for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." (Jno. 6:53–55.)

He has also instituted a holy sacrament, concerning which He says: "Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you. Drink; this is my blood which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins." He is the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world." He is, therefore, the true slain body on which all saints feed, to whom they are gathered in spirit, faith, and loving sympathy now, and to whom they shall be gathered in person hereafter, to see Him as He is, and to be with Him forever. And as saints have their life from the slain Christ, they are rightfully likened to the eagles which live on fallen bodies. They are eagles of faith. They feed on the body and blood of their Saviour, broken and shed for them.*

But not all Christians are to the same extent, and so pre-eminently, the eagles. The eagle is a royal bird. It stands at the head of the feathered tribes, as the lion among beasts. There are also different orders and classes of saintship, as there are degrees of sanctity and spiritual attainment. When the Saviour first comes, according to His own word, He will take some and leave others—honor some servants, and cut off some other servants. And those who are "taken" while others are "left," are particularly and emphatically "the eagles." They are the heirs of royalty and dominion. They are to have crowns. They are to share in the official honors of eternity, as none but themselves ever will. And the qualities of these are eminently the qualities of eagles.

Eagles are great watchers. They have a quick, clear, penetrating, and far-reaching vision. In this respect they excel all birds. It is almost impossible to surprise or deceive them. Audubon once placed himself in ambush to watch an eagle's nest. The parent birds were absent when he took his position. When the female returned, "ere she alighted she glanced her quick and piercing eye around, and instantly perceived her haunt had been discovered, and, dropping her prey, with a loud shriek communicated the alarm to her mate." And the eagle saints are those who are not taken unawares when the day of the Lord comes. That day is to come as a thief, with stealth, unobserved by the common world; but it cannot surprise them. They are on the lookout for it. They have a clear and keen vision for all signs of its nearness, and they exercise that vision. They are ever on the watch, as commanded by the Lord. Whatever the duties in which they are engaged, both in their going out and in their coming in, they are never unmindful of what may at any time occur. They know their danger and they know their safety, and exercise a corresponding circumspection.

Eagles have elevated aspirations and instincts. They prefer the heights, both when they soar and when they rest. They make their homes among the most inaccessible crags, and excel all birds in their sublime ascensions. So eagle saints have their citizenship in heaven. They live in the world, but all their feelings, aims, affections, and desires are above it. Their greatest impulses are upward, ever upward. They love the higher atmosphere and the sublimer sunlight above the clouds and malarious mists and dangers of earthiness. They build their nests in the mountains of God, and prefer and long to be where they are never more annoyed with the vexations and dangers of this sordid world.

Eagles are stronger of wing than other birds. Their swiftness and power are astonishing. So the eagle saints are distinguished by their vigor of faith and hope. They are particularly strong in those truths and promises which lift heavenward, anticipate the dawn of a sublimer economy, and sit "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Isaiah referred, in his day, to saints of these eminent qualities, and likens them to eagles, where he says: "They who wait for Jehovah, gain fresh strength, lift up their wings as eagles, run and are not weary, go forward and do not faint." (40:30, 31; Delitzsch's Translation.) And in Deuteronomy (32:11, 12), Jehovah is likened to a

parent eagle, and His elect to young eagles, whom He feeds, and upbears, and teaches to fly and rise to himself.*

We thus identify a class of eagles, other than the rapacious birds denoted by this name;—eagles that have voices, intelligence, and place in heaven. These eagles are also in heaven before the judgments occur to which these trumpets refer. The Saviour himself, in Matt. 24, puts their gathering together where the body is, in advance of the sending forth of His angels with the great trumpet-sounding. When the sun is darkened, and the moon is obscured, and the stars fall, and the powers of the heavens are shaken, and the sign of the Son of Man appears, and all the tribes of the earth mourn; these eagles are already where the Lord, on whom they live, is. John saw them there, among other images, under that of “a flying eagle,” before the Lamb took the book or ever a seal was broken; where also he heard them sing unto the Lamb: “Thou art worthy; for Thou wert slain, and redeemedst us to God by Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and Thou madest us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.” (Rev. 4:5–10; 5:8–10.) And from among these was He whom John here beheld and heard flying in mid-heaven, saying with a great voice, “Woe, woe, woe, to the dwellers on the earth, by reason of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are yet to sound.”

The manner in which this eagle is spoken of, implies that there are others of the same class. The seer says: “I beheld and heard one eagle” thus flying and saying. This “one eagle” presupposes more eagles; as “one scribe,” in Matt. 8:19, presupposes more scribes; as “one voice from the horns of the golden altar” (9:13) presupposes more voices; as “one mighty angel” (19:21) presupposes more angels.

The Church of the first born is to have a part in the administrations of the judgment upon the guilty world. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (1 Cor. 4:2.) Hence, when the first seals were broken, the voice of power was heard from the living ones. “Go!” And so here, “one eagle” has a mission which he executes between the sounding of the fourth and fifth trumpets, as the prelude to what the last three trumpets are to produce. Verily, we know not, and cannot half conceive what ministries and agencies of heavenly sublimity await us, if only we are faithful. We shall fly, like eagles, in mid-heaven, and mingle our voices with the trumpets of judgment, and fill offices of honor and celestial dignity among the transactions of archangels, as they go forth to close up the history of a rebellious world!

The precise manner in which this proclamation of the eagle is to reach men, is not stated. That it is to be heard on earth, I am quite sure. We can discern no reason why heaven should be thus specifically notified that the succeeding trumpets are woe-trumpets; nor yet for the introduction of such a special agency to inform John that they were to be woe-trumpets. The results of the blowing of them would necessarily make this sufficiently manifest to him. The intention of the proclamation itself is evidently merciful. I take it as a heavenly signal, given in the midst of the ongoing of the scenes of the day of judgment, to apprise men of the terrible plagues next to be enacted, that those then living, who have not become utterly blind and deaf to sacred things, may take warning and seek refuge against the oncoming calamities. It is one of the principles of the Divine administrations, that mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath; and, as long as there is any possibility of bringing men to a right mind, the opportunity for it is given. These three woe trumpets are to conclude the history of this world and to end forever this present economy. Hence, on the very eve of the end, and when the last awful visitations are about to fall upon the ungodly, still a mighty voice of warning goes forth from mid-heaven, that such as will heed it may prepare themselves, and cry for mercy before mercy is clean gone forever. God gives up the world to perdition with great reluctance. He has always said that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; and we thus behold Him true to His word up to the last.

II. We come, then, to the first of these eagle-announced woes. The fifth trumpet brings it. It is quite different in character from the four preceding trumpets. All are blasts of judgment, and all belong to the great day of the Lord; but no two of them are alike except in this, that they all bring calamity and suffering to the wicked dwellers upon the earth.

Thus far the trumpets have blown only the objects of physical nature, and wrought their effects through disturbances in the material world. The first trumpet smote the land, the trees, and the grass. The second smote the waters of the sea, the fishes, and the ships. The third smote the fountains, wells, and rivers. And the fourth obscured and darkened the sources of light and heat to the world. From these several successive blasts great suffering and mortality result to the children of men. But the trumpet now before us goes beyond the physical world and calls into action quite other agencies. The doors of separation between the earth and the prison of evil spirits are opened, and mysterious and malignant tenants of the underworld are permitted to overrun the globe, and to inflict torture and woe upon its unsanctified inhabitants.

John hears the fifth angel sound, and beholds a fallen star in the earth. This is not a meteor like that which he beheld on the sounding of the third angel. He does not see the falling, but recognizes the star as a fallen one—fallen, he does not say when or how. This star is an intelligent agent, for things are distinctly ascribed to “him” which could not be said except of a living being. A key is given him. He takes that key. He uses it for the unlocking of a door, and he lets forth from their prison some of the tenants of the abyss. All this argues active and intelligent agency, and furnishes the Divine intimation that we are not to consider this star to be of the same kind as the star under the third trumpet. It is not a material but a spiritual star, and a fallen one—one fallen out of the heaven. We know of such spiritual and celestial stars. When the capstone of the grand pyramid of creation was laid, the Almighty himself hath declared that “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” (Job. 38:4–7.) These were angelic beings. We know, also, that there are “angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation.” (Jude 6.) We read

of "the angels that sinned," whom God did not spare. (2 Pet. 2:4.) These are of various orders and degrees, "principalities and powers." (Eph. 6:6; Col. 2:15.) Among them is one of pre-eminent dignity, the leader and prince of all the rest—"the great dragon, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan." (Rev. 12:9.) Hence, we read of "the Devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41.) Here, then, are fallen stars of a spiritual sort, and one of particular distinction and magnitude, answering to the description of the text. For the present they have possession of the aerial or heavenly spaces. (Eph. 6:12.) Satan is particularly described as "the prince of the power of the air." (Eph. 2:2.)* He is fallen morally, and fallen from the proper heaven of glory, and is eventually to be entirely ejected from the heavenly places now occupied by him and his angels, previous to the great binding which is to shut him up in the abyss. The Saviour refers prophetically to this, where He says: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." (Luke 10:18.) This ejection, in its final completeness, is described by John in the twelfth chapter, where he speaks of "war in the heaven," and the ejection of "Satan and his angels" by Michael and his hosts. After that, these impure spirits have no more place in heaven forever. But, even after this precipitation from the aerial regions, their work on earth is continued for a time with augmented fierceness and wrath. There may also be a preliminary precipitation of Satan into the earth, previous to the great battle between him and Michael, to which the fall spoken of in the text may refer. It may be the result of a Divine force, or it may be a voluntary casting of himself into the earth for augmented mischief. At any rate, Satan is a fallen spiritual star, and John beholds him fallen into the earth with particular malignity, and bent on letting loose against men all the evil powers which he can command. He also stands related to the inhabitants of the abyss as their chief lord, in a way which renders it congruous and fitting with all that we know of him, that we should see him in this "star out of the heaven fallen into the earth." Whatever the fall, whether moral or local, voluntary, or the result of force, it includes a will for mischief, and overflowing with malignity toward the children of men.

And because of the wickedness of the world, special powers are granted him. As people prefer the service of the devil, God allows them a full experience of his administrations. It has always been so. Because the nations before Christ, when they knew God, glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and changed the truth of God into a lie; He dropped the reins to them and gave them up to uncleanness, vile affections, and a reprobate mind, to be filled with all unrighteousness, and to receive in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. (Rom. 1:19–32.) Because men receive not the truth and dislike it, God gives them what they love, and sends them strong delusions, that they may believe lies, and reap the reward of their perverse choice in its own line. And because men reject the Lordship of Christ for the lordship of Satan, God in judgment enlarges the powers of the lord of their preference that they may have the full benefit of the malignant will of their own chosen.

John beholds and describes how this is done. To this fallen star, he says "was given the key of the well-pit of the abyss." It was "given" to him, as all that Job had was given to the same fallen one, to do with it as he might list. Though Satan has great power, he is under bonds and limitations, beyond which he cannot go without permission. He is now allowed to employ his demons, but not to bring forth all the evil agencies who would fain serve him in his work of malignity. But, in the great day of judgment, and in augmentation of the punishments of the ungodly, he will be allowed to call into his service multitudes of evil beings now restrained and imprisoned in the under-world. Nor will he fail to use this power any more than he failed to exert his full liberty against Job. With the key to the well-pit of the abyss, he opens it, breaks down in part the wall of severance between earth and hell, and evokes a plague, such as the world has never before experienced.

Jehovah once said to Job: "Have the gates of Sheol been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?" (37:17.) There are worlds of being and of darkness upon which man has never looked. There is a tenanted abyss of which the demons know, and concerning which they besought the Saviour that He would not send them into it.* It is a dark and horrible prison, in which many, many strange and evil things are shut up. Satan knows of that world, and would fain bring forth its malignant inhabitants into the earth if he only dared. At last, however, he receives permission to bring them, and the fifth trumpet gives the result.

As soon as the mouth of the pit is opened, a thick blackness issues from it like the black smoke of a great furnace—a blackness which fills the air and obscures the sun; and out of the smoky blackness proceed living things, horrible in shape, malignant in disposition, and armed with power to afflict and torment men's bodies. John calls them locusts; but they are supernatural, infernal, not earthly locusts. They neither consume nor injure any of the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree. They do not appear to eat at all, though they have teeth like the teeth of lions. They are winged creatures, and their flight is noisy, sounding like chariots and horses rushing into battle. They seem to dwell mostly in the air and in the smoke and darkness. Neither is there any indication that they are capable of being caught or killed.

The forms of these creatures are particularly described. They are a sort of infernal cherubim—antipodes of the Living ones conjoined with the heavenly throne. The horse, the man, the lion, the scorpion, are combined in them. Their general appearance is like horses caparisoned for battle. Their heads are surmounted by the semblance of crowns seemingly of gold. They have faces resembling the faces of men. They are hairy, with hair like women's hair. Their backs and breasts are encased as if with iron plates, after the manner of a Roman soldier, and they have tails of the size and shape of a scorpion. Their dimensions are not given. Scorpions vary in size; some kinds are six inches in length. Figuring to ourselves then, an outline of body, the tail of which would correspond to the size and make of a large scorpion, we reach quite formidable proportions.

These horrible creatures have a certain degree of intelligence. Commands are addressed to them. They are able to distinguish between those who have the seal of the living God upon their foreheads and other people. They have a king whom they obey.

Earthly locusts have no king (Prov. 30:27); but these have a king over them. This king is not Satan himself. Satan is, indeed, chief of all the powers of darkness, but he has archons and princes under him, with their own particular commands. It is Satan who opens the door for the egress of these hosts from the pit; but their immediate king is one of Satan's angels—"the angel of the abyss."

This king has a descriptive name. It is given in Hebrew and in Greek, showing that this administration has to do with Jews and Gentiles. Christ is named Jesus because He is the Saviour. This king is named Abaddon in Hebrew, and Apollyon in Greek, because he is a destroyer—the opposite of saviour.

But the destructive power of these locusts is limited. As Satan was not allowed to touch Job's life, so these creatures are forbidden to kill men, and the sealed ones they are not permitted to touch at all. The extent of their power is to horrify and torment "the men who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads." They inflict their torment by means of stings, like the stings of scorpions. These stings are in their tails, which tails resemble scorpions. They have power "as the scorpions of the earth have power." They are not "of the earth," as scorpions are "of the earth." They are supernatural beings, but they have the capacity to injure and torture men which natural scorpions have.

The pain from the sting of a scorpion, though not generally fatal, is, perhaps, the intensest that any animal can inflict upon the human body. The insect itself is the most irascible and malignant that lives, and its poison is like itself. Of a boy stung in the foot by a scorpion, Laborde relates that, although of a race which bears everything with remarkable patience, he rolled on the ground, grinding his teeth, and foaming at the mouth. It was a long time before his complainings moderated, and even then he could make no use of his foot, which was greatly inflamed. And such is the nature of the torment which these locusts from the pit inflict. They are also difficult to be guarded against, if they can be warded off at all, because they fly where they please, dart through the air, and dwell in darkness.

The duration of this extraordinary plague is "five months." No single generation of earthly locusts ever lasts so long. Twice is the period mentioned, as if the Holy Ghost would call special attention to it as marking the great severity of the plague. To be subjected to such intense anguish, and to have it endure for "five months," fills out a length and breadth of woe which only they who feel can fully know. Death itself would be preferable to such an existence. Willingly, also, would the sufferers of this torment resign life in preference to the continuance of it in such torture, if there were no interference to prevent death. But there is such interference. Not only are the locusts forbidden to kill, but the people afflicted by them are hindered from dying. The statement is, that they shall "fervently desire to die," and "shall seek death;" but the woful peculiarity of "those days" is, that they cannot find death, and are obliged to live, whatever efforts they may make to escape from life. Perhaps these locusts themselves keep men from killing themselves. This trumpet accordingly introduces the very torments of hell upon the theatre of this present world.

Many, indeed, consider it mere fancy-work, fiction, and symbol, referring to events in the past history of the race and intended to describe quite other things than are thus literally depicted. But the account is given as an account of realities. There is no difficulty involved in the language employed. The grammatical sense is plain and obvious. Neither is there any intimation whatever of any other sense. And if any other sense was intended, there lives not a man who can tell, with any degree of certainty, what that other sense is. Many and great minds have labored to make out an allegorical and historical interpretation of these locusts from the pit, but thus far, as Alford has justly remarked, only "an endless Babel" has been the result. Alford gives it up. Stuart gives it up. Hengstenberg gives it up. Vaughan gives it up. Others have given it up. And every candid man must give it up, on any scheme that will consistently interpret the Apocalypse as a whole, or preserve to the sacred records the credit and value which this book claims for its contents.—Observe the facts.

These locusts cannot mean the zealots who spread slaughter and devastation through Judea about the time of the fall of Jerusalem, as some have supposed, because those marauders killed people, whereas the locusts are forbidden to kill any one. Those zealots had no king; these locusts have a king. They were natural men; these locusts come up out of the abyss. They had neither wings nor stings; these locusts have both.

Neither do these locusts symbolize those nations of the North which ravaged Italy during the one hundred and fifty years from the invasion under Alaric to the capture of Rome by Totila, as others have supposed. Those invaders were not led by a single chief; these locusts were. They killed men; these locusts kill no one. They did not distinguish in their doings between any sealed or unsealed ones; these locusts do thus distinguish. They did not refrain from harming the trees, grass, and products of the earth; these locusts do thus refrain.

Nor yet do these locusts represent the adherents and propagators of false doctrines, as many have taught. Heresy is killing; but these locusts are forbidden to kill. There never has been any system of error, whose abettors have run their course within "five months," by any method of computation yet devised; or so stung and tormented the ungodly as to make them seek death for relief; or so discriminated between God's sealed ones and the wicked, as to assail only the latter. Arius and his heresies have been named, also Popery and its falsities, also Mohamedanism and its abominations; but, instead of being confined to "five months," or one hundred and fifty years, these have wrought for more than a thousand years, still work, and have never ceased to hurt and kill people of all classes, both literally and spiritually.

Neither does the description answer to Luther and the Lutherans, as Bellarmine and other Romish interpreters affirm. If Luther was the fallen star, who was the king over the Lutherans? The locusts were to continue "five months," but the Lutherans have wrought now for more than three hundred and fifty years, and still are the particular grief of Papists, who, on this showing, have not the seal

of God! The locusts have stings to torment men; the Lutherans have never been tormentors nor persecutors. They have done great things to release mankind from the tortures and inflictions of the papacy, but no people have ever so suffered from the Lutherans or their doctrines, as to seek death in order to escape their torments, without ability to find it. All the Protestant nations, and even many Romanists themselves, refer to the Lutheran Reformation with joy and thanksgiving, as one of the happiest enfranchisements of modern times. It was heaven-wide from this locust plague.*

Nor yet will this vision apply, except in a very dim and imperfect way, to the mighty Saracenic invasion, in which so many moderns locate its fulfilment. If Mahomet was this star, it is impossible to show wherein he experienced the fall ascribed to this star. If he was the star, he was also the king of the powers he set in motion; but the record plainly shows that the star and the king of the locusts are two distinct personages. If the cave of Hera was the mouth of the pit, the followers of Mahomet did not come out of that cave, as the locusts are said to come out of the abyss. If his flight from Mecca was his fall, then the pit was open and the smoke had begun to issue and breed locusts before the star's fall, which is again contrary to the record. If the smoke was Mahomet's false doctrines, then neither smoke nor locusts existed before the pit was opened, for the Arabians were not Mohammedans before Mahomet, but the vision represents the locusts as dwelling in the pit and in the smoke long ere the pit was opened or the smoke issued. It was after the smoke had already gone forth, and followers had been won, that Mahomet professed to have received the key from God; he had therefore opened the pit before he got the key with which to open it; neither was it ever pretended that this key of his was the key of hell. But this is not all.

The locusts were forbidden to touch any one upon whose forehead the seal of God was impressed; but the wrath and fury of the Mohammedan hordes were directed mainly and above all against Christians and Christendom. The locusts were to torment all who had not the seal of God upon them; but the Saracen invasion struck a very small part of the world outside of Christendom. The locusts were not allowed to take men's lives; it was the work of Mohammedanism to kill both body and soul—the bodies of those who refused to accept it, and the souls of those who embraced it. It was the command of Mahomet to all his devotees, and delivered in the name of his god: "When ye encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads, until ye have made a great slaughter among them ... As for the infidels, let them perish." (Koran 47.) So they slew 50,000 in one battle, and 150,000 in another, and spread death and slaughter whithersoever they went. Does this look like the absence of power to kill?* The locusts were to do no injury to trees, crops, and vegetation. The Mohammedans destroyed with fire and sword the countries they invaded.* The locusts were so to torment men that they would seek to destroy their own lives, and yet should not be able to do it; but neither of these things occurred under the Mohammedans. Men loved to live then as now, and fought to defend themselves, and paid tribute to be permitted to live, and could easily find death if they wished. The locusts were in shape like horses prepared for war; Mohammedans had this appearance no more than any other armed hosts. The locusts wore seeming golden crowns; but "turbans of linen" very poorly meet the description, whilst, if the creatures are symbolical, the crowns are symbolical also. What, then, is the prophetic import of a turban? The locusts had breastplates, which are said to be symbols of invulnerability; but the Mohammedans were not invulnerable; they never went into battle without losing some of their number, and they were more than once defeated with great slaughter. The locusts have wings, and tails, and stings in their tails, and poison in their stings like the poison of scorpions; but, in no respect was this true of the Mohammedans, any more than of any other conquering hordes. The locusts have power to operate only for the space of "five months"—on the year-day theory, one hundred and fifty years—but the warlike expeditions of the Saracens ranged through more than four hundred years, and their power is not yet taken away. The king of the locusts is named Abaddon and Apollyon, but neither of these was the name of the Moslem prophet, nor do they describe him any more than many others who have acted a like part in the world. Smoke may very well represent false doctrine, but what was the sun and air obscured by Mohammedanism, when those who see only Mohammedanism in this vision are obliged to consider the Christianity and churches which the Saracens overrun, as even worse than Islamism itself? Besides, if Arabia, whence the Saracens came, is the well-pit of the abyss, as some seem to affirm, then it is into Arabia that the Devil is to be cast, and shut up, and sealed in, for the thousand years, if not also the place into which all the finally lost are to be consigned!

But apart from all this, God himself has named this book the book of "The Apocalypse—the coming—of Jesus Christ." John accordingly, also tells us that what he describes he saw in the day of the Lord—among the scenes and transactions of the great day of judgment as they were made to pass before him in vision. It is impossible, therefore, that this trumpet should refer to the past, unless the day of the Lord is passed and the judgment is over, and the Apocalypse of Jesus has already taken place.

We have seen that the seven Churches span the whole period, from the time of the apostle to the commencement of the day of Judgment. We have also had the declaration of the Saviour himself, that what else John saw and wrote in this book relates to a period of time after the Church period has passed. The seven trumpets come in under the breaking of the seventh seal, and the Church period is ended before any of the seals are broken. The Saracenic invasion occurred in the midst of the Church period. Hence, the locust-plague of the fifth trumpet cannot possibly be the Arabic irruption under Mahomet, unless an event can be both in the middle and at the end of the same period, at one and the same time. Judgments, indeed, prefigure each other, and every feature of the great consummation has its forerunners and prelibations. And so there may have been a dim and inchoate likeness of this trumpet in the Saracenic scourge. But the height and fulness of it, and its only proper fulfilment, remains to be accomplished in the great day to come—the Day of the Lord—the period of Christ's unveiling—when it will be literally realized in all its horrible details.

Nay, more, it is clearly in evidence from the record itself, that all the occurrences under the sixth seal, and all that comes after the sixth seal, up to the events under the fifth trumpet, do really transpire within the natural earthly lifetime of the same persons. When

these locusts issue from the pit, they find living among men certain people “who have the seal of God upon their foreheads,” and whom they are not allowed to touch, because of that seal. It will not answer to jump at the conclusion that these were God’s children in general, because it is specifically told us in a preceding chapter who they are. There is a definite number of them—144,000—and every one of them of Jewish blood. Their sealing occurs under the sixth seal. And here, under the fifth trumpet, they are yet on earth, among men, and as liable to the torture of the locusts as any others, but for the seal of the living God impressed upon their foreheads. They are not successors to the 144,000 sealed ones, for the work of sealing was finished before a single trumpet was blown, and the idea of succession is specifically excluded, first, by the definiteness of their number, and second, by the declaration that “they are virgins.” We thus find the same men living under the fifth trumpet, who were already living under the sixth seal. The “five months” must accordingly mean five months, and not 150 years, and the locusts from the pit cannot be the Saracens, or anything else than what they are literally described to be. They are extraordinary and infernal agents, whom Satan is permitted to let loose upon the guilty world, as a part of the judgment of the great day. All the seals, trumpets, and vials of this book relate to that day. It is a day of miracle throughout—a day of wonders—a day of fierce and tormenting wrath. It is everywhere so described in the Scriptures. And we do greatly mistreat the records which God has given for our learning, if we allow the skeptical rationalizing of our own darkened hearts to persuade us that such supernatural things are impossible, and therefore must not be literally understood. On the same ground the whole doctrine of the judgment may be explained away, and every article of the distinctive Christian faith, until we have nothing left but a book of pre-eminent pretensions and equally pre-eminent obscurity, uncertainty, and emptiness. It appears, then, that hell and hell-torments are not the mere fictions which some have pronounced them. Neither are they as remote from this present world as men often dream. There is a fiery abyss, with myriads of evil beings in it, malignant and horrible, and there is but a door between this world and that.* Heaven is just as near; but heaven is above, and hell is beneath. Mortal man and his world lie between two mighty, opposite, spiritual spheres, both touching directly upon him, each operative to conform him to itself, and he predestined, as he yields to one or the other, to be conjoined eventually to the society on high, or to companionship with devils and all evil beings beneath. To doubt this, is to mistake concerning the most momentous things of our existence, and to have all our senses closed to the most startling realities of our lives. As we are heavenly in our inclinations and efforts, and open and yielding to things Divine, heaven opens to us, and spirits of heaven become our helpers, comforters, protectors, and guides; and as we are devilish in our temper, unbelieving, defiant of God, and self-sufficient, the doors of separation between us and hell gradually yield, and the smoke of the pit gathers over us, and the spirits of perdition come forth to move among us and to do us mischief. And at the last, as the saints of God are taken up out of the world on the one side, the angels of hell with their malignity and torments are let in on the other.

People are prone to persuade themselves that this world of sense and time is all that we need be concerned about, and hence have no fears of an unseen world of evil, and no decided or active desire for the blessings of an unseen world of good. They live only for earth, not dreaming that this brief life is only the vestibule to worlds of mightier and eternal moment. Their houses are built by the very margin of hell, and yet they rest and feast in them without a feeling of insecurity or of danger. The flames of perdition clamor after them beneath the pavements on which they walk, but they have no sense of fear or serious apprehension. God and angels are ever busy to win their attention to the ways of safety, but they turn a deaf ear and drift along as they list, crying, Peace! Peace! And so will the wicked and the unbelieving go on, until ignored and offended Omnipotence gives over the power to Satan to let loose upon them these horrid beings from the abyss, under whose torment they will wish they never had lived at all, and vainly attempt to make their escape from what they once considered their chief and only good.

Friends and Brethren: The judgments of God are coming—they are coming. The agents for them are ready and at hand. They are to alight with awful severity upon all the rebellious and ungodly. They will not be delayed either till this life is over. They are coming in this present world. Men shall feel them while yet they stand upon their feet, and go on with their unbelief and earthiness. Hell is to be let in upon the living earth, and no human hand can stay its torments. And as the generations of the rebellious and the unsanctified complete their five months of horror and writhing under the scorpion stings of these infernal tormentors, the first woe will be fulfilled, whilst yet two other and more horrible ones follow.

God Almighty, in His mercy, save us from the evils of those days! Amen.

LECTURE 20

THE SIXTH TRUMPET—STATE OF SOCIETY AT THIS PERIOD—DEMON-WORSHIP—SPIRITUALISM—REVIVAL OF IDOLATRY—HEATHENISH CONDITION OF MORALS—A PERIOD OF MURDER, SORCERY, LEWDNESS, DISHONESTY—THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT INDUCED—CRY FROM THE HORNS OF THE ALTAR—THE FOUR EUPHRATEAN ANGELS—PLACE OF THEIR DETENTION—SPIRIT HORSES—THEIR MEANS OF HARMING MEN—THEIR HAVOC WITH HUMAN LIFE—HOW LONG THEY CONTINUE THEIR DESTRUCTIVE WORK—THE INTENT OF THIS WOE—NO REFORMATION WROUGHT—THE FOLLY OF WAITING FOR JUDGMENTS TO BRING TO A BETTER LIFE.

Rev 9:13–21. (Revised Text.) And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard one voice out of the four horns

of the altar of gold [which is] before God, saying to the sixth angel, who had the trumpet: Loose the four angels which are bound upon [over or near] that great river Euphrates.

And there were loosed the four angels who had been made ready for the hour, and day, and month, and year, that they should kill the third of the men. And the number of the hosts of horse [was] two myriads of myriads; I heard the number of them.

And thus saw I the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them: they have fiery, hyacinthine, and sulphureous coats of mail; and the heads of the horses as it were heads of lions; and out of their mouths issueth fire, and smoke, and sulphur.

From these three plagues were killed the third of the men, by the fire, and the smoke, and the sulphur, which issueth out of their mouths; for the power of the horses is in their mouths, and in their tails; for their tails [are] like serpents, having heads, and with them they injure.

And the rest of the men, who were not killed by these plagues, repented not from the works of their hands, that they should not worship the demons, and the idols of gold, and silver, and copper, and stone, and wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk; and they repented not out of their murders, nor out of their sorceries [or use of drugs], nor out of their fornication, nor out of their thefts.

THESE words describe one of the greatest and most terrific judgments we have thus far encountered. In approaching its consideration, I propose to notice:

- I. THE STATE OF SOCIETY AT THE TIME.
- II. THE NATURE OF THE JUDGMENT VISITED UPON IT.

The Apostle Paul assures us, that, as time advances toward its conclusion, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." (2 Tim. 3:13.) I have also repeatedly quoted his startling description of the "perilous times" which will come "in the last days." (2 Tim. 3:1-5.) But Paul was not alone in these gloomy anticipations. Peter and Jude likewise speak of them. Nor were these statements without full warrant in the utterances of the Saviour himself, who particularly and often admonished his disciples, that the gigantic iniquities and sensualities of the days of Noah and of Lot, would repeat themselves as the end approached, and that the judgments of the great day would be pre-eminently deserved by the generation then living. It would, hence, be strange, if, in the visions of those terrible adjudications, we were to find no corresponding notices of the bad state of morals then prevailing. And when such notices are found, as in the words before us, it would be contrary to the tenor of the Scriptures on the subject, to take them as mere poetic exaggerations, or as anything other than a literal and true portraiture of the world at that time. Taking the words, then, as they have been written for our learning, we here have an account of the moral state of mankind in the period of the sixth trumpet.

1. It is a period of abounding demon-worship. What demons are, is to some extent an unsettled question. Justin Martyr, and some other Christian fathers, regarded them as the spirits of those giants who were born of the sons of God and the daughters of men, in the days preceding the flood. John of Damascus, considered them the fallen angels. According to Plutarch, Hesiod, as he himself, held demons to be "the spirits of mortals when separated from their earthly bodies." Zoroaster, Thales, Pythagoras, Plato, and the heathen authors generally, viewed them as spiritual beings, intermediate between supreme Deity and mortals, and mostly the souls of heroes and distinguished persons who had departed this life. Lucian makes his dialogist ask: What is man? Answer: A mortal god. And what is a god? Answer: An immortal man. This gives the common heathen doctrine on the subject. Philo says, "The souls of dead men are called demons." The account which demons themselves mostly give of themselves, according to those who have most to do with them, is the same. Josephus gives it as the orthodox Jewish opinion, that demons are none other than the spirits of the wicked dead. With very few exceptions, the Christian fathers were of like opinion. Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Augustine, and the vast majority of early Christian writers, regarded demons as the souls or spirits of the unsanctified dead. And the burden of evidence and authority is to the effect, that demons are the souls of dead men, particularly the spirits of those who bore a bad character in this life.*

It is acknowledged, both in Scripture and in the classics, that the "immortals" whom the heathen adored, were once men; and Paul assures us that the sacrifices of the Gentiles made to these "immortals," were sacrifices to demons, and that their sacred feasts were in honor of demons. (1 Cor. 10:20, 21.)† This would seem to give us scriptural authority for believing that demons are what the Jews and early Christians believed them to be. They are, at any rate, invisible spiritual beings, unholy in character, belonging to the kingdom of evil, and having a vicious and pernicious penchant to interfere in the affairs of mankind in the flesh. The Greeks often applied the name of demons to what they considered good spirits; but the Scriptures always use the word with reference to unclean and wicked spirits only. There is no such thing known in the Bible as a good demon. The Scriptures everywhere distinguish demons from "the devil," Satan; but our English translators continually call them "devils," a name which fitly describes them.

Among the Jews, in the Saviour's time, these wicked spirits incorporated themselves in the bodies of living men, intruding themselves between the soul and the nervous organism, getting possession of men's physical powers, measurably superseding the wills of those affected, so as to speak and act by means of human organs.

Among the Gentiles, many of the persons thus affected were accepted as inspired prophets and prophetesses; and it had become a regular science to know how to induce such connections with demonic powers, and how, at option, to bring their influence to bear, whether for religious or for secular purposes.

There always have been ways of coming into communication with these unclean spirits, of consulting them, and securing their aid. Hence the scriptural allusions to those who have familiar spirits, enchanters, wizards, witches, magicians, soothsayers, diviners, necromancers, and the like. Long before the time of Moses, we read of consultations of the spirits of the dead, and the veneration of demons as helpers and guides, to whom it was the custom to resort. Special statutes were given against it in the laws of Moses, as great unfaithfulness and sin against God. The assumption all the way through is, that there was reality in what was pretended in these instances, and a very dangerous iniquity. The lying prophets whom Ahab followed to his ruin, were really inspired by wicked spirits. Paul encountered a girl at Philippi, whose keepers got great gain from her extraordinary powers resulting from being possessed of an evil spirit. He cast out the demon, and her peculiar power was gone, and Paul was thrust into prison for interfering with the men's business. This case explains the whole system of heathen oracles and mantology, as the heathen writers themselves explained it.

Modern spiritism, or so-called spiritualism, is but a revival of the same thing—a branch of the same iniquity. There doubtless is some reality in it; and it is confessedly a system of intercourse with the dead, whose spirits are invoked in various forms and methods, to teach wisdom; to dictate faith, religion, and life; to comfort and help in trouble and necessity; and to serve as saviours and as gods. It is demon-worship brought to life again. It claims to have vast multitudes of adherents, even among the baptized and nominally Christian. It is influencing whole communities of men and women, who are prepared to commit themselves body and soul, for time and eternity, into the care of these lying demon guides. It has made inroads upon people of all classes, and is received by many as a distinct and the only true religion. Its oracles are loud and hopeful in the prediction, that it will soon enlist to itself the governments and reigning classes of the whole world. The Word of God also forewarns, that it will be vastly successful. "The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils* speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats." (1 Tim. 4:1–3.)† Instead of fearing, loving, and trusting in God above all things, people will bestow their loving confidence upon unclean spirits, invoking them for guidance, and placing religious dependence in their impious falsities. Having no relish for the saving Gospel of Christ, God will send them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie, and be visited with the damnation their perverseness deserves. And at the time this sixth trumpet sounds, the prevailing religion of the world will be this selfsame worship of demons, and following of demons' doctrines.

2. In connection with this demon-worship, will be the revival of idolatry. It is itself idolatry; but, with it, idols of gold, and silver, and copper, and stone, and wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk, will again command the genius of men for their construction, and be set up to please their demon-lords, to facilitate spiritual intercourse, and to help out the foul devotions of the infatuated people.

It may appear too disparaging to the understanding of this enlightened age, to entertain the possibility of a return to the ancient worship of images. People may feel insulted at the thought. But the way for it is opening, and the process to effect it is already going on. The minds of anti-christian religionists everywhere are fast relapsing into the old heathenish philosophies, and I know not what is to hinder their acceptance of the religions with which those philosophies are conjoined. Modifications of them may be made, to conform them somewhat to the requirements of an altered condition of the public mind and taste; but idol-worship will again become, as it is even now becoming, the religion of some who claim to be among the most enlightened and the very illuminators of mankind. Socrates had his demon-guide, and Socrates approved idolatry; and if men accept the Socratic philosophy in preference to the religion of the Bible, and submit to be taught by demons as their most trustworthy oracles, what is to prevent them from becoming philosophic idol-worshippers, especially if their spirit-friends should so dictate, and accompany those dictations with the power of working wonders. A little further on in this book, we read of a "false prophet," who teaches the dwellers upon earth to make an image, to which he gives the power of utterance, so that it both speaks and causes all who refuse to worship it to be put to death. (Rev. 13:14–16.)* All this is simply the culmination of the system already in vogue, showing a base, persecuting, and murderous idolatry, also the source and manner of its introduction. The symptoms and tendencies are even now strongly in this very direction. What is Planchette, but a household god to many, who resort to it as a means of spiritual communion, and speak to it, interrogate it, and reverently seek unto it, for light, consolation, and guidance? What are the numerous and various inventions, constructed and constructing to please the spirits, and meant to serve as material forms and instruments through which the demon-gods are to manifest themselves, and hold communion with their devotees? Is not much of the best science and mechanical skill of spiritualists now employed, in answer to spirit-bidding, fashioning implements for closer and easier commerce with these invisible powers? Do not such machines and images of gold, and silver, and copper, and stone, and wood, already exist? And are they not kept in devoted places as holy things, made the centres of circles of people gathered around them for intercourse with devils, as with the world of hope and blessedness, consulted with pious affection, and guarded and revered with all the awe, and sometimes tearful devotion with which the ancient heathen approached the oracles and images of their gods? Only let all this grow and mature, in the line in which it has begun and is growing, and bald image-worship will soon live again in what claims to be the enlightened society of modern times, and men and women of boasted intelligence will everywhere be found paying their adorations at the shrines of devils,

as to gods. And just this is one of the leading features of the time when the sixth trumpet sounds.

3. And corresponding with the heathen character of the dominant religion, will then be a heathen state of morals also.

Murder will be among the commonest of crimes. Sensual and selfish passion will make sad havoc of human life, with no serious thought about it on the part of the leaders of public sentiment. Fœticide, infanticide, homicide, and all forms of sin against human life, will characterize society, and be tolerated and passed as if no great harm were done. And well would it be for us, if such were not largely the state of things even now.

Sorceries, impure practices with evil agencies, and particularly with poisonous drugs, is also given as one of the dominant forms of vice and sin in those days. The word specially includes tampering with one's own or another's health, by means of drugs, potions, intoxications, and often with magical arts and incantations, the invocation of spiritual agencies, the putting under influences promotive of sins of impurity both bodily and spiritual. We have only to think of the use of alcoholic stimulants,* of opium, of tobacco, of the rage for cosmetics and medicaments to increase love attractions, of resorts to the pharmacopœia in connection with sensuality,—of the magical agents and treatments alleged to come from the spirit-world for the benefit of people in this,—of the thousand impositions in the way of medicines and remedial agents, encouraging mankind to recklessness in transgression with the hope of easily repairing the damages of nature's penalties,—of the growing prevalence of crime induced by these things, setting loose and stimulating to activity the vilest passions, which are eating out the moral sense of society,—for the beginnings of that moral degeneracy to which the seer here alludes as characteristic of the period when the sixth trumpet is sounded.

And interlinked with these sorceries, and reacting the one on the other, will also be the general subversion of marriage and its laws, and the deluging of society with the sins of fornication and adultery. The Apostle uses the word "fornication" alone, as embracing all forms of lewdness, but as if to intimate that marriage will then be hardly recognized any more. And already we hear the institution of legal wedlock denounced and condemned as tyrannical, and all rules, but those of affinity and desire, repudiated as unjust. Already, in some circles, we find the doctrines of free love put forth and defended in the name of right, a better religion, and a higher law. And it would be strange indeed, if the revival of the old heathen philosophies and religions, which justified, sanctioned, and sanctified promiscuous concubinage, did not also bring with it a revival of all these old heathen abominations. So also has the holy apostle written, that "in the last days ... men shall be ... incontinent." And here the seer enumerates "fornication" as one of the outstanding features in the social character of those times.

And last in the catalogue stands the statement of general and abounding dishonesty, the obliteration of moral distinctions, the disregard of other's rights, and the practice of fraud, theft, and deceit wherever it is possible. Pollok makes his ancient bard of earth tell of a time, when

—"Blood trod upon the heels of Blood;
Revenge, in desperate mood, at midnight met
Revenge; War brayed to war, Deceit deceived
Deceit, Lie cheated Lie, and Treachery
Mined under Treachery, and Perjury
Swore back to Perjury, and Blasphemy
Arose with hideous Blasphemy, and Curse
Loud answered Curse; and drunkard, stumbling fell
O'er drunkard fallen; and husband husband met
Returning each from other's bed defiled;
Thief stole from thief, and robber on the way
Knocked robber down; and Lewdness, Violence,
And Hate, met Lewdness, Violence, and Hate.
And Mercy, weary with beseeching, had
Retired behind the sword of Justice, red
With ultimate and unrepenting wrath."

And that time, with just this condition of things, will have come, when this sixth trumpet sounds. We need not wonder, therefore, that it brings a plague of horror and judgment upon mankind, exceeding all that we yet have had to contemplate.*

Notice then,

II. THE NATURE OF THIS VISITATION

1. It is evoked by a cry out of the four horns of the altar. It comes from the immediate presence of God, and therefore with the sanction of God. The call itself is the common voice of all four of the horns of the altar, indicating the energy and the universality of the demand for vengeance, and of that vengeance itself. The call from the altar also reflects the character of a particular apostasy for which this invitation is sent. When there is a voice invocative of judgment, the locality of it expresses where the sin has been which is to be avenged. The voice that went up against Cain for the murder of his brother, cried from the ground which had received

Abel's blood. The voice of woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and establisheth a city by iniquity, comes from the stones and beams of the houses of that town and city. And when a call for retribution comes from the altar, it is because of some great crimes against that altar, and what connects with it. The united outcry of these golden horns tells of iniquity with special reference to them. They were not mere ornaments. God ordered them there to receive the blood of sacrifice for Israel's sins on the great day of atonement, and whensoever the whole people would seek to purge themselves from their transgressions. In these cases there went up from these golden horns the voice of blood, crying to God to spare. But here is a voice for the letting loose of the powers of judgment. The implication is that God's appointed way of forgiveness has been set aside; that the Divine system of gracious atonement and salvation has been rejected and despised; that the one propitiation provided of God has been abandoned and contemned; that the great High Priest and only Mediator between God and man has been disowned, and thrust away to give place to other helpers; that mankind in their guilt have blasphemously pronounced against God's plan of reconciliation; and that the wickedness of earth has risen so high, especially in point of antagonism to the cross, and the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Jesus, that even the altar itself, which otherwise cries only for mercy, is forced into a cry for vengeance. It is terrible enough when sin cries to God against the transgressor; but when the very altar, sin's only recourse, and the very horns of the altar, the sinner's only availing pleaders, unite in that cry, and utter it before God as their own, it is impossible to conceive an intenser density of gathering retribution, or a heavier surcharge of the enginery of the Almighty's judgments.

2. The command issues to the Angel who sounds this trumpet. This is further proof that these angel-trumpeters are of a superior order. Other angels are concerned, and yet this particular angel has binding and loosing power over them. The command itself, is the command of the contemned Saviour. It goes out from the presence of Almighty Sovereignty, and with its sanctions. But it is addressed to the angel. He obeys it as his Divine commission, and thus presides over the administration ushered in by his trumpet. He looses the imprisoned forces, and sets them free for action. And thus, from under his hand go forth the powers which smite the impious dwellers on the earth with terror, death, and torment.

3. Other angels are the more direct executors of the woe. Some have taken these to be good angels. I do not so regard them. Good angels are free, not bound. Good angels would not destroy men, except by special command of God; but these had only to be loosed, and they at once rushed forth for slaughter, impelled to the dreadful business by their own malicious nature. But for their being bound, the implication is that they would have done the same all along. We also read of apostate angels whom God hath "delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto the judgment of the great day." (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6.) This would seem to imply that, when the great day comes, they may perchance, for particular purposes, have their bonds relaxed. The common idea is that they are reserved for their own judgment; but it may after all be for some one else's judgment. These woes all belong to the administrations of "the great day." This sixth trumpet is quite on the margin of the mighty consummation of all that day's proceedings. And if the record implies any such loosing of those everlasting chains, here is the place and time for it; and what this trumpeter-angel did, would seem to be the very loosing referred to. They are not loosed for salvation—not loosed from their reservation unto eternal punishment,—but loosed from their restraint against inflicting death and torment upon men, and now in judgment permitted to act out their evil will upon earth's guilty inhabitants. They were bound in mercy to our race, and here they are let loose in wrath and judgment.

These bound angels "had been made ready for the hour, and day, and month, and year." How had they been made ready, except as fallen angels they had been put in chains, and held in constraint during all the preceding ages, with the foreknowledge and intent of their being loosed at this particular time, for this particular judgment?

These angels are four in number. We know not how many kept not their first estate. There doubtless were very many, and not all of the same rank. Paul enumerates various classes of wicked agencies—the devil, chiefs, powers, world-lords, spirits of wickedness in the aerial regions. (Eph. 6:12.) These four are a particular four, "the four." Either the wicked angels, then, are not all bound at one and the same place, or these four are to be regarded as specially distinguished from others in the relation they hold to the kingdom of evil. I infer that they are particular magnates in the realm of evil powers, with large commands and dependencies subject to them. The myriads of subordinate agents which their loosing brings into action, argues in this direction. Perhaps there are but four fallen angels of this particular rank, authority, and temper, with Satan as the chief of all. At any rate, the four evil angels here spoken of, are a particular four, confined to a particular place, held for a particular service, and representatives of myriad hosts, bound with their binding, loosed with their loosing, and acting their will the moment the bands of their forced inaction are taken off. Their number also indicates the universality of their operations.

A particular locality is named as the place of their detention: "upon,—π, over, near, at,—that great river Euphrates." It was in this locality that the powers of evil made their first attempts against the human race. It was in this locality that the first murder was committed. It was in this region that the great apostasies, both before and after the flood, had their centres. It was in this region that Israel's most oppressive enemies resided, and that the Jews were compelled to drag out the long and weary years of their great captivity. It was in this region that the great oppressive world-powers took their commencement. It is the region where all this world's beginnings were made—where man first saw the light, first sinned, fell from his first estate, was banished from Paradise, and introduced all earth's miseries—where Satan first alighted upon our planet, won his first triumphs, and first set his foul agencies against man in operation. The Euphrates itself is one of the primeval rivers, and the only one we know of that remains. And there,

where guilt came into the place of innocence, and Babylon supplanted Eden, and hell sent up its Upas instead of the Tree of Life, and death came in upon the children of men, these four fallen sons of light, with their evil hosts, rave in the bonds,* imposed in mercy, but, at the appointed hour, in wrath to be relaxed, that earth's blaspheming millions may feel what shall then have been so richly merited.

4. The moment the four bound angels are released from their constraint, hosts of death-dealing cavalry overrun the earth. There are such things as supernatural horses. Horses of fire took up Elijah into heaven. Horses and chariots of fire protected Elisha at Dothan. Heavenly horses and horsemen introduce the dominion of Christ, as described in a later chapter in this book. They are the forces which pertain to the celestial kingdom. And here John beholds troops of horse of like unearthly order, but pertaining to an opposite realm, the infernal cavalry. They are the powers of the four loosed angels, inbreathed with the spirit of death and destruction, and putting into execution their murderous and malignant will. As there are infernal locusts, so there are infernal horses; and as the former were let forth to overrun the world with their torments under the fifth trumpet, so the latter are let forth to overrun the world with still more terrible inflictions under the sixth.

The number of these "hosts of horse" is enormous. Such a cavalcade in point of multitude, has never been marshalled on earth. John could not count them. No spectator could count them. They are as multitudinous as the Psalmist's chariots of God. (Ps. 68:17.) John "heard the number of them:" "two myriads of myriads," just two hundred millions, one-sixth as many as the present entire population of the globe! This one particular should settle forever, that Turkish cavalry and the Moslem conquests are in no proper sense the subjects of this vision.

What the seer describes, he calls horses, while yet he says that they are not proper horses. Their heads are like lions' heads. Their tails are serpentine, eels, one of the fathers calls them, and terminate in heads like serpents' heads. They have riders, and yet the riders are parts of themselves, to whom no separate actions are ascribed. It is not the riders but the horses which do all the mischief. They are covered with coats of mail, the colors of which are the colors of fire, and hyacinthe, and sulphur, answering to the elements which they emit from their mouths. They do not eat, nor does it appear that they are capable of being wounded or killed. "Out of their mouths issueth fire, and smoke, and sulphur," the very elements of hell. Though leonine, they do not seize with their jaws, nor take flesh into their mouths, nor slay with teeth or claws. They stifle and destroy with their sooty, sulphureous, fiery breath—with "the fire, and the smoke, and the sulphur, which issueth out of their mouths." Some say this means gunpowder, discharged from the muzzles of fire-arms and cannon! But, strange to say, when it comes to a following chapter, where it is recorded of the two prophesying witnesses, that "if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies," these interpreters at once drop gunpowder, and substitute prophetic denunciations and prayers! If it is gunpowder in one place, it must be gunpowder in the other. But it is neither gunpowder nor prayers in either case, but simply what the holy seer says it is,—the elements of hell hurled upon the guilty while they still live in the flesh; in the one case by the holy power of God direct, and in the other through the agency of malicious and infernal spirit-powers, which are permitted to put themselves forth in these horrid forms. Israel was once exhorted to consider that Egypt's horsemen were "flesh and not spirit;" but here the case is reversed, and men have to do with horses and horsemen which are spirit and not flesh.*

These agents have two means of harming men. They stifle and kill by what they belch forth from their mouths, and they hurt and injure with their snake-headed tails; "for the power of the horses is in their mouths, and in their tails." As to what issues from their mouths, it would seem as if it were not always the same, but varying and alternating between fire, smoke, and sulphureous fumes; either being fatal to human life. The fire would scorch and burn men to death, and the smoke or the sulphur would stifle and smother them. The three things are named as "three plagues," and the description is, that life is destroyed by each separately, as well as by the three conjointly.* Hence, to meet one of these two hundred millions of infernal horses face to face, is certain death, either by burning or stifling. As to the serpentine tails, nothing is said of power to kill, but only of power to injure, to lame, maim, sting, or hurt. The idea of serpentine tails suggests a capacity for lashing with painful and disabling strokes; whilst the snake-heads at the ends suggest the additional capacity to bite and sting. At any rate, the tails of these horses are parts of the horses themselves, used by them as instruments of mischief, by which great suffering is inflicted. Yet Elliott, Barnes, and commentators of their class, see nothing in these appendages, but the tails cut from dead horses, dried, and hung on poles, which the Turks carry as standards! Well may Alford remark, "I will venture to say, that a more self-condemnatory interpretation was never broached than this of the horsetails of the Pachas."

5. Fearful havoc of human life is made by these infernal horses. To say nothing of the dread and horror which their presence inspires, and the confusion which their advent strikes into every department of society, it is here written, that, by these horses, one out of every three of the whole human family is killed, destroyed from the face of the earth. It was a dreadful time for Egypt, when the destroying angel went through the land and smote down the first-born of every house. It evoked a cry from that guilty people, at which the world still trembles whenever the record is recited. But there, there could scarcely have been more than one in every ten; whilst here one out of every three is killed. Suppose the population of the earth to consist of twelve hundred millions, this one visitation takes off four hundred millions—more than ten times as many as the entire population of the United States! Nor would the mere numbers of the slain be so appalling, but for the dreadful manner in which they are put to death, and the awful dangers amid which the living are necessitated to do for the dead.

6. The continuance of this plague is equally extraordinary. The tormenting locusts continued for five months; this, it would seem, is to continue for more than thirteen. "The hour, and day, and month, and year," noted by the seer, would seem most naturally intended to measure the exact duration of the plague. If so, it is to last one year, one month, one day, and one hour. The four specifications are given with a single article, which accordingly embraces them as a single period of time; and the adding of these specifications together assigns to these operations just a day and an hour more than thirteen months.* Think of having to live amid such perils and such scenes, subject every moment to be horrified, smitten, stung, stifled and destroyed, for the space of three hundred and ninety-one days, with men, women, and children, associates and friends suffering and dying about you every day and every hour, killed by the visible monsters of hell, that throng about your path by day and about your dwelling at night? The mere contemplation of it makes one's flesh chill with horror! What, then, must it be for those who experience it!

7. The object of this woe is partly retributive and partly reformatory. It belongs to the judicial administrations of the great day. It is God's terrific judgment upon the world, which has disowned allegiance to Him, and rejected the mediation of His Son. It is the righteous indignation of outraged justice which can no longer endure the superlative wickednesses of men. The trampled law of eternal right must assert its dignity. Christ cannot submit to the taunts, and thongs, and mockery of Pilate's hall forever. The blood of the covenant cannot be trampled under foot, and accounted an unholy thing, with unceasing impunity. There is a point over which the greatest forbearance and long-suffering dare not go, and at which mercy itself cries out for unsparing justice. And as these people, against all the light and warnings sent them, still drive on with their devil-worship, idolatry, murders, sorceries, lewdness, and dishonesties, until they have filled the measure of their guilt, and wearied out the very patience of indulgent God, the horses of hell are let loose upon them, to sweep one-third of them to speedy perdition.

And yet, in wrath God remembers mercy. He suffers only one-third of the race to fall a prey to this tremendous woe. Two-thirds of mankind He spares, not because they deserve to be spared, but that by means of their awful trials they might perchance be led to repent of their sins, and lay hold of salvation before it is clean gone forever. Ah, yes, the Lord is good and gracious, even in the severest of his visitations. He delighteth not in the death of the wicked, but would rather that they should turn from their evil ways and live.

But alas for those who continue in sin till trouble brings them to a better life! Those content to give their good days to the devil's service, seldom come to reformation in their evil days. While the pressure of judgment is on them, they may cry, God have mercy! and think to lead a different life; but their vows and prayers vanish with their sorrows, and they are presently where they were before, only the more hardened in their iniquities. Thus was it in this case. The powers of hell had been let loose upon the guilty world. Times of danger, death, and horror, fell upon the people. The wrath of offended God flashed through the earth for thirteen months, until it seemed as if the entire race would be consumed. A plague unprecedented stript the globe of one-third of its population, by a form of death giving visible demonstration of the truth of God's warnings to the wicked. There was left no room for any one any more to doubt the reality of hell, or his close proximity to it; for hell had come in upon the earth! And yet, "the rest of the men, who were not killed by these plagues, repented not from the works of their hands, that they should not worship the demons, and the idols of gold, and silver, and copper, and stone, and wood, which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk; and they repented not out of their murders, nor out of their sorceries, nor out of their fornication, nor out of their thefts."

Such is depraved and infatuated human nature. "Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." (Prov. 27:22.) If people will not listen in the days of peaceful opportunity, there remaineth very little hope for them. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." (Luke 16:31.)

LECTURE 21

VISION OF THE CLOUD-ROBED ANGEL—NOT A CREATED ANGEL—HIS ATTIRE—HIS FACE—HIS FEET—THE PLACING OF HIS FEET—HIS LION-CRY—"THE SEVEN THUNDERS"—THEIR UTTERANCES SEALED—THE LITTLE BOOK—ITS IDENTITY WITH THE SEALED ROLL—JOHN'S EATING OF IT—ITS SWEETNESS AND BITTERNESS—THE OATH OF THIS ANGEL—THE MYSTERY OF GOD—PREACHING OF THE CONSUMMATION—"DAYS OF THE SEVENTH ANGEL"—DELAY OF THE LORD'S COMING—ITS CERTAINTY NEVERTHELESS.

Rev 10:1–11. (Revised Text.) And I saw another, a mighty angel descending out of the heaven, clothed about with a cloud, and the rainbow on his head, and his face as it were the sun, and his feet as it were pillars of fire, and having in his hand a little book [or roll] opened; and he set his right foot upon the sea, but the left upon the land; and he cried with a great voice even as a lion roareth; and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices; and when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; and I heard a voice out of the heaven saying, Seal up those things which the seven thunders spoke, and write them not.

And the angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the land lifted up his right hand into the heaven, and swore by him that liveth for the ages of the ages, who created the heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be no more delay; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall sound, the mystery of God is [to be] fulfilled, even as he preached (glad tidings) to his servants the prophets.

And the voice which I heard out of the heaven [I heard] again speaking with me, and saying: Go, take the book [or roll] which is opened in the hand of the angel who standeth upon the sea and upon the land. And I went to the angel, saying to him, Give me the little book. And he saith to me, Take, and eat it, and it shall make bitter thy belly, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the hand of the angel and ate it; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was made bitter. And it was said to me, Thou must prophesy again upon peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings many.

THIS part of the Apocalypse is sometimes treated as an episode, thrown between the second and third woe-trumpets, and having little or no relation to either. This is an error. We have still to deal with the blast of the sixth Trumpet. It is only in the fourteenth verse of the eleventh chapter, that we find the note of indication that the woe of the sixth Trumpet is accomplished. What now comes before us accordingly pertains to the sixth Trumpet, the same as the sealing of the 144,000, in chapter seven, pertained to the sixth Seal. It introduces new subjects and phases of the judgment administrations, but continues the same general narrative and burden found in what precedes and follows. God give us soberness of thought and earnestness of consideration, as we proceed to unfold what is here written for our learning!

We observe,

I. A VISION OF A VERY NOTABLE PERSON

John writes, "And I saw another, a mighty angel descending out of the heaven." This person I take to be the Lord Jesus himself. He is called an Angel, but there is nothing in that to prove him a created being. Angel is a title of office, not of nature. In the Old Testament the Son of God is continually described as the Jehovah-angel. We had a somewhat corresponding vision in the first chapter; yet, he who there appeared, announced himself as the First and the Last, the Living One, who became dead and is alive forever. We had an account of an angel in the seventh chapter, and again in the eighth, whom there was reason to regard as none other than the Lord Jesus. We do know that he appears in the Apocalypse as a Lamb, as a Lion, and as an armed Warrior, and there is nothing to hinder his appearance also as an Angel.

This person is also very particularly distinguished from other angels who appear in these visions. He is not one of the four loosed from the Euphrates, nor one of the seven who sound the Trumpets, but quite "another."

He is further described as "a mighty angel." This would seem to identify him as the "strong" Lord who judges Babylon, and the mighty One on whom God hath laid help, even Christ. When no more is said of an angel than simply that he is strong, or mighty, there is no reason to suspect anything but a created being, for all angels are powerful; but when this quality is referred to as a mark of distinction among other high angels, and is conjoined with what does not properly belong to angels, it is to be taken as equivalent to Almightyness, and as meant to denote a being who is uncreated and divine.

The attire of this angel indicates Deity. John beholds him "clothed about with a cloud." Wherever clouds are connected with glorious manifestations, there we find the presence of Divinity. If there is cloud, there is mystery; and if there is mystery, there is suggestion of Deity. The Lord descended on Mount Sinai in a thick cloud. He appeared on the mercy-seat in a cloud. When Israel was delivered, "the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud." When the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation." When God reproached Israel for their murmurings, "the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud." "The Lord said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud." The Psalmist gives it as the characteristic of the Almighty, that "clouds and darkness are round about him;" that "he maketh the clouds his chariot:" and that about him are "thick clouds." When the King of glory cometh in his divine majesty to judge the earth, the exclamation is: "Behold, he cometh with clouds." Clouds, therefore, belong to the attire of Deity, particularly in his manifestations toward fallen men. They indicate his unapproachableness, his infinite majesty, his consuming power toward sin, which cannot live before his uncovered glory, and yet his drawing near to communicate with the dwellers upon earth. No mere angel is ever arrayed in such drapery, and the vision is that of the glorious God-man himself, in the midst of the grand administrations of judgment.

He has "the rainbow on his head;" not a rainbow, but the rainbow. This is a further mark to show that he is not a created angel. We had this rainbow in the fourth chapter, where it is given as one of the grand appurtenances of the throne. It refers back to God's ancient covenant with the earth. It was originally ordained as God's mark in the cloud, and the sign of His, and no mere angel's covenant. We never read of any one surrounded with the rainbow, but the person is God. The clouds are indicative of Divine judgment, and storms, and rains, and floods of wrath; and so the rainbow is indicative of Divine mercy in the midst of judgment, and a covenant of security to the believing, even though everything seem to be going to destruction. A garment of cloud, and a tiara of the iris, would, therefore, well befit the Saviour, in the administrations which we are now considering, but would in no manner of truth

be suitable to a mere angel, however mighty.

“And his face as it were the sun.” This again identifies him as the same who appeared unto John in his first vision. It is there said of Him who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, that his countenance was “as the sun shineth in his strength.” This luminousness of face is also one of the ascertained characteristics of Christ, in connection with the final revelation of his kingdom. Peter speaks of the appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration, as a foretaste and earnest of “the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;” and yet, in that sublime picture, the record is, “his face did shine as the sun.” It was thus that he appeared unto Saul of Tarsus, on his way to Damascus. (Acts 26:13.) And from the most ancient times, the prophets were accustomed to refer to him as the outbeaming glory of God—the very Sun of Righteousness.

“And his feet as it were pillars of fire.” These are manifestly the same feet beheld in the vision of the first chapter. There they dazzled the eyes of the seer, like fine brass melted and glowing in a furnace; and they were the feet of Him who was dead, but is alive forevermore, and has the keys of death and of hell. There they presented an image of terrible pureness, and here they furnish an image of steadfast and consuming majesty, which no one can encounter and live. Nothing of the kind is ever affirmed of a created angel. We observe again,

II. A NOTABLE ACT OF THIS PERSON

“And he set his right foot upon the sea, but the left upon the earth.” This was a distinct and deliberate act, and is full of significance. To set one’s foot in a place, expresses a purpose to take possession of that place. Jehovah said to Israel, “Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours.” (Deut. 11:24.) Abraham could not “set his foot on” any part of Palestine in this sense, inasmuch as God gave him none inheritance in it. And when this mighty Angel deliberately sets his right foot on the sea, and the left on the land, he thereby claims possession of it, and asserts his purpose to take it as his own, and to establish his occupancy and rule over it. It is an act befitting the character and office of Christ, but hardly a created angel. He is the rightful sovereign of sea and land. His taking of the sealed book from the hand of eternal majesty, and his breaking and destroying of its seals, proved and legitimated his right to the possession of the earth; and here we have his assertion of that right, and his purpose to enforce it. Long has both sea and land been under the dominion of his enemies, but now he sets foot on each, and takes hold upon them as his own.

He does it also in a way which shows how useless it will be for his foes to resist him. Those feet are mighty columns of fire. Who can stand against columns of fire? The image is one of invincible power and steadfastness, joined with consuming destruction to those who venture to withstand. Pillars are firm and mighty; and pillars of fire are steadfastly irresistible; and Christ plants his feet on sea and land “as pillars of fire.” They are then immovable, and must needs consume all opposition.

And with the symbolic act, and as part of it, there is a corresponding utterance. “He cried with a great voice, even as a lion roareth.” It was not a cry of distress and fear, but a shout of power, and the herald of vengeance upon enemies and usurpers. We have already seen who it is that is called “the Lion from the tribe of Judah.” Of old it was written, “The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake.” “The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation: he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh, he will give them that are wicked to the sword.” (Jer. 25:29–31.) And the great voice before us connects directly with these predictions. It is not the voice of a created angel, but the cry of the almighty Judge himself. As yet he is in his cloud, like the lion in his covert. But when he comes forth to set his feet upon the earth, the shout, like of those who tread the grapes, shall be given, and the winepress of the Divine fury shall be trodden. It is the cry for and the herald of the oncoming judgments of God; and upon it follows,

III. A NOTABLE RESPONSE FROM HEAVEN

“And when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices.” Interpreters have been much tasked to tell what particular thunders are here meant. Seven times is thunder called “the voice of the Lord,” in the 29th Psalm, and some pretend to find these seven thunders there, but what to make of them as thus found, they know not. Certain writers have spoken of “the thunders of the Vatican,” and so some think they see these seven thunders in the bulls of the Popes against Luther and the Reformation! But if we cannot find “the seven thunders” without resorts so remote and puerile, we might as well confess that we know nothing about them.

They are mentioned with the definite article. The force of this is that these are thunders of which the Apostle assumes that his readers already have some knowledge. And if we will only go back in the record, we will find that we have heard of them before. In the vision of the fourth chapter, John saw “a rainbow” encircling the throne, and here he speaks of that rainbow (ῥίς) as upon the head of this mighty Angel. And in that same vision he beheld and said “out of the throne go forth lightnings, and voices, and thunders.” They are not specified as “seven,” but in the nature of the case, upon the principle on which the number seven is employed in this book, seven is their number. That is the number of dispensational completeness, and these thunders from the judgment throne are the thunders of the entire administration from that throne. They may, therefore, be very properly referred to as specifically “the seven thunders.” Some detonations of these same thunders were also remarked in the eighth chapter; for, as the

Priest-Angel turned the contents of his fire-filled censer upon the earth, "there followed thunders, and lightnings, and voices."* They are the judgment thunders, and hence must proceed from the judgment throne, and everything attendant on that throne takes the characteristic number seven: "seven torches," "seven spirits of God," "seven seals," "seven angels," "seven trumpets," "seven vials;" and for the same reason, and in the same sense, necessarily "seven thunders" of the Divine indignation.

The first readers of the Apocalypse, therefore, had no occasion to go to the 29th Psalm, nor yet to wait fifteen hundred years for the Pope's bulls against the Reformers, in order to find what thunders John here had in view. "The seven thunders" are the judgment thunders of the throne of God. And when the Lion from the tribe of Judah gives his roar, as on the eve of bounding forth upon the prey, these seven thunders utter themselves in full sympathy with the proceeding, and the righteous vengeance of the throne of eternal majesty vocalizes the sentences to be visited upon the guilty and still rebellious world. Verily, no created angel could thus evoke the seven thunders of the Almighty's wrath.

There is also a sort of personality ascribed to these thunders. It is amazing how everything takes animation, and becomes instinct with life, intelligence, and sympathy with the heavenly movements, in these awful processes. The very thunders have distinct articulation added to their terrific detonations. They speak; they give forth intelligible utterances. John heard what they said; and when the period to which he refers once comes, the dwellers on the earth will doubtless also hear and understand them. Thunder is an expression of the majesty of God, and of his wrath upon transgressors; and the voices of these "seven thunders" were voices of consummated divine indignation to be launched upon the guilty world, though the seer was not permitted to record what they uttered.

At the beginning of these wonderful visions, he was commanded to write what he saw, and to make it known unto the churches. Therefore he says, "When the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write: and I heard a voice out of the heaven saying, Seal up those things which the seven thunders spoke, and write them not." The command was absolute, and the holy apostle obeyed it. What the seven thunders said, is therefore unwritten and unknown, and must needs remain unknown, till, amid the ongoings of the judgment as here foreshown, they shall answer the great voice of the mighty Angel. And, until then, it is enough, and best, that the children of men should know no more upon this point than that there are such thunders; that they have utterances to give in sympathy with the lion-cry of Christ when in the act of proceeding to take possession of the sea and land; and that those voices, in all their terrific majesty, will be heard when the time comes. We observe,

IV. A NOTABLE DOCUMENT IN THE HAND OF THIS PERSON

As the Angel proceeded to set his right foot upon the sea and his left upon the land, the Apostle saw "in his hand a little book, or roll." This is a marked feature, and not without important significance. It is not the main thing in the vision, as Alford and some others have erroneously supposed, but it is an expressive accessory to the thrilling revelation.

The Apocalypse abounds with references to books and records of a remarkable character. The first verse of the fifth chapter disclosed to our view a very notable document, in connection with which all the interest, up to the chapter now before us, has arisen. We had a good deal to observe concerning that book, or roll, at the time. We were then constrained to look upon it as representing the title-deed of the inheritance, forfeited by man, and recovered by the Lamb.* We saw it lifted by that Lion-lamb, amid the adoring shouts of eternity, and one of its seals after another broken open, followed with miraculous commotions, which shook the earth from centre to circumference, and affected even the great orbs of immensity. When the last of the seals was broken, that book was still in the hands of Him who alone, in all the universe, was found worthy to take it, break its seals, or even to look upon it. The breaking of that seal introduced the seven trumpet-angels; and then, for the time, we lost sight of the wonderful document around which all this interest and these wonders centre. And as this mighty Angel can be none other than the self-same Lion-lamb who took the book from the hand of eternal majesty, why may not this roll in his hand be the same identical roll lifted from the throne? Some commentators have ridiculed the thought, but I take it to be a most reasonable supposition. If the book in the hand of this Angel be not the same book which the Lamb took from the throne in heaven, then that marvellous document, after all the wonderful interest and events created by it, most strangely and ingloriously disappears, and is never heard of any more forever. Such awe and exultation at its first appearance, and such mighty occurrences attending the mere opening of its seals, beget the expectation and belief, and indeed require, that we should hear of it again; that it should not be so miserably hustled off the scene; and that it should have an end befitting its character and its introduction into these visions. But an unaccountably sorry fate does it receive, if we are not to recognize it in the roll in the hand of this Angel.

It is said of the little book now before us that it was "opened." This implies that it had been shut, sealed; and that what kept it shut, its seals, had been broken off; all of which accords precisely with what we saw of the book taken by the Lamb.

Both documents were small rolls. They are both designated by the word βιβλιον, which is the diminutive of βιβλος. The one in the hand of the Angel is, also, by some manuscripts, called βιβλαριδιον; but that is only another diminutive form of the same word, whilst all the best MSS., in one place or another, use precisely the same form of the word for the one which is used for the other.*

The nature of the case would also seem to call for the presence here of the same document which the Lamb had taken from the throne. The Angel is engaged in the solemn and sublime act of formally claiming the possession of the earth. He needs his warrant for such an act. Redemption proceeds on a legal foundation. Christ as our Redeemer had to be made under the law. It was

necessary that he should fulfil all righteousness. All his successes, triumphs, and exaltations were achieved on the basis of having meritoriously met and answered all demands of the law. He could neither rise from the dead, ascend to the right hand of the Father, propose free forgiveness to men, or dare to repossess man of the forfeited inheritance, except as he had satisfactorily atoned for all man's sins, and in himself meritoriously won and purchased all that he now or ever holds or claims for his redeemed. It was only as he was slain for mankind, and atoned for their unrighteousness, and thus overcame, that he was pronounced worthy to take the book, or open its seals, or act the Goel for those whose inheritance had been disposed away, and overrun by aliens. And so neither could he claim and take possession of the earth, and clear it of all foes and usurpers, except upon warrant from the law giving that right as the just due of his perfect righteousness, No man can claim land without showing that he holds his title-deed for it. No one can proceed to execute penalties even upon transgressors, without warrant from the government. And so our mighty Goel in proceeding to set his right foot on the sea, and his left on the land, claiming possession of the earth, and about to inflict extirpating punishments upon the rebels who infest it, holds in his hand the open title to it, worthily obtained from the right hand of eternal majesty, displays it to all observers as his warrant from the throne, and challenges the potencies of earth and hell to yield or perish; whilst all the thunders of Almighty power utter themselves for his support.

The ultimate disposal made of this document is also such as to correspond with the character I have assigned to it, and to identify it as the same that was taken by the Lamb from the hand of sovereign majesty. John says, "The voice which I heard out of the heaven [I heard] again speaking with me, and saying, Go, take the book [or roll] which is opened in the hand of the Angel who standeth upon the sea and upon the land. And I went to the Angel, saying to him, Give me the little book. And he saith to me, Take, and eat it. And I took the little book [or roll] out of the hand of the Angel, and ate it." Thus the history of this βιβλιον terminated. And for what does our blessed Redeemer take the book out of the right hand of eternal sovereignty? Why does he appear in the court of heaven as a once slain Lamb that he may be accounted worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof? What indeed is the great object and intent of all his works and doings, whether on earth or in heaven, to procure rights, titles, and warrants from the throne? Yea, what? but that he may give and impart the same to his apostles and be lieving people, that they may take them, eat them, appropriate them, preach and prophesy them, live on them, and build themselves up with them unto eternal life? There is no book like the roll which the Lamb takes from the right hand of the Sitter on the throne. It embodies in itself all the prophetic, priestly, and royal rights of Christ, in the attitude of our Goel, or Redeemer. It compasses the very spring and kernel of all sacred prophecy, all evangelic preaching, all true faith, all abiding hope. It is the eternal charter, from the right hand of eternal sovereignty, on which reposes the whole right, authority, work, kingdom, and dominion of Jesus, as the Lord and Saviour of men. And the grand intent and purpose of all that he has done in reference to that document, for which he has obtained it and freed it of its seals, and for which he holds it open in his hand as he proceeds to take possession of the earth is, that his people may have the benefit of it—that they may take it from his hand, feed on it, incorporate it with their inmost being, make it the subject of their hopes, their prophecies and their prayers, and in the strength and virtue of it live and reign with him forever. And if we have at all hit upon the nature of the document which John beheld upon the right hand of Him that sitteth upon the throne, the analogy of faith, and the whole congruity of things, come into play to establish and confirm the belief that this βιβλιον, or βιβλαριδιον, in the hand of the Angel, is the same book, and that the Angel who holds it is none other than the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the Lamb that was slain, the blessed Jesus.

The effect of this roll on the prophet likewise corresponds with the view we have taken of it. There is nothing sweeter than the Gospel to a willing and believing soul. The good things which Jesus has obtained for us from the Father, and especially the title to them, are so suitable to us that every child of God can exclaim with the Psalmist: "How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to the mouth!" The victory of the Lamb over sin and death—the meritorious repurchase of our alienated inheritance—the acknowledged right, and power, and gracious promise of our Lord, to tread down Satan under our feet, and bring us into the goodly land of rest—all these are involved with the roll from the Saviour's hand, and are like living waters to the thirsty, and precious manna to the hungry. But,

E'en the rapture of pardon is mingled with fears,
And the cup of thanksgiving with penitent tears.

No one can truly eat the book, but he "must prophesy." Its power in us is to send on errands, lead through scenes, and charge with offices and duties, full of hardships, trials, and many a bitterness. The roll of God's word to Israel was in the mouth of Ezekiel "as honey for sweetness," but it carried him on a mission to which he "went in bitterness, in the heat of his spirit." It costs pains to be a full-souled believer, a faithful prophet, an unflinching candidate for an inheritance not seen as yet. And such dreadful "lamentation, and mourning, and woe," must come upon the unsanctified world before the precious charter Christ has obtained from the throne can go into full effect, that no true man can be other than sad when he contemplates it. So the book in John's mouth was "sweet as honey;" but when he had eaten it "his belly was made bitter." To receive as his own, and as the food of his soul, these precious title-deeds of the blessed inheritance, thrilled him with joy and gladness; but those scenes of blood and wrath to the dwellers upon the earth which must be enacted before the inheritance is reached—those hardships to the flesh in holding faithfully to the holy document—those conflicts, and contradictions of sinners, and harrowing contumelies, and trying dangers, and laborious toils, attendant upon honest prophesying of these things,—all combined to make the effects of the book bitter in his body, though so

sweet to his taste. It is all perfectly natural and easily accounted for, just as I have taken it. Even Jesus wept on the very eve of triumph, and while the hosannas of final glory were already heralding their approach. But we have yet to observe,

V. A NOTABLE PROCLAMATION

“And the Angel, whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the land, lifted up his right hand into the heaven, and swore by Him that liveth for the ages of the ages, who created the heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that there shall be no more delay; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall sound, the mystery of God is [to be] fulfilled, even as he preached glad tidings to* his servants the prophets.”

The Mystery of God is nothing more nor less than the final sum of all God's revelations and doings for the reinstatement of man into his lost inheritance. The fulfilment of this mystery is the final accomplishment of the last items of the Divine administrations which make up that sum—the ultimate realization of all the foreannouncements made to and by any and every one of God's prophets in all the ages—the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven at length merged into full and everlasting fruition of that kingdom—the consummation of all things. And concerning this consummation, sundry particulars are here observable.

(1.) It is true Gospel. What God has made known concerning it is glad tidings, good news, the proper evangely. People shake their heads, and say, that we are quite beside the Gospel, if not beside ourselves, when we preach about the second coming of Christ and the end of all things; but this mighty Angel is of a different mind. Himself the very heart and soul and life of everything that is gospel, and apart from whose person, utterances, and work there is no gospel, He not only makes this consummation the one sole theme of, perhaps, the most majestic, solemn, and formal proclamation ever put upon record, but at the same time, and after the same manner, and as part of the same awful discourse, affirms, that the same was and is the prime subject of all God's inspirations of all His prophets. We, therefore, plant ourselves upon all the divinest of records, and upon the most authentic, direct, and solemn of all sacred utterances, and say, that he whose gospel drops and repudiates from its central themes the grand doctrine of the consummation of all things, as portrayed in this Apocalypse, is not the true Gospel of God.

(2.) It is to be accomplished in the period of the seventh trumpet—“in the days of the seventh angel, when he shall sound.” I say period of the seventh trumpet, for it spans a section of time, and its sounding is not over in an instant. The word is not day, but “days;” as “the days of Abraham,” “the days of David,” “the days of youth,” “the days” of Christ's sojourn on earth. The greatest events of time transpire under this trumpet, and it may overspan years. It is the grand climacteric of the Apocalypse, and so of these mysterious administrations of God. And “in the days” which it embraces, the whole Mystery of God shall be fulfilled, and everything foretold by the prophets consummated.

(3.) It will only come after long, repeated, and trying delay, if not on the part of God, yet in the estimates and expectations of His people. This is distinctly implied in the proclamation, the gist of which is to meet a feeling that the whole thing has receded so far into the distance as hardly to be any more within the bounds of sober credence. The idea is, that there has been delay, and repeated delay; that time has intervened, and lengthened itself out to very suspicious proportions; but that, notwithstanding, as God lives, and has made and controls all things, when once the period of the sixth trumpet is reached, there shall be no more delay.

The Scriptures often allude to this postponement beyond all anticipation, and the temptation and ill effects of it upon men. Peter tells of people to whom the thing is put off so long, that they finally turn scoffers, and say, “Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning;” and in the same chapter he apologizes for the fact that the grand event is so long deferred. It is implied in the fact that some servants shall say, “The Lord delayeth his coming.” The same is perceptible in the parable of the Ten Virgins. Even after the eagle-saints have been “taken,” and the whole of remaining Christendom, having ascertained its place in the prophetic calendar, has been moved to go out as one man to meet the next great turn in the already present judgment-scenes, there is still such tarrying and delay, that all the animation and zeal upon the subject largely subside, and all sink into apathy and slumber with regard to it.

It is very true that the Scriptures nowhere definitely tell us when the time is. “Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven.” There is hence no warrant for any one, at any time since the blessed Saviour ascended, to put away into the distant future that day when judgment shall begin. The true attitude of the Church, and that to which all the representations and admonitions of the Scriptures are framed, is to be looking and ready any day and every day for the coming of Christ to seize away his waiting and watching saints. But in faithfully assuming this attitude, and thus hoping and expecting the speedy fulfilment of what has been promised, the Church has been made to see one notable and quickening period after another pass away without bringing the consummation which was anticipated. Eve thought the promise on the point of fulfilment when Cain was born; but He whom she was expecting was yet 4000 years away. When Simeon took the infant Saviour to his bosom and sung his exulting Nunc demittis, he supposed that the time for the consummation had arrived; but it was only the preliminary advent that he had lived to witness. When John the Baptist thundered his rugged calls to repentance through the wildernesses of Judea, the joyous burden of his soul and preaching was, that now the Consummator was come with winnowing fan to make the final separation between the chaff and the wheat; but what was most in his contemplation was yet a score of centuries off. The early Christians were lively in their expectations

that yet in their day the standard of the coming One would be seen unfurled in the sky, and all their hopes be consummated; but the days of the Apostles and of the apostolic fathers passed, and still “the Bridegroom tarried.” Nearly every century, as it rolled, was designated as the one in which the Church might confidently count on being transferred from earth to heaven; but each, like the one before it, came to an end, without bringing that more notable end on which our eyes are ever to be fixed. The Reformation, with the revival of the primitive faith, revived the primitive hope, that the great day must needs be very close at hand; but the days of the Reformers passed, and all the days which they designated as those beyond which the day of judgment could not be delayed; and yet the momentous period had not arrived. Many times within the past hundred years the attention of men has been called to particular dates as the times when this present world should end; but they have all come and gone, as innocent of the great consummation as any that went before them. And although the Saviour may come any day, and our duty is to be looking for Him every day, it is still possible that all present prognostications on the subject may fail, as they have always failed; that years and years of earnest and confident expectation may go by without bringing the Lord from heaven; and that delay after delay, and ever-repeating prolongations of the time of waiting may intervene, till it becomes necessary for the preservation of the faith of God’s people to hear the fresh edict from the lips of their Lord, that “there shall be no more delay.”

(4.) Though the coming of the final consummation be slow, it will come. There is not another truth in God’s word that is so peculiarly authenticated. All the holy prophets since the world began have foretold it. All the evangelists and apostles have inwrought it in all their writings as one of the central and fixed things in the Divine purpose. Jesus himself has given us parable on parable, precept upon precept, and promise upon promise, all directed to this one thing. And God hath certified it to all men, in that He hath raised up Christ from the dead. But after all the rest of the canon of Inspiration was finished, another book was indited, making this its particular and specific theme; and in that book is a particular vision, in which the mighty Judge himself appears, and gives forth the most intense and awful asseveration on the subject. With clouds for his garments and the rainbow for his crown—with his face shining as the sun and his feet glowing like pillars of fire—with a roll in his hand, lifted by his merit from the throne of infinite majesty, he stretches up his right hand into the sky, and swears,—swears by the Eternal—swears by the power which has given birth and being to all things,—that, in spite of all the mistakes, disappointments, delays, and consequent doubts upon the subject, what was made known to the prophets shall be, and that the time shall come when there shall be no more delay!

Shall we then have any doubt upon the subject? Shall we allow the failure of men’s figures and prognostications to shake our confidence or obscure our hope? Shall we suffer the many and long delays that have occurred, or that ever may occur, to drive us into the scoffer’s ranks? True as the life of God—certain as the Divine eternity—unfailing as the Power which made the worlds—immutable as the oath of Jesus—the great consummating day will come, when the whole Mystery of God shall be fulfilled. Unbelief, away! Misgiving, be thou buried in the depths of the sea! Doubt, be shamed into everlasting confusion! “Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him. Even so, Amen.”

Holy One of heaven, have mercy upon us, and help us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised!

LECTURE 22

DIFFICULTIES OF THE CURRENT METHOD OF INTERPRETING THE APOCALYPSE—CONNECTION OF THIS CHAPTER WITH THE PRECEDING—THE SAINTS IN HEAVEN MUST PROPHECY AGAIN—MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE—“THE HOLT CITY”—THE JEWS AGAIN IN THE FOREGROUND—A NEW ORDER AND CANON—CASTING OUT OF THE GENTILES—ZION REDEEMED WITH JUDGMENT—THE FORTY-TWO MONTHS.

Rev 11:1, 2. (Revised Text.) And there was given to me a reed like to a rod, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it. And the court which is outside the temple, cast out, and measure it not; for it is given to the Gentiles; and they shall trample the holy city forty and two months.

WE here come upon ground which has been very trying to expositors—the great battleground of conflicting systems, and the burial-ground of many a fond conceit and learned fancy. Alford has given it as his opinion that the chapter on which we now enter “is undoubtedly one of the most difficult in the whole Apocalypse.” On all the prevalent theories for interpreting this Book, he is certainly right in this opinion, and the difficulties of which he complains must remain till those theories are abandoned, and another departure taken.

If we were to take a description of a horse-mill, and insist on expounding it as a description of a mill-horse, no matter what qualifications we might bring to the task, we would find ourselves continually beset with difficulties and embarrassments which we never could fully overcome. And just so it is with nearly all our commentaries on the Apocalypse. It is not learning, ability, research or ingenuity that is at fault, but an underlying misapprehension of the nature and intention of the record. It is a description of one thing, and they are all the while trying to make it quite another thing. It is an account of the wonders of “The Lord’s Day”—the day of

Judgment, and they propose to explain it of “man’s day”—the day of the present dispensation. God gave it as “The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ,” and they seek to interpret it as an apocalypse of human history. This is the great trouble. Nor is it to be wondered that the skin of the lion will not fit the ass, and that the ears of the inferior animal will stick out notwithstanding the most ingenious efforts to cover them.

It would, indeed, be affectation to pretend that there are no difficulties in the way of a satisfactory exposition of this Book, but I am well persuaded that the most of those encountered by our commentators, and which hinder thinking readers from seriously embracing their theories, are imported by themselves, in the primary mistake which wrests the record from its own proper subject, and applies it to another which is at best only remotely and inchoately embraced. Let it be fixed and settled that we here have to do with the scenes of miracle and judgment, and that this chapter relates to those grand and mysterious administrations by which Christ is to take possession of the earth and clear it of usurpers and enemies, and the way is open to understand all, so far as it is possible to comprehend such wonders beforehand.

It is evident that the events here narrated are of a piece with what was described in the preceding chapter, and follow directly from it. Concerning the relation between these two chapters, Dr. Elliott justly says, “The connection between what concludes the one, and what begins the other, appears to be as close as it well could be: seeing that the Angel who before addressed St. John still continues here to address him; and the new injunction, Rise and measure, is but a sequel to His previous injunction, Thou must prophesy again.”* We there saw the glorious Angel, which is Christ Himself, in the sublime attitude of taking possession of the earth, by setting His feet upon it, displaying in His hand the title-deed to it, and swearing that there should be no more delay. And what now comes before us must, therefore, relate to the same transaction, and to the time and occurrences in which the same is to be carried into effect. In other words, it describes to us the ongoing of the judgment, now rapidly moving to its climax.

The first thing in the process of this taking possession of the redeemed inheritance is indicated in the change made in the attitude of John. Having beheld the Angel, he is withdrawn from the position of a mere seer and made an actor. A voice from heaven directs him to take the document from the Angel’s hand, to eat it, and so to make it his own by incorporating it with his very being; whilst it is further announced to him: “Thou must prophesy again upon peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings many.” What did this mean? John is not the only one who is to obtain the title to the inheritance. All the meek have it promised to them. Every true Christian is to share it. When the blessed Goel comes to give it to His redeemed ones, there will be many besides John to receive it. In what capacity then are we to contemplate this calling of John to take, eat, and have vested in him the title-deed to the inheritance? Certainly not in his individual capacity; for then none are ever to inherit but himself, as in him that title finds final lodgment.

It is a very common thing, in the delivery of sacred prophecies, for the individual prophet to act in himself what is meant to be understood of those whom he represents. “As remarked long since by Irenæus, the ancient prophets fulfilled their office of predicting, not merely in the verbal delivery of predictions, but by themselves seeing, hearing, or acting out the things in type, which were afterwards to be seen, heard, or acted out by others in reality—and this whether in real life, or perchance in vision. In all which cases they were to be considered, as they are called in Isaiah and in Zechariah, mophthim; that is, figurative or representative persons.”* And such a representative is St. John in the case before us. He acts the part in the apocalyptic scenes which pertains to the whole body to which he belongs. What is given him in the vision is to be understood as given them, and what he does and experiences is to be understood as done and experienced by them, when the vision becomes reality.

Nor can we be in any doubt as to the persons of whom he is thus the representative. He is an Apostle, and hence a divinely constituted representative of the Church. He is in heaven at the time, and so a representative of the Church thus shown to be in heaven at the time the vision is fulfilled, that is, of the resurrected, translated, and glorified saints. To the whole body of redeemed ones are we therefore to understand this giving of the title-deed of the inheritance to be; in whom also it forever after inheres.

But as John receives and eats the little book as the representative of glorified saints, it is as the self-same representative of the self-same saints, that it is said to him: “Thou must prophesy again,” and that it is further commanded him to “Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it.” And if so, then we have the key to the whole case, and there breaks in upon us a glorious light for the right interpretation of this otherwise very difficult passage.

To prophesy is not simply to foretell future events; but to exercise the functions of a witness for God. In the verses following, the Two Witnesses get their name from their work, and that work is called prophesying. To declare the will and purpose of God, or to act as His ambassador and mouth-piece, is to fill the office of a prophet. Aaron was to be Moses’ prophet, which is explained to mean that he should be a spokesman and a mouth for Moses. And so, to be the agent or instrument through which God utters Himself to men, whatever may be the nature or the subject of the utterance, is to prophesy. Such witnesses and mouth pieces Jehovah has always upon earth. The whole Church is such a witness and prophet. In and through it the word of God ever sounds, and the mind and purpose of God ring out into the ears of the world; and even principalities and powers in the heavenly places are being instructed by the Church. Every individual Christian is a confessor of the true God, in whose confession the will and purpose of God in Christ Jesus is testified and proclaimed. No one can become or continue a faithful Christian without this. In so far, then, every genuine Christian is a real prophet. Through him God speaks continually. His whole career on earth as a Christian confessor is a continuous prophesying against the wickedness of the world, of the necessity of godliness, and of the way of salvation in Christ. But even after the saints have gone from this world, they are still not yet done prophesying. As here said to John, they must prophesy again. After they have been “caught up together to meet the Lord in the air,” and have “put on immortality,” and the day of judgment has

progressed to the second woe-trumpet, the Mighty Redeemer having delivered to them the recovered deed to the inheritance, new commissions issue; and from being mere spectators of the ongoing judgment, they become actors in its administrations, and once more assume the office of witnesses for God. And what is involved in this prophesying again, together with its attendants and results, it is the object and intent of this chapter to set before us. Let us, therefore, approach it with due reverence and prayerfulness. "And there was given to me a reed like to a rod, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it. And the court which is outside cast out, and measure it not; for it is given to the Gentiles: and they shall trample the holy city forty and two months."

These words set forth the initial processes of the actual taking possession of the earth by our triumphant Redeemer. Like the judgment-administrations as a whole, it is not a summary, but a gradual work. It certainly extends through years, and involves various particulars and stages. How, and where, and in what, the commencement is to be made, we may here learn.

A remarkable feature in the case is, that the glorified saints are the chief actors. It is John who receives the equipment and the commission, but in him, as was said, the glorified saints in general are included. This is true in every instance in which he is taken out of the position of a mere spectator and made an actor in what is narrated. His call and transfer to heaven, described in the fourth chapter, set forth the catching up into the aerial spaces all God's ready and waiting saints when once the time for the fulfilment of these wonders has come. And so his reception and eating of the little book, from the nature of the case, must be understood of the whole Church in heaven at the time these scenic representations become reality. So then likewise must we understand the prophesying again, and hence also the equipment and commission in the words in hand; for they all necessarily go together as parts of each other, and must be accepted in one and the same way throughout. The giving and the command are to John, but only for the convenience of the description, whilst in the fulfilment they are to the whole body of glorified saints, for John here stands in place of the saints.

Nor need we be surprised at this, as if it were something foreign to the teachings of the Scriptures in general. Paul, in a plain and didactic epistle, says: "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" (1 Cor. 6:2.) So also says the Psalmist: "Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their couches: let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written. This honor have all the saints." (Ps. 149:5-9.)

The office assigned in this particular instance, is the measuring of the temple and altar of God, and those who worship therein. Measuring is a judicial act—the laying down of lines and borders which are to mark and determine dimensions and boundaries. It is the sign of appropriation. When it is proposed to take possession, and to have things put to their purpose, men begin to measure. In the settlement of some new order, as beheld by Ezekiel, there is a great deal of measuring and marking out of portions and possessions. And so when the triumphant Redeemer is about to enter upon the inheritance, he gives command to measure. What is measured is from that moment His, and so designated by the measuring. What the lines of the measurement include, He acknowledges and claims; and any indignity rendered toward it becomes a heinous sin against High Heaven. And what is outside of those lines, and not measured, is not acknowledged by Him, but is rejected, and held and treated as defiled.

The first things thus measured are the temple, the altar, and the worshippers in that temple. Peter says, "Judgment must begin at the house of God." The only house of God now on earth is the Church, the mystic temple, the spiritual house, constituted of all believers. At this house judgment begins by the sudden and miraculous catching away of God's waiting people to the sky, as we saw in the earlier chapters of this book.

But the Judgment-administrations have two sides. They consist of two series, and exhibit, so to speak, two different currents: the one the upward current, in which good and its representatives pass out of the world as if abandoning everything to utter perdition; and the other the downward current, in which good and its representatives come again in victorious power to possess and hold everything. Each of these currents has its own particular beginning; and, in both instances, the point of beginning is the most sacred point—the house or temple of God. But it is not the same house or temple in both instances. It is the mystic temple in the first, and it is a more literal temple in the second. When Christ once catches away to the heavenly spaces His ready and waiting saints, as described by St. Paul, the present Church ends. Fractions and inferior fragments of it may still float in the waves of the great tribulation and subsequently land on the shores of salvation, but without crowns, and only as the after-born, not as the first-born. And by the time the downward current of which I spoke sets in, the present Church, as such, will have been quite transferred to the regions above, and will constitute the measurers in the text, and not the object measured.

The measuring here commanded implies that what is measured had not, up to that time, been acknowledged on the part of Christ. This could not be true of the Church. The language is peculiarly Jewish. There is a fane, an altar, and a court of the Gentiles spoken of; which accords with the ceremonial economy, but not with the Christian.* There is a "holy city" alluded to, which is given to the Gentiles to trample for a time, which carries us directly to Jerusalem, and indicates that we are here unmistakably on Jewish ground. There is no other city on earth so called in the Scriptures. In the account of the return from Babylon we read: "The people also cast lots to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem, the holy city." (Neh. 11:1, 18.) Isaiah (52:1) calls out: "Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city." In the account of the temptation it is recorded: "Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple." (Matt. 4:5.) And even after its inhabitants had made themselves guilty of the innocent blood of Christ, the same language is still used; for we read that "many of the saints which slept arose and came out of their graves after His

resurrection and went into the holy city, and appeared to many.” (Matt. 27:52, 53.) There is only one other “holy city” spoken of in all the Bible, to wit, the New Jerusalem; but that never has been and never will be given to be trampled by the Gentiles. Some other “holy city” must then be meant. Many make it the Church; but the Church has not only been measured, appropriated, acknowledged from the very beginning, but its untrue members have likewise been all the while rejected and unacknowledged, and just as really and conspicuously so before the Reformation as then or since. Inchoately and secondarily, as a sort of shadow of the great substance, we may see some resemblances between these visions and the past history of the Church; for the course of things conducting to the consummation takes the general outlines of that consummation; but we have abundantly seen that this Book will not interpret on the mystical method, without most damaging prejudice to what belongs to a divine revelation, assuming to itself the pre-eminent importance and solemnity which this Book assumes. And so true and palpable is this, that the common Christian mind under its teachings, and the sorry acknowledgment of many of its most candid defenders, is, that this is a book of riddles and mysteries which it is not in the power of man to understand, and that nothing clear or solid is to be derived from it;—nay, that Christians may now learn as much if not more, on the same subjects, by reading the infidel Gibbon, and a few writers on mediæval and subsequent history, than from the whole Apocalypse!* This is so damaging a confession for a Christian to make, that it wears the evidence on its face of some deep and radical mistake in the method of treatment which necessitates it. We cannot, therefore, take “the holy city” here as denoting the Church, but understand by it what the Scriptures always mean by the phrase, and interpret it with confidence of Jerusalem, to which alone the temple, with its altar and court of the Gentiles pertains.

What, then, is the implication, but that when this period is once reached, Jerusalem will have been largely repopulated by the children of its ancient inhabitants, its temple rebuilt, and its ancient worship restored. God is not yet done with the Jews as a distinct people. In their half-faith and “blindness in part,” they will seek and find their way back to a revival of their ancient metropolis, temple, and ritual. Some of the most striking passages of holy Scripture assert this with a clearness and positiveness which no fair exegesis can ever set aside. The New Testament constantly assumes it. And when it is accomplished, as it certainly will be, Jerusalem will still be “the holy city,” because of the consecration it of old received. The temple will also be in some sort God’s temple, though at first unacknowledged and unappropriated by Christ. And among the worshippers will also be many true servants of God; for already under the sixth seal we were called to contemplate a movement among the tribes of Israel by which 144,000 were marked as the Lord’s, and singled out as the objects of His gracious protection. These still live on earth among men at the time to which the text refers; for it is only as late as the transactions noted in the fourteenth chapter that they are found with the Lamb in glory. Nor will there be at that period a holier place or service on earth than this restored Jerusalem and temple. But with all, it will not till then receive the acknowledgment and appropriation of the glorious Messiah; nor then entirely, nor at all without a strict resurvey, and the putting down of new lines, measurements, and boundaries from heaven.

Important changes are likewise indicated by this measuring. Where there is a new laying out of lines, the old is cast away, and things take a new shape. The same is indicated in the character of the rule or instrument of the measurement. In measuring the New Jerusalem, the instrument is a “golden reed.” Here it is “a reed like to a rod”—a measuring implement, but having the prevailing aspect of an instrument of chastisement—hence indicative of an afflictive, revolutionizing, measurement. There will, therefore, be rejections of some things, and additions of others. In other words, there will be a purging of the temple after the style of the proceeding of the Saviour when he took a scourge in his hand, and somewhat disturbed the business of the money-changers and them that sold doves. It is a measuring which is to proceed according to a rule which operates as a rod.

But the changes indicated are not arbitrary. The lines are all drawn by a fixed and heavenly rule, given for the purpose. It is called “a reed.” The original (κάλαμος) is the word which the Septuagint uses for the Hebrew word Kaneh, from which comes our ecclesiastical word Canon, both meaning a rule, particularly a rule of religious belief and duty. Hence the books of the Old and New Testaments are called The Canon, or the canonical books, seeing that they are the infallible Rule of all true faith and practice. This κάλαμος, therefore, is not to be associated so much with the idea of a frail reed shaken by every wind, as with the idea of a canon law, an inflexible rule, a divinely constituted directory. It does not mean our present Scriptures, as some expositors have represented; for it is not THE canon, but A canon—not the Rule, but a Rule. For all the offices and duties pertaining to this life, the sacred Scriptures are the exclusive and supreme Rule; but for the offices and duties of the “world to come,” there will be other Rules, and another canon. The Scriptures have already been given to the saints. We have them complete, and our fathers have had the same for ages. The canon here in question is a new thing, first given at this stage in the ongoing Judgment, and given first to the glorified saints in heaven. The germs of it may indeed be embraced in our present Scriptures, as the germs of the New Testament were all contained in the Old, particularly as the Psalmist says the saints are “to execute the Judgment written;” but still the new commission has also its new canon, not yet given, according to which this judicial measuring is to be done, and to which all the changes it brings will be conformed. The ancient Jews “received the law by the disposition of angels” (Acts 7:53); and it would seem that their descendants in the judgment time are to receive another canon “by the disposition of” glorified saints, in connection with the final fulfilment of that promise quoted by St. Paul: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: ... for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” (Heb. 8:8–12. See Jer. 30 and 31, and Ezekiel 36.)

It appears, therefore, that, from the time of the measuring here described, there is again to be a true and divinely acknowledged temple of God upon earth, with an altar and worshippers set apart and marked off as the Lord's.

Some have given out the strange fancy that it is in heaven, and not on earth, and that it is only the outer court that is on earth. This is meant to avoid the difficulty created by the erroneous assumption that what is measured can never thereafter be defiled. But it is evidently a mistake. There is indeed a temple in heaven, as shown all through the Apocalypse; but the temple, altar, and worshippers there, have all the while been acknowledged and appropriated as the Lord's, and required no new measurement to that effect at this late period; and to apply the rod to people and things in heaven, argues a rather sorry appreciation of the holiness and happiness of that region. When the New Jerusalem is about to be entered and set apart as the glorious city of God and His saints, it is measured too, but with "a golden reed," not with one "like to a rod." Besides, the outer court is rejected, and hence not acknowledged of God, which would leave us no temple of God at all upon earth for "the captain of the robbers" to defile. And how can that be sacrilegiously desecrated which God refuses to acknowledge and positively disowns? The great aggravation of the sin of Antichrist is, that he sets up an idol in Jehovah's place, and turns God's true and acknowledged temple into a house of murderous idolatry. There must, therefore, be a true temple of God on earth, one which God acknowledges and claims as His, during the time of Antichrist, which is immediately subsequent to this measuring.

The outer court of this temple is ordered to be rejected, and cast entirely out of the measurement. The outer court is the court of the Gentiles, and this fact is given as the reason for the rejection. The present dispensation began with Jews exclusively; and "in the regeneration" the new order on earth is likewise to begin with Jews exclusively. And this casting out of the court of the Gentiles because it is the court of the Gentiles, proves the present dispensation then at an end. Now Gentiles and Jews stand on the same level. The one has no prerogatives or rights above the other. In the Church there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but all nationalities and conditions in life yield to one common brotherhood and heirship. The text, therefore, tells of a new order of things. New commissions issue, a new canon comes into force, and the Jew is again in the foreground for the fathers' sakes, and the Gentiles are thrust back. The mere presence of them in the outer part of the temple causes it to be rejected and cast out of God's acknowledgment.

From the very beginning of the admission of the Gentiles to fellow-heirship with the seed of Jacob, the admonition of "the Apostle of the Gentiles" to them was, and still is: "Be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert graffed contrary to nature into a good olive-tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree? For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." (Rom. 11:21–25.) This is very remarkable language. It implies a precariousness of our high calling in Christ Jesus which we would hardly suspect, and which it is dangerous to overlook. It foreshows an end to the favors now enjoyed by the Gentiles, and for the same causes that cast down the Jews from their ancient pre-eminence in the Divine economy. It sets forth that the existing depression of the Jew, and the exaltation of the Gentile to equality with him, is only temporary, and must terminate. Yea, and in all the Scriptures, there is a time contemplated, when the πληρωμα—the full complement—of the Gentiles shall have come in, and things shall begin again with the Jew at the head. And it is to the fulfilment of this mystery that the text relates. The measurement of the temple, its altar, and its worshippers, is the receiving again of the Jew, his re-grafting upon the old theocratic root and native olive-tree, and his re-establishment as the chosen of God among the nations of the earth; and the casting out of the court of the Gentiles, is the diminishing, cutting off, and casting away of the Gentiles from their present rank and privileges.

And when we consider the corruption, deterioration, and ever-increasing apostasy of the present Church, from the time of the Apostles onward;—when we read in holy writ that in the last days the form of godliness shall be found lingering over the utmost excesses of unrighteousness, the pure truth of God be no longer tolerated by professed Christendom in its eagerness for religious novelties and sensations, and faith have almost entirely vanished from the earth;—when we contemplate the prophetic pictures of the consummate heathenism and perversion of everything sacred and true which is to mark the closing periods of this dispensation;—there is no room for wonder at the final command to cast out the unclean thing, whilst what follows begins again with the children of God's ancient people. It is the eternal law of things, that unfaithfulness brings judgment, and that if people do not appreciate and improve their privileges they must lose them. The Gentile Church apostatizes, and it dissolves, just as the Jewish Church before it.

But though God be again choosing Jerusalem and its temple as the place of His manifestation, and Israel for his earthly people, he does not yet defend either from all further disturbance and disaster. "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and they that return of her with righteousness." (Is. 1:27.) "They (the Gentiles) shall trample the holy city forty and two months;" not because of the superior holiness of these Gentiles, for in them wickedness comes to its highest earthly culmination, but God uses them for the chastisement of Israel, at the same time that he puts them in position to be themselves tormented and discomfited. He manifests their sin against His newly constituted people, that He may manifest the climax of His judgments against them, and require of them "the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world." They persecute the measured worshippers, desecrate the measured

altar and temple, and set up an idol in the marked place of Jehovah, that the consummation of all plagues may fall upon them.

And here comes in a very important point to test the soundness of the spiritualistic interpretation; to wit, the relation, in point of time, between the measuring of the temple and these forty-two months of the trampling of the holy city. Is there not every reason in the record for regarding the measuring as first performed, and the trampling as a sequel to it? By no fair dealing with what is written can we put the trampling first and the measuring afterwards. But if the measuring precedes the trampling, or even synchronizes with it, then Popery and the Reformation cannot be the subject of the picture, as taught by our spiritualistic expositors. The Church cannot be at the same time both reclaimed from papal desecration and trodden down by it; neither can its reformation from popish defilement precede the dominancy of such defilement. Yet one or the other of these must be true, if the measuring denotes the work of the Reformers, and the trampling the evils inflicted by the papacy. But as in the nature of things neither can be true, it follows that the Papacy and the Reformation are not here the subject, and many a splendid chapter of historic learning must pass for nothing, as regards the exposition of this prophecy. It is what is measured that suffers under the trampling, and the purged temple is again briefly defiled by the Gentiles. Nay, the measuring itself involves chastisement and trouble to those who are the subjects of it, such as cannot well be predicated of the Reformed Church. The reed with which it is done, is "like to a rod;" and a rod (ἄβδος) in the Apocalypse always denotes an instrument of chastisement. (See chapters 2:27; 12:5; 19:15.) It is likewise written of those then to be received into particular favor: "I will bring them through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." (Zech. 13:9.) And the ordeal includes just such a spoliation of the holy city as is here described; for God says He "will gather all nations (Gentiles) against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half the city shall go forth into captivity." (Zech. 14:1, 2.)

But the trouble, though sharp and severe, will not be perpetual, nor long; for "then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations (Gentiles) as when He fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east" (Zech. 14:3, 4); and the great day of God Almighty will end it forever.

"Forty and two months" is the holy city to be trampled; that is, three years and a half, no more, and no less. It is a literal city that is trampled and defiled; it is a literal oppression and affliction that befalls it; and so the months which compute the duration of the trouble are also literal months. These great chronological scaffoldings which men build around prophetic dates, is mere fancy-work—"wood, hay, and stubble"—nothing but rubbish and obscurations of the truth of God. When it is meant that we should take numbers and dates in some other way than as they read, He gives us intimation of it; and in the absence of such divine hints, as in this case, there is no warrant for taking them any otherwise than as they stand written. "Forty and two months" are forty and two months, and not twelve hundred and sixty years.

The computation is given in "months," which is common in the Scriptures when troubles and afflictions are the subject. The beginning and duration of the flood is expressed in months. The ark was in the country of the Philistines seven months. The locusts torment men five months. And Jerusalem's last great trial is computed in months, as well as the term of the blasphemies of the Beast.

The number of the months is forty-two—six times the period that the ark was in captivity. Six is the number of evil, and seven of dispensational completion, and these are two marked factors of forty-two; which would seem to signify a fulness or completion of the evil in those months. Israel in the wilderness had forty-two stations; and the wicked youths slain by the bears for their mockery of Elisha were forty-two. The powerful monster who makes war with the saints, oppresses the nations, and blasphemes God, continues "forty-two months." And so the completion of Jerusalem's troubles is summed up in the same numbers and computation.

But ere the forty-two months are accomplished, there are yet many other things to come to pass, among the most marked of which is that crux interpretum, or rack of expositors—the history of The Two Witnesses. But what I have to say concerning these must be reserved for another occasion, when I hope to be able to identify them and their place in history without having to hunt up the obscure Waldenses, hidden away from the world like Chammoix in the Alps, or to lodge the true cause of God on earth for a dozen centuries with so variable, roving, and revolutionary a sect as the doubtful Paulikians, from whose history scarce a page survives which a true Christian can indorse as an untarnished testimony for God. Meanwhile, may the Lord add His blessing to what has been said, and cause it to be fruitful in bringing forth praises to His holy Name!

LECTURE 23

THE TWO WITNESSES—THEIR CONSPICUOUSNESS—THE ACCOUNT OF THEM DICTATED BY CHRIST—THEIR NUMBER—THEIR PERSONALITY—THEIR INDIVIDUALITY—ARE SAINTS FROM HEAVEN—DISTINCT FROM RESURRECTED AND GLORIFIED SAINTS—ENOCH AND ELIJAH ANSWER TO THE DESCRIPTION—BEINGS FROM HEAVEN HAVE COME TO EARTH AND DIED—THE PERSONAL RETURN OF ELIJAH AFFIRMED BY MALACHI, CHRIST, THE JEWS, THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS—A TWOFOLD ELIJAH COMING—ANOTHER PROPHET TO ACCOMPANY ELIJAH—ENOCH THAT PROPHET—BOTH ARE JUDGMENT-PROPHETS—THEIR CLOTHING—HOW "THE TWO OLIVE TREES AND THE TWO LAMPS"—THEIR

Rev 11:3, 4. (Revised Text.) And I will give to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.

These are the two olive-trees and the two lamps, which stand before the Lord of the earth.

WHOEVER these witnesses may be, they are the most extraordinary of whom there is any account. Many martyrs perish under the Beast (see chapters 13:15; 20:4); but none of them receive a tithe of the notice given to these two. Antichrist himself, in all his despicable preeminence and vast dominion, does not more conspicuously stand out on the record than they. Nay, in all the earth there are none to cope with him but them. He tramples the world beneath his feet, and they alone are more formidable against him than all other men besides. And this one simple fact is itself sufficient to shake and overthrow forever many of the modern attempts to identify them. The priests Ananus and Jesus at the time of Rome's siege of Jerusalem, Pope Sylvester and Mena, Francis and Dominic, John Huss and Jerome of Prague, the Waldenses and the Paulikians, in this view of the case, are not once to be thought of.

These Witnesses are not presented to John in vision. They are described to him by the glorious Angel, who is the Lord Jesus Himself. The account we have of them is not John's account, as in most other instances in this book; but it is Christ's account, given in Christ's own words. But few interpreters have remarked this, though a striking feature of the case, which shows that we here have to do with something altogether extraordinary and special.*

The narrative is also somewhat anticipative. It brings together into one compendious account the whole history, some of the details of which relate to agencies and scenes which are only afterwards described in full. The Beast who makes war with these Witnesses, and slays them, is not seen coming up till we reach the thirteenth chapter. Their career accordingly reaches into subsequent visions, and overspans scenes and events which remain to be afterwards narrated. And the fact that the whole story of these Witnesses is presented separately from everything else, in a different manner, and somewhat in advance of some of its connections, conclusively argues a peculiarity, conspicuity, and extraordinariness in the matter, which cannot well be exaggerated.

These Witnesses are two in number— $\delta\upsilon\sigma\ \nu\ \mu\ \rho\tau\upsilon\sigma\ \nu$ This duality is three times repeated, and is an essential part of the record. As stated by Alford, "no interpretation can be right which does not retain and bring out this dualism." Why two, we do not fully know. Both the law and the Gospel calls for two witnesses to establish important truth. (Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16.) God generally sets his heralds and witnesses in pairs, as Moses and Aaron, Caleb and Joshua, Zerubbabel and Jeshua, Peter and John, the twelve and the seventy, "two by two." And in the trying circumstances here described, two could better uphold and console each other than one, without companionship.

These witnesses are persons. Primasius says, though somewhat equivocally, "The Two Witnesses represent the Two Testaments preached by the Christian Church to the world," and Bede, and Bishop Andrews, and Melchior, and Affelman, and Croly, and Wordsworth, and some others, have taken this view. But it is altogether a mistaken view, necessitated by the embarrassment occasioned by wrong conceptions of the Apocalypse, rejected by the overwhelming majority of interpreters ancient and modern, and utterly irreconcilable with the text. It is not true that the Old and New Testaments are preached to the world only 1260 days, or years, and then end their testimony;—that they are arrayed in sackcloth all the days they are preached;—that fire issues out of their mouths and kills those who will to injure them;—that there is no rain upon the earth during the days of their prophesying;—that they have power over waters to convert them into blood, or at will to smite the earth with plagues;—that they are capable of being killed by man;—or that indignity can be offered them, being dead, by refusing to allow them to be put into a sepulchre. Yet all these things are affirmed of these Witnesses. Nor is either the Old or the New Testament ever called a $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho$. Ten times do we find this word in the New Testament, and in every other place but this, no one questions that it denotes persons. In more than fifty places in the Old Testament, the corresponding Hebrew word denotes persons only. These Witnesses prophesy. This is the work of a person. More than one hundred times does this word ($\pi\rho\phi\eta\tau\epsilon\upsilon\omega$) occur in the Bible, and never, except once by metonymy, but of persons. These Witnesses wear clothing of sackcloth, of which we read much in the Scriptures, but always of persons. They work miracles and execute judgments, but nothing of the sort is ever predicted of anything but personal agents. Not without the greatest violence to language and fact, therefore, can we regard these Witnesses as other than real persons. The conclusion may be very damaging to some men's cherished theories, but the integrity of God's word requires it, and it is impossible to escape it with any just regard to the laws of language and the nature of things.

These witnesses are individuals. No reader of the account, having no preconceived theory to defend, would ever think of taking them for bodies, or successions of people. All the early fathers, from whom we have any testimony on the subject, regarded them as two individual men. Two distinct and conspicuous bodies of witnesses for Christ, all prophesying in sackcloth through 1260 years, or even days, and all dying martyrs, as here represented, expositors have searched in vain to find in the history of the Christian ages. Such bodies of men, with such powers, and with such a history, have never existed. Modern writers have flattered themselves that they have found successions of people scattered through the middle ages, whom they would have us accept as The Two Witnesses of the text; but they have been obliged to purchase their conclusions at the expense of explaining away every distinct feature of the record, doing violence to the facts of history, and super-exalting almost every species of obscure and even heretical sects and sectarists as God's only acknowledged prophets. This is by far too great a cost at which to accept a theory, which, even if true, would be totally unworthy of a place in so solemn and momentous a book as this Apocalypse. Good and able men have satisfied

themselves with it; but, on the same principles of interpretation, there is not a chapter in the Bible, nor a doctrine of our holy religion, which could not be totally explained away. By a happy inconsistency they do not so treat other portions of Scripture, or they would transmute the whole Revelation of God into uncertainty and emptiness. And whilst we give them credit for their learning, industry, and good intentions, and admit that a dim and imperfect correspondence to these Two Witnesses may perhaps be traced in the past history of the Church, yet, as we value the literal truth and certainty of the Divine Word, we cannot accept their expositions as exhaustive, or even as approximative to the revelation here given us.

WHO, THEN, ARE THESE TWO WITNESSES?

The connection in which the account of them is given, may serve to put us somewhat on the track of the right answer. These Witnesses come upon us suddenly, in the midst of the scenes of the judgment. The glorious Angel, which is Christ, is in the act of taking possession of the earth. New commissions have gone forth, which introduce the saints in heaven to new activities relating to the earth. In the person of John they are commanded to measure the temple, its altar, and the worshippers in it. And in connection with this command, and as part of the same address of the glorious Angel, the word is: "And I will give to my Two Witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days. These are the two olive-trees and the two lamps which stand before the Lord of the earth."

Now, as saints from heaven are to do the measuring, and the Two Witnesses are promised, in part at least, to accompany the measuring, would it not be natural to suppose them also to be some noted saints from heaven? Saints from heaven are in the field. These Witnesses fulfil their office in connection with a work assigned to those saints, and in some sort by way of co-operation or supplement of the same. Why should we then think of their being any other than also saints from heaven? Hence, with the whole body of the early Church, I take them to be none other than two such saints from heaven.

But a very marked and wide distinction is made between these Witnesses and the saints represented by John. Those are measurers, these are witnesses. There is nothing said to show that the measurers are known or visible to the people on the earth; but these Witnesses prophesy and preach to men, and are seen, and heard, and known, and handled by them. There is no intimation that the measurers are the objects of persecution, affliction, or death; but the Witnesses are hated, resisted, and finally killed. This difference indicates not only a difference of office and sphere, but also a difference in the form and susceptibility of being. The saints who have once died, and been resurrected and glorified, have put on immortality, and are no longer capable of death. "Once to die" is the lot appointed unto men; and having paid that debt, bodily death hath no more power over them. And as these Two Witnesses die subsequent to their prophesying, we are driven to search for some saints in heaven, who never have died.

Nor will our search be a fruitless one. The Scriptures tell of two noted prophets, who have now been thousands of years in heaven, and who, for aught we know to the contrary, are just as capable of death and resurrection as ever; especially if God has so arranged and intended. Need I say more plainly to whom I allude? They are so marvellously distinguished in the Scriptures from all others of the race, that it is at once suggested to the Christian mind who they are. They were, and still are, God's pre-eminent witnesses. They were God's most noted prophets while they sojourned upon earth, and, in the manner of their removal from among men, they are the only witnesses of the kind that God ever gave. One of them lived on the other side of the flood, "and was not, for God took him." The other was a Jew, of the degenerate times of Ahab and Jezebel, who "went up by a whirlwind into heaven." The one is ENOCH, the seventh from Adam; the other is ELIJAH, the Tishbite.

It may strike the modern ear with some surprise to hear of these saints, or any saints, returning again to earth here to suffer and be killed. We live in a very materialistic and skeptical age;—one slow to believe, and very unwilling to receive anything outside of the common round of human observation. People see things running on in one channel, and call it Nature, and will not hear of the possibility of any variation from it, though what they reject may really be no more unnatural than what they admit. They are so impressed with the uniformity and stability of things around them, though knowing almost nothing about them, that they give out with great confidence: "Since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:4), and ridicule the credulity of those who can listen to anything else. They forget how the Scriptures pronounce against such a temper, and foretell it as one of the marked symptoms of the last days, and warn us to beware of it as unspeakably dangerous with regard to the predicted wonders of the judgment time. We must, therefore, make due allowance for the skeptical spirit of our modern atmosphere, and not reject extraordinary truth simply because it strikes us as too extraordinary.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Neither is it so unheard of and improbable a thing after all, that beings from heaven should come to the earth, and suffer, and die, and rise again. An infinitely longer time than since the rapture of Enoch, had the blessed and adorable Son of God been in heaven; yet he came to earth, suffered, died, and rose again. Even after His incarnation, on the mount with Peter, James, and John, he was as much arrayed in heavenly glory as Elijah who there appeared in converse with him; yet, from that holy mount, and glory, and sublime transfiguration, he came down, and suffered, and died. Paul was once in heaven, caught up, he knew not how, and saw and heard things he dared not tell; and yet, he came back, and preached, and suffered, and died. John was called up to heaven, to

behold the wonders that are described in this Book; yet he also returned, and suffered, and died. And if the eternal Son of God from the very throne of Deity, and the Son of Mary from the mount with Moses and Elijah in glory, and Paul in the third heaven, and John amid the wonders of the scenes he writes of in the Apocalypse, could and did come from thence to preach, and suffer, and die, what laws of things, or word of Revelation, can be produced to preclude the possibility of a like return, suffering and death on the part of Enoch and Elijah? There are no such laws, and there is no such word.

But so marvellous a truth is not to be rested on mere likelihoods and probabilities. We must have something positive and decided for it, or dismiss it as a fancy. Something positive and decisive, however, we have.

Turning back to the ancient prophets, we find this word: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you in judgment ... For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch ... BEHOLD, I WILL SEND YOU ELIJAH THE PROPHET [the Septuagint, Arabic, and old Latin versions read 'Elijah the Tishbite'] before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smile the earth with a curse." (Mal. 3:4.)

This is God's own word—the closing word of the Old Testament. It names Elijah the prophet, even Elijah the Tishbite, and says that God will send him again upon earth, to minister among men as the forerunner of the great and terrible day of the Lord—the day of the final overthrow of all the hosts of the wicked.

Here, then, we would seem to come upon solid Scriptural ground. If Elijah means Elijah, and the great and terrible day of the Lord is the day of Christ's final coming in judicial majesty to crush out Satan and his seed, there is no alternative left to believers in God's word, but to receive the doctrine that Elijah is to come again to prophesy and execute works of judgment upon earth, and just in that period of time to which the Apocalypse assigns these Two Witnesses. Whatever else may be compassed by the prediction, and in whatever narrower circles it may have been fulfilled, if words are not utterly deceitful, and certainty can at all be predicated of God's very specific promises, this prophecy cannot be considered fulfilled or accomplished in the past, nor until Elijah the Tishbite, in propria persona, returns again to the earth.

We accordingly find that the book of Ecclesiasticus (which the Roman Catholic Church receives as inspired, which the fathers and Reformers highly honored, and which Protestants often have bound in their Bibles between the Old and New Testament), eulogizes Elijah and says, that he is anointed by God's order to appear again in the world, to rebuke evil, declare the impending judgment, reconcile the children of Jacob, rescue many, and make the way for the great and terrible day then about to break. (Chap. 48:1–11.) Hence also the ancient Jewish believers up to the time of Christ, as all strict Jews since, looked for the reappearance of Elijah in the flesh as the herald of the victorious Messiah. Arnold (in Ecclesiasticus 48:10) says: "It was the unanimous sense of the Jews, that Elias should first come himself in person before the Messiah, and restore all things." Their old Litany of the Hosannas celebrates this anticipation.* Their most honored writers constantly refer to it.† Hence, too, the deputation to John the Baptist with the question: "Art thou Elias?" (John 1:19, 20.) And hence the remark of the disciples to Christ: "The scribes say that Elias must first come." (Matt. 17:10.)

Some teach that this was a mistake—a mere Jewish notion. If so, it was a most extraordinary mistake. What was so devoutly accepted, taught, and believed by the holiest saints from Malachi to Christ, the theme of so many holy prayers and songs, and given out for the truth of God by the most eminent Christian fathers down to and inclusive of Jerome and Augustine, cannot safely be set down as a groundless conceit. We also have the highest Scriptural reasons for believing that it was not an empty notion, but a part of the true and abiding Revelation of God. Jesus Himself has affixed His own infallible authentication to it, and in such explicit terms that we can only wonder how people can speak so contemptuously of it as some writers who call themselves Christians.

On the mount of Christ's glorious Transfiguration Elijah appeared. The disciples saw him and knew him. And, as they were coming down from the mount, they asked the Master about this very point, alleging the doctrine of the scribes that "Elias must first come." And He answered and said unto them: "ELIAS TRULY SHALL FIRST COME, AND RESTORE ALL THINGS." (Matt. 17:11.) This passage is decisive. "The great Interpreter of prophecy gives right to that interpretation of the prophetic word which the scribes maintained," says Trench. It cannot refer to John the Baptist, for John was then dead, while every part of it specifically relates to the future. "Elias truly shall come,* and shall restore all things."† Besides, the restoration or "restitution of all things" (ποκαταστασις παντων), in the which it is affirmed that the coming Elias is to take part, is specifically referred by the Apostle Peter to the time of Christ's second coming. (Acts 3:19.) In all its terms and relations, therefore, we are compelled to accept this solemn declaration of the Saviour as looking to the future, and meant to set forth what yet awaited fulfilment. John the Baptist is here out of the question, unless indeed he is to come again. Dr. Stier has rightly said: "Whoever, in this answer of Christ, would explain away the manifest and striking confirmation of the fact that a coming of Elias was yet to take place, must do great violence to the words, and will never be able to restrain the future of their form and import so as to be applicable to John the Baptist."*

But, it may be asked, Did not Christ say in the same connection, that Elias had come already, leaving it to be understood that He

spoke of John the Baptist? The answer is, Yes; but in a way entirely distinct from the declaration we have just been considering. Elsewhere also he says of John: "If ye will receive [it, him, or something else] this is Elias, which was for to come." (Matt. 11:14.)† This proves that there is a sense in which John the Baptist was Elias, but certainly not such a sense as that in which the Jews were expecting Elias, nor yet such a sense as that in which He declared, after John was dead: "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things."* John was not the literal Elias. This we are compelled to admit, or else he did not tell the truth; for when the priests and Levites asked him, "Art thou Elias?" he answered, "I AM NOT." (John 1:21.) And this clear and positive denial is further sustained by the facts (1) that he did not restore all things as was predicted of Elias, and (2) that the great and terrible day, which was to be ushered in immediately upon the finishing of the Elijah ministry, did not succeed the ministry of John, but is even yet future. Whilst, therefore, there is a sense of much importance in which John was Elias, there is another, more literal, and equally important sense, in which he was not Elias, and in which Elias is still to be expected, according to the Saviour's own word.

There was a twofold ministry embraced in the ancient promise to send Elijah, just as there was a twofold advent in the predictions concerning the Messiah. In neither case did the Old Testament clearly distinguish between these two, but viewed them both as if they were but one. And as the two Messiah-comings are widely separated in time, though belonging to one and the same work; so there are two Elijah-comings, equally separated in time, and equally comprehended in the predictions. Hence John, as the forerunner of Christ in the first advent, was Elias; that is, he filled the Elijah place, operated in the Elijah spirit and energy, did for that occasion the Elijah work, and so far fulfilled the Elijah promise. As the angel said of him before he was born, he went before Christ "in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luke 1:15–17); which implies that he was not Elias himself. The Saviour could, therefore, truly say of him while living, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come;" and so likewise after he was dead, "Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed." John the Baptist operated in the spirit and energy of Elias, and performed the Elijah mission for the first advent, and so far "was Elias," but, according to the word of the angel, only the virtual, and not the literal Elias. He could accordingly answer the Jews, who had in mind the literal Elias, that he was not Elias, while yet, in another respect, he was Elias. In him the prediction in Malachi concerning the sending of Elijah had a true and real fulfilment, but only a partial, germinant, preliminary fulfilment, whilst the highest and ultimate fulfilment respects another advent of the Messiah, and the coming of the literal Elijah as the herald of it.

Such also is the view which the fathers took of the matter; and so they held and taught on the subject with great unanimity.

Justin Martyr says, "If Scripture compels you to admit two advents, shall we not allow that the word of God has proclaimed that Elijah shall be the precursor of the great and terrible day, that is, of His second advent? Accordingly our Lord in His teachings proclaimed that this very thing would take place, saying, that Elijah would also come. And we know that this shall take place when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come in glory from heaven; whose first manifestation the Spirit of God who was in Elijah preceded as herald in John."*

Hippolytus says, "As two advents of our Lord are indicated in the Scriptures, also two forerunners are indicated, the first was John, the son of Zacharias. He first fulfilled the course of forerunner. But since the Saviour is to be manifested again at the end of the world, it is matter of course that His forerunners must appear first, as He says by Malachi, I will send to you Elias the Tishbite before the day of the Lord, who shall come and proclaim the manifestation of Christ that is to be from heaven, and perform signs and wonders."†

So too Origen: "The vision upon the mountain in which Elias was seen, did not appear to agree with what the scribes had said; for it seemed Elias came not before Jesus, but after Him. They asked the question, therefore, supposing that the scribes had misled them. But to this the Saviour answers, not contradicting the tradition about Elias, but declaring that there was another coming of Elias before Christ, which had been unknown to the scribes."‡

Victorinus, Methodius, Cyprian, and Lactantius express the same belief and expectation that Elijah is yet to come in person.§

Chrysostom says, "As John was the forerunner of the first coming, so will Elias be the forerunner of the second coming"—"Christ called John Elias on account of his performing the same office."*

Theophylact says, "By saying that Elias cometh, He shows that he was not yet come; he will come as a forerunner of the second advent, and will restore to the faith of Christ all the Jews who are open to persuasion." "If we will receive it, that is, if ye will understand it wisely (if we will not take it too literally), this [John] is he of whom the prophet Malachi spoke as the coming Elias; for the forerunner and Elias perform the same service."*

Jerome writes, "Elias himself, who will truly come in the body at the second coming of Christ, has now come in the spirit through the medium of John the Baptist."*

And so the great Augustine: "It is a familiar theme in the conversation and heart of the faithful, that in the last days before the judgment the Jews shall believe in the true Christ by means of this great and admirable prophet Elias, who shall expound the law to them. For not without reason do we hope that before the coming of our Judge and Saviour Elias shall come."†

And so profoundly and universally was this belief rooted and grounded in the early Christian heart and teaching, that De la Cerda says, "All the ancient fathers have delivered it;" and Huetius testifies, "It is the constant and most received opinion of the Church, and all the fathers;" and Maldonatus declares, "It was always the most constant opinion of Christians that Elias was to come before the day of judgment;"* and Bellarmine gives it as his belief that to reject this doctrine is, *vel haeresis vel haeresi proximus error*—either heresy, or error next thing to heresy.†

And so likewise it was expected and believed, by both Jews and Christians, that the returned Elijah would be accompanied by some other great prophet of the olden time, who was almost uniformly believed to be Enoch. Hence the book of Ecclesiasticus (according to the rendering of Bossuet, who regarded it as inspired and canonical) sets forth that Enoch is to come again, turn the hearts of the disobedient, and give repentance to the generations then living (Wisd. 44:16), after the same manner that it speaks of Elijah. Hence, when John the Baptist told the messengers of the Jews that he was not Elias, they immediately asked him the further question: "Art thou that prophet?" and wondered who he could be if "not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet." (John 1:19–25.)

The apocryphal Gospels, Acts, &c., which, though we go not to them for doctrine, belong to the early literature of the Church, and hence are competent witnesses as to the opinions current among Christians at the time they were written, are also very positive and clear in the assertion, that Enoch, with Elijah, is to witness again upon earth. In the history of Joseph the carpenter, Jesus is represented as saying: "Enoch and Elias must, toward the end of time, return into the world and die, namely, in the day of commotion, terror, perplexity, and affliction; for Antichrist will slay them." (Chap. 31.) So in the Gospel of Nicodemus, two old men are found living in their bodies in paradise, one of whom says: "I am Enoch, who was well-pleasing to God, and who was translated hither by Him; and this is Elias the Tishbite; and we are also to live until the end of the world; and then we are to be sent by God to withstand Antichrist, and to be slain by him, and after three days to rise again, and to be snatched up in clouds to meet the Lord." (Chap. 9 alias 25.) So also in Revelation of John, a voice from heaven is represented as saying: "Three years shall those times be ... And then I shall send forth Enoch and Elias to convict him [Antichrist]; and they shall show him to be a liar and deceiver; and he shall kill them at the altar, as said the prophet." So also Tertullian (*De Anima*, 50): "Enoch was translated, and so was Elijah; nor did they experience death; it was deferred; they are reserved for the suffering of death, that by their blood they may extinguish Antichrist." Arethas (on Rev. 11:13) declares the two Witnesses to be Enoch and Elijah, and claims that this was held with one accord in his day—concorditer affirmatur. Ephraem the Syrian, in quite another section of the Church, speaking of the Antichrist and the great day of judgment, says, "But, before these things, the merciful Lord will send Elijah the Tishbite, and with him Enoch, to teach religion to the human race: and they shall preach boldly to all men the knowledge of God, exhorting them not to believe in the tyrant through fear. They shall cry out and say, 'This is a deceiver, O ye men. Let none of you in any way believe him: for in a little while he will be utterly abolished. Behold, the Lord, the Holy One, cometh from heaven!'" So also Ambrose, who reproves Victorinus for substituting the name of Jeremiah in the place of Enoch as the companion of Elijah in the last years of this present world. And scarcely, until after the first half of the Christian ages, do we hear of any other testimony on the subject. Whenever we hear of the last great Antichrist and the Witnesses who withstand him unto death, Elijah and Enoch, Enoch and Elijah are the names we hear from the lips of the most eminent teachers, bishops, apologists, and martyrs, from the time of the Apostles onward. Modern Christendom has wellnigh dropped these names from all such connections, as it has also wellnigh dropped most of the characteristics of primitive Christianity itself; but nothing that it has substituted in place of these names can claim even a moiety either of the Scriptural or the traditional evidences, which still, in spite of everything, continue to proclaim Enoch and Elijah The Two Witnesses.*

It is also to be observed that these Witnesses are described as specially Christ's witnesses. He styles them by emphasis "MY two Witnesses"—not so much witnesses for Christ in general as the Mediator and Redeemer of men, but the witnesses of Christ in the particular character and relations in which He was then speaking, namely, as the Mighty Judgment-Angel coming down from heaven, robed in clouds, His face like the sun, and His feet as pillars of fire, about to execute vengeance on His foes and Himself take possession of the earth. And of all men that have ever lived, Enoch and Elijah are the judgment prophets. This particular impress was upon their ministry from the very beginning.

As to Enoch, this characteristic is particularly emphasized. Milton sings of him, that he

—"spake much of right and wrong,
Of Justice, of Religion, Truth, and Peace,
And Judgment from above;"

but from a higher inspiration than that of Milton we learn, that the grand substance of his faith, and preaching, and prophesying, was the last named. We do not know of a single other word that he ever uttered save on this theme of "Judgment from above." There is no evidence that he ever preached on any other subject. The all-absorbing, all-comprehending, as all-characterizing topic of his entire ministry, as attested by the New Testament, was this, that he prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." (Jude 14, 15.) He was, therefore, the great prophet of judgment before the flood, and hence one special witness of Christ in the specific character of the strong Angel coming down from heaven in the clouds to execute vengeance upon the guilty.

As to Elijah, he was also pre-eminently a messenger and prophet of judgment. The Book of Ecclesiasticus says of him, that he stood up as fire, and his word burned like a lamp; he brought sore famine upon the guilty, and by his zeal he diminished their number, and brought kings to destruction, and anointed kings to take revenge. (Eccl. 48:1–8.) Words and works of death and portent to the wicked constituted the great outstanding characteristic of his whole prophetic career, interspersed with the power of resurrection. His spirit was not the evangelic, but the judgment spirit. That wild figure, that stern voice, those deeds of blood, that vehemence of

judicial administration, which stand out in such startling relief from the pages of the old records concerning him, have become somewhat silvered over in the Christian's thoughts with the light of the Mount of Transfiguration; but the fiery zeal, and destructive wrath, and rugged outline of the old prophet of woe and death to Ahab and Jezebel, Baal and Ashtaroth, is still the true and characteristic picture of Elijah, identifying him, of all others since his time, as a peculiar Witness and Messenger of the Judgment Angel. We search in vain for any other two prophets so peculiarly, intensely, and characteristically Judgment-prophets, or that so specially take on the features of heralds and representatives of the coming of the mighty Judgment Angel.

They are further said to be "clothed with sackcloth." This also is significant. It shows that they are individuals, and not bodies of men extending through a dozen centuries. "It is hard to conceive how whole bodies of men and churches could thus be described. The principal symbolic interpreters have left out, or passed very slightly, this important particular. One does not see how bodies of men who lived like other men can be said to have prophesied in sackcloth."* It also shows that we here have to do with another order of things, and not with the present Gospel dispensation. Neither the prophets, nor the children of the New Testament, come thus arrayed in the garb of judgment-times, calamity, and burdens of woe. When we put on Christ, it is not sackcloth we put on, nor is it the spirit of heaviness we enter into; but a wedding garment has clothed us, a garment of praise has arrayed our spirit. The wearing of sackcloth, and the sort of life which it betokens, befit not these years of grace and jubilee, and relate to other times and another ritual. The mention of it here is a distinct indication that the dispensation has changed. Assuming, however, that Elijah and Enoch are to be these witnesses, the description fits entirely to what is written concerning them in the past, and is just what we would expect in case of their return as heralds of the judgment.

Elijah, that prince of Hebrew prophets, with all his holy zeal, was a solitary and savage man, rough and shaggy as a lion, dwelling in the hills and caves and unfrequented ravines of Palestine, when not confronting thrones or hewing false prophets to pieces. The Bible tells of the girdle of skin he wore around his loins, and the hairy cloak in which he wrapped himself, to which it gives a name never applied to any garment but his, and shows at every point of reference to him what wild and ascetic austerity and severity marked his whole style of life, as he traced and trod the footprints of Jehovah, and surged hither and thither by the mighty inspiration of God, insulted and outraged by the idolatries of Israel, and the abominations of its kings.

Nor was it different with Enoch. The nature of the times in which he lived necessarily made him a man much like Elijah. Whatever else is couched in that pregnant statement that he "walked with God," it tells of a life sequestered from that of other men, rugged, isolated, and singular. "Walking with God, he did not walk with men. If we may at all credit the Book which bears his name, "he was wholly engaged with the holy ones, and with the watchers in his days;"* only coming forth betimes to reprove the wicked world, and to sound forth upon unwilling ears the herald voice and midnight cry of coming judgment. And these two great prophets returned to earth again as they were of old, to reprove still greater sins and declare the forthcoming of still greater judgment, would give the exact outline of these Two Witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, and tormenting them that dwell upon the earth.

These Witnesses are furthermore "the two olive-trees and the two lamps which stand before the Lord of the earth." Who are the two olive-trees? All agree that the allusion is to Zechariah's vision. (Zech. 4.) He saw "a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps which are on the top of it; and two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof." He asked, "What are these two olive-trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left thereof?" and again, "What be these two olive-branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?" The answer was, "These are the two anointed ones [oil-children] that stand before the Lord of the whole earth."

What was the meaning of this vision? The Angel gave it: "This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of hosts." That is to say, it was a material image of the mysterious organism through which the heavenly potencies were coming forth to give success unto completion to the work in which Zerubbabel was then engaged. That work was the restoration of Jerusalem, its temple, its worship, and its system of ordinances—the type of the building of the spiritual temple of the Christian Church, and the pattern and prophecy of that final rebuilding and restoration when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. That candlestick of gold stands for the national Church of the Jews, and thence also for the Christian Church (see Rev. 1:20), whilst the two olive-trees—the anointed ones—standing between God and the people, were Zerubbabel the prince, and Jeshua the high priest. Hence, when Christ declares these apocalyptic Witnesses "the two olive-trees," the meaning is, that they are the Zerubbabel and Jeshua of the final restitution;—great ministers of God corresponding to Zerubbabel and Jeshua of old, and occupying a similar position as the organs of heavenly potencies put forth for the occasion. The two olive-trees in the vision are two individual persons; so then these two Witnesses are likewise two individual persons, for they are "the two olive trees" for their day, as Zerubbabel and Jeshua were in a former day.

But whilst they are "the two olive-trees" of their time, as viewed through the medium of Zechariah's vision, the whole order of things is changed from what it was in Zechariah's day, or what it is in the present Church-period. The golden candlestick, with its many conduits and multitudinous burners, is missing. All of that arrangement has disappeared.* The Church-period has ended. Gospel ministers are stars; but these Witnesses are not stars. There are neither "stars" nor candlestick left in the time of these Witnesses. As the more direct and special messengers of God, like Zerubbabel and Jeshua, who gave out the golden oil into the golden bowl and candlestick, the two olive-trees remain; but they are alone, with no golden organism of lightbearers to feed and supply. They are themselves the only light-bearers now; for they are at once "the two olive-trees and the two lamps." This clearly demonstrates that the economy is a new one, whilst it at the same time singularly agrees with the two characters whom we take it to describe. Such a

lone and self-supplying lamp was Enoch—the sole light-bearer to the old world, then on the eve of submersion in the great waters of judgment; and such a lone and self-supplying lamp was Elijah to the nation of Israel, then in great darkness, and drawing near its great captivity. Many distinguished individual lightbearers have graced the several ages of time, but none of them so marked and conspicuous in self-standing lonesomeness as these two. Never but once did the human race depend for a knowledge of God's purposes upon one mere man as it depended upon Enoch; and never but once did the Hebrew faith hang upon one mere man, as it hung upon Elijah and his ministrations. He was himself "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." (2 Kings 2:12.) Looking through the world for two men pre-eminently entitled to the name of "the two lamps," we must inevitably settle upon Enoch and Elijah, who, as "the two lamps," are mysteriously preserved to come again for the illumination of still darker times, after the same style as of old. "Which stand before the Lord of the earth." This is peculiar language, but exactly fitted to the same conclusions. "Lord of the earth" is not the Christian title of God; for the Church, like Abraham in Canaan, is only a pilgrim and a sojourner here, and Satan is now the god of this world. The characteristic name of our God in the Gospel is, "The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet, when Israel was about to cross the Jordan, and to possess the promised land as a divine nation, God was called "Lord of all the earth." (Josh. 3:11–13.) When Jerusalem was conquered and its people carried away captive to Babylon, the Most High took the name of "the God of heaven." (Dan. 2:18, 28, 37, 44, &c.) When they came back to rebuild the temple, and repossess their land, and re-establish their holy state, God was again called "the Lord of the whole earth." (Zech. 4:14.) But when He is styled Lord of the earth, the word is Adon, Master, and not Jehovah. It would, therefore, seem to be a theocratic title, having relation to a divine nationality and government upon the earth. If so, the occurrence of it here, again bespeaks the Jew in his own land, and Jerusalem and the temple rebuilt; and proves that this part of the Apocalypse relates, not to the middle centuries of Christendom, as so many think, but to that time when the glorious Christ is taking forcible mastery of the earth, and setting up upon it His own visible supremacy and kingdom. These two Witnesses "stand before the Lord of the earth." This standing before or in the presence of the Lord, or the king, ordinarily signifies the enjoyment of a near relation, acceptableness and authority, as the servants or officers of the Lord or king. But this is otherwise so clearly expressed and implied with regard to these Witnesses, that we are prompted to look for something more peculiar and characteristic in the phrase as here employed. If we keep to the strict reading of the text, this standing of the Witnesses before the Lord of the earth was already a matter of fact when the statement was given to John. It is not said that they will stand before the Lord in the time and office of their prophesying, but that they were then, while the Angel was speaking, standing before the Lord of the earth. To keep rigidly to the words then, these Witnesses were persons already living in the time of John, and hence not churches and bodies of men born centuries afterwards;—living also a true bodily life, for still capable of bodily death, as shown from the killing of them by the Beast. But John's earthly contemporaries have all been dead for ages, and were all dead long before the time at which any one has located these two Witnesses. Being alive then in the time of John, and still living a bodily life susceptible of bodily death, and thus surviving all John's earthly contemporaries, they must have been living in heaven, having been taken thither without dying. This would also seem to be the more particular sense of the phrase "standing before the Lord." When the Saviour exhorts to watchfulness and prayer, that we may be accounted worthy to escape the judgment sorrows, "and to stand before the Son of man," what is it that He most of all proposes to us, but transference to the presence of Jesus in the heavenly spaces without the intervention of death? And if so, why may not this standing of the two Witnesses before the Lord of the earth in the time of John, be taken as specially descriptive of a corresponding transfer and continuity of bodily existence bestowed upon them? Dying is falling—ceasing to stand—becoming prostrate; and, by just antithesis, standing is living—continuity of bodily life uninterrupted by death. And in this sense, to stand before the Lord must involve transfer to where the Lord is, without the suffering of death. If then these two Witnesses, destined to be murdered by the Beast, were standing before the Lord in uninterrupted bodily life at the time these words concerning them were spoken to John, who could they be but ENOCH and ELIJAH? Of all men that have lived in heaven or on earth, these lone two answer to the description. They were still standing in the time of John, never hewing fallen under the power of death; and they were standing before the Lord of the earth, having been miraculously conveyed away from among men into the mysterious heavens, where they still stand in waiting readiness to fulfill any commands of their Lord, even though it should be to return to the earth, here to repeat in increased intensity their great deeds of old, and have added to their crowns that of martyrdom also.

Thus, then, it would seem to me, that we have sufficiently identified these mysterious Witnesses, and also in strict accord with all the terms and surroundings of the record, without straining language or forcing history, as in every other interpretation that has been given. Other arguments lie couched in what further is revealed concerning them, which will be brought out when we reach the places. But I must close for the present, which I do in the words of Paul, written not without some relation to this very subject: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." (Rom. 11:33.)

LECTURE 24

SUPERNATURALISM, JUDGMENT TIMES—PROPHETS OF THE COMING JUDGE—EVINCE THE JUDGMENT SPIRIT—INFLICT GREAT PLAGUES—ARE RESTITUTIVE PROPHETS FOR JEWS AND GENTILES—PREVENT THE UTTER DESTRUCTION OF THE RACE—IMMORTAL TILL THEIR WORK IS DONE, FINALLY VANQUISHED AND SLAIN—REFUSED BURIAL—JOY OVER THEIR DEATH—THEIR RESURRECTION AND RECALL TO HEAVEN—THE EFFECT—A GREAT EARTHQUAKE—THOUSANDS DESTROYED—MIGHTY TERROR—CONCLUSION OF THE SUBJECT.

Rev 11:5–14. (Revised Text.) And if any one willeth to injure them, fire issueth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies; and if any one willeth to injure them, thus must he be killed.

These have power to shut the heaven that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying: and they have power upon the waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with every plague as often as they will.

And when they shall have completed their testimony, the beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them; and their corpse [shall lie] upon the broad place of the great city, which is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And [certain ones] from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations behold their corpse three days [and] half, and suffer not their corpses to be put into a sepulchre.

And they that dwell in the land rejoice upon them, and make merry, and shall send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt in the land.

And after the three days and half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon those Who beheld them.

And they heard a great voice out of the heaven saying to them. Come up hither. And they went up into the heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them. And in that hour there happened a great earthquake, and the tenth of the city fell, and were killed by the earthquake seven thousand names of men; and the remainder became terrified and gave glory to the God of the heaven.

The second woe is past; behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

I HAVE noted some of the reasons for the uniform belief of the early Church, that the Two Witnesses here spoken of are individual persons, and that they are none other than Enoch and Elijah, returned again to this world in its last evil days, according to other sacred prophecies and ancient beliefs. The subject is full of interest, and is far from having been exhausted. A number of important inquiries and circumstances remain to be considered; and to these I now propose to direct attention.

Assuming that I have sufficiently identified these Witnesses as the returned Enoch and Elijah, I invite you to note more particularly, I. THEIR TIMES; II. THEIR DOINGS; III. THEIR END; praying the God of prophecy to prosper the attempt to search out the mysteries of his holy Word, and to guide us into a right knowledge of the predictions he has given for our learning.

I. As to the Times of these Witnesses quite a good deal has necessarily been anticipated in the preceding lecture; but, that we may have the picture more fully before us, a few further observations are necessary.

1. The times are not Gospel times. There are indications of the presence of the Jew and his temple, but no traces whatever of the present Church. Though symbols, which in their original application embraced the Church, are referred to, they are modified and recast so as to eliminate from them what specially represented the Church. "The two olive trees" appear, but the golden candlestick is gone, and in its place is nothing but two lone lamps,—the two Witnesses themselves. Ministers of God are present, but their spirit and method are entirely different from what pertains to ministers of the Gospel in the present dispensation. These witnesses kill, torment, deal out fiery judgments upon their enemies, and avenge and resent the very wish to injure them, even before it is outwardly manifested in act. This is not according to the Christian spirit, and very unlike the commands which are upon us now. We are not to avenge ourselves, not to render evil for evil, not to smite and kill our enemies, but to love them and do good to them, and to be "harmless as doves." Even Jesus himself, who had all power, refused to exercise it after the style of these Two Witnesses, and has given us commandment to follow his steps. He tells us that he came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; and in this spirit his servants have ever acted. Stephen is stoned, James is beheaded, Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned, Peter is crucified, Polycarp is burned, Antipas is put to death; but neither of them resists, nor attempts to defend himself by miracle, or to avenge the wrong inflicted. But here are ministers of God of another order. "Fire issueth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies; and if any one willeth to injure them, thus must he be killed." The preaching of the Gospel is a thing of joy and gladness. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation!" (Is. 52:7.) But these Witnesses are arrayed in sackcloth, and their very garb betokens calamity and judgment. Nature itself is joyful over the course of the messengers of grace. The prophetic word was, "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree." (Is. 55:12, 13.) But here the heavens are shut up that no rain falls, the waters are turned to blood, the earth is smitten by many a plague, and they that dwell on it are tormented. "Peace on earth and good will toward men" is the keynote of the Gospel; but the ministry of these Witnesses is one of the three great apocalyptic woes. It is simply impossible, therefore, to find place for these Witnesses as Gospel ministers of the present dispensation. They have quite

another commission, and operate for quite other ends. They remind us rather of the old theocratic order, when Jeroboam's hand was withered by the unnamed "man of God" when put forth to lay hold on him, and fire from heaven consumed the soldiers of Ahaziah that came against Elijah on the hill.

2. They are very evil times—times of great affliction and sorrow for God's true ministers. This is signified by their habit. They gird themselves in sackcloth, as Jacob when he mourned for his son, as King David in his grief and abhorrence at the unjust killing of Abner, as Daniel when he came before the Lord to lament the sins of Israel, as Hezekiah when he heard the blasphemies and boasts of Sennacherib, and as the priests of God when the holy services of the temple were intercepted. The world is so full of malignant evil, that they cannot maintain a being in it without the power of miracle. Hell has incarnated itself upon earth. From the abyss has come up a mysterious Beast, to whom Satan gives power and authority as his chosen agent, whose mouth is open in blasphemies against God and His tabernacle, after whom all the world wonders, and whom the great mass of men worship and adore. War rages against the holy ones, and overcomes them, and kills even the fire-guarded Witnesses themselves, whilst the people congratulate each other and make merry over the death of God's most extraordinary prophets. Times there have often been for good men to sigh, and cry, and wrap themselves in the habiliments of lamentation and woe because of the wickedness and evils of the world, but none to compare with these times of the Two Witnesses.

3. They are also times of intense supernaturalism and miracle. All the ordinary laws of things are shaken and bent, like reeds in a swollen river; and extraordinary agencies and results put themselves forth from all sides. Saints from heaven and potencies from hell are upon the scene, as never was the case to the same extent or in the same manner before. Here are Enoch and Elijah, who so miraculously disappeared from the earth so many ages ago, again as miraculously moving and ministering among men, and breathing fire which devoureth those who will to injure them. They have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls during all their ministry; they have power over waters to turn them to blood; and every species of plague is in their hands wherewith to smite the earth and torment its wicked inhabitants.

And a similar preternaturalism presents itself on the side of evil. When Moses comes to Pharaoh with his heavenly signs and wonders, hell's priests are there too with their perplexing mimicries and lying wonders. So here. Supernatural divine prophets appear, and they are at once confronted with a supernatural man from the abyss, and his false prophet at his right hand, doing great wonders, making fire come from the sky in the sight of men, deceiving them that dwell on the earth by those miracles which he had power to do, giving life and speech to an image, causing men to worship it, and all to be beheaded who will not conform to the detestable idolatry. "As Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth." The worst impieties of all ages shall concentrate in one. All the power of hell itself shall come into play upon earth. Such times the world has not yet seen. Indeed, human philosophy has become so wise as to banish from the range of possibility even the smaller variations from the ordinary course of nature which stand recorded of the past. But all such wisdom is folly. There is nothing permanent in nature. It is not true that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." Mighty changes and variations have occurred, and will yet occur. Nature's laws are not God, and are ever subject to modifications both from heaven and from hell. Satan could impoverish and sicken Job as Moses could afflict Pharaoh. Nay, here it stands written, from the lips of Him who is the Alpha and Omega, that there shall come times when spiritual potencies, good and bad, will show their activity on the earth, as if nature herself were about to be entirely superseded. Men are astounded, and hold back from believing when they read the doings of Abraham's God among the idols of Egypt, or in the camp of the pilgrim Hebrews. They hesitate, and talk of fiction, metaphor, superstition, orientalism, exaggeration, when the life and deeds of Jesus are the theme. But their doubts about the supernatural, and all their grave science on the subject, shall yet be utterly confounded. Here are times indicated, which shall bring men on earth face to face with living powers from heaven and hell in the gigantic struggle of their last conflict, and fill the world with wonders, of which those in Egypt were but the dim foreshadows;—times when that Devil, whose existence some count a mere myth, will put himself forth in things so marvellous that, if it were possible, the very elect would be deceived, whilst the deluded world gathers as one man to his worship as their God and Saviour. People may doubt, and shake their heads, and vaunt the sobrieties of their better philosophy; but such will be the times of these Two Witnesses.

4. The same will of course be judgment times. We must not lose sight of the fact, that in all these wonders of the Apocalypse, we have to do with "the Day of the Lord," and the winding up of all the affairs of this present world. This is the one great theme, from the seven Epistles onward. Phase after phase, and act after act, of the drama of this world's ending have already passed before us, as we have gone forward with these expositions. In the preceding chapter we saw this self-same speaker of the text, who is none other than Christ himself, setting his burning feet on sea and land, holding in his possession the open title to both, and swearing by the eternal Maker of all things that there should be no more delay. Between that oath and the completed mystery lay only these days of the Two Witnesses, and a little season beyond the finishing of their testimony. The days of the seventh angel, when he sounds, bring the consummation of the whole matter; and that angel stands ready to sound the moment these Witnesses pass from the stage. Their times, therefore, belong to the period when judgment is hastening to its culmination. The old prophecy also says that Elijah is to be sent immediately "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord;" that is, immediately anterior to the outpouring of God's consuming wrath upon the wicked in its highest stress and fulness, while the woes of judgment are surging hither and thither through the world all ready for the final consummating act. And one of these Witnesses is Elijah. Their times are, therefore, the fearful times of the judgment.

II. We come, then, to note THEIR DOINGS OR WORK

1. They are here presented in the special character of Witnesses—prophetic Witnesses. A witness is one who deposes to the truth, explains it, attests it. All the prophets were God's Witnesses. So were the Apostles, who so solemnly and convincingly testified to the Gospel and its facts. So, too, all the confessors of Christ, who gave up their lives rather than surrender their faith, are called Martyrs, Witnesses. And so even Christ himself is "the faithful and true Witness," because of what he taught and testified, sealing it with his blood. The character, therefore, under which these Two Witnesses are described, indicates the nature of their administrations. They are great messengers from God, sent into the world in its last dreadful extremity, to teach, explain, and attest His truth and purposes. As Enoch and Noah in the old world, as Moses before Pharaoh, as Jonah in Nineveh, as Elijah against Ahab and Jezebel, as John the Baptizer to Jerusalem and Herod, and as the Apostles in the world lying in sin, so are these Witnesses to the populations and powers of their day. They rebuke reigning iniquity, unmask Satan's falsities, insist upon the prompt repentance of sinners, and maintain righteousness over against apostasy and abounding wickedness. They prophesy, expound the Scriptures, demand obedience to God, point out the only way of escape from oncoming damnation, and labor to turn men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God.

2. But they are not only prophetic Witnesses, but by emphasis the Witnesses of the Angel who is speaking to John, "My Witnesses." This is proof positive that the Angel is Christ himself. Angels are often God's ministers, but he has never sent and endowed prophets to be the servants and messengers of angels. Nor have angels anything going on in this world so as to have use for witnesses. And when engaged in doing for God and His Church, they are never recognized as other than fellow-servants and brother agents with prophets and apostles. (Rev. 22:9.) We everywhere read of prophets and witnesses of God and Christ, but nowhere do we read of prophets and preachers of angels. Yet, here are two of the most extraordinary prophetic Witnesses we know of, whom this Angel designates as emphatically His Witnesses. The same must, therefore, be Christ himself, and cannot, in the nature of things, be any other.

But this Angel is not Christ in His present office and attitude as our sinbearer and intercessor; but Christ as the mighty Judge and King, about to close up the whole history of this present world, having already set his burning feet upon it, and sworn by Him that liveth forever and ever that there shall be no more delay. And it is in this particular attitude and work that these Witnesses are by emphasis His. They are not Gospel ministers according to the present order; for the Church period is past. They are extraordinary persons for an extraordinary work. They witness for Christ, not as the bleeding and pleading Lamb of God, but as the avenger of his elect, who is about to break his enemies with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. They are Judgment prophets sent to resist the gigantic blasphemies of the final Antichrist, give to the infatuated world its last awful warning, assure of the coming avalanche of destruction, and put into condition for deliverance a people to be carried over to that new and better order of things which is then to follow.

3. To this also agree the powers which they exercise. Everything is full of the spirit of judgment "Fire issueth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies." Gospel ministers also have enemies, who often hate and persecute them unto death; but they are not at liberty thus to defend themselves. These Witnesses live in other times. The Angel has placed his feet of fire upon the earth, and his Witnesses are armed with fire, with command to use it. They emit or breathe it from their mouths the same as the Euphratean horsemen. I can make nothing of the record except to take it literally as it is written. Nor do I find any difficulty in the way of such an acceptance. The horsemen were supernatural beings from hell, and the Two Witnesses are supernatural beings from heaven; and, in either case, I know not why the thing may not be true to the exact letter. If we are to think of gunpowder in the case of the horsemen, we must do the same here, and set down these witnesses as a brace of sharpshooters. We do, indeed, know of holy prophets using miraculous fire against the wicked, but I know of no case in which they carried rifles. Nor would it seem congruous for Enoch and Elijah, after having been these thousands of years in heaven, to go about the earth as holy messengers of God with each a breech-loader on his shoulder. They will need no such weapons. He who, after his brief sojourn in Sinai, could speak fire from heaven which consumed fifty soldiers at a time, and repeat the operation at will, certainly would be at no loss to speak killing fire upon his assailants, after having gone to heaven in a chariot of fire, and lived there amid the celestial splendors for thousands of years. And come now again into the world as God's great judgment-prophet, it befits the times, himself, and the Angel whose he is, to prove to the doomed world by the very breath of his mouth that the devouring wrath of the Almighty is fully kindled, and ready to break forth in fiery destruction to all who stand out against his messengers, or seek to destroy them.*

But these Witnesses not only have power and command to kill their assailants with fire, but otherwise to torment and afflict the wicked world. They breathe the law-spirit, and they execute lawpenalties. Of old the threat upon apostasy was: "Thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed." (Deut. 28:23, 24.) And now that the time has come for all God's threats to be executed, these messengers of his come to attest the true state of things, "shut the heaven that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying." When Elijah was the first time on earth, "he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months" (James 5:17, 18); and the same will be repeated when he comes again,—repeated in token of the presence and anger of the same sin-avenging Jehovah.† It is for the great sin of idol worship, trust in false gods, and sacrilegious desecration of God's temple, that this shutting off of rain is the special penalty. (Lev. 26:1, 19; Zach. 10:1, 2; Jer. 14:22; Hag. 1:9–11.) We thus see reflected something of the characteristics of the times of these Witnesses, and of the more

specific aim of their prophetic endeavors. The shutting of the heaven tells of infamous idolatry, false confidence, and defilement of the temple, and the infliction of this particular chastisement by these Witnesses likewise tells of efforts on their part to set on foot again the true worship of Jehovah in his own chosen house.

One of the great plagues which Moses brought upon Egypt was the turning of the waters into blood. It was an infliction particularly related to the bloody and oppressive tyranny which had been enacted against God's people. In like manner these Witnesses "have power upon the waters to turn them to blood." The thing having been done once, there is nothing to hinder it from being done again. And as oppression, persecution, and wholesale murder, were the particular forms of sin which brought this plague in the days of Moses, its recurrence here tells of similar transgression, and shows further against what the endeavors of these Witnesses are directed. They come to rebuke and resent the blasphemies of unprincipled power, the oppressions of assumed authority, the murders of persecuting government, attesting by the nature of their infliction the near coming of the Almighty to overwhelm these bloody tyrants and all their hosts forever. Nay, "to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they will," is the intrusted prerogative of these Witnesses, that they may prove how everything is in the hand of Him who sends them, and is now ready to be turned into enginery of irresistible destruction to those who still persist in their impieties.

4. These Witnesses are "the two olive trees." This refers us back to Zachariah, where Zerubbabel and Jeshua appear as the two olive trees. These were the two special ministers of God, the one a prince and the other a priest, who led the advance in Israel's return from the great captivity, stirred up the people to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, and restored again something of the old polity and worship to its ancient place. A still greater desolation has since come upon Israel for the rejection of Christ and his salvation. It is to continue "till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," and the present Church order has run its course. Then is to come another restoration, and a "restitution of all things," when God "will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land, and will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, ... and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children forever; and he will set his sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore" (Ezek. 36). The time for this is everywhere given as the judgment time—somewhere about the period of these Two Witnesses. And if they are Zerubbabel and Jeshua in some sort over again, we thus have a very distinct light thrown upon the character of their work. They are to lead the restoration of fallen Israel. They are to go up with the vanguard to their ancient seat. They are to inaugurate the work of bringing back to the ancient worship God's long-rejected and afflicted people. They are to labor for the setting up again of the temple and the theocratic rule, and for the return of the smitten nation to its true God and Saviour King.

5. But all this is made still clearer when we connect with it the literal prophecies concerning the coming again of Elijah. We find those prophecies in the Old Testament and the New, from the servants, and from the Lord himself. It was the work of Elijah when he lived on earth to convince and lead back the apostate people to the God of their fathers, and with the spirit of judgment to testify against the heathen falsities which had taken possession of the nation. John the Baptizer, who came "in the spirit and power of Elias," fulfilled a like office, called the people to repentance, and by the threats of impending doom incited them to flee from the coming wrath, and put themselves in readiness for the Messiah King, even then standing unrecognized among them. And so Malachi tells us that, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, Elijah the prophet will come, "and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." (Mal. 4:5, 6.) So, too, the Saviour himself tells us that "Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things." (Matt. 17:11.)*

We may not be able to tell the full meaning of these words; but the reference is, above all, to the Jewish people. Malachi introduces the announcement of the coming again of "Elijah the prophet," with special command to remember "the law of Moses," and "the statutes" given through him in Horeb for all Israel. The "fathers" must needs be the heads of the Jewish race and economy, who first received God's Institutes, and best understood and observed them. The "children," then, must be their remoter descendants, contemplated as apostate and quite estranged from their holy ancestors. The turning and restoring must accordingly relate above all to the Jewish people, whatever minor relations it may have to the Gentiles. There is to be a bringing back of the branches that have been broken off, to be grafted again into their own native stock, purified, delivered, and settled after their old estates. And for this, among the rest, these Witnesses are sent, at least Elijah, whom we believe to be one of them. Hence the words of Augustine, that "it is a familiar theme in the conversation and heart of the faithful, that in the last days before the judgment the Jews shall believe in the true Christ by means of this great and admirable prophet Elias, who shall expound the law to them. For not without reason do we hope that before the coming of our Judge and Saviour Elias shall come, because we have good reason to believe that he is now alive.... When, therefore, he is come, he shall give a spiritual explanation of the law which the Jews at present understand carnally, and shall thus 'turn the heart of the fathers to the children.' ... The meaning is, that the sons, that is the Jews, shall understand the law as the fathers, the prophets, and Moses himself among them, understood it. For the heart of the fathers shall be turned to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, when the children understand the law as the fathers did, and have the same sentiments."*

As John was sent "in the spirit and power of Elias," we may also see in his stirring mission an indication of what the work of the real Elias shall be. His office was, as declared by the Angel, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:16, 17.) We know something of the thrilling power with which his voice rung out from the wilderness of Judea, assaulting the apostasies and sins of the nation, and demanding instant repentance and return to the ancient faith on pain of a speedy destruction. He was a bright and shining light in the midst of a

perverse and crooked generation, turning “many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God,” and making ready a people from among whom the Gospel derived its first adherents and the Church its apostolic leaders and princes. And thus, on the superior scale in which the original excels the picture, and the second Advent exceeds the first, will Elijah suddenly flash out the sharp messages of Jehovah in the last evil times, and draw forth from amid the incurable ungodliness a portion of the house of Jacob to become the centre of a new order in the final restoration.

6. And such an office with regard to the Jews on the part of Elijah, suggests and argues a corresponding office with regard to the Gentiles on the part of his fellow-Witness. Enoch was not a Jewish prophet. He lived and prophesied long before Moses and the law. It was through his ministry that a seed was prepared to survive the awful flood to become the heads and princes of the repopulated earth. The son of Sirach celebrates him as taken up alive to heaven, that he might be a token, teacher, witness, herald, of repentance to other generations.* Such a token and witness he was in his own degenerate times. Patristic poetry sings of him as the “signal ornament” of the patriarchal Church, who

By counsel strove

To recall peoples gone astray from God

And following misdeed, while raves on earth

The horde of robber renegades;†

and inspiration tells of the pungency and fire with which he prophesied of the fearful coming of the Lord to execute judgment upon all, and settle accounts with the wicked for all their hard speeches and ungodly deeds. (Jude 14, 15.) And as the future ministry of Elijah is to wear the same features as the first, only intensified and exalted, the same must also be true of Enoch, who comes with him as one of the Two Witnesses. His first mission was to the common world at large, then drawing toward its end in the flood; and so will be his future mission at the end of this present world, to prepare a people from among the Gentiles also to survive the great day, even though many whom he recovers to obedience may meet the fate of holy martyrs under the bloody reign of Antichrist.

7. The work of these Witnesses is then a merciful work. Though they appear in judgment times, and evince the severity of the judgment spirit, dealing out plague and fire, lashing and harassing the impious Beast from the abyss, tormenting them that dwell on the earth, killing all who venture to harm them, and causing all nations to feel the disturbing effect of their presence, they are still messengers of mercy on an errand of good and grace. True, their ministry will not be more effectual than it was when they prophesied of old. Israel as a nation will not then be turned back from its apostasy, and the world will not be deterred from acknowledging and worshipping the Antichrist. Because men love not the truth, even miracle and judgment will not persuade them. (2 Thess. 2:9–12.) Still, the sending and ministrations of these Witnesses is an act of mercy in the midst of wrath, and accomplishes a gracious purpose. Some are rescued and saved. But for these supernatural messengers the whole race would yield to the Antichrist, and perish with him. It is that the earth may not be utterly swallowed up under the terrible ban of final judgment, that they are sent. This is specifically stated in connection with the promise of the coming again of Elijah. The word is, “I will send you Elijah the prophet, ... and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” (Mal. 4:6.) The Hebrew word here rendered curse denotes utter destruction. It is one of the most fearful words in use among the Jews, and was specially applied to the extermination of the Canaanites, whose cities were razed to their foundations, and their inhabitants utterly destroyed.* And this fate would befall the whole race but for the ministry of these Witnesses, and the gathering out of an elect remnant by their instrumentality, for which remnant’s sake the desolating and all-consuming terrors of “the great and dreadful day of the Lord” are measurably pacified and softened. When Jerusalem fell, except those days of awful suffering had been shortened, none could possibly have survived; “but for the elect’s sake those days” were “shortened.” (Matt. 24:21, 22.) And a corresponding modification in the stress of tribulation and ruin is to occur again in connection with the last awful catastrophe, by reason of what these Witnesses achieve.

III. Notice, then, WHAT BECOMES OF THEM. Their career, though illustrious, and crowded with miracle from beginning to end, is very brief. “They shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days”—just three years and six months. The mightiest of sacred ministries on earth have been the shortest.

1. These Witnesses are immortal till their work is done. How they are nourished, or whether they partake at all of earthly food, is not told us. Elijah was supernaturally fed when on earth the first time; nor can much less be said of John, the spiritual Elias; and there is no reason for doubting that it will be more eminently so when the true Elijah comes again. At any rate, nothing can harm these Witnesses till they “have completed their testimony.” They that undertake to injure or interfere with them are instantly burned to death. No power of earth or hell can touch or bind them. There was a time when Elijah fled from the face of Jezebel, and Herod imprisoned John, and finally cut off his head. But there can be no intimidation, no imprisonment, no killing of these holy messengers till they have quite fulfilled all that they are sent to do.

2. When their work is finished they become vanquishable and are vanquished. “When they shall have completed their testimony, the Beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war with them, and overcome them, and kill them.” Whether in consequence of a withdrawal of their power of self-defence and the gradual wasting of their heavenly vigor, like the fading of the celestial halo from the face of Moses, or by an enlarged license to hell to act out its murderous malignity, the potencies of the underworld eventually seize them and put them to death. What form of death they die is not described. The reference to crucifixion in verse 8 can hardly be

applied to them. We know that beheading is the ordinary mode of execution under the Antichrist. (Rev. 20:4.) John, who was the spiritual Elias, was beheaded. And it is to be inferred that so these Witnesses are killed.

3. Their dead bodies are denied sepulture. Their corpses are exposed “upon the broad place of the great city, which is called spiritually Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.” “It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem” (Luke 13:33); and there these last great prophets, like their Lord before them, meet their end. Jerusalem is called a “great city;”^{*} and as there is another great earthly city spoken of in this book, the further mark is given, that it is the one “which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt.” The introduction of this word “spiritually” settles the literalness of the narrative. Only the names “Sodom and Egypt” are to be spiritualized, or taken in a sense different from the letter. Men mistake God’s mind, and pervert God’s word, when they refuse to accept and interpret the Bible as it reads. When he means it to be taken otherwise, he gives us indication to that effect. Jerusalem is not Sodom; and yet, “spiritually” considered, or Jerusalem in apostasy, is a Sodom, and is repeatedly so called by the prophets. (Is. 1:9, 10; 3:8, 9; Deut. 32:30–33; Jer. 23:14.) So also is it “spiritually” likened to an Egypt, because of its idolatries. (Ezek. 23:3, 4, 8, 19.) But to identify the place beyond mistake, it is further described as the city “where also their Lord was crucified,” which was none other than the literal Jerusalem. The main description is a moral one, indicative of the ripeness of affairs for the great destruction that impends, but it is likewise local and geographic, to distinguish the city now in question from great Babylon, with which some improperly confound it. Everything betokens that we are here on Jewish soil, and have to do with the Jewish capital. And there, in the broad place of public concourse,^{*} the dead bodies of these Witnesses are exposed. “And certain ones from among the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations behold their corpses three days and a half, and suffer not their corpses to be put into a sepulchre.” This is so intense an outrage upon common decency and humanity, that it is full of significance here. Even to the worst of criminals the law awarded burial on the same day of their execution (Deut. 21:22, 23); but all law and right feeling is set at defiance with regard to these prophets of God. The exposure of their dead bodies tells of a most extraordinary malignity and spite, and attests the extraordinary potency and effectiveness of the objects of it. It shows at once a devilishness of unwonted intensity in the people, and a terribleness of efficiency in the Witnesses in provoking a fiendishness and resentment so monstrous and unrelenting that it could not be placated by their death, but continued to reek and vent itself upon their lifeless remains after they were dead.

4. Great joy is experienced over their death. “They that dwell in the land rejoice upon them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another.” These Witnesses were a terrible dread and annoyance to the Beast and his adherents; and many a sore torment had they occasioned to the wicked. Those torments were indeed but the earnest and precursors of far greater woes now ready to break forth. But so insane are Satan’s dupes, that they count their redemption come, if only they can get rid of God’s faithful ministers. Now that the two mighty Witnesses are dead, they dismiss all further fear, consider their greatest trouble at an end, and send presents and congratulations to each other, as upon some grand jubilee.*

5. Three days and a half the holy prophets lie in death, their corpses a public spectacle, their killing celebrated as a general benefaction. The days are literal days, not years. Corpses could not endure to be thus exposed for three and a half years. Three years and a half they prophesied, and three days and a half they lie under the power of death. It was long enough to prove the reality of their death, of which the representatives of the nations were so anxious to be perfectly assured.

6. But they do not remain dead. “After the three days and a half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet.” The extraordinariness of the death and resurrection harmonizes well with the extraordinariness of the history of Enoch and Elijah throughout. Of old, they left the world as no other mortal ever did, and here they are resurrected in a band by themselves, and under circumstances quite differing from all other resurrections. Whilst their exposed corpses were being watched and guarded by men overjoyed at their destruction, those lifeless frames took vitality again. The spirit of life from God re-entered them, and they arose from their prostration, and stood upright, gazing round upon the terrified people who beheld them, and flashing a fresh and still deeper alarm into the guilty souls late so joyous over their death. “The triumph of the wicked is short;” and the “great fear” which now “fell upon those who beheld them,” was only the intenser because of the fiendish indignities which had since been added to the sum of previous crimes. Conscience is a fearful executioner. A very hell of plagues and torments instantly throng the imaginations of these astounded spectators. They remember the power and terribleness of these Witnesses while they lived; how the mere will to injure them was resented with sudden death; and what revolting and distressing afflictions they had given forth upon the worshippers of the Beast. And now that organized and Satanic war, and veritable killing, and the baseness of the most malignant insults after the killing, had been perpetrated, what was to be apprehended from this their sudden resurrection! But these holy messengers had completed their work on earth, and Jesus himself was now to be their avenger. No more devouring fire issues from their mouths, and no further plagues do they inflict. By the power of God life is restored to them, even a higher, more glorious, more indestructible life than that which was given them in their marvellous translation. They rise and stand upon their feet. Their enemies behold them. The reality of their resurrection is as manifest as was the reality of their death. The fiendish joy of the enemy is suddenly turned into overwhelming terror. Guilty consciences are now the prophets that torment the people. The Witnesses prophesy no more. They only stand up, and other fires seize their adversaries’ souls.

7. Heaven immediately recalls them. They stood by Christ in their testimony, faithful unto death; and Christ now rewards their fidelity, receives them to himself, and crowns them among his heavenly princes. “They heard a great voice out of heaven saying to them, Come up hither. And they went up into the heaven in the cloud, and their enemies beheld them.” People who would not believe in the resurrection and ascension of Christ for their hope and consolation, are now compelled to witness the resurrection and ascension of

his last Witnesses, to their horror and dismay. The record is literal. As well might we think to do away with the literal reality of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ himself, as with the literal reality of the death, resurrection, and ascension of these Two Witnesses. Against their wishes and theories, many have been compelled to admit the inevitable literalness of "the first resurrection" in chapter 20; but much more clear, circumstantial, and certain is the literalness of the account of these Witnesses and their marvellous end. I therefore receive and hold it for a literal history.*

When Jesus ascended, and his friends stood gazing after him in tearful wonder and adoration, holy angels lingered by with words of promise and comfort. Here there is another gazing into heaven, as his prophets go up. But the gazers now are his murderous foes. Marvels follow here also; but they are marvels of judgment. Not loving angels with words of consolation, but executioners of divine vengeance with signs of doom show their presence. "In that hour there happened a great earthquake." It is a literal earthquake, for it overthrows buildings and kills men. "The tenth of the city fell, and were killed by the earthquake seven thousand names of men." Earthquakes attended the death and resurrection of Jesus also, but we read of no deaths occasioned by them. Those were days of mercy and promise; these are days of judgment. A tenth part of the city is thrown into ruins, and many people are slain. Seven thousand men are enumerated as killed by this earthquake.* The record says "names of men;" but men's names stand for those who have them, and they have them in proportion as those names are in people's mouths. Hence many understand by it men of name, note, and distinction, being seven thousand in number. When Jesus said to the Church in Sardis (Rev. 3:4), "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments;" he meant persons in Sardis. So when the same Speaker here talks of names being killed by an earthquake, it is equally clear that the reference is to persons. Perhaps the phrase is meant to denote only men of name, but it certainly denotes men, of whom seven thousand perish from the earth. They would not allow burial to the slain Witnesses, and now they themselves are buried alive in the ruins of their own houses, and in hell forever.

We may well suppose that such a cluster of stunning marvels would not be without effect, even upon the hardened wretches of those evil times. Amazement, conviction, terror, strike in upon their guilty souls, and for the moment they acknowledge the hand of God and seem ready to repent. "The remainder," that is, those not destroyed with the seven thousand, "became terrified and gave glory to God." To see those dreaded Witnesses come to life again, and go up in triumph to the sky, and, in the same hour, one house in every ten of the city fallen, seven thousand men of name killed by the disaster, and the world itself rocking as if in the throes of dissolution, was more than even their indurated hearts could bear. Against their will they are forced to the confession that God's almighty power is in it.

Bengel thinks we have token here of an ample conversion. He is evidently mistaken. Such a terror-extorted giving of glory to the God of heaven, bears not the marks of genuine penitence. Neither do we find it bringing forth fruits meet for repentance. The Beast goes on with his iniquities, and the masses continue to serve and adore him. When true repentance shows itself, judgment delays or lingers; but there is no postponement here. The consternation of the survivors of the earthquake concludes the second woe; but instantly the word is, "Behold, the third Woe cometh quickly." And that third woe is the consummation of woes. We, therefore, do violence to the record to take this forced confession as evidence or token of revival and reformation.* pharaoh and his magicians smarting under the plagues of Moses, the Philistines under the sore afflictions which accompanied their profanation of the holy Ark, and the Roman centurion amid the signs that attended the death of Jesus, made similar acknowledgments, and gave utterance to similar convictions; but in neither are we assured of any real conversion to God. Startling calamities and bitter afflictions sometimes turn men from their careless and wicked ways; but the religion of fear and dread is never to be trusted. Remove the pressure, and things relapse into their former estate. These people were terror-stricken. Their alarm carried them captive for the moment. They saw and felt that Jehovah's hand was in these things, and confessed it. But their emotions were only transient, had no right seat in the heart, and brought forth no lasting fruits unto holiness. When the demons encountered Christ, they too were terrified, confessed his Deity, acknowledged his power, and stood aghast at his approaching judgments; but no elements of change in their character were thereby betokened. And when men have sinned away their day of gracious visitation, fighting, killing, and glorying in the destruction of God's prophets, they are not likely to be suddenly transformed into saints by the constraints and terrors of the day of doom, though obliged to confess that it is the invincible God of heaven that is dealing with them.

Here, then, I conclude this review of the case of The Two Witnesses—their times, their doings, and their end. It is a marvellous history, hard for the rationalistic and materialistic temper of our day to receive, or to treat with respect. I am also well convinced that men will dispute and reject all such presentations of it till these Two Prophets themselves appear again; and even then the dupes of Antichrist will still dispute and reject it to their everlasting perdition. But that will not alter the record which God has given, nor do away with the reality of what he has so solemnly foretold. I may perchance not apprehend the matter rightly; but if I mistake, it is with the Bible in my hand, and following its statements just as the Holy Ghost has caused them to be written. If I have erred from the true meaning of the Sacred Word, it has not been from an intrusion of human fancy, reason, or philosophy, into the realm of inspiration, but from having dared to think that God knew how to say what he meant, and that he really means what he has said. If others are satisfied they understand the matter better, to the Master they and I must answer; but with no clear conscience could I go before him, as things now address themselves to ray understanding, were I to affirm anything at variance with what I here have said.

Nor is it a small satisfaction to me, to be able to say, that I have spoken in accord with the common teaching and belief of the Church of Christ and its greatest lights for ages next after the Apostles;—with Justin, the noble Apologist and Martyr;—with Hippolytus, the saint, bishop, and confuter of heresies;—with Origen, the learned preceptor and annotator, who, with all his

aberrations, was never charged with error for holding it to be a declaration of Christ that there is to be another coming of Elias; with Victorinus, Methodius, Cyprian, and Lactantius;—with Chrysostom of the golden mouth;—with Jerome the great critic and scholar;—and with Augustine the illustrious bishop and theologian. In such society it would seem hardly possible to go very far astray. To believe and teach what these with one accord have held and taught, can scarcely be in conflict with the faith, or with the duty and proprieties of a sober Christian teacher. And if with them I err, I may claim the same forgiveness by which they are excused and justified.

But I am not willing to believe that these saints, scholars, bishops, martyrs, and champions of the faith against the errors of their times, have all missed the sense and meaning of God's revelations on these points. Not on their authority, but on that of the same records which guided them, I follow in their track.

So, then, I must believe and teach, till better knowledge proves me in the wrong; and,

With faltering footsteps, I will journey on,
Watching the stars that roll the hours away,
Till the faint light that guides me now is gone,
And, like another life, the glorious day
Shall open o'er me from the empyrean height
With warmth, and certainty, and boundless light.

LECTURE 25

THE SEVENTH TRUMPET—THE GRAND CLIMACTERIC—"DAYS" INCLUDED—TEXT A SYNOPSIS—VOICES IN HEAVEN—EMOTION OF THE ENTHRONED ELDERS—TEMPLE IN HEAVEN OPENED—ARK APPEARS—NATURE AGITATED—GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD CHANGED—EARTH'S DESTROYERS DESTROYED—THE DEAD JUDGED—THE PROPHETS AND SAINTS REWARDED—ALL CONCERNED IN THESE THINGS.

Rev 11:15–19. (Revised Text.) And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in the heaven, saying, The kingdom of the world is become our Lord's and his Christ's; and he shall reign to the ages of the ages.

And the twenty-four elders which sit before God on their thrones, fell down upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give to thee thanks, O Lord God the Almighty, who art and who wast [and art to come, is an addition without adequate authority here], because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and shown Thyself King. The nations indeed were angry, and Thy indignation is come, and the time [or season] of the dead to be judged, and [the time or season] to give the reward to thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to them that fear thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy the destroyers of the earth.

And there was opened the temple of God in the heaven, and there was seen the ark of his covenant in his temple; and there were [or, ensued] lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and earthquake, and great hail.

WE here approach the grand climacteric of this world, and of judgment-work of the Almighty One. The seventh angel, restrained so long from ushering in the final scenes which separate us from the glorious world to come, at length pours out his wondrous blast. It is the Last Trumpet, so often referred to by the sacred writers, and by the Saviour himself, as bringing with it the mightiest scenes and changes in the whole history of earth and time, that here sounds. And if there is anything in all the round of human thought to absorb, fix, and intensify interest and attention, we have it in this subject.

The particular passage we have now to consider, is only a synopsis of the matter—a rehearsal in brief of what is subsequently given in detail. It is an important point to remark, that the seventh trumpet does not sound merely for one instant or for one day. In that solemn oath of the cloud-robed Angel, which we were called to consider in chapter 10, and in which it was said that the fulfilling of the mystery of God should be finished at the sounding of the seventh angel, it is distinctly implied, that the sounding is continuous, and extends through a period of time. It is there said, that "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall sound, the mystery of God is [to be] fulfilled." "Days" are included. What measure of "days," or how many of them, we are not told; but a period of time is specifically indicated. In the case of the other woe trumpets, there is unmistakable continuity,—"five months" the one, and evidently no less a time in the other. And the presence of this distinct note of continuity here, taken along with the tremendousness of what turns out under this trumpet, is evidence enough that it is a mistake to confine this last and great woe trumpet to the few summary notations of the text, or to crowd it into an instant of time. From the plainly expressed character of the events, and from the oath of the Angel, we are sufficiently assured, that this seventh trumpet embraces everything involved in the completing of the whole mystery of God, up to the termination of all this judgment history. That fulfilment is certainly not accomplished without the seven vials

of wrath, the harvest and vintage of the world, the manifestation of the great white throne, and the establishment of the new heavens and the new earth. In the nature of the case, that fulfilment overspans everything this side of the completed redemption; and yet that fulfilment is most specifically located "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall sound."

There is, therefore, no alternative, but to take the text as only synoptical of this trumpet—a sort of summary of its chief contents, the full details of which are subsequently described, and spread over a considerable period;—an anticipative programme, so to speak, of the main elements and issue of the great drama, given out in advance of the more special narration of circumstantial particulars and related events.* In other words, we now have to do with a syllabus of the fulfilment or consummation of the mystery of God—with a prelude sketch of the contents of the Last Trump, in which we may note:

- I. THE SYMPTOMS WHICH ATTEND IT.
- II. THE ITEMS WHICH IT EMBRACES.

And may He who sent His angel to disclose these wonders, open our eyes and hearts by His Holy Spirit, that we may rightly apprehend and ponder the same!

I. The symptoms which attend the sounding of the Last Trump are the most remarkable, the most numerous, and the most intense, both in heaven and on earth, that are anywhere detailed in the Scriptures. There were many mighty wonders attendant upon the deliverance of the chosen people from Egypt, and their planting in the promised land. In the air and in the waters, in the trees and in the rocks, in the clouds and in the dust, on animate and inanimate nature, there were manifestations that stand out among the greatest marvels of bygone time. At the birth, in the life, and at the death of Christ, there was also a great commotion, a stir among the angels, among the stars, among the elements, and among men both living and dead, which make up a history such as had never occurred before. And so when Jerusalem was finally destroyed, there were signs, and sounds, and voices, and portents, which have sent their report down through the ages, and which still oppress the breathing of men to hear about. But neither of these, nor all of them together, can at all approach the overwhelming intensity of the manifestations which attend the sounding of the Last Trump.

1. Great voices in heaven utter themselves. There is not only a stir and great activity excited there, but a great outcry, a giving forth of mighty intimations. Whose voices they are, is not here told us; but there is tremendous commotion. Even eternity cannot keep quiet when this crisis comes. The inhabitants of glory have seen too much of earth, its behavior toward God, and God's doings for it, not to be excited when the final termination is announced. Their silence breaks, and heaven rings with mighty voices.

What some of these voices are, we learn from the succeeding narrative. One is the voice, as the voice of many waters, and as a voice of great thunder, as the voice of harpers harping with their harps, and pouring forth a new song in the presence of the throne. Another is the voice of a mighty angel flying in mid-heaven, calling loud enough for every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people to hear. Others are the voices of angels shouting the fall of great Babylon, and the fate of them that worship the Beast. Another is a voice crying the blessedness of the dead. Others again are the loud voices calling for the thrusting in of the sickle for the reaping of the harvest of the earth and the gathering of its clusters. Still another is a great voice commanding the pouring out of the bowls of the wrath of God; and another a voice out of the temple, from the throne, crying, "It is done," and voices saying "Halleluia," "Amen," "Halleluia;" and still other voices, as it were the voice of a great multitude, and the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Halleluia, because the Lord God Almighty reigneth. And along with these are yet other great voices from the heavenly world, each in its place and all together combining to fill all the realm of God with intensest utterances.

When the Lamb took the book from the hand of the Sitter upon the throne, there was something of a corresponding commotion in the holy universe. It was an act which included and looked to the consummation which the seventh trumpet brings; and all along the track of unfolding judgment, we find this same celestial interest and excitement continued, till, at the sounding of the last Trump, everything breaks out with cries, and shouts, and songs, and triumphings.

2. The twenty-four Elders fall down upon their faces, and worship with sublimest thanks. When the mighty Goel took the book, they also fell down before the Lamb, and gave their solemn and adoring vote to his worthiness; but here the prostration is still lowlier. They not only fall into the posture of reverent adoration, but "upon their faces;" bury their immortal countenances in the pavement around the throne; by their very emotion hurled from their golden seats, over whelmed and almost undone. There they expressed their adoring sense of the Saviour's worthiness, exulting in the prospect of what was to result; but here they celebrate the whole issue reached, the blessed consummation come, the thing of hope for all these ages now translating into fact; and, crowned princes of heaven, and anointed coregents with the great Eternal as they are, they cannot contain themselves. Their glorified limbs sink under the weight of the contemplation; their heads bow down to the place of their feet; their whole being melts into one flux of overwhelming realization of what now is come, and the gush of their adoring soul-dissolving joy breaks like a sea of thankfulness against the throne.

Who those Elders are, I have elsewhere told.* They are the representatives of the first-born of the resurrection. They are the seniors of the celestial congregation of the redeemed. They are the ones accounted worthy to "escape" the sad scenes and tribulations of the judgment-time, taken away and hid in the pavilion of God while the anger of the Almighty sweeps the guilty world, and enthroned in heaven for their valiancy and faithfulness when yet on earth. They are already glorified, but that does not diminish their interest in the ongoing and completion of the same process in the case of others. They have their golden crowns, but that does not withdraw

their hearts and sympathies from those still in the graves, or from the still remaining fulfilment of all God's word. There is no vanity and selfishness in heaven; no pride of privilege and place; no vaunting of authority. The crowned Elders on their thrones are even more concerned over the conflicts still pending, and the victories yet to be achieved, than they were in those through which they had won their own crowns. The destroyers of the earth were not yet destroyed. The great multitude of the dead had not yet been finally judged. The mass of men had not yet been assigned their just deserts. The reward had not yet fully come to the prophets and saints and fearers of God. The divine righteousness and honor had not yet been fully vindicated. The usurpation of Satan had not yet been overthrown. The great redemption had not yet been fully wrought out into ultimate fact. But the trumpet which brings all this was now ringing out its unmistakable notes, and not even these blessed kings could keep their seats, or restrain the outpouring of their hearts in grateful, adoring, and exultant thanks.*

3. And the temple of God in heaven opened. There is a heavenly temple and worship, from which the tabernacle and temple of the Jews was copied. When Jehovah directed the building of them, He said to Moses: "Look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount" (Ex. 25:40); and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls them ποδείγματα, copies or likenesses of things in the heavens (9:23.) The heavenly and the earthly worship were once in close and manifest union. It was sin that divorced them, and separated between man and the divine, excluding him from the sacred communion of Paradise, and all but the consecrated priests from the sanctuary, and all but the high priest from the holy of holies in the Jewish tabernacle and temple, and even him, except once in a year, when alone he might enter it enveloped in clouds of incense. Sin has obscured and hidden from man the sacred and divine. It has repulsed heaven from his view and fellowship, with only a lingering ray left here and there, and even that so buried away as to be, for the most part, entirely unapproachable. Hence, when Christ paid the ransom-price for human sin, and introduced an availing righteousness for the race, and a new dispensation of mercy and grace received its foundation-stone, the veil of the temple rent, the way into the holiest opened, and the divine began to be visible and approachable again. And this opening of the temple in heaven at the last trumpet expresses the same idea. Knowledge and vision of heavenly things, and closer fellowship and intimacy between the worshippers on earth and the worshippers in heaven belong to the great consummation. As the Saviour has taught us to pray, then it is to be, "as in heaven so on earth." Oneness is again to be restored between the worship of both worlds. All this is shown in the twenty-first chapter, where the finished mystery is described. Hence, as this trumpet begins to sound, the mists begin to lift from sacred things, the excluding barriers give way, the seclusion yields to human gaze and approach, the veil withdraws, the holy begins to disclose itself again, and the temple of heaven opens.

4. And with that opening of the heavenly temple the ark of God's covenant appears. It is no unholy or profane exposure, but a hallowed symptom, setting forth still further the glory of the occasion. All the compacts of God with His people, and all His solemn promises to them, are in that ark. All His engagements, whether particular or general, are lodged and treasured there. In that sacred casket they have long been hidden away, as Jeremiah is said to have hidden the Jewish ark when the Chaldeans took Jerusalem.* But, though buried from view, it is not lost, and its holy contents have all been preserved. Not a promise is obsolete or dead. And now, at the ending of time, that golden box reappears. As the Jews believed the old ark would be brought out again in the day of Israel's blessing, so the ark of God's covenant is now seen in the temple on high. A divine potency goes along with that ark. On earth the waters of Jordan rolled asunder beneath the shadow of it. The walls of Jericho fell down before it. The enemies of God were scattered where it set forward. The many thousands of Israel were in safety and blessedness where it rested. And its appearance here is a token of the recurrence of all these wonders, only on a completer, grander, and sublimer scale. It tells of the speedy fulfilment of all that God hath spoken, and the putting into living force of all that He has engaged to do. Whether as respects the seed of Abraham or the Gentiles, friends or enemies, the living or the dead, the Church or the world, blessing or punishment, all that the Almighty has covenanted is now to be fulfilled. And in token of this the ark, the sign and bearer of His promises, appears. There could all now see the pledge of God's remembrance of His holy covenant, and of His oath which he swore to Abraham, and of all that He hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

5. And lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and earthquakes, and great hail ensued. "The days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall sound," are terrible days; days of sore scourgings and afflictions to the wicked dwellers on the earth, and the breaking forth upon them of sorrows which never end. When God revealed Himself on Sinai He charged the people to beware, lest He should break through upon them; and now He is about to break through. The sky flashes with electric fires. Portentous voices ring out in stunning power. The air is filled with thunder. The earth trembles and quakes. The winds rush in noisy fury, and great hailstones fall upon the earth. Jehovah is now risen up from His place to punish the wicked. And as the ark of his covenant is revealed to give joy and hope to the parties to that covenant, lower nature is set in dread commotion to harbinger the bursting forth of His indignation upon his adversaries.

Such, then, are the predicted symptoms which attend the sounding of the Last Trump. Let us now look at—

II. THE ITEMS WHICH IT EMBRACES

1. The first named is, a radical change in the government of the world. This is what all the great unidentified voices that first speak on the sounding of the seventh angel utter, as it is the sum of great consummation. The mighty administrators in the upper world exultantly proclaim, "The kingdom [not kingdoms, as the common reading is, but βασιλεία abstract—the sovereignty] of the world [το κόσμου—of the constituted order on the earth] is become or Lord's and his Christ's; and he shall reign to the ages of the ages."

The tense of the expression is that peculiar to prophetic language, which fixes upon a result yet future, or only beginning to be, as if already accomplished. It is not until the scenes narrated in chapters 20 and 21 are fulfilled, that this change of sovereignty is finally completed; but when God announces a thing, and especially when He proclaims Himself in motion to do a thing, it is the same to the heavenly orders as if it were already wrought out. The word of God is truth, and what it says is the same as fact and verity already, although not yet distributed out and located in present time. His word has virtue to make its contents present to those who really know Him. The seventh trumpet brings this change, and on the first tone of it all heaven sees and celebrates the work as already done, and the kingdom of the world become their Lord's and His Christ's.

Not yet has the sovereignty of this world become the Lord's. All earthly governments, principalities, and powers, from the beginning until now, are uniformly represented in the Scriptures as wild beasts, having no lawful owner, and full of destructive savageness and offensive uncleanness. A lion with eagle's wings, a bear crunching bones and flesh, a four-winged and four-headed leopard, a nondescript with many horns, dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly, having great iron teeth to devour and break in pieces; these are the prophetic symbols of the greatest and most lauded of them. Even the premiership of Daniel himself in one of them does not alter its general character. It is but folly and fanaticism for men to talk of Christian states and governments in this world. Christian and good men may be concerned in their administration, and Christian ideas may sometimes temper their enactments, but earthly states and governments themselves are not Christian, and in the nature of things cannot be. They are all the products of devastated nature's wilds, and full of savage nature's passions and ungodliness. Fix it as we may, such is the result. The best-planned institutions and the wisest laws are ever disappointing their framers. The very law which God Himself promulgated from Sinai's thunder-shaken heights was "weak through the flesh," and did not serve to keep the Jewish commonwealth from like apostasy to that of other nationalities. To this hour there is nothing so great a desideratum among men as good and just government, nor another department in which the native evilness and God-antagonizing passions of men are so potent and defiant. True, the kingdom is by right the Lord's. All authority and power originates with Him and belongs to Him. Government is His own ordinance. But since the apostasy of the race to Satan's standard, usurpation, falsehood, and other powers than the rightful sovereign of men and nations, have held and directed the sway in this world. Many revolutions have been wrought, and men have labored, and sacrificed, and bled, and died to achieve them, believing that now they would secure the precious boon for which the race has sighed and cried for ages; but it was only the turning of the sick man on his bed, who keeps his pain however he may change his place. In our day especially people are looking and laboring for a grand jubilee of nations, shaped to popular rule, and compacted by common laws, interests, and creed, in which enlightened ideas shall be the king, and all the world be one; but the result will be only a more horrible beast than any that preceded it, a leopard with bear's feet and a lion's mouth, full of heads and horns and names of blasphemy; the very embodiment of hell, whose infamies so outrage High Heaven as to bring the great day of God Almighty upon the world. No, no; your revolutions, and reforms, and progress of liberal ideas, and overturning of old creeds, and grand conventionalities in revision of the Decalogue, and internationalities for the redemption of the world without Christ, and glorious philosophies ruling out a personal God and exalting self and passion in His place, and all your glittering ideals to which to reconstruct society and relocate the highest interests of man, much as they may promise, and successfully as they may draw the heart and energy of the world after them, are but the nurslings of Satan's bosom in which this world lies, and the inspirations of his foul breath. Dream, and prate, and preach, and glory as men may, the devil is de facto the god and king of this world. His mantle may be often changed, and every day may exhibit a new garb, but the presiding genius within is still and always the devil, with all his pride, and malice, and spoliating falsities. And so it will go on, "wicked men and seducers waxing worse and worse," till the last trumpet sounds.

But then shall come another order; not developed from below, but enforced with sudden and resistless power from above. How, we will see when we come to consider the details of the ensuing chapters. Meanwhile, however, the fact itself is sure to the exultant voices in heaven. God is king, and the sovereignty hath He given to His Son, Jesus Christ. And having given the world six thousand years in which to choose and settle upon its proper allegiance, and finding after all only an intenser and more malignant apostasy, He causes the final trump to sound, breaks in with His Almightyness, and enforces His rightful dominion. A kingdom comes which breaks in pieces, and consumes all other kingdoms, and stands forever. Laws are given to be changed no more. And the true Anointed reigns on earth in an empire of sinless, deathless life and peace, to the ages of the ages. The government is changed.

2. And closely connected with this change, and one of the things involved in it, is the destruction of earth's destroyers. This is announced in the thanks giving of the Elders. The same word is used to denote Jehovah's act, that describes the character of those on whom the action is inflicted. What men and governments in this world sow, that shall they also reap. They that are a curse to the world, shall be accursed. The word ($\delta\iota\alpha\phi\theta\epsilon\iota\rho\omega$) means to spoil, corrupt, ruin, make away with, kill, destroy; and those who act in this line, shall be dealt with in the same line. Usurpers, liars, tyrants, persecutors, and murderers, who thus spoil God's world, shall be reacted upon by the violence of their own deeds, overwhelmed, and utterly put out of the way.

Peter gives it as one of the great objects to be achieved by the awful demonstrations of the day of the Lord, that then shall come "the perdition of ungodly men." That day shall find wickedness and confederation in iniquity ripened to the full. The very prince of hell shall then have incorporated himself personally in the government of the world, speaking through its heads, dictating its religion and its laws, controlling its trade, enforcing the worship of himself as God, cutting off the heads of those who dissent, filling the world with the worst of blasphemies, and compelling all that would live to receive the mark of allegiance to him. All existing nations on the prophetic earth shall have organically conjoined themselves with him as the representative of all authority and power, "and all that

dwell upon the earth shall worship him.” But when the seventh trumpet sounds, the end of this infamous confederation has come. Then the maddened nations shall suddenly be dashed to atoms, as a vessel of pottery struck with a rod of iron; and their armies slain by the blasts of Jehovah, as the Syrians of old; and the great beast that did rule them, and the deceiver that was with him, shall be cast alive into the lake of fire; and great Babylon shall fall, as a millstone cast into the sea; and the dragon shall be seized and shut up in his proper hell; and death and the grave shall be extinguished; and all the destroyers of the earth shall be destroyed! O! glorious riddance of our weary world, when “the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire!” (Matt. 13:41, 42.) Well may the enthroned Elders fall on their faces, and cry their thanks to the Lord Almighty for it.

3. And still another item in the grand schedule of the last trumpet is, the judgment of the dead. This also is recited in the thanksgiving of the Elders. When men die, and their bodies waste in the ground, it is not the end of them. Whatever may be their state meanwhile, they reappear again. John sees them, the small and the great, given up by the sea, and death, and hades, all standing before the great white throne, to be judged, every one of them, according to their works. There is to be a resurrection, even, of the wicked. They that put an end to their existence on earth, resolving not to live any more, must still live, and take the judgment and sentence of Heaven for all their deeds. Not one of all the race can escape it. And the time of the dead to be judged, is “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel.”

This side the grave, full justice is never done; and up to the great day, no one receives entirely all his deserts. That is reserved for the period of resurrection. Soul and body, having wrought together, shall reap together of what they have sown. Only the resurrection life is full retribution life. Incomplete and unequal are all the administrations here. Many a great criminal dies without having had his guilt so much as known, whilst perchance innocent ones have had to suffer for his sins. The wicked go unpunished, are even honored in their crimes, and pass away with no experiences to mark how they stand in the estimate of God. Fortunes are made, and enjoyed, and respected, and their holders held in favorable esteem to the end of their days, every dime of which is stained with blood, corroded with crime, and marked with fraud, oppression, and soul-damning deeds of injustice. So marked and constant are the inequalities that occur, that even the holiest of men have often been tempted to despondency and doubt whether their faith and godliness are not after all a mistake. Nor is there any stay for the good man’s confidence, or adequate justification of his course, but in the fact that the end of the matter is not in this world. Beyond is the theatre on which final settlement is to be made, and there is the invincible throne of inexorable justice. There shall all earth’s wrongs be righted, all present inequalities adjusted, and the administrations of God forever vindicated. The dead have not gone beyond His reach. The grave does not cover them from His sight, nor bar them from His approach and power. Having escaped unpunished from this world, their just portion still awaits them in the next. People may call it fable and dream, and reason it an impossibility; but that will not alter it. And when the seventh angel sounds, there will be exultant thanksgivings in heaven, that “the time of the dead to be judged” is come.

4. And with this, yet one other point, the giving of reward to the prophets, and the saints, and to them that fear God, the small and the great. Piety and the fear of God are poor recommendations for the favors of this world. Our religion is the religion of the cross, and that cross has to be borne by all who are faithful and true. Nothing can abolish it—nothing can exempt from it. Since the days of Abel, whose contiding devotion and humble obedience to his God cost him his life, there has been no age, no nation, no realm or country on earth, where saintship and holiness have not subjected to losses, trials, and pains. The prophets all were persecuted and injured men, who lived martyr lives if they did not come to martyr deaths. For all these ages, the children of God have been children of affliction and sorrow. Some were tortured; others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonments; some were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword; some wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, compelled to hide themselves in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. He that would come after Jesus must deny himself. He that would live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution. There is no rest, no recompense, no hope for us here. For, if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But no Christian looks for his compensation in this present world. So long as he is in this tabernacle, he groans, being burdened, troubled on every side, distressed, perplexed, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. And the only thing that reconciles to such a lot is, that God’s servants “look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.” Glorious promises have come forth, and these the good have embraced, and are persuaded of them, and confess themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth, looking for a better country, believing that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. And the realization of all these fond desires and blessed hopes belongs to the time of the seventh angel, when he shall sound. Piety may not pay as regards this world, but it will pay then. Not even the gift of a cup of water to the thirsty shall then go unrewarded; nor a loss, or pain, or labor of love, or pang of hardship, or tear of sorrow, incurred for Jesus or His truth’s sake, fail of its just recompense. Rewards—rewards—for the wronged prophets, for the suffering saints, and for all that fear God, small and great, are in reserve. Jesus hath gone to make them ready. In heaven, in the counsel and purpose of God, in His covenant and promise, in His hand, secure from all peradventure, they are stored away. Faith sees them there, and waits for them with eager hope. And when the last trumpet sounds, they shall be given. Then shall Paul get his crown of righteousness, and all the apostles take their everlasting thrones. Then shall Daniel stand in his lot, and Moses possess the recompense to which he had respect, when he chose rather “to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for the sake of God and His Christ, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life. No wonder, then, that the blessed Elders fall on their faces before God, and praise and thank Him with profoundest song, when

the signal for so glorious a consummation sounds.

Nor is all this without the most intense moment to us. We are all concerned with that last trumpet's sound. Our sublimest eternal interests are wrapped up in what it is to bring. Big is it with the doom and destiny of every one, and everything that is. Be our place, our state, our occupation what it may, our fate and lot, and every question, every doubt, shall then come to final settlement. Near or remote as those scenes may be, we shall all be in them, and take from thence the character of our forever. Believe it or not, we every one shall be there; there as victims of the great day of Almighty wrath, as prisoners brought forth for final execution, or, as the friends and servants of Jesus, to be confessed, rewarded, and glorified by our blessed Lord.

And as we spend these swift-passing days, and conduct ourselves in this brief life, will be the character of our experience and portion then. Building on Jesus in humble faith and lowly steadfastness, we are safe, and our work is safe. Then may we sing, and exult, and give thanks with all the holy ones of heaven, as we see the day approaching. Then may we rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is the reward that we shall get. Otherwise there is no dreader sound than that of the Last Trump. And when we think of the millions of dead and living for whom it has no blessing, and of the utter destruction which it shall bring on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel, is there not reason for us all to be moved with fear, lest that day should come upon us unawares? It will be too late then to remedy present mistakes, negligences, and omissions. If we are to meet that day with joy, and escape the horrors it brings to the unprepared, we must be getting ready now; getting ready, by honest repentance of our sins, joining ourselves to Christ and His people, and with all our heart and energy seeking to be in accord with His word and will. Happy they, who, when the Last Trumpet sounds, shall be found in such a case!

Jesus, do Thou mine eyes unseal,
And let them grow
Quick to discern whate'er Thou dost reveal,
So shall I be delivered from that woe,
Blindly to stray
Through hopeless night, while all around is day.

LECTURE 26

THE SUNCLAD WOMEN—NOT MARY—NOT JERUSALEM—THE CHURCH IN ITS ENTIRETY—HER WOMANLINESS—HER PREGNANCY—HER VICTORY—HER ROYALTY—HER TRAVAIL TO BRING FORTH.

Rev 12:1, 2. (Revised Text.) And a great sign was seen in the heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars, and, being with child, she crieth out, travailing and agonizing herself to bring forth.

EDITORIAL NOTE: [SEE CAVEAT REGARDING SEISS' INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION 12 AS THE CHURCH](#)

THIS book of the Apocalypse is one of the most wonderful in the Sacred Scriptures. As the Bible among literature, so is this part of it among the inspired writings. Though it has had to fight its way in every age, and to struggle to maintain its place in the sacred canon, there is not another book in the volume of inspiration more strongly attested, or more fully authenticated. Its superscription, its historical statements, its catena of testimonies, and the nature of its contents, amply evidence its genuineness, and its divine original. Its imposing scenery, its grand similitudes, its pregnant maxims, its significant dialogues, its stirring exhortations, its glowing prayers, its evangelic songs, and its sublime doxologies, give to it all the majesty of the book of the mighty consummation, not of inspiration only, but of the grandest revealed plans and purposes of God. And if an inspired book at all, there is not another which so solemnly enforces itself upon the attention of the Churches, or that is compassed about with guards and penalties more explicit and severe. We must needs regard its author as an unaccountable boaster, if it is not the highest interest and duty of every earnest Christian to read and try to understand it, so as to take its momentous presentations in among the most settled and potent things by which to direct his way and fashion his expectations. Therefore, with a devout and able living divine beyond the sea, I would say "Join your prayers with mine, my brethren, that our resumption of the study of this Divine Book may be fruitful, not in curious speculation and intellectual gratification, but above and before all else, in the quickening of our Christian vigilance, and in the increase of our knowledge of God in His Son."

In the passage which we are now to consider, we have the picture of a marvellous Woman, clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars, and she herself agitated and agonizing with the anxieties of parturition.

This, the Apostle tells us is a sign, σημεῖον, a word which he here uses for the first time in the Apocalypse, and which serves to show that the apparition is not simply a "wonder," as our version has it, but a wonder intended to bring before us something beyond itself. I have repeatedly remarked, that when the Scriptures use figures or symbols, or speak in a way not intended to be taken literally, like all serious writings they always give some intimation of it, in one way or another. The text is a case in point. What is

described, is said to be a sign, a representation or picture of something else—a symbol. And the fact that we are here told that this is a sign, goes far to prove that the Apocalypse in general is to be taken literally, except where indication to the contrary is given. It would be quite superfluous to tell us that this thing is a sign, and that certain things mean certain other things, except upon the assumption that whatever is not so labelled is to be taken just as it reads, a woman for a woman, a star for a star, a mountain for a mountain, and so on. But, whatever else is literal in this book, the case of this woman is not; for the Apostle says it is a sign—a picture—a symbol of something else, which is the true subject of contemplation. He further tells us that it is “a great sign.” In itself it was something very imposing and sublime to the eye which beheld it. But the greatness cannot be well understood, except with reference to the thing signified. It was a great sign as indicating something great, remarkable, momentous. The whole picture is itself so marvellous and extraordinary as to necessitate the idea of something of the greatest excellence, conspicuity, and importance. And when it is yet added, that the sign is a “great” one, that to which it refers must needs be of the utmost consequence and consideration, and no trifling object or ordinary event can be admitted as fulfilling the majesty of such a picture.

This sign appeared “in the heaven.” But that does not seem to be of special significance. In the verses following, we read of another “sign,” which appeared in the same place, whilst both the woman and the dragon are really as much on earth as in heaven. It is simply the scene of vision that is indicated. The seer is in the heavenly regions, and in those regions these signs appear, though relating to both earth and heaven.

A more important question is that respecting the object intended to be symbolized by this Woman. Who is she, and what are we to understand by her? The answers returned by expositors are not in all cases the same.

Some are disposed to consider it the picture of the Virgin Mary giving birth to the blessed Saviour. Even Professor Stuart says, that no attentive reader can help thinking of the birth of Christ and the massacre of Bethlehem. But, much as we may think of it, and howsoever included, this cannot be the proper subject. If the Apostle had believed it a representative of Mary, he doubtless would have said so; neither is it congruous thus mysteriously to give us the picture of one woman so superlatively exalted, in order to denote another woman so poor and lowly as Mary at the birth of our Lord. Nor was Mary ever clad and adorned as here set forth. She has also long since passed away from the earth, while this woman continues even until after the sounding of the last trumpet. When Christ was caught up to God, this Apocalypse was not yet written, nor for half a century after, whereas it was said at the time of the writing that it referred to things then still future.*

Others think that it means the City of Jerusalem. It has been said that there are only two women spoken of in this book, and that as the one is “that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth,” so the other is that city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. But it is as foreign to all Scripture diction, as it is contrary to the nature of things, for a material earthly city to take wings and fly away to the wilderness, and after 1260 days to return again.

A more common view, in which there is a more general agreement, is, that this woman somehow represents the Church, the body of God’s professed people. It belongs to the ordinary Scripture imagery to speak of the Church under the figure of a woman, a spouse, a mother. We read of “the Daughter of Zion” as a personification of this kind under the Old Testament, and Paul speaks of the spiritual Jerusalem as “the mother of us all.” The Canticles, which certainly are to be taken in a mystic sense, show how familiar such conceptions were to the Jews; and the same sort of language is everywhere employed, in one form or another, in the New Testament. And when we contemplate all the splendid particulars respecting this woman, how she is assailed by Satan, and the destiny of the offspring she bears, there is hardly any room left for a doubt, that it is the collective body of the Church or people of God that we are to see in this picture.

But what Church, or the Church of what particular dispensation or era, or the Church in what particular aspect, is not so generally agreed. Some say it is the Old Testament Church, others that it is the Christian Church of the early centuries; persecuted by the heathen, agonizing for converts, and finally bringing forth the Emperor Constantine; others, that it is the Latin Church of a later period; and others still, that it refers to the Church in yet other times, or the Church in general, without undertaking to find any one particular fulfilment for it.

In trying to come to a definite conclusion where there is so much irreconcilable diversity, it is necessary to bear in mind that we are here dealing with consummations. The Apocalypse is the Book and revealer of consummations; and the seventh trumpet, under which this sign appears, above all, refers to the times and scenes in which everything runs to its final completion and end, and appears in its terminal culmination. It is the climax of the great judgment period, when all that has gone before comes to its full, and is finally disposed of. It would therefore harmonize best with the time, and with the character of the connected administrations, that any picture of the Church here introduced should embrace it in its largest fulness, as made up through all ages and dispensations, and as related to the great consummating events pertaining to the end.

So, then, I have been led to view and interpret this wonderful sign. It does not refer to the Jewish Church exclusively; for that, apart from the Christian, never, to the same degree, possessed the majesty and glory which pertain to this woman. It is not the Christian Church exclusively; for the man-child who is to rule the nations with the rod of iron must necessarily include the Lord Jesus as its Lord and head; but he was born before the Christian Church, as such, had an existence. But the Church of the Old Testament and that of the New, are, after all, not so alien to each other. There is still an inner oneness between them never to be overlooked, which makes one a necessary part of the other, and which constitutes them the one Church of God, notwithstanding the differences of dispensations and outward form. Christian believers are children of faithful Abraham, and brethren of the ancient prophets, who were not perfect without us. Changes of external order and administration have occurred, and will perhaps occur again when the

present age is consummated, but it is still the same Church of the living God. There has really been but one Church on earth, existing through all times and under all economies. And so we have here, as the symbol of it, this one glorious woman, in whom all its highest excellences and chief characteristics are summed up from the beginning even unto the great consummation, at which point, and with reference to the great occurrences of that time, it is here brought to our contemplation. It is the one only Church of God on earth, though its several parts have existed in succession—even the same which was patriarchal before Moses, Jewish before Christ, and Christian since Christ, here aggregately exhibited, that we may at one and the same view see it in its fulness, and particularly with reference to what is to happen it under the seventh and last trumpet.

It is wonderful also what a profound and complete view of the Church, in all its deepest peculiarities, excellences, office, and prospects, is here given in one single picture, at once as simple as it is sublime.

1. We have here the image of a woman. Woman was made out of Adam. A deep sleep fell upon him for the purpose, and out of that sleep woman came into being. From a rib out of his side was she builded. There was but one made, and Adam had none other. She was brought unto the man, and accepted and loved as bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, and made one with him in the closest of all earthly relations. This is not only history, but also parable and prophecy. Paul is very particular to tell us that it is “a mystery,” a sacred revelation set in historic facts, to show the character and relations of the Church. Adam was “the figure of Him that was to come.” Christ is “the Second Adam.” And the wife of the Second Adam is the Church, made out of Him by the hand and Spirit of God from that deep sleep of His for the sins of the world. It is but one, and beside it there is none other. It is Christ himself begotten in His people, and joined to Him in holy compact, service, fellowship, and love, so deep and close as to be really organic; for “we are members of his body, and of his flesh, and of his bones”—one with him as the branches with the vine—sharing each other’s characteristics, estates, and destiny. And to say nothing of the feminine qualities as distinguished from the masculine, there is here the profoundest reason for the representation of the Church in the figure of a woman,—a pure, beautiful, sublime, and perfect woman. The Church is the woman, in her creation from the second Adam, in her naming after Christ, and in her receptivity, love, maternity, trusting dependence, beauty, and willing obedience. She is the betrothed of the Lord, His Bride, His Queen, partaker of His inmost love, and all His estate and kingdom, having her joy in Him and His in her. Nor is there another image known to man which more richly and truly sets forth that mystic body, which we recognize and identify in every age as the Church or people of God.

2. This woman is in the way of motherhood. This is the characteristic of the Church in every period of its existence, and with special reference to what is to be fulfilled when the last trumpet shall sound. She ever bears in her body the maturing germs of a mighty birth awaited in the future. There is one individual outward figure, but that figure incloses and carries within it an invisible seed, the royal sons of a royal sire. As seen and known to us, the Church is the assembly of God’s called and chosen people, manifest in the fellowship and profession of the rites and signs of revealed religion. This assembly, however, embraces two classes, the truly elect and regenerate, whom God has begotten as His own children, and in whom the Church has its life-character as the congregation of saints, but along with them many nominal outward members, who are not God’s children in living reality. It is quite manifest to those who look, that not all are saints who profess Christianity and observe its rites; but who are the true members is not certainly known to us, but to God only. There is, therefore, a visible and an invisible Church—one woman, but compassing a hidden seed to be revealed hereafter. The invisible Church lies within the visible, and there is begotten, nourished, and borne, till the time comes for it to be brought forth. The visible Church is truly the Church, because the elect are in it, only it embraces some who are not of the elect. In it alone are God’s true people to be found. There are the means and instruments through which saints are begotten and nurtured, and the Church collected, and its offices and administrations filled. Though it has many who are not really what they profess, and are not of the inner household of faith, it does not cease to be the true Church of God and the only mother of saints on that account. Their profession still is right, and the word and sacraments which they handle are still God’s appointed means of grace and salvation. And it is the Church as one glorious whole, outward and inward, visible and invisible, that we are to see in this magnificent woman.

And there is much in the picture in this respect to teach us duty, and to support and encourage our faith. The Church is meant for the work of begetting and bearing saints. It is not for show but for fruitfulness,—for the carrying and bringing forth of a royal seed of God, to inherit His kingdom, and to rule and reign in the ages of eternity. In all places and in all time, this is her office. It is the one aim of all her equipments and all her high relations. Ministers and people forget their calling, pervert their mission, and take the attitude of hypocrites and usurpers, where this is not their one sole aim in all their ministrations and endeavors. And as they devote themselves, often in sadness and tears, to this their work and aim, it is a blessed thing to know that, wherever the Church is, this her mission is being fulfilled, however imperceptibly to human eyes. God’s fact-picture of the Church is, that where she is found, she is at the same time burdened with a seed begotten of God, which is being nurtured from her own body for a glorious birth-hour when time reaches its close. The patriarchs and prophets were often discouraged in their privations and labors for God and His cause. The efforts of the faithful seemed ever to be coming to nought. The old world apostatized. Noah’s house degenerated into idolatry. Israel departed from Jehovah, and knew not the day of their gracious visitation. The Christian Institutes were soon alloyed, tainted, and soiled with the intermixtures of falsehood and heathenism. Again and again the true life of faith seemed to die out of the earth, leaving nothing but the corpse of godliness. And to this hour we are oft disheartened and desponding over the ill-success of our best and costliest efforts. The earnest messengers of God come weeping with Isaiah, that men will not believe their report. And when we look about us, the true servants of Jesus are as hard to find as grapes remaining after the vintage, whilst the man of sin takes possession of the very temple of God. But the Church lives nevertheless, and is ever “with child.” With all the discouragements and

defections, within her body, unseen to mortal eyes, the princes are maturing for the birth to celestial and eternal rulership. Blessed revelation which the dear Saviour thus sends us from heaven! Why then should we despond or grow weary in our work?

3. This woman is magnificently arrayed. It is sometimes decried as a woman's weakness that she is fond of beautiful attire, and has an irrepressible instinct for personal adornment. It is not a weakness, but an instrument of power. It is part of her God-given nature, as the original type and representative of the Church. She may abuse it, and fall into many silly mistakes and sins by reason of it, but it becomes her, and belongs to her proper womanliness to be as beautiful as possible, and to be as beautifully and appropriately arrayed as she honestly can. She owes it to herself, to her sex, to her husband, and to society. A slattern is a monstrosity to the Divine ideal. The Church is the truest and heavenliest woman, and she is splendidly arrayed. She is "clothed with the sun."

Of course, no mere creature, or any number of creatures, can be literally dressed with the sun. That sublime luminary cannot be worn as a garment. It is only a pictorial representation, which is to be figuratively understood. But it is a gorgeous and most expressive figure.

The sun is the fairest and most brilliant thing our eyes have ever seen. It is the great orb of brightness. To be clothed with it, one would need to be clothed with light. And so it is with the Church and the people of God. Jesus says, they are "the children of light" (Luke 16:8). It is the office and end of all God's merciful appointments "to turn men from darkness to light" (Acts 26:18). Of those whom the Apostles enrolled as members of the Church of Christ, it is written, "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8). The Church has ever been an illuminated body. Its children are not of darkness, but of the day. God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of His own glory. They "walk in the light." They wear it about them as a garment. If there be any light in the Divine revelations, they have it as their constant possession. If there be any teaching and illumination of the Holy Ghost, they enjoy it. They are an instructed people, illuminated from on high. They are the truly wise. They have the true philosophy of things, and are the widest awake to the highest truth and wisdom. While others grope in darkness, they are arrayed in light.

The sun is at the same time the great light-giver. It radiates brightness as well as possesses it. Light streams forth from it as the illuminator of this whole sublunary world. And to be clothed with the sun, one must necessarily be a glorious dispenser of illumination. And such is the Church. Its members and ministers have been the brightest lights of the ages. It is the pillar and ground of the truth—the golden candlestick of God amid the abounding and otherwise sunless darkness of this alien world. It is constituted and ordained for the teaching of the nations, and the bearing of the light of heaven to the benighted souls of men. People can learn the way of truth only through its testimony and confession. Christ hath said of His people, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). By them it is that the knowledge and joy of salvation are carried over the earth, and ministered unto the dwellers in darkness and the shadow of death. They are the dispensers of the light of God. It is a great and wonderful endowment and office; but this treasure hath the Lord given to His Church. Oh, that His people may know and realize it!

The sun is likewise an orb of great excellence and purity. Nothing can diminish its glory, or taint its rays. To be clothed with it, is to be clothed with unsullied excellency. And so it is with the Church. It may have shabby members, but they are not really of it. Whatever may be the native corruption of men, or their entanglement with the errors and vices of an ungodly world, in becoming God's people they are washed, they are sanctified, they are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. They are the purest and holiest of the race. They are the flower of mankind. They are the jewels of the Lord of hosts. They are saints, having put on the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "the Sun of Righteousness."

Light is the garment of God. It is the symbol of His own nature. And as all true people of His are "partakers of the divine nature," being begotten unto Him from above, they enter also into the same clothing. The Church is robed with the sun.

4. This woman is victorious in her position. She has "the moon under her feet." Needless is the perplexity which men have felt in ascertaining what we are here to understand by the moon. As the sun is the king of day, so the moon is the empress of night; and hence a fit picture of the kingdom of darkness. And as to be clothed with the sun is to be "light in the Lord," a glorious light-bearer to the world, a possessor of great excellence and purity; so to tread the moon under foot is the image of victory over the powers of darkness, whether of nature, or aught else. And this is a blessed characteristic and honor of the Church. All her true members are conquerors. Not all have yet come to the final triumph. This is not a picture of the Church triumphant, for the woman is still the subject of persecution, compelled to fly into the wilderness for her life. But even now, all who have come to real standing and membership in the household of faith, must needs have gained certain victories, and attained to the character of conquerors. By whatever Divine helps and gratuities it has been achieved, they have vanquished their native ignorance and hatred of God. They have subdued their prejudices, and brought their bodies and passions under the sway of another and better dominion and discipline. They have risen in rebellion against the old bondage, and have conquered it, and broken away from it, and by stern resolve through the grace of God have entered upon the field of self-mastery and independence. With some the battle still rages, and "there remaineth yet much land to be possessed." But they have not warred in vain. Some glorious vantage-grounds have been won. They have conquered so far, that if they will only stand firm, their final triumph is sure. On fields once held by Satan, they have succeeded in planting the banners of Jehovah. And from the heights they have already gained, they see the victory from afar, and realize it even now. The moon is under their feet.

And the same is equally true of the Church as a body. She is the child and hero of battles, sufferings and victories. It is the primordial condition of her being to fight, going forth "conquering and to conquer." Without having anything in this world, she has

successfully made her way into it, in spite of all the antagonism and power of the devil, who has never ceased to assail and resist her with all the might of earth and all the craft and subtlety of hell. Without the show of conquest, and mostly in weakness and in pain, straitened betimes as if it were impossible for her to survive, she has moved on, through blood and fires, floods and wildernesses, never surrendering, never losing a jot of her character and office, and doing her work against all the powers arrayed against her. Kings have combined to exterminate her, tyrants have oppressed her, treason has been raised in her own bosom, children have betrayed her, friends have deserted her, prisons have closed upon her, despotism has stamped its feet upon her neck, men in power have taken pleasure in dashing her little ones against the walls and feeding their flesh to the beasts of the earth, and many a time have her foes sent up their congratulations to each other that at last she was effectually vanquished. But still she has lived on, like the bush of Moses, unharmed by the fires, gathering children as trophies from the ranks of her enemies, pushing her influence to the very throne of Satan, making mighty champions of truth out of the veriest sons of hell, penetrating into all the nations, and to-day still waves aloft the palm of ten thousand contests, singing her pæans of thanksgiving to her God, as when Miriam struck the cymbals on the Red Sea's further shore. Small, and weak, and feminine, and despised, and pursued by the great destroyer, and seemingly ever on the point of destruction, she has continued victorious through all, God himself turning her worst calamities to triumphs, and the very malice of her foes to her glory. The moon is under her feet.

5. Still further: this woman is royal in rank and dignity. Regal gems glitter about her brow. There is "on her head a crown"—a crown "of stars,"—stars to the sacred number of completeness,—"twelve stars." Whatever the particular allusion may be, whether to patriarchs, or tribes, or apostles, or all of these, or to the totality of her teaching agency, there flashes forth from this the unmistakable idea of kingship and authority; yea, of celestial royalty and dominion. And this too is one of the sublime possessions of the Church. Christians are "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." (1 Peter 2:9.) By anticipation at least, all who are washed from their sins in the blood of Jesus, are "Kings and priests unto God." (Rev. 1:6.) All who are called by the Gospel, are called to royal place and dignity, and in so far as they have made that calling sure, whatever be their earthly estate or place, they are anointed and sealed as lords and princes of the eternal realm. They are joint heirs with Him to whom all power in heaven and earth is given. Time only is needed to instate them in immortal thrones. Crowns are theirs and the glory of imperishable empire.

And if we take these "stars" in the crown of the Church as representative of her ministers and teachers, after the manner of "the seven stars" in the first chapter, her royal character is strikingly manifest. In the covenants and promises to the fathers, in the precepts of the law, in the revelations of the prophets, in the melody of the Psalms, in the wisdom of the Proverbs, in the records of the four Evangelists, together with the princely letters of the Apostles, there stands written a Royal Law, stamped with the signature of the Eternal, unalterable by any existing powers in earth or heaven, binding not only the bodies but also the souls and consciences of men, and enthroned forever in the Council Halls of Christendom. To monarchs at their coronations, to magistrates, and judges, and officers of state at their induction into office, to bishops, ministers, and teachers at their ordinations, to every witness coming to testify in the courts of justice, and to every man, woman, and child seeking recognition before the altar of God, it is solemnly delivered, and its mandates enjoined, as The One Supreme and unchangeable LAW, to which all must conform on pain of being denied of God, and of perishing eternally. And as the possessor, guardian, and administrator of this Law and teaching, the Church attests her queenliness before all the earth. Herein she is even already enthroned, judging men, and judging angels. People look, with contempt upon the Church. They think her mean among the majesties of this world. They esteem her manner of life a letting down of man's proper dignity and consequence. They scorn her modesty and humility as effeminacy. But they are despising Jehovah's Queen. They are vaunting over a power which is charged with the decision of their own destiny. They are contemning the Mother of Eternity's Kings. They are making light of the sole mistress of the holy keys which bind and loose on earth, with the irresistible authority of the very throne of God. For the Church is a royal woman, crowned with the stars of heaven.

6. And she is in travail to bring forth. She is persecuted; but these are not so much pains of persecution. The pains of persecution come upon her from without; this anguish is from within. Persecution proceeds from the wicked, for the purpose of destruction; this agony proceeds from a treasure of heavenly sons, and is a travail to produce. Persecution has its spring in hell's malignity; this agonizing has its origin in the love, and faith, and hope of a pious maternity.

Friends and Brethren: There is a grand and glorious birthday on hand when once the seventh trumpet begins to sound,—a birthday foreshadowed by the seizing away from earth of Enoch and Elijah, and forepledged by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, and his sublime ascension to the right hand of the Father,—a birthday which Paul had in his eye when he wrote, "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor. 15:52.) To that all the promises point. Of that the patriarchs were persuaded when they "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Heb. 11:13.) To that the twelve tribes under the law, instantly serving God day and night, hoped to come. (Acts 26:7.) For that the great Apostle of the Gentiles counted all his sacrifices and sufferings as nothing, and ever pressed, through stripes, and prisons, and losses, and privations, as the mark and prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:4–14.) And, in all the ages, this is the grand birthhour for which the Church ever cries to God, and agonizes and strives. It is the goal of all her being. It is the pole-star of her hope, and faith, and labors. It is the opening of the consummation for which her inmost nature ever yearns. And the effort to bring her sons to that birth, is the travail and anxiety here portrayed.

For this present we are in heaviness and tribulation. Heaven is not in this world. Our inheritance is beyond, and only the resurrection can bring us to the full fruition of it. In the day of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God shall be finished, and His saints come to that for which they look, and long, and cry out, in all these years of waiting. Think, then, what a time

that will be when once the object of all these prayers, sufferings, and endeavors has at last been reached! What, indeed, is all the glorious light, and victory, and royalty, and joy of faith and hope we now possess, compared with the fulness of joy which shall come with that glad consummation!

But we may not now anticipate. The subsequent portions of this book tell the blessed story. Till we come to them, we defer what more is to be said. We have seen enough to suffice us for the present. We have seen that God has a Church on earth. We have seen its features and characteristics as pictured by Himself. And blessed above all is the fact that it exists for us. It is, and lives, and agonizes thus, that we may be members of it and be nurtured and disciplined in it for the glories of immortal regency. And all this cheering light concerning it is given to draw us into it, here to steady and improve us in faith and duty, that we may be God's sons and daughters, and share the destiny of its children. God grant that none of us may fail of the transcendent honors!

The Church—the Church—the holy Church—

The Saviour's spotless Bride!

Who doth not love her queenly form

Above all earth beside!

Be mine through life to live in her;

And, when the Lord shall call,

To die in her, the Spouse of Christ,

The Mother of us all.

LECTURE 27

THE GREAT RED DRAGON—HIS TAIL THAT DRAWS ALONG AND CASTS DOWN THE STARS OF THE HEAVEN—HIS HEADS AND HORNS—HIS COLOR—HIS GREATNESS—HIS ATTITUDE AND BEARING TOWARD THE CHURCH OF GOD.

Rev 12:3, 4. (Revised Text.) And there was seen another sign. In the heaven, and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads seven diadems. And his tail draweth along the third of the stars of the heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stands before the woman which is about to bring forth, that when she has brought forth he may devour her child.

EDITORIAL NOTE: [SEE CAVEAT REGARDING SEISS' INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION 12 AS THE CHURCH](#)

PARALLEL with the history of the Church in this world, there runs another, of very great moment, and closely related to it. It is the history of a mighty antagonizing power with which the Church has ever to contend, and which is ever set to hinder her progress and destroy her hopes. Nor is it possible to have a complete view of the one without some corresponding account of the other. Hence, in connection with the apparition of the woman clothed with the sun, "there was seen another sign in the heaven," which is described to us in the text. It is "another sign"—σημεῖον, and therefore to be interpreted after the same manner as the preceding.

The image presented is that of "a dragon"—a sort of being better known to heraldry, fable, and fanciful art, than to natural history. In the book of Job (chap. 41) there is a description of some semi-marine animal, clad in a panoply of hard scales, "esteeming iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood, counting darts as stubble, and laughing at the shaking of a spear," setting at defiance all the power and courage of man. It is there called Leviathan, but the same, or some corresponding serpentine creature, is elsewhere identified as "the dragon." (See Is. 27:1, and 74:13, 14.) Some think it the crocodile, others the whale, and others perhaps one of those gigantic reptiles whose remains are occasionally dug up out of the earth. Evidently we are to conceive of it as some terrible serpentine creature, inhabiting the estuaries of rivers, or the marshes and margins of the sea, clawed, and armed at every point, and delighting to attack, terrify, and devour. When Jeremiah would set forth the terrible voracity and oppression of Babylon, he assigned to it the characteristics of this beast, saying, "he hath swallowed me up like a dragon." (Jer. 51:34.) Hence, it was given place on the escutcheon of Egypt, and adopted as one of the military ensigns of imperial Rome. The legions of the latter bore it aloft, with the winds whistling through its wide-open throat, causing it to hiss as if in a rage, while its tail dangled or floated in various folds to the breeze.

But while the picture here is in general that of a dragon, it is one altogether peculiar, and different from common dragons. It is "a great dragon," one in size and bulk vastly in excess of the ordinary idea, and with every dragon-feature hugely magnified. It is also of a peculiar color, "red"—πυρρός, fiery, or red as fire. It has "seven heads." Dragons ordinarily were assigned but one head; but this is possessed of seven, and each head has on it a diadem or crown—"upon his heads seven diadems." He is armed also with "ten horns." And he has a most extraordinary "tail," which "draweth along the third of the stars of the heaven." The image is most formidable and terrific. And the attitude is equally threatening and terrible. The monster confronts the Woman as a great and malignant destroyer, in determined readiness to devour her child the moment it is born.

What, then, are we to understand by this Dragon? Who is he? What is thus meant to be brought to our view?

Fortunately on this point we can speak with entire confidence and certainty. The answer is given, in the ninth verse, by the inspired writer himself. We there read that “the great dragon” is none other than “the old serpent, that is called the Devil and Satan, who seduceth [or misleadeth] the whole world.” Whatever men’s theories of the Apocalypse may be, they cannot go back of this statement. It is one of those divinely settled points by which the whole interpretation must accord, in order to be true. The Dragon, then, is not Egypt as such, nor Babylon, nor the Roman Empire, nor anything but what John here tells us it is, namely, the Devil, even Satan. So the early interpreters all taught and maintained. Even catechumens in the fifth century are addressed by their teacher as all-knowing, “that this dragon is the devil.” He is not literally a dragon, as the Church is not literally a woman, but the Dragon here described is a divinely-given image or symbol of him.

And as we are now dealing with consummations, we are to take this image of the Devil in the same way in which we took the image of the Church; that is, in his whole character, career, and manifestations, from the beginning up to the end of this present world, particularly with reference to the decisive occurrences under the last trumpet. As the sun-clad woman denotes the Church in its entirety with reference to the final termination, so this dragon denotes the devil in his entirety with reference to the same.

There is, then, a Devil. Of this the chapter before us is authoritative proof. If there were no other passages on the subject, this would be sufficient to settle the question. But we read of him from the very beginning. In the Pentateuch, in Job, in the Gospels, and in the Epistles there are the most direct allusions to him, his origin, his malignity, and his works. The Bible tells of evil spirits, and of Satan as the head of them. Reason is reluctant to receive such doctrine. It is one of the favorite resorts of Satan to try to persuade men that no such being as he exists. Some think it impossible for such an evil power to find place in the realm of almighty Goodness. But there is no greater difficulty in explaining or construing the existence of wicked angels than the existence of wicked and devilish men. The very nature of moral government implies and necessitates the possibility of evil. God never made an evil being; but, having constituted moral agents, the ability to do wrong as well as good had to be in them. And with the ability to do wrong, there is nothing improbable in the doctrine that some have exercised that ability, perverted their being, and lost their character, standing and place as holy creatures. It is rather one of the unavoidable liabilities of such a constitution; and without such a constitution God could not half be known as He is known, and the sublimest part of the universe would be nothing but a blank. Instead of being offended with God for having made it possible for evil to originate within his domain, and of finding fault with Him for allowing sin, we should rather be praising and blessing Him for those sublimities of moral being, to the existence of which the possibility of evil is necessarily incident. That evil exists is a plain and evident matter of fact. A man must have lost all perception not to see and admit it. It stares him in the face whithersoever he turns. He encounters it in others, and he feels it in himself. And if it is possible for men to be evil, it is just as possible and likely that other creatures, higher in the scale than we, likewise have among them some who are apostate and depraved. And if so, reason itself is sufficient to suggest the doctrine of some great leader and prince in evil, in exact accord with the Scripture teaching with regard to the Devil. At all events, Revelation tells us of a crafty and powerful spiritual being who was the cause of the fall of our first parents, who was the direct agent of Job’s afflictions, who tempted and assailed Christ, and who is the head and soul of a great empire of evil, which has eaten its way into the glorious creation of God, drawing some of His sublimest works into peril and ruin. And with these teachings we can most safely abide, believing what our gracious Father in heaven has caused to be written for our learning, and ordering our thinking accordingly.

We could not but admire in our last the wonderful beauty and fulness with which the Church was portrayed to us in the sun-clad Woman. But no less remarkable and complete is the picture of Satan as sketched in this “great red dragon.” The subject, of course, is not so inviting, but still it is very important. Let us look at it then with something of the care and solemnity which is called for by the circumstantial particularity with which God has caused it to be here introduced.

1. When Moses was commanded to take up the serpent, into which his rod had been turned, he was told to “take it by the tail” (Ex. 4:4). And this may be a very proper way to take hold of this Dragon, “the old serpent.” His tail is certainly one of the most striking features in the picture, and with it very marvellous execution is done. It swings through heaven, coils about celestial principalities, and “draweth along the third of the stars.”

These, however, are quite other stars from those in the crown of the Woman. Those were simply “stars,” her coronal gems; but these are “the stars of the heaven”—some particular stars. Neither are they literal stars, for the whole thing is a “sign”—a symbol. But we are not to think of “the body of pagan priests,” as Adam Clarke would teach us; nor of the apostasy of Licinius, as Elliott would have it; nor yet of the princes and rulers of the world subdued to the Roman Empire, as Mede and Hengstenberg suggest. All this is far beneath the majesty and relations of the picture. Vitringa hit the truth much more successfully, when he spoke here of the angels. These are truly “the stars of the heaven.” When God brought the world into being, we are told that “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:4–7). These were the angelic hosts. They are fitly called stars by reason of their beauty and glory; and they are pre-eminently “the stars of the heaven,” as they pertain to heaven, and are the sublimest ornaments of the celestial world. Satan himself was once one of these stars, as we saw in chapter 9:1. Isaiah (14:12) alludes to this, where the exclamation is, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer [literally, day-star], son of the morning!”

Has there then been any calamity among the angelic hosts to answer the description before us? The Scriptures distinctly tell us that there has. Jude (6) speaks of “angels which kept not their first estate [their principality], but left their own habitation.” Peter refers to “the angels that sinned,” whom “God spared not” (2 Pet. 2:4). A time there has been when evil got in among these heavenly orders, infected many of these shining sons of light, soiled their robes, tarnished their crowns, silenced their songs, dislodged them from their glorious seats, and eat out of them every noble impulse and holy affection. How the sorrowful disaster came about, is

suggested in various places, and distinctly indicated in the picture before us. Satan, one of the brightest and mightiest among them, was the cause and author of it all. Abusing his moral liberty, he dared to lift himself up against his Maker, and instituted a revolt against the throne and majesty of God. By his example, instigations, and persuasions, he infected others, imbued them with his spirit, and made them copartners in his plot.

By their aid, aspiring
To set himself in glory, above his peers,
He trusted to have equalled the Most High,
And, with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God,
Raised impious war in heaven and battle proud.

Here then was this dragon exerting his strength in the heaven, insinuating his coils about the sons of light, and drawing them along with his presumptuous cause. All these

The Almighty Power
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion down.

How many were thus involved is not told us. The text says that the terrible apostasy embraced "the third of the stars of the heaven." Many take this as significant only of a large proportion, without regard to any exact number. And so the meaning may be. But the statement itself is definite, and will bear the interpretation that just one-third of all the angelic host fell through that Satanic rebellion. Milton imagines a great multitude, greater than that which the north of Europe emptied out,

When her barb'rous sons
Came like a deluge on the south, and spread
Beneath Gibraltar to the Lybian sands.

These were "cast to the earth"—not the literal earth, for we are contemplating "a sign," and we must interpret accordingly. Contrasted with the visible heavens, the earth is simply the lowest place—the ground—the base. For a star to be cast down to the earth, is to be plucked out and thrown down from its setting as a star. And so these rebel angels have been plucked from their places, dethroned and abased. Hence we read of them as "reserved in chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day" (Jude 6). Having failed voluntarily to keep to their proper place, they are now kept against their will, in the power and purpose of God, for a doom not yet fully executed. They lost their heavenly principality. In place of their starry brightness they are now darkness, which clings to them, as chains to a prisoner, and holds them for eternal punishment. They still roam at large, particularly about our earth, and in the atmosphere which surrounds it; for the devil "goeth about" to do mischief. But, like tethered cattle, or chained dogs, their liberty is bounded, and they can go no further than that tether's length. And this is the casting down and disability which the picture before us symbolizes.

So much, then, for the tail of this dragon, his chief power, which draws along the third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth.*

2. We advance now to his heads and horns, which look formidable enough; for he has "seven" of the one, and "ten" of the other. The head is the governing power, and implies rule. When crowned, it implies political rulership. These seven heads of the dragon are all crowned heads. He is an imperial personage. Each one of his heads has on it a diadem, indicating imperial rulership and autocratic administration. And just so far as these heads show themselves on earth, terrestrial magistracy and government are implied. The number of these crowned heads is seven, which is the number of dispensational fulness, the earthly complete number. Hence we have in these heads the symbol of the entire imperial government of this world from beginning to end, the universal secular dominion of the earth in all periods. They are seven heads, in the same sense that we read of "the seven Spirits of God"—a manifold unity. Daniel beheld the imperial authority of this world up to the great judgment day, under four successive beasts, and these several beasts together had also seven heads, to indicate the whole aggregate completeness of earthly empire.

We need not bother ourselves then about the seven hillocks on which the city of Rome was built; nor about the seven administrations, or forms of dominion, or dynasties, which are said to have marked the history of the Roman Empire; nor yet go on a search through the archives of the world to find and identify seven successive imperial establishments to embrace the governmental history of time. However the facts in these cases may incidentally conform to the picture, it goes quite above and beyond all such arithmetical enumerations and trifling distinctions and details; for trifling they are as compared with the mighty sweep of the subject. The number is the symbol of full completeness, which takes in all of its kind in the whole world-period. It is nothing more nor less than earth's political sovereignty, however and wherever put forth, from the beginning to the day of judgment, that is embraced in these crowned heads.

And they are the Devil's heads. All sovereignty is, indeed, of God; but, in this world, Satan has usurped much of it. When he pointed out to Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them," and offered them as a compromise and compensation to the

blessed Christ if He would but “fall down and worship” him, it was not mere boast and false pretence. Three times the Saviour pronounces him “The Prince of this world” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Paul styles him the very “god of this world” (2 Cor. 4:4). The glorious ones in heaven are witnesses to us, that “the kingdom of the world” is not yet “our Lord’s and His Christ’s,” nor will be till the last trumpet sounds, and the grand events under it are consummated. John testifies that “the whole world lieth in the wicked one” (1 John 5:19); that is, reposes in his bosom, as the source of its warmth and life, its lord and its resting-place. Its governments, therefore, above all, must be in his power, and pertain to his administration. Good elements, in a greater or less degree, may here and there be in them, and sometimes they may largely conform to what is right and true; for God has not resigned His providence over the world; but Satan has hold of them, and operates by them nevertheless. If now and then modified, so that his presence is not so conspicuous, and his influence repressed, it matters not. He is the great usurper, and one or the other of his numerous heads has been under and in every temporal crown that ever swayed the sceptre of sovereignty on earth, save only the Israelitish theocracy. So the Scriptures teach; and hence the image before us presents him as wearing the diadems of all the dominions of this world. And through these world-powers he puts himself forth over against the kingdom of God.

Horns are the weapons of animals, their means of inflicting injury, their power for evil. As symbols, they do not so much represent rulership or dominion, as power to harm, wound, and afflict. The “four horns” in Zechariah’s vision, were the powers which devastated Palestine, “scattered Judah,” and injured, oppressed, and destroyed the people of God. (Zech. 1:18–21.) And such are the horns of this Dragon. The number of them is ten, the number of worldly completeness, especially in the line of worldly evil. All the tyrannies, oppressions, and hard inflictions that have tortured mankind, from the beginning to the end of them, are thus ascribed to Satan. They are his horns, with which he gores, and wounds, and scatters, and destroys. Every manifestation in the world, in the line of violent and oppressive injury or mischief, is from the Devil. And whatever the persons, combinations, or powers, whether governmental or otherwise, by which the damage is inflicted, they are the Devil’s horns, which he has been using with mighty effect in every age, and is still using, and will use, till the great judgment sits, and he is put out of the way.

3. We look next at his color; for nothing in the description is without significance. This Dragon is “red,” the hue of fire and blood. This was the color of the horse whose rider was to take peace out of the earth, who carried the great sword of execution, and who filled the world with bloodshed and slaughter. (Rev. 6:4.) It is the color of the apparel of the Almighty King, when he puts on his strength to crush out his enemies. (Is. 63:2–4; Rev. 19:11–15.) It tells of flaming heat, of intensity of fierceness, of bloody administrations. And this well describes the inmost nature of Satan, as everywhere portrayed. He is a fierce and murderous being, cruel, bloodthirsty, and ever intent on destruction. Jesus says, “He was a murderer from the beginning.” (John 8:44.) Peter warns all Christians against him, as one that walketh about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Pet. 5:8.) He is the Destroyer of both souls and bodies. He seduceth and misleadeth the whole world, promising good and peace only that he may the more effectually entrap and ruin. With what murderous malignity did he attack the innocence of our first parents, and the heavenly purity of Jesus! With what carnage and misery has he overflowed the earth! There has never been a murder, but he caused it. There has never been a sanguinary war, but he instituted it. There has never been a death-scene, but it is traceable to him. Every blight of human happiness, every failure of human peace, every sorrow of human life, has come from him. All the fiery passions that rankle in men, and break forth in deeds of violence and blood, are his inspirations. Never a being has been perverted from the beneficent object of its existence, never a soul has lost its Creator’s image or gone down to perdition, never a life has been disabled or extinguished, never a heart has been broken or a wretchedness enacted, of which he is not the primal cause. All graves, all tears, all mutilations and dismemberments of earth’s families, nations, or the race, are results of his doings and malignity. And when we think of the blood that has been shed, and the murders committed, since Cain raised his hand against his brother’s life; how rapine, and plunder, and violence have disgraced and tormented the world in every age; what hellish devastations war alone has wrought; how human society has been continually spoliated and cursed with intemperance, ignorance, uncleanness, and vice; and remember that all these, with all the calamities, misfortunes, and sufferings of time and eternity, have their source in Satan, and are but outbirths, enactments or results of his spirit; how could a truer characterization be given of him, than that of a monster, indyed with flames and blood! He is red, for he is the Satan, the Devil, the Apollyon.

4. Still another feature specially noted, is his greatness. He is a fierce, malignant, and bloody monster, and a “great” one. But how shall we get a right conception of what is thus portrayed? Milton talks of him as Titanian, long, and large, extending many a rood; his shield, like the broad circumference of the moon; and his spear so great, that to it the tallest pine

Hewn on Norwegian hills to be the mast
Of some great admiral, were but a wand.

But, not in this way can we get a right idea of Satan’s greatness. We must lift our thoughts to much wider and mightier contemplations.

Looking out from this world into the depths of space about us, we see “an outward, visible universe, studded with constellations of suns and their attendant systems, circling in unmeasured orbits around an invisible and omnipotent centre, which controls them all. Amazed and overwhelmed at these stupendous displays of creative power, wisdom, and goodness, in adoring ecstasy we inquire into the uses of these mighty orbs, which, in such untold millions, diversify and adorn those undefined fields of ethereal beauty which fill unbounded space. Reasoning from all our native analogies, and from the scattering rays of supernal light that have reached our

world, we must infer that all these orbs are the mansions of social beings, of every conceivable variety of intelligence, capacity, and employment, and that in organized hierarchies, thrones, principalities, and lordships, they constitute each within itself an independent world," though all together but so many members of the one immense family of creation.

Now, in all these intellectual assemblages, spread over the immeasurable area of universal being, there are but two distinct and essentially diverse confederations—two empires, with two primal heads. On the one hand sits the almighty and ineffable Jehovah, whose majesty transcends all human thought or comprehension; his being, eternal; his nature, perfect; his throne, absolute; to whom "every creature which is in the heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and upon the sea," in one form or another, is compelled to give the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for the ages of the ages. But, on the other hand, stands a mimic god, a creature, indeed, and not at all beyond the Almighty's government and control, but one of the sublimest of angelic beings, a prince among the celestial hierarchies, set against God, seeking to overturn heaven, aiming to supplant the kingdom, authority, and rightful worship of the great Eternal, himself grasping for the reins of universal sovereignty. We tremble as we think of the awful daring. The ambition and adventure of earthly despots in setting out to conquer this world, is startling; and because of what men have done towards accomplishing it, history calls them "great." Yet here is a being, who has adventured upon the exploit of conquering the universe, of wresting creation from its Maker! Under the mysterious economy of God, he has also been enabled to make mighty strides towards the realization of his fell purposes. Principality after principality, in the celestial realms, succumbed, and fell in line beneath his banner. A third of the very stars of the heaven joined his cause, and followed in his train. The appointed lord and sovereign of the earth at the beginning was betrayed into his power, and all earth's naturally engendered children were made his born slaves and servants. And so there now exists a mighty confederation of evil, made up of angels and men, disembodied and in the flesh, numbering millions on millions of disloyal spirits, who burden our atmosphere, and overspread our planet with disorders, anarchy, misrule, darkness, gloom, sorrow, death, and ten thousand embitterments of existence, from which uncounted creatures sigh, and groan, and cry to be delivered! Long ago, indeed, an effectual check was put upon the growth and sway of this impious coalition in heaven. Also, in the decrees of God, the unalterable determination stands, to uproot and destroy it utterly. But till the eternal Son of Deity undertook the case, not a potency in all the circle of created things could shake its hold upon this world of ours. Neither could He, without centuries on centuries of preliminary work, and then the resignation of His place in the Divine bosom, the conjoining of himself to human flesh and blood, and the enactment of a humiliation, as astounding to all heavenly intelligences as it was unparalleled in the history of things. No, nor even then without battle and conflicts so intense and horrible that they wrung even His mighty soul with anguish unspeakable, shook the fabric of His immortal being to the verge of annihilation, and put the very Lord of glory under the pangs, and bonds, and darkness of death and the grave! And only when we have surveyed the dimensions of an empire so gigantic, and counted the cost at which alone its hold could be broken, are we in position to estimate the greatness of that fell spirit, who created it out of his own subtle deceit and unholy ambition, sits as its head giving force and direction to all its parts, and wields it with a genius and will inferior only to that of eternal uncreated Mind. Ah, yes, the Dragon is "great."

5. And yet one feature more is given in this picture, to wit, his attitude and bearing toward the Church of God. "The dragon stands before the woman which is about to bring forth, that when she has brought forth he may devour her child." How intensely does this sum up the whole history of the case in all the ages of time! The Church and the Devil, the kingdom of heaven and the powers of darkness, have ever been the two great antagonizing forces on the earth. The one is the spirit of mercy, embodied in the work of man's deliverance; the other is the spirit of malignity, going about to crush and kill every tendency, power, or prospect of man's salvation.

We go back to the beginning of the world, and contemplate the excellent sacrifice of Abel, "by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts" as of an heir to a blessed immortality. But the Dragon is there, enraged that such a seed should come from among men. Envy, hate, and fratricide he stirs up in the sullen heart of Cain, till murder's hand is put forth for the first time in our world, and the meek and holy believer's blood is shed by his own brother, for no other reason than that in him was brought forth a child of eternal life and prince-hood.

With the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was lodged the promise of spiritual sonship and glorious dominion. Out of them was to be developed a seed to redeem and rule the world. But as the time approached for them to take their place according to the covenant, lo, the claws of this same Dragon were upon them, clenching them tighter and tighter to keep them down, and giving forth imperial edicts for the slaughter of all their infant sons, to defeat what God had spoken. And through the whole national existence of that people, again and again, the heathen raged, and the people meditated mischief, and the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, fulfilling ever more and more the great draconic image of the text, to prevent the Godchild's forthcoming to the rulership of the world.

We recur to Bethlehem, as the great Head and chief of all this divine seed appears. We hear the angels sing and the shepherds rejoice. We see the stars giving unusual indications, mighty sages of the far-off land coming to lay their royal treasures at his feet, and everything aglow with a sense of the wonderfulness of the event. But the Dragon is there, with rage inflamed, and eager to devour. In Herod he inquires, and plots, and sends his executioners to slay all the children in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, to make doubly sure of reaching this child's life, and destroying this whole seed forever.

So has it also been in all succeeding time. While Jesus was going up and down among the villages of Palestine, fulfilling the prophecies and maturing God's plans for begetting a people for Himself, the earthly powers about him were ever prowling and plotting to destroy both him and his work, and finally seized him, killed him, and sealed up his mangled body in the sepulchre. When,

by the Spirit of God, he rose again, and gave new commissions and endowments to his apostles, threatening and slaughter pursued them, and the sword, the cross, and the stake awaited them. Rome joined with Jerusalem in oppressing, banishing, and destroying them, and all who adhered to them. Emperors sported themselves with their sufferings, and edict after edict went forth from the throne of the world for their extermination. Ten mighty persecutions fell on Christians throughout all the jurisdiction of the Cæsars. The earth was repeatedly deluged in martyr blood. And what was it all but this seven-headed and ten-horned Dragon confronting the travailing woman, determined to make an end of her royal seed!

Nor was it essentially different after Paganism was dethroned, and the cross appeared upon the imperial banners. The tactics changed, but it was still the Dragon that wrought. Outward oppression was broken, but then came inward assaults, corruption, and decay. The sword of state for a while was sheathed, but then was drawn the more killing weapon of domineering heresy. Soon also the tiara became the imperial crown, the wearer of it the world's dictator, and kings and governments the slaves and menials of another Rome, robed in Christian symbols indeed, but at heart the Dragon still, with fagot, and bloody inquisition, and bans of terrible damnation, striving to enforce its blasphemous assumptions and soul-destroying lies. When the holy Reformers began again to shake the torch of evangelic truth to light the nations to their salvation, the Vatican thundered with its bulls, armies rallied for the on slaught, and massacres and butcheries filled many lands with the blood of God's confessors, or lighted them with flames to consume the bodies of the saints. And even to this day and hour, the old serpent lies coiled in the Church's path, and in the forms of a pretended superior science, a false philosophy, a perverted Gospel, and many an ugly persecution, still strikes, assails, and mightily struggles to crush the meek Galilean's power from the earth, and keep the God-child from his royal destiny and dominion.

So true is it, that "The Dragon stands before the woman which is about to bring forth, that when she has brought forth he may devour her child."

Behold then, my friends, what a mysterious battle-field this world is. A contest here is waging which enlists and engages the mightiest powers that exist. It is the great and far-reaching conflict between good and evil, between truth and falsehood, between right and usurpation, between the Kingdom of God and the Empire of Satan, between Heaven and Hell—the great war of a divided universe, coming to final issue upon this little world of ours! It is largely silent and invisible. Though raging round us every hour, we perceive so little of it, that many doubt its reality. But its very hiddenness is evidence of its awful greatness. The little broils and disputes of a neighborhood are loud, and thrust themselves on every ear, because they are confined to a level and limit within easy observation and comprehension; but this conflict we can only know by divine Revelation, because it encompasses so much of eternity, and pertains to spiritual potencies under and behind the outward ongoing of things. The "noise of the captains," the "shouting," the rattle of arms, the boom of artillery, marking earthly battles, is but the fuss and ado pertaining to the local and circumscribed exhibits of man's doings. When it comes to a contest stretching through worlds and ages, and enlisting the greatest of invisible powers, the reach of human hearing and sight are necessarily far transcended, and the conflict is all the deeper and more tremendous because of its hiddenness and silence. But, whether conscious of it or not, such a mighty strife exists, and we ourselves are all parties to it, and combatants in it. If not of the glorious Woman, we are of the seven-headed and ten-horned Dragon, at war with her, her seed, and her God. Nor are any of us of the glorious Woman, who have not renounced Satan and all his works, and confessed ourselves to Christ in obedience to His Gospel. I ask not any of you to tell me to which side of this awful controversy you belong. The Word of God has settled that question. And from these holy oracles of truth I make it known to you this night, that if you have not yet enlisted under the banner of Emanuel, and at His altar sworn unfaltering allegiance to Him, you are under the Dragon's standard, serving his will, helping on his foul and murderous work, and on the way to share his destiny. God help every one in such a case to see it before it be forever too late! Though involved in Satan's coils, it is not impossible yet to change sides; but it must be done quickly, if ever. Hence, the very first question which we are bound to ask of those to whom we are to deliver the promise of salvation is: "Do you renounce the Devil and all his works,—the vanities of the world and the sinful desires of the flesh?" And for those who decline to do this, now in the time of their probation, there is no hope, and no promise of eternal life.

LECTURE 28

THE MAN-CHILD—THE CONFUSION OF EXPOSITORS ON THE SUBJECT—LANDMARKS TO BE OBSERVED—THIS WOMAN AND CHILD THE VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE CHURCH—MANHOOD OF THIS CHILD—IS MEANT FOR RULERSHIP AND DOMINION—THE OBJECT OF SATAN'S PARTICULAR MALICE—THE BIRTH—THE GLORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CALLING.

Rev 12:5. (Revised text.) And she brought forth a son, a male [neuter, embracing either sex], who is to rule [shepherdize] all the nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught away to God, and to his throne.

EDITORIAL NOTE: [SEE CAVEAT REGARDING SEISS' INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION 12 AS THE CHURCH](#)

IN the discourses which last engaged our attention, we saw what is to be understood by the wonderful Woman clothed with the sun; and likewise ascertained who the great red Dragon is that stands before her. But we are not quite done yet with either of them. This

Woman was travelling and agonizing herself to bring forth, and really did bring forth, even in the face of the murderous Dragon. It remains, therefore, to inquire concerning this Child, the nature of the birth spoken of, and the results which followed; remembering, of course, that we are still dealing with a symbolic picture, "a sign."

In looking over the expositions that have been given of the matter, we encounter a strange and wide-ranging amount of conjecture and confusion. Some find the fulfilment in the birth of Christ; some, in the birth and enthronement of Constantine, the great, the first Christian Emperor; some, in the increase and growth of the Church in the period in which Constantine lived; some, in the Christianization of the State under Constantine, and the nationalization of the Church in the Roman Empire. Others take this child to be "the Valenses and Albigenses as sequestered from the pure worshippers generally." Some even suppose it to be the Nicene Creed, the Church of Rome, or only a revitalized or reprimed Christianity in general, at some period in the times long past. Hengstenberg says, "The man-child denotes the manly, vigorous aftergrowth, or fresh growth of the people of God." Durham says, "It is mystical Christ, who in his members is brought to a flourishing condition, and his Church set at liberty from persecution, and some of her sons exalted to an honorable condition." Alford says, "The man-child is the Lord Jesus Christ, and none other." Elliott says, we are to see in it "a baptized emperor, the son of Christ's faithful Church, elevated to the whole empire, to an avowedly Christian throne." Robertson (of Leuchars) says, "This Child is a collective expression, and takes in the whole brood of the Church under Paganism, and in spite of its efforts to hinder the same." Adam Clarke affirms, "The man-child mentioned in this verse is the dynasty of Christian emperors, beginning with Constantine's public acknowledgment of his belief in the divinity of the Christian religion." "Mattheetes" thinks, "The Child is the same body as the Great Multitude of chapter seven," which comes out of the great tribulation. Barnes says, "I understand the man-child here to refer to the Church in its increase under the Messiah, and the idea to be, that the Church was, at the time referred to, about to be enlarged, and that, though its increase was opposed, yet it was destined ultimately to assert a mild sway over all the world." By the male son, the editor of Lange On the Apocalypse understands "the 144,000" referred to in chapters seven and fourteen. And so we might go on quoting the most divergent and contradictory interpretations, guesses and conceits, not one of which rests upon any self-consistent method for understanding this Book.

How, then, are we to bring ourselves through this labyrinth? I answer, by simply following the straightforward, natural and self-indicated principles which have guided us in these expositions from the beginning. If these will not serve to bring us out with some good degree of satisfactoriness, it may as well be admitted first as last, that there are no means at present within the reach of man by which to arrive at any clear and assured understanding of what God here intended to make known to the Churches. Let us see, then, what these principles will do for us.

We have, I may venture to say, ascertained, that this image of the Woman clothed with the sun denotes the visible Church, the body of God's confessing people of all ages and dispensations. In one way or another, there is a somewhat general agreement with Vaughan, from Hyppolytus and other of the Fathers, that "the Woman clothed with the sun, and having on her head a crown of twelve stars, is the Church of God; the Church, regarded as one whole from the days of Abraham, perhaps we may say, from the day of the Fall itself, under whatever dispensation placed, the patriarchal, the Israelite, or the Christian."*

It is also a most conspicuous particular in the description itself, that this mystic Woman is in the way of motherhood. Within her body, concealed from human view, but consciously to herself, there is a mystic seed, maturing for manifestation, to bring which to the birth is the one great object of her most intense anxieties.† This is one of the most marked and striking characteristics of the picture, and no application of it can be the true one which does not throughout answer to this travail and self-agonizing of the Church to bring forth this invisible seed into open day and proper life. The Woman being the entire Church, this seed, borne by her, and which she thus labors above all things safely to bring forth, cannot possibly be Constantine, or the State under him; nor the Christians within that State; nor the dynasty of the Christian Emperors of Rome; nor the fresh growth of the people of God in those days; nor the Valenses and Albigenses; nor the 144,000 sealed ones; nor the multitude out of the great tribulation; nor the nationalized Church of the Roman Empire; nor "the whole brood of the Church under Paganism;" nor any local, individual, particular, fractional, temporary or incidental thing in the great sweep of the Church's history. The reason is manifest. None of these things were in the Church, consciously to her, through all ages and dispensations. Neither did either or all of them constitute the one great and preeminent thing on the bringing forth of which all the universal Church's desires, aims, efforts and intensest self-agonizings were concentrated. Certainly, none of these things were present to the mind of the patriarchal and Jewish saints as the thing for which, above all else, they toiled and agonized; nor yet to the apostles and the great body of the Christian Church; no, not even in the particular times and localities to which these things relate. Never was the whole mind and energy of the Church thus anxiously preoccupied with any such bringings forth. And if the subject were not so sacred as to awe men from speaking out with regard to it as they do on other matters, they would laugh to scorn the floundering imbecilities which interpreters have shown in attempting to construe so definitely drawn a divine picture of the universal Church of God, with such trifles and local accidents of the ordinary history of earthly affairs, as are brought forward by Elliott, Faber, Clarke, Barnes, and the like. The declaring of Victoria the Empress of India, is not less the centre of the world's history, than these presentations of grave religious teachers are below the range of such a picture as that which God has here set before us of His universal Church.

Still another landmark in the case is, that the birth here spoken of is not consummated before the period of the end of this age. Whatever earnestings of it may have preceded, it is not fully accomplished till the day of judgment comes. It is here placed under the seventh trumpet, and the seventh trumpet is the last, with which the whole history of this present world comes to an end. Accordingly, this child is unborn until the period of the end is reached. "We cannot, therefore, legitimately understand it of anything in

the past history of the Church, or of anything that comes to its maturity and is outwardly manifested, anterior to the judgment times. This one particular in the presentation, so clear and conspicuous that we dare by no means ignore it, of itself utterly sweeps away four-fifths of all the commentation on the subject, as irrelevant, unallowable, and only clouding the truth intended to be exhibited. Any and everything, of whatsoever kind or character, which is born, matured and outwardly manifested, prior to the day of judgment, is not, and cannot be, this man-child; for he is not born, at least his birth is not fully accomplished, till the seventh trumpet sounds, and the end of the world is come.

“With the way thus cleared, we are in position to inquire more directly, and to inform ourselves more surely, as to who this man-child is.

Let it be observed, then, first of all, that it is one of the accepted and necessary doctrines of common Christian Theology, that the Church of God exists, or is to be contemplated, in a twofold form: first, in the wide or general form of the whole congregation of those joined together in the confession of the Divine Word, and in the observance of the divine rites and ordinances; and second, in the narrower form, which embraces only those who are true believers, and are really the children of God; for “not all are Israel who are of Israel.” In the one view, the Church is a visible body, made such by the having of an outward call of God, by joining in an external fellowship, and by the use of the outward means and instruments through which God collects and edifies His Church. This we call the visible Churchy or the Church in that aspect of it in which it is recognizable by man, and becomes a subject of human history. **It is the Church thus viewed, that is, the general congregation of God’s confessing people, that is symbolized by this wonderful Woman.** (EDITORIAL NOTE: [SEE CAVEAT REGARDING SEISS' INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION 12 AS THE CHURCH](#))

With this assembly, however, many are outwardly connected, whom the Holy Ghost has not regenerated, and who are not in reality the genuine children of God. A very great difference therefore exists between such members, and those who have fully entered into their calling, and become partakers of that spiritual renewal and enlightenment which makes them truly the children and elect of God. Which of the outward members of the Church are thus truly regenerated, cannot be fully and certainly distinguished by us. They are in the visible Church, and they are also as visible as others, with respect to their outward calling, fellowship, and observance of the Divine ordinances; but as to their inward estate and union with God, they are not certainly recognizable. The Church, as a visible body, knows that they are there; but just who they are, it does not know, and cannot now surely determine. And this inner and narrower circle of the professed people of God, we call the invisible Church; not because its members are not as visible as any others, nor yet as a Church separate and apart from the visible Church; but with respect to that feature in their case, that we cannot now see and certainly decide as to the fact of their being of the regenerate and elect.

Here then is a great, broad, and necessary theological distinction, as deeply rooted in the nature of the case, as it is in the plain teachings of the Scriptures. It is approved and accepted by all parties, as true of the Church in all ages, and under all dispensations. Now, if this Woman is the visible Church, who can that divine seed which she carries and nurtures within her body be, but just these genuine children of God, whose characteristics are yet hidden, and who are only to be manifested at the great day, to wit, the invisible Church! Those who constitute the invisible Church are in the visible Church, and for the present are still joined to the visible Church as a most important part thereof. They are her chief treasure. The visible Church exists for their begetting and nurture. Where she is, they are also. It is on their account she has all her trials, her anxieties, and her assaults of Satan. It is with them that she ever travails, and cries out, and agonizes herself, that they may be brought safely to birth and manifestation as the sons of God. The picture is as true and exact as it is beautiful, and as true of one age and dispensation as it is of another. Nor is there a single item in the whole case which does not go to strengthen the overpowering proof, that this is what we are to understand by this mystic Child. Look for a moment at a few additional particulars.

1. There is a peculiar manliness ascribed to this child. It is not only “a man child,” as our English version renders the phrase, but more literally “a son, a male” or a son who is a male. There is special emphasis laid upon the masculinity. But this is in no way distinctive of Constantine. He was in no respect more conspicuously a male, or even in the higher sense a man, than many other notable sons of the Church. Moses, and David, and Solomon, and Daniel, and Zerubbabel, among the ancients, and Paul, and Peter, and Augustine, and Luther, and Gustavus Adolphus, among the men of our own dispensation, were in every respect as manly as he. Nay, the letter of the description is such as to prove that this child is collective and composite, the same as the mother, and likewise includes people of both sexes. The word (αρσεν) which means male, has the peculiarity of being in the neuter gender, and so applies to both men and women, and cannot apply to any one individual. We have a somewhat similar instance in 2 Tim. 3:6, where the apostle speaks of certain perverted religionists, “which creep into houses and lead captive silly women” (γυναικαρις), that is, silly women of the neuter gender, and so women, or womenish ones, of both sexes. Sex, however, is not so much the subject of this αρσεν as the higher qualities of manhood common to both men and women. Such forms of speech lose all propriety except when construed with the implication that a body of persons is meant, and that this body includes women as well as men, and men as well as women. But it is a body at the same time distinguished throughout with a special masculinity, which knows no sex; that is, with the most manly of virtues, and the most vigorous and heroic of characteristics. This was not true of the Christians of the time of Constantine, of the Valenses, or of any other particular peoples who have been named in this connection, any more than of the genuine saints of God of any other time. Nay, we look in vain to the Christians of Constantine’s day, or to those who lived under the dynasty of Christian Emperors after him, for exemplifications of this manliness at all special, or worthy to be compared with the heroism of the prophets, apostles, and martyrs which were before them, or with that of the great champions of the faith in more recent times. But if we understand here all God’s saints, all who have been begotten of the Holy Ghost, of every age, then every

letter of the narrative is realized to the full. Here are men and women, in multitudes upon multitudes, "of whom the world was not worthy," alike pervaded with the highest qualities of virtue, courage, self-denial and strength. They are all conquerors. They all have overcome the world, triumphed over the powers of darkness, won the race of faith, and through the grace of God possessed themselves of titles to everlasting crowns and honors. Their masculinity in these respects is unquestionable and most intense, whether they be men or women as to sex. Nor is this so true and characteristic of any people that have lived, or that shall live, as it is of the true children of God of all time. Here we find all the noblest and best of the race, and the embodiment of the highest virtue and wisdom that ever pulsed in the arteries of humanity. Here is the proper "man child," if ever there was or will be one upon earth.

2. This child "is to rule [shepherdize] all the nations with a rod of iron." He is to reign, with unrivalled and irresistible authority and power, over the world. He is to govern, discipline and control all the peoples of the earth, as a shepherd deals with his flock. To shepherdize with an iron sceptre, is to exercise a dominion which is inflexible, irrefragable, and that cannot be withstood. Strength, absoluteness and perpetuity of rule, is unmistakably indicated; and that rule is specifically said to be over "all the nations." It leaves none outside of it. It is universal. But none of this is strictly true, either of Constantine, or of the Christianized Roman Empire. Neither is it true of any king or state, in favor with God, in any period, from the beginning of the world till now. But it is true to the letter with respect to the regenerated and victorious children of God. Every one whom grace has called, is called to be a King. Every one redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, is the anointed heir of eternal regency. From the days of the ancient prophets, the divine promise has been, that "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." (Dan. 7:27.) Nor was this a mere Jewish notion, clothed in Oriental extravagance. It is spoken of in the New Testament in the plainest language. In the last words of Christ, and uttered from heaven after his ascension, the promise rings out to and through the Church of Thyatira, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: EVEN AS I RECEIVED OF MY FATHER." (Rev. 2:26, 27.) Surely, the Roman State under Constantine was not the same as that glorious dominion given to the Saviour on account of his obedience unto death. If it was, then many have been robbed of their share in this promise; for it is made to every one that overcometh, and keepeth Christ's works to the end; which is the fact with regard to all saints of all ages, many of whom lived before there was a Roman empire, and others have lived since that empire passed away. How then could that promise have been fulfilled to these! Moreover, that same "power over the nations," and shepherdizing with a sceptre of iron, is still held out as part of the hope and reward of every victor for God. It must therefore be still future, and something different from a mere Christianized Cæsarian dominion, which at best a very few of God's people ever possessed. Indeed there has never lived a manly saint, in any dispensation, who has not been called, anointed and predestined to the rulership here in question. How then can it be Rome's emperorship!

Those who profess to find the fulfilment of this picture in the times long past, are still constrained to admit, that the language touching the official destiny of this child falls in precisely with the second Psalm. And yet that Psalm refers particularly to the judgment time, and pre-eminently to Jesus Christ, that greatest Son, as well as Lord, of the Church, in whom and with whom all the blessed and holy who have part in "the first resurrection" shall "reign" and "judge" in a supernal and immortal administration, to which neither Constantine, nor the Valenses, nor any others ever yet attained. The description fits to the true saints of God of every generation, with the glorified Jesus at their head; but to none else.

3. This child is the special object of Satan's murderous malignity. It is on the child's account that he assails the woman, takes his station before her, and stirs up all his power to hinder and destroy. It is not so much she, as the child, that he is bent to devour. But he was no more malignant towards Constantine, or the dynasty of Rome's Christian emperors, or any of the Christians of that era, than against the people of God in any other age. The truth is that so-called Christian Rome has served his purposes about as well as Pagan Rome. But here is something peculiar, special, and against which all the malice of hell is aroused and concentrated. We can very well understand this, and the tremendous painting comes out in all its significance, when we see in this Child the universal body of God's saints. To devour these, or to stop these from reaching the kingdom, is ever the one great malignant intent of the Dragon. Their success is his defeat. Hence this intent of the unparalleled attempt to overwhelm them at the final extremity. He might destroy Constantine, and destroy Constantine's empire, as he has destroyed it, and destroy any one particular class or company of Christian confessors or peoples, and still the main object of his draconic enmity remain comparatively unharmed. There still would be representatives of salvation left; Christ would still have his array of saved ones; and the main intent of infernal malice would not be reached. But if Satan could destroy the whole body of the redeemed, or at the last thwart their exaltation to the authority and dominion for which they are destined, this would be an accomplishment to answer to the awful significance of the picture. From the intensity and specialness of the Dragon's murderous intent, we may thus read the certainty of a momentousness about this Child which nothing can adequately explain, but the fact that it represents the whole regenerated purchase of the Saviour's blood.

So, then, I take this Man Child, and know not how else it can be taken without a miserable emasculation of the whole representation, emptying it of every significance at all up to the subject, or demanded by the circumstances.

But what, now, are we to understand by this Child's Birth? for this is the crisis of the entire matter. All that precedes this looks to it, and all that comes after dates from it.

A man's birth is the most important event in his life. Everything that can come of him depends upon his being born. It is only by his birth that he comes into the possession of his own separate being. It is only by his birth that he begins to enter upon his proper life.

Hence the birth of this child must needs be the chief event in all its history—the event on which its separate and proper existence as well as everything in its subsequent career depends. Without this birth it comes to nothing, and its entire being miscarries. And if it is the invisible Church, the whole body of true saints, that is represented by the Child, then this birth must refer to the very greatest and most momentous occurrence in the whole history of the redeemed, even that on which their proper existence and glory depends. What is there, then, in the revelations of God with regard to all His regenerated children, to answer to so significant and striking a figure as that of being born?

Remembering that it is under the seventh trumpet, which is the last trumpet, that this birth occurs, we are naturally conducted to the one only thing in all the everlasting career of God's saints to answer the description. But this one thing does answer it, and fills out every feature of it in absolute perfection.

Turn back to the Saviour's own great prophetic discourse, and see what he connects with this trumpet. The subject is His own coming and the end of the world. And we there read of mighty commotions in all the visible universe, and of the appearance of the sign of the Son of man in heaven; whereupon it is said, "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matt. 24:29–31.)

Turn also to Paul's great chapter on the subject, and hear what he writes about it: "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor. 15:51, 52.)

Turn again to his still more specific statements to the Thessalonians: "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." (1 Thess. 4:16, 17.)

Or turn to the Apocalypticist's account of the seventh trumpet, and to the summary of its contents as proclaimed in the song of the gold-crowned Elders: "And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven: We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because Thou hast taken unto Thee Thy great power, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy Name, small and great." (Rev. 11:15–18.)

These passages are decisive. They each speak of the great trumpet of Judgment—the last trumpet, and tell us of glorious things then to be fulfilled. They tell of God's elect, small and great, from one end of heaven to the other, all gathered together for their rewards, the dead from their graves, and the living from their places wherever they are, and every one "changed," from corruption to incorruption, from dishonor to glory, from weakness to power, from earthly to heavenly, and all "together" caught up into the regions above, to meet their Lord in the heavens. The occasion is the grandest and most momentous in all their history. It involves the greatest change in all their experiences, the goal of the intensest anxieties and most agonizing endeavors that ever occupied the thoughts and energies of the saints, and the sublimest transition in the form of their being to which the Scriptures refer. It is their first entrance upon that proper life which till then is only a matter of promise and hope, toward which there is a growing indeed, but which only then becomes fruition. It is the great point to which everything that precedes looks, and from which all that succeeds dates its beginning. In a word, it is their great and glorious Birth into immortality and eternal life; and the time of it is the time of the sounding of the last trump. Prior to then, the saints are indeed generated, begotten, quickened by the Holy Ghost, and full of prophetic yearning for what is beyond; but they are not yet born. They are still invisible, hidden, inclosed, restrained, disabled. They do not yet know what they shall be. They pulsate with a heavenly life, but it remains for them to be set free, to be "brought forth," to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." And that deliverance is only consummated when the last trumpet sounds, bringing with it "the adoption" for which we groan, to wit, "the redemption of our body."

A birth is a manifestation, a bringing to the light, the making visible of what was before invisible. And so the Scriptures repeatedly speak of "the manifestation of the sons of God," which in this present order of things is expected and yearned after, but which only takes place in connection with the sounding of the last trump. (Rom. 8:19.) Malachi refers to that time when the Lord of hosts shall make up His jewels, and says, "Then shall ye discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." (Mal. 3:17, 18.) Isaiah (25:7, 8) sings of a day when death shall be swallowed up of victory, and notes it as one of the glad concomitants, that then the covering shall be taken away. Paul, with unmistakable pointedness, writes to the Colossians (3:4): "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." And hundreds of other passages, in all manner of forms, teach us how then for the first time it is to be demonstrated and shown who all are truly the regenerate children of God. Till then, this cannot be known with certainty. The child is as yet unborn; but then it shall come to the light, the saints shall be revealed with their Redeemer, and the sons of God shall be manifested.

For the present the true congregation of God's ransomed ones is invisible, but it is "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Pet. 1:5.)

Here, then, is a most momentous Birth. It is the greatest birth of all time. It is a birth to be experienced by the very parties whom we take to be symbolized by this mystic Man-child. And it is a birth which reaches its completion just where God has placed the picture of it, to wit, under the last trumpet. It answers every feature of the symbol, and without the slightest straining of Scripture or of history. It comports with the proper dignity and importance of the subject. It corresponds perfectly with every item and implication in the wonderful painting. And it looks to me like an attempt to browbeat the Revelation of God, not to accept it as the true and proper thing here to be understood.

And yet, there is still one other particular in the text which would seem to make it impossible to get away from this interpretation. The instant this Man-child is born, it is "caught away to God, and to His throne." We have just seen that it is the destiny of the saints to be kings. It is everywhere told us that they are to have crowns; that they are to sit on thrones; that they are to reign with Christ. Jesus says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (Rev. 3:21.) On this point there can be no question. This throne is not an earthly throne, like Cæsar's, nor yet a mere moral influence, such as the saints already possess and wield; but a heavenly and divine throne, to which belongs a sceptre of iron, and a rulership which involves irresistible force and judicial power, breaking to shivers whatsoever rises against it; even the mighty throne of Jesus Christ in his glory, which all his people are to share with him. And the time for this sublime coronation and investiture of the saints is the time of resurrection, the time of the last trump, the time of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. When Paul gave out his last farewell to the world, he said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day," the day of judgment, and not before. (2 Tim. 4:8.) Peter writes to "the elect through sanctification of the Spirit," and says to them, "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (1 Pet. 5:4.) Daniel (7:26, 27) tells us specifically that the time when "the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom" is given to the saints, is the time when "the judgment shall sit," even that great judgment under which the final antichrist is finally destroyed. And as the birth of this Man-child synchronizes with, or is instantly followed by his coronation and enthronement in heaven, and the time of that coronation is specifically defined to be the time of resurrection, it is simply impossible to locate this birth anywhere else than at the resurrection time. And if the birth is thus positively located in the resurrection time, what can it be but that very resurrection change, by which all the genuine saints of God have their full birth into immortality and exaltation to their immortal crowns?

Nor does it at all militate against this view that some saints are raised, translated, or glorified in advance of others, and that the "change involved does not take place with the entire number at precisely the same instant." It is part of the Divine plan always to give forepledges and earnest of what is to come. There is in every instance some "first fruits" before the general harvest. So Christ was raised and glorified long in advance of the final redemption of his people, and many of the saints also arose with him. These were the preliminary specimens of what was to come long afterwards. So Enoch and Elijah were translated without tasting of death, as a sort of earnest of the promised translation of those who are alive and ready when Christ comes. All these are a part of the body denoted by the Man-child. They all belong to what is subsequently called "the first resurrection," to which "everything belongs that is raised to immortality before the last day."* And so we are taught, as Ambrose, and Luther, and Kromayer admit, that other particular resurrections and translations of certain eminent saints occur at intervals preceding the full completion of the glorified company. The very figure before us would indicate successive stages in the case. A birth is never so sudden a thing, but that some parts of the body appear before others. The picture is plainly meant to be a summary one. It is the symbol of the full consummation of the whole matter. In such a picture there is no occasion for the noting of minor distributions or details. It is enough to give the Birth and exalted destiny of the Child, without entering into the particulars of the presentations, which are sufficiently set forth in other places. And yet, even in so general and summary a picture, the fact, that not all belonging to the body come to the Birth at one and the same instant, is still not overlooked, nor precluded, but really involved.*

Behold, then, my friends, the dignity and glory of the Christian calling! Having put on Christ, we belong to a fellowship, for which the sublimest things are reserved! Living a life of faith on the Son of God, we are maturing for a wondrous accouchement! These wrappings and disabilities of time are soon to give place to the liberty and blessedness of a glorious immortality! Instead of these aches, and ills, and toils, and disabilities, and many anxieties, shall presently be the elastic vigor and untiring strength which we now see in the angels! Instead of these doubts, and fears, and contests with evil in and around us, there shall be accomplished redemption, beyond all further vicissitude or danger! And for these crosses shall come crowns of imperishable dominion with Jesus! It amazes and confounds me when I attempt to survey the astounding changes that await the faithful. I am overwhelmed with the sublimities of exaltation and power which are set before the poor sinful children of men in the Revelations of God.

We are often disheartened with our hardships and trials, and begin to think it too hard a thing for us to be Christians. Nature is so weak and depraved; there is such a burden in this incessant toil, and self-denial, and watchfulness, and prayer; the way is so steep, and narrow, and difficult; we are tempted again and again to give up. But when we think what the dear Lord has done for us, what glories he has set before us, what victories are to come to us, what princedoms and thrones in the great empire of eternity await us, and how sure is all if we only press on for the prize; we have the profoundest reason to rejoice and give thanks every day that we live, that such opportunities have been vouchsafed us, were the sufferings even tenfold severer than they are.

Blessed be God, for His holy Church! Blessed be God, that He has called us to be members of it! Blessed be God, that every faithful one in it is on the way to a glorious birth-hour to immortal regency and power! Only let us see to it, that we rightly appreciate our mercies, and give the diligence to make our calling and election sure. And "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To whom be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

That clime is not this dull clime of ours;
All, all is brightness there;
A sweeter influence breathes around its flowers,
And a far milder air.

No calm below is like that calm above,
No region here is like that realm of love;
Earth's softest spring ne'er shed so soft a light,
Earth's brightest summer never shone so bright.

Those dwellers there are not like these of earth,
No mortal stain they bear;
And yet they seem of kindred blood and birth,—
Whence, and how came they there?
Earth was their native soil, from sin and shame,
Through tribulation they to glory came;
Bond-slaves delivered from sin's crushing load,
Brands plucked from burning by the hand of God.

LECTURE 29

THE WAR IN HEAVEN—FAULTY INTERPRETATIONS—A LITERAL REALITY—THE FORCES MARSHALLED—WHO MICHAEL IS—THE DRAGON AND HIS ANGELS—THE OCCASION OF THE CONFLICT—DISPUTE ABOUT THE BODY OF MOSES A FORE-INTIMATION OF IT—THE NATURE OF THE BATTLE—A BLOODLESS WAR—A FORENSIC CONTEST—THE ACCUSER'S STRONG POINT—THE GROUNDS OF DEFENCE—THE ISSUE OF THE ENGAGEMENT—THE DRAGON DEFEATED—PROVED A MURDEROUS ACCUSER—EJECTED FROM THE HEAVENLY REGIONS—REJOICING IN HEAVEN—ENCOURAGEMENT TO CHRISTIANS.

Rev 12:7–12. (Revised Text.) And there came to be war in the heaven: Michael and his angels warred with the Dragon; and the Dragon warred and his angels, and they prevailed not, neither was even their place found any more in the heaven.

And the great Dragon was cast down, the Old Serpent, who is called the Devil and the Satan [adversary], he who seduceth [or misleadeth] the whole inhabited world: he was cast down into the earth, and his angels were cast down with him.

And I heard a great voice saying in the heaven, Now is come the salvation, the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the dominion of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down who accuseth them before our God by day and by night. And they conquered him by reason of the blood of the Lamb, and by reason of the word of their testimony, and they loved not their life unto death. Therefore rejoice ye heavens, and ye that tabernacle in them.

EDITORIAL NOTE: [SEE CAVEAT REGARDING SEISS' INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION 12 AS THE CHURCH](#)

FROM the earliest periods of the human race till now, its sublimest poets have occupied their sublimest numbers with pictures and descriptions of conflicts in the heavenly worlds, and battles of the gods. Contemporaneous with these dreams and songs, have also been the sneers and scoffs of the skeptic mind, ridiculing the idea, astonished that reasonable men should give entertainment to such fictions, no matter in what magniloquence arrayed. And it is

Strange,
At first, that angel should with angel war,
And in fierce hosting meet, who wont to meet
So oft in festivals of joy and love
Unanimous, as sons of one great sire
Hymning th' eternal Father.

But much as any one may be disposed to doubt and question, there is a background of solid reality in the case. Since Homer wrote, and Deborah and Barak sung of the stars fighting in their courses, there has been an increasing revelation of the spiritual economies, and in it accounts of conflict and war involving all beings in all worlds. Especially, in the great and wondrous outcome and consummation of the affairs pertaining to our race, a momentous collision in the heavenly spaces is foreannounced, in which the highest and mightiest of created beings are to be the combatants. The seer of Patmos, in rapport with the divine Spirit and prescience, was shown it, and by command of God has put it on record for the instruction of the Church, as a sober and settled part of Christian anticipation and eschatological theology. And here, among other stupendous visions of what is to come to pass hereafter, he has written it down for our learning, that "there came to be war in the heaven: Michael and his angels warred with the

dragon; and the dragon warred and his angels, and they prevailed not, nor was even their place found any more in the heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, who is called the devil and the Satan (or adversary), he who seduceth (or misleadeth) the whole inhabited world, he was cast down unto the earth, and his angels were cast down with him."

Some have supposed this to be a mere poetical and exaggerated account of certain moral conflicts in the history of the Church on earth. Some take the Dragon to mean the Pagan Roman Empire; Michael, the Christian Roman Empire; Heaven, the throne of the Roman Emperors; and the war in Heaven, the different and opposing counsels of the adherents and supporters of the Pagan and Christian Roman Emperors. Others teach that we are not to understand it of any real transaction, but as a sort of summary of the prolonged antagonism between good and evil, which, to a lively poetic imagination, might seem as if the hidden principalities and powers were in actual war. But all such ideas pay very poor compliment to the inspiration claimed by the holy Apostle, to his capacity to write for the instruction of the Church, and to what he has by divine command put upon record as a veritable Revelation of the Lord Almighty. Having examined a long list of these symbolic and allegorical interpretations, and followed the processes by which their authors have tried to apply them, I have not found one which does not completely break down under the weight of its own cumbrous unfitness. They each and all fail to explain the facts and relations of the record, and treat John as a half-demented sentimental old man, trying to make a grand poem out of a few dim anticipations touching the earthly fortunes of the Church, which could have been better told in one well-written chapter. They are, at best, the wild guesses of men who have never got hold of the real thread of the matter, whilst under the necessity of saying something. I take the holy Apostle as a fully inspired man. I take his Book, not as a crazy poem, but as a real Revelation. I take his visions to be exactly what the Angel actually showed him, all truly and faithfully written as he was divinely directed to write them, and not fabrications of his own brain, draped according to his own doting fancy. I take all his terms and statements literally, except where he gives plain intimation that they are to be otherwise taken. I locate all in the time and place in which he locates it, and in the order in which he gives it, conditioned with this one fundamental consideration, that the entire Book is intended to give to the Church an apocalyptic chart of the outcome and consummation of all history, in connection with the coming again of the Lord Jesus. Accordingly, I take the text as it stands, as the account of a real commotion in the aerial spaces,—a violent collision among immortals—a literal "war in the heaven,"—concerning which we are called to notice,

- I. THE FORCES MARSHALLED;
- II. THE OCCASION OF THE CONFLICT;
- III. THE NATURE OF THE BATTLE;
- IV. THE ISSUE OF THE ENGAGEMENT.

May God help us to consider these particulars as the solemnity and momentousness of the subject deserves!

I. Let us look, then, at the Forces marshalled. These are specifically described. On the one side, "Michael and his angels" are the warriors; on the other, "the Dragon and his angels."

Who, then, is Michael? Many answer, The Lord Jesus Christ, claiming that it would impinge upon the dignity and prerogatives of Christ to attribute all that is here implied to a mere angel, however exalted. But I do not find that those most inclined to this view are the most clear and decided in their recognition of the proper Deity of Christ. And though the Lord Jesus has His angels, there is nothing in that to prove that an archangel may not have angels as well. Satan has his angels, why may not Michael have them too? What if the name does mean, One like God? As a title of Christ, it would rather disprove than prove His proper Deity. There is also an unquestionable Godlikeness in all holy beings, which must be very exalted in those pre eminent among the ministers of the throne. What if Michael is called a leader or prince of angels, and, by way of emphasis, "the archangel?" We know from Daniel that there are other "chief princes" in the angelic world. Paul (1 Thess. 4:16) also refers to "an archangel" (see original) in a way which presupposes other archangels. The angel who communicated with Daniel calls Michael "one of the chief princes," which implies the existence of others of similar rank (Dan. 10:13). He also speaks of Michael as "holding with him," and not he with Michael, as the diction would be were Michael the same as The Son of God. What if he is "the great prince which standeth for the children of the prophet's people" in the time of their trouble? Michael is a great prince, and one whom the Jews have always acknowledged, whilst they rejected and crucified Christ, and nationally refuse to have Him for their prince. What if the bruising of the serpent's head, and the destruction of the works of the devil, and the spoiling of Satan's goods, are ascribed to Christ? Anything done by the agent is done by the principal; and that Christ has appointed angels to minister to the heirs of salvation, and to execute such parts of the grand administration as may be appropriately assigned to them, is part of the clear teaching of the Scriptures. The war in this case is plainly in behalf of the child which the mystic woman brings forth, and the Head and front of that composite child is Christ Himself. As part of the body fought for, He is thus distinguished from "Michael and his angels" who do the fighting, just as Michael is distinguished from the Divine Son in the Book of Daniel. What if the establishment of the reign and dominion of Christ is the result of this war? The general who conducts a campaign to victory is not therefore the king to whom the results of that success belong. In Christ's own explanation of some of these matters (Matt. 13) He says: "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;" but He is no less the great Judge on that account, neither is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory a whit less His. "Michael the Archangel" was the disputant in the matter about "the body of Moses" (Jude 9); but it is there said of him that "he durst not bring against the devil a railing accusation, but said, The

Lord rebuke thee." This shows a clear distinction between Michael and the Lord, as well as a law and restraint upon Michael which pertains only to a creature and a subject, and not to the almighty Son of God, who had not yet then become incarnate. Jesus could say, "Get thee behind me, Satan," but Michael dared not speak thus. Besides, "Michael" is everywhere used in the Scriptures as a proper name, the same as Gabriel, or Jesus, or John; and occurring here the same as in all other places there would seem to be no more authority for making it mean the Lord Jesus than for making John mean Daniel, or Mary mean Martha. The Bible, indeed, abundantly speaks of the Angel of Jehovah, who plainly is none other than the only-begotten Son of God; but there is no proof that this Jehovah-Angel is ever called Michael. And as the name here is Michael, I know not by what right any one can take it as meaning any other than Michael, the created archangel, who is not less than five times referred to by this name in the holy Scriptures.*

According to the Jewish teachings Michael is one of seven Archangels, and the chief of the seven. In this the Christian Church has ever been disposed to concur. Hence the Church references to "Michael and all angels." Hence also, in the highest of all the Christian services from the beginning, "with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify God's glorious Name." And as the very chief of all angels, though himself one of them, Michael would have "his angels," though no less God's, just as a general-in-chief has his aids, officers, and soldiers, who nevertheless all belong to the king. He would also thus be the proper one to stand at the head of the grand Army of heaven, when called out in force to put down "the Devil and his angels." All the holy angels, therefore, with "Michael the Archangel" as their chief, constitute the sublime forces on the one side, marshalled for this "battle of the gods."

Nor need we be at a loss to identify those on the opposite side. The Scriptures abundantly assure us of the existence of great spiritual powers and principalities ever arrayed against human welfare, and who are the enemies of God and all good. Paul (Eph. 6:11, 12) tells us that we are continually exposed to assaults, surprises, and dangers from an unseen and most subtle confederation of spiritual agents; that there is a "devil," from whose "wiles" and agents we are in perpetual jeopardy; that our contest is not only with blood and flesh, but with "the principalities, the powers, the sovereigns of this present darkness, the wicked spirits in the aerial regions;" that there stands opposed to us, and to all good, a great malignant kingdom, a vast spiritual empire of evil. There are "angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation" (Jude 6). God never made an evil being; but He made angels, principalities, and powers capacitated for mighty joys and distinctions in His glorious domain, yet with free will, implied in the very creation of moral beings, which they could exercise for their everlasting weal or woe. Many have remained steadfast, to wit, "Michael and his angels." But some abode not in the truth, but revolted against the rule of Heaven, and became the unchanging enemies of God and His Kingdom. Among these is one of peculiar power and despicable pre-eminence, who drew his associates into his revolt, and ever stands as the head and leader of them. He is called The Devil, a name which the Scriptures, in the original, never use in the plural, and never apply to but one being. All others belonging to his wicked empire are "his angels," morally like him, but in place and position grouped around him, under his direction, agents of his imperial will. He is called "a prince," "the prince of this world," "the prince of the powers of the air," "the god of this world." And the same is here called "the great Dragon, the Old Serpent, the Satan, or Adversary, who seduceth or misleadeth the whole populated world." "The course of this world" is declared to be "according to" him. He, with his confederates, "rules in the darkness of this world," "blinding the eyes of them that believe not," "working in the children of disobedience," and leading men captive at his will. All apostates and false Christians are called his children, the tares of his sowing. The Mau of sin, that Wicked, to whom the Scriptures impute such a terrible career of lawlessness and tyranny in the last period of the present world, is the incarnation of his spirit and evilness. The evil princes who had the sway over ancient Persia and Greece, and who withstood the good angels who communicated with Daniel, were his archons or world-lords, as Paul's word is. Demons,* whoever they may be, also belong to the empire of the Dragon, but they are of a lower order,—the plebeians of this detestable confederacy.

These, then, make up the opposing Forces in this battle.

II. Let us look now at the Occasion of the conflict. In the preceding verses we had the picture of a woman, glorious in her apparel, victorious in her position, royal in dignity, and travailing to bring forth a child destined to rule all nations. Before her stood the great red Dragon, bent upon devouring this child as soon as it should be born. We have seen, as Methodius also taught, that this woman represents the Church as a visible body, and the unborn child the invisible Church, which lies concealed in the visible, and consists of true saints only. We have further seen that the Birth to which the woman labors to bring the child, is the birth into immortality by resurrection and translation, otherwise called "the manifestation of the sons of God," which occurs when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise, and we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," and to receive the promised crown of glory. And it is in immediate connection with this Birth of the man-child, and its being "caught away to God, and to His throne," that this "war in the heavens" comes on. Already in Daniel we are told that the time when Michael stands up for the sons of the prophet's people, is the time when every one that is written in the book shall be delivered,—the time when many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake to everlasting life to shine as the firmament and the stars forever. It is this glorious exaltation of the saints that the devil and his angels have ever been most bent on defeating. For this they have been operating through all the ages, the Dragon ever standing before the travailing woman to destroy her seed. For this all the subtlety and power of hell are exerted, and are becoming the more intense as the resurrection time approaches. And no sooner are the graves of the saints about to open, and the true people of God to come forth into the honors and glories of immortality, than Satan stirs up all his

power to prevent it, and thus arouses this commotion in heaven.

A prelude to this controversy, on a small scale, is referred to by Jude as occurring in connection with the body of Moses. There is reason to believe that Moses is not dead. He did indeed "die in the mount," according to the command of God; but he was seen alive in the days of the Saviour on the mount of the Transfiguration, seen "in glory," and hence in resurrection life. He must therefore have been raised again from the state of death,—raised in advance of the general resurrection of the saints, as Enoch and Elijah were translated before the general translation of God's waiting and watching ones at the coming of the Lord. And if we are at all warranted in this belief, the dispute between the archangel Michael and the devil "about the body of Moses," was a contention about his resurrection, the one standing up for the recovery of that body from death, and the other resisting. Thus we have the precise parties named in the text, and a fierce contest over the same thing in one individual case, which we have here in the case of the saints in general. It was the resurrection and glorification of Moses which was the subject of collision then, and it is the resurrection and glorification of the saints in general which is the subject and occasion of the war here. It is Michael again, joined now by all his angels, that here stands up in behalf of the true people of God emerging into resurrection life and glory; and it is the same Old Serpent, stirring up now all the power of his kingdom to hinder and prevent the sacred seed of faith from attaining their promised exaltation.

There is also every reason why the whole strength of the great adversary should be interposed to prevent this glorious coming forth of the children of God to immortal glory and power. With the dominion of death broken the whole empire of darkness breaks with it, the reign of hell is dissolved, and the victory of redemption is complete. With the curse of mortality and corruption thus swallowed up of life, the devil's sway is gone, his kingdom mutilated, and all his malignant hopes against the Church overwhelmed. To yield here without the most stubborn resistance would be to give up the aim of all his plans and endeavors since he first tempted man in Paradise, to let his whole empire collapse, to permit the chief power of his dominion to go by default. Hence his rallying of all his forces. Hence his most determined resistance just at this point. And hence this "war in the heaven."

III. Having thus identified the combatants and found the occasion of the conflict, we are also far on the way to a right apprehension of the Nature of the Battle. The beings engaged are all spiritual, and the region is "the heaven"—in the air—in the spaces above the earth. The battle therefore must needs be spiritual, and not physical. There is no taking of life—no killing—no bloodshed—no slaughter. Milton has ventured a description of it where he says:

Michael bid sound

Th' archangel trumpet: through the vast of heaven
It sounded, and the faithful armies rung
Hosanna to the Highest: nor stood at gaze
The adverse legions, nor less hideous joined
The horrid shock: now storming fury rose,
And clamor such as heard in heaven till now
Was never; arms on armor clashing brayed
Horrible discord, and the madding wheels
Of brazen chariots raged; dire was the noise
Of conflict; overhead the dismal hiss
Of fiery darts in flaming volleys flew,
And flying vaulted either host with fire:
So under fiery cope together rushed
Both battles main, with ruinous assault
And inextinguishable rage; all heaven
Resounded, and had earth been then, all earth
Had to her centre shook.

But Milton wrote from imagination, and drew his conceptions from earthly battlefields. True, all the strength of hell with heaven is measured; but it is moral, intellectual, spiritual strength. The cannonading is thought, argument, subtle accusation, and defence. It is the war of mind with mind, of malignant and hellish intellect inflamed with desperate hate and anger against the intellect, reason, and right of heaven, a war which has its type rather in some tremendous forensic battle, where giants of the law dispute and contend, each intent on the victory. This is indicated in all the incidents and circumstances of the case. Satan appears here in his old character of the seducer and accuser, in which he has been for so long misleading and perverting the world, making the wrong seem right, and the right seem wrong, inciting to misjudgment, ruinous passion, and all the deadly consequences of moral and spiritual obliquity. As he appeared among the sons of God in the history concerning Job, sneering at the virtues of that man of God, insinuating the unreality and sordidness of his piety, and insisting that a fair trial would prove him nothing but a hypocrite; so he appears with all his malignant forces in this case, accusing the saints, and God for proposing to do such sublime things for them, denying the reality of their virtues, the adequacy of the tests of their obedience, and their right to be thus glorified.

Every saint of God embraced in this Man-Child was born a sinner, and by sin forfeited the favor of God and a blessed immortality.

How can the Almighty be just and true to His nature, laws, and threatenings, and yet lift these people in honor and glory from their graves, receive them to His throne, and give them place in the heaven of His holy administrations? Here is the devil's strong point, with which he ever assails men, and with which he here assails all the celestial powers. His line of battle is shown in the statement that he accuses the brethren, the saints, by day and by night. The great thunder of his tremendous cannonading is, that these people are not fit for and not worthy of such honors; that God disowns His holiness, and casts dishonor on His throne by awarding to such a people such a portion and such a destiny; that all reasonable being and intelligence is set at nought and outraged by such a proceeding. This is "the dismal hiss of fiery darts," flying "in flaming volleys," and vaulting either host. Accusation, accusation—keen, darling, deep, and clamorous accusation, subtly insinuated, and with infernal rancor hurled, is the artillery which belches forth with all the desperate energy of hell. This is further shown beyond mistake in the statement as to how he and his hosts are vanquished. The record says they overcame him by means of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, and their not having loved their lives to save them from death. Sinners indeed were all those who belong to the company of this mystic Child, and forever contrary is it to the nature and government of God to connive at sin, or to look with allowance upon iniquity; but these people are not therefore without a maintainable cause. An ample atonement has been made. A Lamb has bled, whose meritorious blood, weighed in all the strictness of eternal right, by which the carping malignity of hell itself is silenced, covers the whole amplitude of their deficiencies, and cleanses away all account of their sins. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." "Blood of the Lamb!" This is the everlasting fortress of the saints; and this stands foremost of all the means by which the accuser and his hosts are driven back. But, sheltered under this by faith in Him who died for them, there is also some claim and show for works. Justified and forgiven men, who have no hope but in their Saviour's merit, may still have title to some consideration and reward for their fidelities. Having given their word of testimony for the Lord that loved them, and stood firm to it against an adverse world, living martyr lives, or dying martyr deaths, cheerfully resigning all that man counts dear for the sake of the truth they confessed, God is not unjust to forget the work and labor of love they have shown towards His name in ministering to His people and His cause. And thus Michael and his angels, standing up for the Lord's saints, conquer the accuser and his hosts by reason of the blood of the Lamb, and the worthiness that appears in what they have done and sacrificed for Him. The means of the victory disclose the nature of the conflict.

But the sternness and tenacity with which every inch is contested, and the dreadfulness of the determination with which the resurrection and eternal rewards of the saints is withstood when Heaven thus comes to the fulfilment of its covenants and promises, necessarily involves a "horrid shock," and "storming fury," and bray of clashing and conflict, which even the genius of a Milton was incompetent to set forth. Michael and his angels war with the Dragon, because wickedly set to prevent the fulfilment of God's promises to His people; and the Dragon wars, and his angels war; and "madding wheels of brazen chariots rage," in the terrible-ness of a collision such as "in heaven till now was never."

IV. I now come to say a word or two about the Issue.

As we would expect from such a contest, the Dragon is defeated. With all his skilled generalship and energy, and all the desperate fury of his hosts, the effort is fruitless. "They prevailed not." He might have known that this would be the result. But pride, depravity, and malice have wonderful power to blind the mind to reason and truth, and to give brazen hope even where there is not the slightest ground for hope. Satan has ever been so successful in the past, both in heaven among the angels, and on earth with the human race, and his proud daring is so unbounded, that he does not hesitate to believe that he can break even the decrees of Almightyness. So he attempts it. But every argument he urges is successfully met. Every accusation is answered. Every charge proved unfounded and false. He may deceive men, but he cannot impose his deceptions and subtleties on heaven. He cannot show a flaw in the foundations of God's covenant of eternal life to every true confessor of the Saviour's name. Every onset is adequately withstood. Every weapon he brings forth is shivered in his hands. Not all his own great genius, nor all the strength and determination of his hosts, is of any avail. The meritoriousness of the Blood of the Lamb is too much for him. The right and justice of reward to them who have stood to the faith even unto the giving up of life, are too mighty for him to overcome. He once drew with him a third of heaven, and succeeded in making himself "the god of this world;" but daring now to think to thwart the good purpose of Omnipotence, he finds only

Joyless triumphals of his hoped success,
Ruin, and desperation, and dismay.

With his failure comes conviction as a murderous accuser, falsifier, and deceiver. Foiled at every point he stands revealed to all heaven in all the devilish baseness of his true character, and all his hosts as the ministers and abettors of Satanic falsehood and the most hellish malignity. Such convicts can no longer be tolerated in the vicinage of heaven. Stunned and effectually repulsed by the infallible merits of the blood of the Lamb, the celestial forces pursue him to an utter rout. Henceforward neither he nor his angels are any more to have the liberty of the heavenly spaces. Henceforward "their place is not found any more in the heaven." With his defeat and conviction ejection, complete ejection, follows.

It may not be in every one's mind that the aerial regions, the air, the cloud-heavens, the spaces above the earth, are now the chief lurking-places of evil spirits. But so the Bible teaches. Paul says we wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with wicked spirits in high places, literally "in the heavens," "in the aerial regions" (Eph. 6:12). Hence also Satan is called

“the prince of the power of the air,” more literally, “the prince of the aerial host,” meaning wicked spiritual powers dwelling in the aerial heavens (Eph. 2:2). Thus the Satanic confederation has its seat in the upper air—in the atmospheric heaven—in the spaces above and around our world. There they are permitted to have place up to the time of this war. But this base attempt results in their casting out and ejection to the earth, preliminary to the shutting of them up in the fiery abyss. They not only fail to prevent the saints from reaching heaven, but displace themselves, with loss of power ever to return. To this also the Saviour had reference in his answer to his disciples when they came rejoicing that even the demons were subject to them. As the kingdom then was drawing sensibly near, this great result of its coming was even then preliminarily begun. And looking onward to the end He said, “I saw, or was beholding, Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” And so the words of Isaiah in describing the great oppressor’s fall, also reach forward to, and include what is first realized in its fulness in connection with this war in heaven: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!” It is therefore fact and not costume—reality and not poetic drapery—that the Dragon and his angels, when this vision comes to fulfilment, are ejected from the spheres which they have held so long, and find place there no more for ever.*

And as a still further result, all heaven is filled with rejoicing. In mighty volume the triumphal song rings out: “Now is come the salvation, the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the dominion of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren, who accuseth them before our God by day and by night, is thrown down. Because of the blood of the Lamb, and of the word of their testimony, and of their not holding life too dear to be given up to death, he is overcome. Therefore rejoice ye heavens, and ye that tabernacle in them!” Full salvation does not come so long as Satan’s accusations are not finally disposed of. The power of the kingdom of God has its chief revelation in the dethronement of the Dragon, first in the heart, and then in the heavenly places. This is salvation, and this is the power of the divine kingdom and the dominion of Christ, when Satan’s hold is broken, when his foul sway is overthrown, when he and his hosts are dislodged from their abodes, when he can no longer accuse and assail the saints or tyrannize over them. And when this great daring attempt to prevent their entrance into glory is vanquished, it is one of the gladdest events in time, and all holy beings thrill at the sight of its accomplishment. Verily, “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth;” for it is the dislodgment of Satan from that heart. And when this great victory is achieved, and he and all his angels are forever cast out of all the upper localities, all heaven breaks forth with jubilations and sings with diapason power:

Hail, Son of the Most High, heir of both worlds,
Queller of Satan, on Thy glorious reign
Now enter, hasting complete redemption!
Thou didst defeat and down from heaven cast
The false attempter of Thy Father’s throne,
And frustrated the conquest fraudulent;
He never more will dare to set his foot
In Paradise to tempt: his snares are broke:
A fairer Paradise is founded now
For Adam and his chosen sons, whom Thou,
A Saviour, comest down to re-instal,
Where they shall dwell secure, from sorrow free,
Of tempter and temptation without fear!

Such, then, is the story of this battle in the heaven.

Many cheering lessons, my friends, might we gather from this singular foreshowing; but I cannot dwell on them now. Suffice it to say that we here may see what friendly and sympathetic interest is felt for us in heaven; what mighty princes and courageous hosts stand ready there to espouse our cause and maintain our title to the glorious promises, when adverse powers assail, and prove too mighty for our feebleness; what blessed hopes are guaranteed if only we trust in Jesus and His atoning blood, and continue true to our confession of His name, ready to die rather than disown Him as our only Lord and hope.

Take courage, then, O Christian, and gladly labor on. Heaven is on thy side. The object of thy fond aims shall yet be thine. The kingdom comes. The Saviour’s meritorious blood shall bring thee through in spite of all thy weaknesses and lamented sins. Thy works and sacrifices for thy Lord shall not be forgotten. Satan’s accusations shall yet drop powerless at thy feet. And with the exulting hosts that sing his fall shall thy place and portion be.

LECTURE 30

THE FLIGHT OF THE WOMAN—THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD AFTER THE REMOVAL OF THE MAN-CHILD—DEVILISM DEVELOPED TO THE FULL—HARD FATE OF THE “LEFT”—JERUSALEM THE CENTRE OF CONTEMPLATION—WHY THE WOMAN FLEES—WHITHER SHE FLIES—THE WATERS CAST AFTER HER—INCREASED RAGE OF THE DRAGON—TURNS UPON THE REMAINDER OF THE WOMAN’S SEED—REFLECTIONS FROM THE SUBJECT.

Rev 12:12–17. (Revised Text.) Woe to the earth and the sea! because the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

And when the Dragon saw that he was cast down into the earth, he persecuted [or pursued] the woman which brought forth the male [child]. And to the woman were given the two wings of the great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, to her place, where she is there nourished a time, times, and half a time, away from the face of the Serpent. And the Serpent cast from his mouth after the Woman water like a river, that he might cause her [to be] carried away by the river. And the earth helped the Woman; yea, the earth opened her mouth and drank up the river which the Dragon cast forth from his mouth. And the Dragon was enraged against the Woman, and went away to make war with the remainder of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and hold fast the testimony of Jesus.

EDITORIAL NOTE: [SEE CAVEAT REGARDING SEISS' INTERPRETATION OF REVELATION 12 AS THE CHURCH](#)

THE ejection of Satan from heaven lodged him upon the earth. This is the final cleansing of the heavenly spaces from his foul presence. His revolt began in heaven, and the effectual overthrow of his power commences there. The victory over evil follows the order in which it came into existence. The earth was the last conquest of the Devil, and he is thus cast to the earth, here to await his further doom.

We would think that so signal a defeat in the heaven would cure him of his malignity, at least induce him to refrain from any further attempts against God and His people. But he is hopelessly depraved, and nothing but absolute force can quell his devil nature. There is no cure for a being so totally perverted. And his ejection from heaven and confinement to the earth only angers him the more, and calls forth increased violence, inducing a state of things by far the worst that this world ever experienced.

That which hinders the full revelation of devilism now is the Holy Spirit of God, embodied in his Church and people; but that Spirit will not always strive with men. The birth of the Man-child into immortality takes out of the world the best material in it. Being made up of the truest and most devoted of God's saints, and being caught away to God, and to His throne, the earth is left minus the presence, prayers, activities, and moral forces of its holiest population. The removal of these faithful ones to their Lord is such a depletion of the spiritual power in earthly society, such a diminution of the salt of the earth and the light of the world, such a vacation of the most potent and active elements of good, as to give the field almost entirely to the Devil and his angels. And it is in punishment of the faithless and unbelieving ones "left," when the Man-child is caught up, that the Devil and all his are precipitated upon the earth, and circumscribed to it, here to act out the final scenes of his enraged malice, blasphemy, and spite. Hence, while heaven thrills with rejoicing over his defeat there, his ejection to the earth commingles with the song of triumph a sad note of woe and pity for the dwellers here. "Woe to the earth and the sea! because the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time."

Everything in this record shows that it belongs to the very last years of this world's history. It is the judgment time; for it is the time of resurrection and translation—of the seizing away of God's holy and prepared people to Him, and to His throne. It is the time of the sounding of the seventh or last trumpet, which in the progress of the visions has here already pealed forth its clarion proclamations that the time of the end has come. It is the time when the gold-crowned Elders are giving thanks to the Lord God Almighty that He has taken to Him His great power to assert His sway, to give reward unto His servants the prophets, the saints, and them that fear His name, and to destroy the corrupters of the earth. It is the time when the Devil himself is convinced, and swollen with unwonted rage and fury because he sees and knows that but a few brief years remain till his reign is over and the abyss is his prison-house. But this "short time" must be improved to the utmost. The text tells us that when the Dragon sees himself thus cast to the earth, he begins to stir himself for further mischief. Milton has not inaptly described the case, where he makes the arch-fiend address his prostrate confederates, saying:

Princes and potentates,
Warriors, the flower of heaven once yours, now lost!
If such astonishment as this can seize
Eternal spirits; or have ye chosen this place,
After the toil of battle, to repose
Your wearied virtue, for the ease you find
To slumber here, as in the vales of heaven?
Or in this abject posture have ye sworn
T' adore the Conqueror, who now beholds
Seraph and cherub rolling in the flood,
With scattered arms and ensigns, till anon
His swift pursuers from heaven's gates discern
Th' advantage, and descending, tread us down
Thus drooping, or with linked thunderbolts
Transfix us to the bottom of the gulf?

Awake, arise, or be forever fallen!

We have seen that the mystic Woman, whose child is caught up to God and His throne, is the “sign” or symbol of the visible Church in its broadest sense, as an earthly and outward organization, the unborn Child being the invisible Church, in the narrower and truer sense of “the congregation of believers” those who are really begotten of God, and joined to Christ as the spiritual body of which He is the invisible Head. The bringing forth and catching away to heaven of the child, is not therefore the removal of the mother. She still continues on the earth, a visible body, though very greatly diminished and weakened by the birth and removal of the Child. This is very clearly exhibited in the vision; for when the Man-child is brought forth, separated from her, and caught up to God and His throne, the seer still beholds her on earth, fleeing into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, and where they nourish her a thousand two hundred and sixty days. The cause of her flight was not at first stated. The narrative was interrupted to relate the “war in the heaven,” and the casting down of the Dragon and his angels. That being told, the narrative returns to the Woman and “the remainder of her seed,” both of which are contemplated as still on the earth and the subjects of the Dragon’s persecution. And so it is everywhere told us, that when the translation time comes, not all professed Christians will be “taken.” The Saviour Himself has solemnly said, in so many words: “I tell you, in that night there shall be two in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two shall be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left.” (Luke 17:34–36.) So again He speaks of professed servants of His, who say in their hearts, “My Lord delayeth His coming,” and hence indulge themselves in uncharities, unwatchfulness, and worldly compliances, and so shall be overtaken in their unreadiness, cut off from the high honors of the faithful servants, and compelled to remain in the world to suffer here with hypocrites and unbelievers amid the sorrows of the great tribulation. (Matt. 24:42–51.) Hence, also, His special command to His people: “Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36); that is, be kept “from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world,” after the waiting and ready saints have been “caught up to God and to His throne.” (Rev. 3:10.) And those professed Christians who are “left” or “cut off” when the chosen ones are “taken,” together with such as shall be recovered to a pious life and right faith amid the sorrows of the judgment time, will constitute the Woman and “the remainder of her seed” on earth, after the Man-child has made its ascension to glory.

And a hard time of it they will have. Then shall be “a time of distress, such as never was since there was a nation to that time.” (Dan. 12:1.) “Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” (Matt. 24:21.) “For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled.” (Luke 21:22.)

First of all shall be the “weeping and gnashing of teeth”—the self-crimination and disappointment—at having lost the first honors of the kingdom, and at being compelled now to unlearn the mistaken philosophy and theology in which they trusted, and to begin again as little children to learn the truth which they so unreasonably sneered at, neglected, or denounced. And a very sore grief this will be to them. To have had the whole matter so plainly before them in God’s Word, and yet not to have seen it;—to have had so glorious a prize within their reach, and counted so hopefully on it, and now to find it lost and gone from them beyond recovery;—to have grown gray, venerable, and mighty in learning, in wisdom, and in championship for the Gospel, and yet not to have learned the simple practical truth of waiting, watching, and keeping in readiness for the coming again of the Lord Jesus,—and forever deprived now of place in “the Church of the first-born,” with nothing left to them but in sorrow and humiliation to make their way to the secondary places in eternity;—these shall be among the scorpion stings which too many, alas, will then have to endure! Had they but taken in what “watch the thief would come,” they would have watched, and would not have suffered their house to be thus broken up.

Something of this, owing to a misapprehension which had been palmed upon them, was felt by the Thessalonian Christians in St. Paul’s time. They were “shaken in mind,” they were “troubled,” they were in the deepest mental distress, because they were made to believe that the day of Christ (*ενεστηκε*) was then present, had arrived, was come; that the resurrection was “past already;” that the time for the rapture and glorification of the saints was here; whilst the blessings, joys, and honors which they as Christians connected with it were not realized. In other words, they thought themselves “cut off” and “left.” Just as they were previously disturbed and sorrowing over their deceased friends as possibly disabled for the joy and glory to be realized at the Lord’s coming, which they were so eagerly expecting, so now they were filled with perturbation and alarm, under the tidings that Christ had come and had not taken them. It was a deep, terrible, and soul-agonizing distress,—one which called forth the apostle’s sympathy, and all the energy of his great spirit and strongest words to roll off the load from their hearts. But when that day has once come in literal truth, and all half-Christians, self-deceivers, and unfaithful and un-watching ones, have it flashed upon them that they are “left,” there will be a worse shaking than these Thessalonians felt, with no apostle to come with better tidings to their relief. And though a hope of salvation may still remain to them in case of a prompt and earnest repentance, still, the Saviour says, “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

But this is not the worst. The Man-child being “caught up to God and to His throne,” the period of Satan’s great anger comes, and hence the most terrible persecutions. The Hinderer being removed, “then shall that Wicked be revealed, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.” (2 Thess. 2:8–10.) Then the great Dragon rages, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. He persecutes and pursues the Woman, as typified in the infamous proceedings of Antiochus Epiphanes in the Maccabean times. As the text clearly implies, and as more specifically

set forth in the succeeding chapter, things shall be made so hot and oppressive to the Church that no Christians could live, except for the miraculous help of God. Weakened and depleted as the Woman is, she must flee, as of old time "it was told the king of Egypt that the people fled." The Dragon pursues her, as the avenger of blood while his heart was hot pursued the manslayer. The lament of Jeremiah will then reach its deepest pathos in the lips of God's people: "Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness." (Lam. 4:19.) Then shall be the cry: "Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my life: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt. Let them be as chaff before the wind; and let the Angel of the Lord chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery; and let the Angel of the Lord persecute them. For without cause they have hid for me their net, in a pit which without cause they have digged for my soul. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall. O Lord, keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me. Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord." (Ps. 35.) It is with reference to this very time that the Saviour himself says: "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." (Matt. 24:22.)

There can be no doubt that the centre of events and doings, as here contemplated, is Jerusalem. Already in the first part of the preceding chapter, we had the measuring of the temple, and its altar and worshippers, which presupposes their rebuilding, and God's taking possession of them again. This temple and altar, as Dr. Clarke admits, "must refer to the temple at Jerusalem." "The holy city" is named in connection as the locality, and the only earthly city so named in the Scriptures is Jerusalem. A partly Jewish and a partly Gentile population is distinctly recognized as having place in "the holy city" at that time. It is there that the Two Witnesses are slain and resurrected, even "where their Lord was crucified;" and the ministry of the Two Witnesses is contemporaneous with "the Beast," who kills them. And it is under his domination that the persecution and flight of the Woman occurs. Jerusalem, then, is certainly the centre of the field of contemplation in the text, and the point from which the flight of the persecuted Woman takes place. As the flight of the Christians to Pella in the time of the Roman invasion eighteen hundred years ago was centrally from Jerusalem, so it will be again under the final "prince that shall come," armed with that same iron power, to overrun the temple court and to "trample the holy city forty and two months."

Why does the Woman fly? Evidently because she cannot sustain herself or live without it. The persecution of the professed followers and worshippers of God is so severe and bloody as to compel them to fly in order to save their heads. It is the period of the dominion of the Beast as described in the chapter next succeeding; and there we are told that as many as will not worship the image of the Beast shall be beheaded; and that whosoever will not receive the mark of the Beast in the right hand or forehead, shall not be allowed to buy or sell. There will be no living under him without accepting him in the place of God and of Christ. And this Beast is the embodiment of the Dragon's rage against the Woman and such of her seed as still remains upon the earth. He has his power, and his seat, and his great authority from the Devil; and the known worshippers of Jehovah must then fly or die; there is no other help. It is a dreadful strait; but into it will all remaining Christians come when once the Hinderer is taken away, and the Man-child has been caught up to God. It was thus that Antiochus decreed that whosoever would not do according to his command, and totally abolish every vestige and observance of Jehovah's law should die (1 Macc. 1:41-50); and so, in yet fiercer vigor, shall it be under the Beast then.

But though such suffering and dread temptations and necessities come upon the unready ones after their more watchful and faithful brethren have entered the celestial apartments, they are not utterly forsaken. If true to their profession then God will help them by His own great power.

When Israel came out of Egypt God marvellously strengthened every muscle and invigorated every weakness. "There was not one feeble person amidst their tribes." Not a foot swelled, and not even a garment or a shoe waxed old for forty years. And when they came to the wilderness of Sinai, where God spoke to them from the flaming mountain, He said: "Ye have seen how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." (Ex. 19:4.) Again it was said: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead him." (Deut. 32:11, 12.)

And those same wings here appear again. "And to the Woman were given the two wings of the great eagle;" that is, the special and direct help of God. In like miraculous manner the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah, enabling him to outrun the hasting chariot of King Ahab, even from Carmel to Jezreel. (1 Kings 18:46.) The sore trial is not lifted off, but miraculous assistance is given according to the occasion.

But whither does the Woman fly? When those wings were lent to Israel in the flight from the Dragon in Egypt they carried the people into the wilderness, even to Sinai. And here we have "the wilderness" again, as well as the same eagle's wings, and that very same wilderness of Sinai. Habakkuk, celebrating certain revelations of the Lord connecting with this very time, speaks of His coming from "Teman," the southern section of Idumea, and from "Mount Paran," which identifies with Sinai and its hills. (Hab. 3.) It is here called "her place"—a place belonging to her which God hath prepared for her. And, remarkable enough, this was the locality to which Moses fled for security from the wrath of Pharaoh,—to which Israel fled from the tyranny and rage of the Egyptians,—to which Elijah betook himself for refuge from the wrath of the bloody Jezebel,—to which the faithful Jews retired from the persecutions of the Syrian kings in the Maccabean times. (1 Macc. 2:28-31.) Having served as the place of shelter for God's faithful ones in so many instances, and on such marked occasions, it may well be called "her place,"—the one locality of all on earth prepared and

consecrated as the desert asylum of God's persecuted people. It is further stated that there the woman is nourished. The idea is that of a miraculous feeding, and the past is prophecy of the future. It was there that God sent the manna to feed the fugitive thousands of Israel in the days of Moses. Elijah was miraculously fed by an angel, and received a meal from heaven, in the strength of which he went forty days, in his flight to this "mount of God."

The feeding of the Woman here, indicates the depth of her straits, and her utter helplessness in any resources of her own. She is in great need, and no amount of activity on her part can supply her with sustenance. But for some provision, answering to that made there for Israel of old, these poor distressed fugitives would all perish. But like the multitudes which followed Jesus into the desert place, she is fed in the wilderness; and there she is nourished for three and a half years, the entire term of the persecuting dominion of the Beast, far away from the face of the serpent. It is a sore thing to be chastised of the Lord; but it is a blessed thought that He will not forsake those who cleave to Him, and that His grace shall be sufficient for them that meekly trust in Him.

But even in her mountain retreat the Dragon's enmity and rage against the Woman continue. He is bent on destroying her if he can. When Pharaoh-Necho went up with his armies against Babylon, Jeremiah exclaimed: "Who is this that cometh up like a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers? Egypt riseth up like a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers." (Jer. 46:7, 8.) When Nebuchadnezzar came with his Chaldean forces against Tyre and Sidon, the Lord said, "Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl. At the noise of the stamping of hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to their children for feebleness of hands." (Jer. 47:2, 3.) And so here. John beheld, "And the serpent cast from his mouth after the woman water like a river, that he might cause her [to be] carried away by the river." The interpretation is evident. Soldiers are dispatched to assail and overwhelm her in her retreat, and to destroy her there where God is nourishing her. It is not "a flood," or a vast and universally devastating army, but "water like a river" a smaller expedition for one definite purpose, which keeps within its own track to the one end; to wit, the destruction of these fugitives lodged in the wilderness. It was thus a detachment of the Syrian army was sent after the faithful fugitives in the time of the Maccabees. (1 Macc. 2:31-38.) But it is a force sufficient for its purpose, in all ordinary calculation. It is more than the Woman in her own strength could possibly withstand, It would sweep her away—quench her existence in blood—if no help came to her relief. But man's extremity is God's opportunity. What saith the record? "The earth helped the Woman; yea, the earth opened her mouth and drank up the river which the Dragon cast forth from his mouth."

Exactly what sort of calamity befalls these armed forces of the Beast, we may not be able definitely to determine. When the hosts of Pharaoh, in mad pursuit of ancient Israel, were overwhelmed by the sea, the exulting song of Moses and his people was, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord! Thou stretchedst forth thy right hand, the earth swallowed them." (Ex. 15:11, 12.) In this same wilderness, when God's anger was visited upon Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, for their rebellion against Moses and Aaron, "the ground clave asunder that was under them, and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that pertained unto Korah, and all their goods: they, and all that pertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished." (Numb. 16:31-33.) It is the region and time of miracle when this drinking up of the river which the Dragon sends against the woman occurs. It is the region and time when there is to be a renewal of wonders, "like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt," (Is. 11:15, 16.) It is the region and time of great earthquakes and disturbances in the economy of nature. (Zech. 14:4; Luke 21:25, 26; Rev. 11:13, 19.) And there is reason to think that it is by some great and sudden rending of the earth that these pursuing hosts are arrested in their course, if not en masse buried up in the convulsion. At least, the object of their bloody expedition is thwarted. They fail to reach the Woman in her place of refuge. The very ground yawns to stop them in their hellish madness.

But though completely baffled in this attempt to destroy the Woman, the rage of the Dragon is not assuaged, but only burns the more fiercely. Compelled to desist from his attempt to destroy her, he turns about to seek after the lives of such remnants of her seed as may be elsewhere found. "His plans turn to dust in his mouth; yet he is only angry, not penitent." Defeated beyond redress in this scheme, he abandons it; but only to enter upon a further war with every fraction of humanity still within his reach which may be found adhering to the commandments of God or the testimony of Jesus.

Two classes appear to be referred to. Abraham was promised a twofold seed: an earthly, likened to the sands of the sea; and a heavenly, likened to the stars of the sky. And from the beginning of the Gospel there have always been two classes of believers: the Jewish and the Gentile. So "the commandments of God" suggest to us God's older revelation by Moses, and the Law given through him; and "the testimony of Jesus" calls to mind the Christian profession. The allusion would, therefore, seem to be (1) to Jewish believers, the 144,000 of whom, described in chapter 7, are then still on the earth; and (2) Gentile, servants of God who hold fast the confession of Christ over against the prevalent abominations of the time. These are now sought out with desperate hate, wherever they may be, and proceeded against with determination to conquer them to the worship of the Beast, or, failing in that, to cut off the heads of all who refuse to yield. This is also the time during which the Two Witnesses are prophesying; and they, and those awakened by their witness, embracing both Jews and Gentiles, are specially noted in chapter 11:7, as those against whom the Beast shall make war, and overcome them, and kill them.

It is not the organized Church which is the object of this new outbreak of the Dragon's wrath; for the Church as a visible body is in the wilderness beyond his grasp. According to the terms, this remaining portion of the Woman's seed consists rather of individual believers here and there, whose organic association with each other has been broken up, and who from the stress of the times no

longer have their visible assemblies. Nevertheless, they are everywhere sought out, under the fell resolve to exterminate them from the earth.

The organs through which the Dragon puts forth all this bloody rage against the Woman and the remnants of her seed are described in the next chapter, and those that succeed it, where further details are given. I will not anticipate them here. At another time, God willing, I propose to enter upon them. Meanwhile, let us reflect a little over the subject-matter which has been engaging us to-night.

1. Note how dark is the outlook of the Church of Jesus with respect to this present world! We wonder betimes at the smallness of its success, and the hard struggle it ever has for its existence. But why should we wonder? Think of the might of the Devil and his angels, of their malignity against it, and how deeply the whole world is in their possession. By reason of the depravity that is upon our race, every human being born is brought forth under Satan's dominion. We scarcely succeed in winning and training some to truth and holiness, till death comes and takes them away, leaving the same work to be gone over again and again continually, with the same result awaiting it every time. And while faithful ones are laboring, multitudes of their fellow-professors are a mere incubus on their exertions, hindering by their indifference and inconsistencies, whilst the great world continually opposes, and a universal depravity, inflamed of hell, perpetually fights against the calls and claims of heaven. Ever dreaming of victory to bring us the reign of righteousness and rest, we still find ourselves at the bottom of the hill, toiling to reach the unreachable summit. And how can we expect it ever to be otherwise as long as this present order of things lasts, seeing that Satan continues with ever-deepening malice and activity to the very end of the world, and that the last days are the wickedest and the worst! All that we can do is to work on, like Paul, if that by any means we may "save some."

2. Note the true source of dislike and hatred to the Church. There be many who think more of anything on earth than of the Church. They may consider it well enough to have its services when they die, but whilst they live they only neglect and despise it, and are only offended and enraged when its claims are pressed. They forget that this is the very spirit of the Devil. There is nothing which Satan so much hates, which he so energetically opposes, which he persecutes to the end with such an unrelenting and undying rancor, or that he tries so hard to keep out of heaven and obliterate from the earth, as the Church. We are justly amazed at the intensity of his malice toward the mystic Woman and her seed, pursuing her with ever-increasing rage, even when God's judgments multiply upon him for it. And every one who dislikes, hates, or persecutes the Church and people of God, has in him the Devil's spirit, acts the Devil's will, and is one of the Devil's children.

3. Note what a lesson of rebuke and duty addresses itself to Christians from the Devil's example. He never rests from his murderous endeavors. He stops for no losses, succumbs to no adversities, desists for no hindrances, turns back from no encounters, and surrenders not even to the Almighty's judgments, so long as he has liberty to act or time in which to operate. His energy and activity increase the more as he sees and knows that his end is near. He does it out of wicked spite and mere evilness, and with no prospect but utter defeat and eternal damnation. And how should we, then, who claim to love God, and believe that everlasting crowns of glory and blessing are to be the reward of our fidelity, stand rebuked for our coldness in the presence of such an example! His day runs from the beginning to the end of time, yet he works incessantly to its last hour. Our day is measured by a few brief years, half of which is spent in infancy and sleep, whilst the whole may at any moment end in death; yet we fritter away our time and energies and opportunities as if no necessities were upon us, or as if we had no salvation to secure, no hell to escape, no God to serve, no heaven to win. Alas, alas, for such indifference! Brethren, look at the untiring energy of Hell for destruction, and learn wisdom for eternal life.

4. Finally, note the pressing need there is to keep ourselves awake and in readiness for the coming of our Lord. Over and over we are told that He shall come as a thief in the night—when men think not—when many of His own servants are saying and believing that it is not possible that He should come in their day—when the great multitude is counting on nothing but peace and safety. The day and the hour knoweth no man. And if that day should come upon us unawares, and find us unprepared, even though we should not be finally lost, these presentations show that terrible experiences await us. No wonder that the beneficent and loving Jesus should make it one of his most constant and most urgent admonitions, to watch and pray that we come not into these dreadful tribulations. As we value our peace, let us not then be indifferent to things so solemn.

LECTURE 31

THE BEAST FROM THE SEA—THE DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE ANTICHRIST—THIS VISION A SYMBOL OF TEMPORAL SOVEREIGNTY IN ITS FINAL CONSUMMATION—AN INDIVIDUAL ADMINISTRATION EMBODIED IN ONE PARTICULAR MAN—A SUPERNATURAL PERSONAGE—HIS ATTRACTIVENESS AND GREATNESS—THE CONSUMMATE ANTAGONIST AND SUPPLANTER OF EVERYTHING DIVINE—HIS BLASPHEMY TOWARDS THEM THAT TABERNACLE IN THE HEAVEN—THE DEEP AND SOLEMN IMPORTANCE OF THESE FORESHOWINGS.

Rev 13:1–10. (Revised Text.) And I [some MSS. he, the Dragon] stood upon the sand of the sea; and I saw a beast [or wild beast] coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy.

And the beast which I saw was like to a leopard [or panther], and his foot as of a bear, and his mouth, as the mouth of a lion. And the Dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.

And (I saw) one of his heads as having been slain to death [killed], and the stroke of his death was healed; and all the earth wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the Dragon because he gave the authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who [is] like to the beast! And who is able to war with him!

And a mouth was given him speaking great and blasphemous things; and authority was given him to act for forty-two months.

And he opened his mouth for blasphemies towards God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, they which tabernacle in the heaven.

And it was given him to make war on the saints, and to overcome them, and authority was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation. And all that dwell upon the earth shall (will) worship him,—[every one] whose name hath not been written, from the foundation of the world, in the book of life of the Lamb that hath been slain.

If any one hath an ear, let him hear. If any one [is] for captivity, into captivity he goeth; if any one will kill with the sword, with the sword must he be killed.

Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

THE Apostle John, writing to no particular Church, but in a general Epistle to a wide circle of churches, makes this remarkable statement: "Little children, ye have heard that Antichrist shall come." (1 John 2:18.) Where and how had the Christians of his time thus heard about "the Antichrist," and become familiar with the fact of his coming? The answer is, that this was a part of the common instruction given to God's people, both under the Old Testament and the New. It was distinct and prominent in the writings of the ancient prophets, and it was among the teachings of Christ, and those sent to preach and teach in His name. Even the light of the first promise of a coming Deliverer, had with it the dark adumbration of an antagonizing power to bruise His heel, and of a serpent brood to mass its strength against the mother's seed. And through all the ages of our world, there has been a Cain for every Abel, a Jannes and Jambres for every Moses and Aaron, a Babylon for every Jerusalem, a Herod for every John the Baptist, and a Nero for every going forth of God's consecrated apostles,—all the types and precursors of the ultimate heading up of all evil in one final foe, which is the Antichrist. Nor has it been possible for the teachers of God in any age to give full instruction touching the history of human salvation, without embracing in it the doctrine concerning this foul personage. It is part of the background of all Revelation, promise, and hope, given for the admonition and strengthening of God's people. And it is this Serpent seed, in its ultimate development, even THE MANIFESTED ANTICHRIST, whose portrait is given us in the chapter on which we now enter. May God help us to handle it with wisdom and soberness!

In the preceding chapter we were called to contemplate the great Dragon, the Old Serpent, his influence over our world, his perpetual malignity toward the saints, his casting out from the heavenly spaces at the glorification of the Church of the first-born, his great rage at being cast down into the earth, and his consequent determination to destroy all the people of God yet to be found among mortals. But Satan is a spirit, and cannot operate in the affairs of our world except through the minds, passions, and activities of men. He needs to embody himself in earthly agents, and to put himself forth in earthly organisms, in order to accomplish his murderous will. And through the inspired seer, God here makes known to us what that organism is, and how the agency and domination of the enraged Dragon will be exerted in acting out his blasphemies, deceits, and bloody spite. The subject is not a pleasant one, but it is an important one. It also has features so startling and extraordinary that many may be repelled, and led to treat it as a wild and foolish dream. Nevertheless, we all need to look at it, and to understand it. No one is safe in refusing to entertain it. And whether we are able to grasp it fully in all its particulars or not, it is here set forth for our learning, that we may know just how things will eventually turn out.

John "in the spirit" finds himself stationed on the sands of the sea,—that same great sea upon which Daniel beheld the winds striving in their fury. He beholds a monstrous Beast rising out of the troubled elements. He sees horns emerging, and the number of them is ten, and on each horn a diadem. He sees the heads which bear the horns, and these heads are seven, and on the heads are names of blasphemy. Presently the whole figure of the monster is before him. Its appearance is like a leopard or panther, but its feet are as the feet of a bear, and its mouth as the mouth of a lion. He saw also that the Beast had a throne, and power, and great authority. One of his heads showed marks of having been fatally wounded and slain, but the deathstroke was healed. He saw also the whole earth wondering after the Beast, amazed at its majesty and power, exclaiming at the impossibility of withstanding it, and celebrating its superiority to everything. He beheld, and the Beast was speaking great and blasphemous things against God, blaspheming His name, His tabernacle, even them that tabernacle in the heaven, assailing and overcoming the saints on earth, and wielding authority over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation. He saw also that all the dwellers upon earth, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain, did worship this Beast. And for forty-two months the monster holds its place and enacts its resistless will. This is the picture. What are we to make of it? What does it mean? How are we to understand it?

1. My first remark on the subject is, that we here have a symbolic presentation of the political sovereignty of this world. The Beast has horns, and horns are the representatives of power.

On these horns are diadems, and diadems are the badges of regal dominion. The Beast is said to possess power, a throne, and great authority. He makes war. He exercises dominion over tribes, and peoples, and tongues, and nations. He has control of buying and selling, and fixes the conditions on which they are carried on. He furnishes the power to slay every one who will not come under his regulations. All of which proves political sovereignty and imperial earthly dominion. He is a monstrous Beast, including in his composition the four beasts of Daniel. He comes out of the same agitated sea, and behaves as they behaved. From the interpreting angel we know that Daniel's four beasts denoted "four kings," or kingdoms, that arise upon earth. The identification thus becomes complete and unmistakable, that this monstrous Beast is meant to set before us an image of earthly sovereignty and dominion. And if any further evidence of this is demanded, it may be abundantly found in chapter 17:9–17, where the same Beast is further described, and the ten horns are interpreted to be "ten kings," together with other particulars, which identify the whole representation with this world's political sovereignty.

2. My second remark is, that we here are shown the world-power in its final consummation—the whole sum of it from the beginning to the end in one figure, as it will be in the last three and a half years of its existence.

The duration of the dominancy of this Beast as such is explicitly given as forty-two months, or three and a half years; and when he finally falls, as described in chapter 19, he goes into perdition, and all this world's kings, armies, and administrations end forever. He is therefore the embodiment of this world's political sovereignty in its last phase, in the last years of its existence. Daniel's beasts were successive empires, the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, the Græco-Macedonian, and the Roman. But the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the nameless ten-horned monster, each distinct there, are all united in one here. This Beast is therefore the consummation and embodiment of the whole world-power or political dominion from the beginning, as it presents itself at the final outcome. Nor do I know by what means this could be more definitely expressed than in the particulars and relations of this vision. "Every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation," is included under the dominion of this Beast. There is no political sovereignty on earth during its administration but that embraced in its horns and heads. It is therefore the whole sum of it as then existing. And as there is nothing more of it left after this Beast's fall, it is clear that what is here shown us must needs be the entire political power of this world in its final outcome or consummation.

3. My third remark is, that this Beast is an individual administration, embodied in one particular man. Though upheld by ten kings or governments, they unite in making the Beast the one sole Arch Regent of their time.

Ever since the period of the Reformation until now, the battle of the commentators has hung heavy over the question whether this Beast is to be construed as an individual imperial person, or a mere system, power, government, or influence, having its life in a succession of agents or representatives. Some take one side and others the opposite. Both parties are largely in the right as to the fact, though the more common historical interpretation is greatly at fault in the manner in which it applies the fact. There can be no kingdom without a king, and no empire without an emperor; neither can there be a king in fact without a kingdom. We cannot consistently speak of imperial power and dominion apart from a personal head which represents and embodies that power. A person is necessarily included in the conception, as well as an imperial dominion which that person holds and exercises. So far as the mere symbol is concerned, a succession of persons wielding the same authority might be embraced; but it cannot be so in this case. The period of this Beast's dominancy is specifically limited to three and a half years, and there is no room for much of a succession in that space of time. The attempt to stretch out these 42 months into 1260 years is without warrant in the Scriptures; and, if accepted, proves inadequate to any just application of the vision. It breaks down as to beginning, middle, and end. Try it as men will, it fails to reach the great day of final judgment, in which the dominion of this Beast so signally terminates.* The 42 months are 42 months, and the 1260 days are 1260 days, not years; and the Beast, the measure of whose reign is thus limited, cannot stand for a series of successive sovereigns, but must be understood of one individual person. And other particulars require the same conclusion. This Beast is worshipped as a god; but people never worship an empire as such; neither do they make a succession of emperors into an object of religious devotion. The paying of divine homage to kings has been a common thing in the world's history, but it has always been rendered to individuals. An image or statue of this Beast is set up, and the worship of it demanded of all on pain of death; but antiquity tells of no images or statues of empires or dynasties set up for the religious reverence of subjects. It has always been the image or statue of the emperor, or the king; and so it must needs be in this instance. This Beast also has a proper name,—a name expressive of a particular number, and that number "a number of a man;" which cannot be conceived except on the idea of an individual person. This Beast is, by common consent, identical with "that Wicked," of which Paul wrote to the Thessalonians; but that monster instrument of Satan is called "that man of sin." An apocalypse is also ascribed to him, the same as to Christ, and various actions and position, nothing of which can be fairly understood except as applied to a person. This Beast is also clearly identifiable with the wilful king of Daniel; but that king is in every respect treated of as an individual person, the same as Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius, Xerxes, or Alexander. This Beast is finally damned. He goes into perdition, into the lake of fire, where he continues to exist and suffer, after passing from this earthly scene (chap. 17:11; 20:10), which cannot be true of systems of government. We would therefore greatly err from the Scriptures, as well as from the unanimous conviction and teaching of the early Church, were we to fail to recognize in this Beast a real person, though one in whom the political power of the world is finally concentrated and

represented.*

4. My fourth remark is, that this Beast is a supernatural personage.

As a political power, he rises out of the convulsed sea of peoples, the same as world-powers in general; but as a person, his origin is peculiar. He is repeatedly described as “the Beast that cometh up out of the abyss.” “The abyss” cannot mean less than the underworld, the world of lost spirits, the receptacle and abode of demons, otherwise called hell. Ordinary men do not come from thence. One who hails from that place must be either a dead man brought up again from the dead, or some evil spirit which takes possession of a living man. Many of the early Christians held and taught that the Emperor Nero is the Antichrist, and that he will return again to the earth, get possession of its empire, and enact all that is affirmed of the Man of Sin.* They explained the passages referring to the matter to mean, either that Nero was not really dead, but in some mysterious way kept alive, presently to come upon the scene as this Beast; or, that, being dead, he will be satanically resurrected for this purpose. But even if not literally resurrected, he, or some other tenant of hell, might still fulfil the idea, after the style in which certain spirit-mediums claim to be animated and possessed, so as to think, speak, and act only as the will of the foreign spirit impels. In either case, the Beast, as a person, is an extraordinary and supernatural being. Nor can we adequately explain what else is said of him without assuming that such is the fact. John tells us that he beheld one of the Beast’s heads “as having been slain to death.” The expression is so strong, definite, and intensified, that nothing less can be grammatically made of it than that real death is meant to be affirmed. It is further described as a sword-wound, “the stroke of his death,” or a stroke which carries death to him who experiences it. A man who has undergone physical death is therefore in contemplation. Whether he comes up again in literal bodily resurrection, or only by means of an obsession of some living man, we may not be able to decide. Whatever the mode, it will be in effect the same as a resurrection. The record is that his death-wound becomes effectually negated, and so far healed, or made of non-effect, that, though dead, he enters again upon all the activities of life the same as if he never had been killed. Similar phraseology is used in this Book with regard to Christ, but all agree that it there means return to life by resurrection after a real bodily killing. How, then, can it mean less here? In the subsequent portions of the history this Beast is repeatedly spoken of as “he whose stroke of death was healed;” “the beast which had the stroke of the sword, and lived,” or became alive again,—“the beast that was, and is not, and yet is,” or as the Codex Sinaiticus has it, (καὶ πάλιν πάρεσται) shall soon again be here. These expressions inevitably carry with them the notion of a violent and real death, and as real a return again to presence and activity on the earth. Indeed, it seems to be this revivescence and remanifestation of one known to have been dead that causes the universal wondering after this Beast. Be the explanation what it may, the implication strongly is, that this Beast is a man who once was living, who was fatally wounded, whose place was in the abyss of lost souls, who somehow comes forth from thence in convincing evidences of his real identity, and who, having been slain, returns again to take the lead in the activities and administrations upon earth, to the great wonder and astonishment of the whole world.

The source whence he derives his extraordinary character and power is clearly indicated. It is from no intervention of God in his behalf, though for the punishment of the godless world permitted. The record says: “The Dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority.” It is therefore by the Devil’s power that he is thus revived, just as all demonism, necromancy, and witchcraft are of the Devil. When Christ was on earth, the Devil took him into an exceeding high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to Him: “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” There certainly was supernaturalism here. The holy Jesus, indeed, spurned the offer; but Satan eventually finds one to accept his conditions. This Beast is a worshipper of the Devil, and causes all under him to worship the Devil. In return, he gets what was proposed to Christ. The Devil makes over the infernal dominion into his hands, brings him again from the abyss, and constitutes him his great vice-regent in the sovereignty of the world. He thus becomes in some sense an incarnation of the Devil. Accordingly, it is written that his manifestation “is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.” (2 Thess. 2:9.) Unmistakably, then, we have here to do with a very extraordinary being—with a man altogether different from anything ever beheld in humanity before—with one who hails from the bottomless pit, endowed with all the energy and power of Satan himself.

5. My fifth remark is, that this “Man of Sin” will be an exceedingly attractive, fascinating, and bewitching personage.

He draws upon himself the intensest admiration and homage of the world. John beheld, and “all the world wondered after the Beast.” Mankind are represented as so struck, captivated, and entranced by the contemplation of his wonderful qualities and powers, that they even render willing homage to the one who could give them so glorious a leader, and join in honoring and glorifying him as a very god of wisdom, power, daring, and ability. They can conceive of none like him, and celebrate his praise as the Invincible. The adoring cry is: “Who is like to the Beast? And who is able to war with him?” It cannot therefore be otherwise than that this man is supreme in whatever is admirable to the taste, judgment, and imagination of the world.

There has been much in the great empires of the past for men to wonder at and love. In Babylon was the golden majesty and splendor of sovereign rule, always so captivating to the souls of men. In Medo-Persia was the towering prowess and massive ponderousness of power, at which the world has ever stood in wondering awe. In Greece was the polish and elegance of intellect and art, combined with heroism for liberty, for which the human heart has ever been full of enthusiasm. And in Rome was the idea of

justice, the iron strength of law and martial discipline, to which the nations still look with admiration. Conceive, then, the resistless attractiveness of these all combined in one, and attended with the results thereto pertaining. How would mankind even now idolize such an exhibition? And how much the more if concentrated in an individual man, and he recognized and acknowledged as one of the great illustrious dead? God means soon to manifest a man, even the Man who is His fellow, as the centre and channel of all majesty, wisdom, glory, and power. So Satan, as anti-God, glorifies with his glory the final Antichrist; whilst men in their depravity and delusion rejoice in it, and cry their devoutest vive le Roi to his hell-derived majesty. Imagine all that has ministered to the glory of worldly empire in the ages past—the imposing array of intellect, knowledge, arts, and arms—the splendor of Oriental monarchs, the valor and grandeur of mighty heroes and conquerors—the eloquence, wisdom, and power of statesmen, orators, and poets, and all the varieties of mental accomplishment and external greatness united in one marvellous man, possessed of all the hitherto divided power and distributed attractions of all preceding times, and where is the soul, untaught of God, that would not run wild with enthusiastic adoration over him? Yet this is the sort of appeal which this Beast makes to the unsanctified millions of his time. Not as an instrument of terror, dismay, and horror is his revelation, but with all the blandishing allurements of the sublimest champion of human interests and greatness. Men will not fly from him, but love him, and delight and glory in him as the consummate sage and hero of all time. He will be the idol of the world. All kings will gladly yield him their thrones, and give their dominion to him; and all the nations will think their millennium come in the splendor, and wisdom, and miraculous greatness of his teachings and his deeds.

In Nimrod's days, when the people combined to build a city, and a tower which should reach to heaven, and make themselves a name, lest they should be scattered abroad upon the earth, what was it but one grand ceremonial of worship to earthly greatness? And if they could thus glory and sacrifice to the ambition and schemes of Nimrod, how much more to the wonderful Antichrist? If the genius and exhibitions of such men as Cæsar, Charlemagne, Frederick, Napoleon, Voltaire, Mirabeau, Byron, and the like, have been able to delight the souls, fascinate the minds, and lead captive the wills of the children of disobedience, how can it be otherwise, when the glories of intellect and taste, of war and conquest, of miracle and majesty, of recovery from death, of mastery over all the mysterious forces of nature and spirit come forth in one sublime embodiment!

The very cities and regions over which this Beast rules will add to the fatal delusion of those times. Where, indeed, have the thoughts of men so fondly lingered as in Rome, in Greece, in Egypt, in Babylon, in Jerusalem? All the associations of greatness, conquest, taste, learning, eloquence, art, and religion are mostly bound up with these places. And these are to rise up again under the Antichrist, as if from the world of death, whence he himself comes, mimicking the glories of the true restitution which the Son of God is then about to bring.

And to the natural impulses of the human heart will be added the unwonted instigations of the Devil himself operating behind and through all, influencing the hearts, and tongues, and energies of men. And so they will be deluded, bewitched, and rallied to the worship of the Beast, and to the acceptance of him as the true and only God.

6. My sixth remark is, that this Beast is the consummate antagonist and supplanter of everything Divine.

He is exhibited in the vision as having "on his heads names of blasphemy." To the same effect it is added, that "a mouth was given him speaking great and blasphemous things,"—that "he opened his mouth for blasphemies towards God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, they which tabernacle in the heaven." The seven heads of the Beast are explained in chapter 17 to be "seven kings," or powers, five of which were fallen at the time, one of which then existed, and the seventh was not yet come. That is an allusion to a succession of imperial headships, of which the Antichrist is the consummation. It may refer either to the emperors of Rome, or to the successive great dominions of all time, the Roman emperorship being the one existing when the Apostle wrote. Taken in either way we have the key to something of the nature of the blasphemy which comes to its highest culmination in this Beast. Counting back from Rome as the sixth, we find five great empires,—the Grecian, Medo-Persian, Chaldean, Egyptian, and old Assyrian, and in every one of these the deification of the monarch, and the claiming and giving of divine honors to him was part of the common piety of the state. Such was particularly the case with the emperors of Rome. Julius Cæsar took divine titles, accepted divine honors while he lived, and had temples erected to his worship after he was dead. Augustus Cæsar favored the erection of temples for the worship of his uncle, and of others devoted to the worship of himself. At Angora the remains of one of these may still be seen, and on it the inscription: "To the God Augustus." In the same locality there is an inscription, "To Marcus Aurelius, unconquered, august, pious, successful, by one most devoted to his Godhead." Nero was styled God while he lived. Lamps have been found devoted to Domitian as "our God and Lord." Nor can there be any question of the profession and award of Deity in the case of all the great heads of secular power from the beginning on. They all wore names of blasphemy. And these names of blasphemy are received by this Beast in augmented intensity and impiousness, and worn as of right his own. Daniel says of him: "He will exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god. He will speak marvellous things against the God of gods. He will not regard any god, for he will magnify himself above all." Paul says: "He opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." (2 Thess. 2:4.) He is at once Anti-God, Anti-Christ, and Anti-Spirit, antagonizing each particular Person of the adorable Trinity, trampling on their claims, usurping their honors, putting himself into their place, and abolishing all worship and recognition of either.

As a necessary concomitant, he is a consummate persecutor. The Apostle in vision saw it "given him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them." It is he that wars with the Two Witnesses, and overcomes them, and kills them (chap. 11:7). It is through

him that Satan persecutes and pursues the Woman, and turns to make havoc of the remainder of her seed. It is under him that as many as will not worship his image shall be slain, and no one can either buy or sell without accepting his mark in hand or forehead as his slave and devotee. All this is set forth again and again in the Old Testament and the New.

A particular object of his blasphemies is "God's tabernacle, they which tabernacle in the heaven." This is a side-proof that our interpretation of the birth and rapture of the Man-child is correct. It will then be known and acknowledged that a resurrection and translation of saints has occurred. It will then be known and understood that they are in the pavilion cloud with the Lord in the heavenly spaces. (Ps. 27:5; 31:20.) Even the Beast, with all his setting aside, and ridicule of everything divine and sacred, is conscious of the presence of these glorified ones on high, and annoyed at thought of them. He speaks of them; he acts with reference to them; and he pours out his special blasphemies with regard to them. This is a necessity to him. The catching away to heaven of so many people of God must needs leave a deep impression behind it. The slain and abused bodies of the Two Witnesses are visibly revived, and taken up into the sky before the eyes of Antichrist's minions. This was a grand and most convincing evidence against him and all his infamous pretensions, a manifest token of his devilish falsity and approaching doom. And he needs above all to break it down, to cast discredit and dishonor upon it, and to root out the very idea if he can. Hence his particular railing and impatience with reference to this divine tent of the glorified ones, and his virulent blaspheming of those who tabernacle in it. The Dragon's wrath at the defeat of his efforts against these chosen ones is thus outwardly vented in this blasphemy of the Beast, and his bloody persecution of all on earth who dare to believe and hold contrary to his will. How blessed are they who through faith and watchfulness have been accounted worthy to escape his power by being caught up to God ere he is revealed!

7. My seventh and last remark, for the present, is, that Christians have great need to study and understand what is thus foreshown.

There is appended to the vision a special admonition and command: "If any one hath an ear, let him hear." It is the same which the Great Divine Teacher has laid upon mankind with reference to the most vital things of His Gospel. It shows that something of the most intense and urgent importance is involved in these things, not only for theologians and scholars, but for every Christian—for all classes of men—for every one that hath an ear for the learning of divine truth. It shows that the predisposition will be, and is, to ignore and disregard this and such like subjects—to treat them as wild speculations—to pass them by as destitute of practical worth, if not as positively injurious. It shows that God's idea of the study of prophecy, and of the drawing from it of doctrine and admonition to condition our faith and shape our lives, is very different from that which many modern Christians inculcate. And it makes plain as language can tell, that it is the solemn and gracious will of heaven for every one to "mark, learn, and inwardly digest," for living practical use and effect, what is here foreshown of the character and doings of this Beast.

Nor is it difficult to see that the admonition to hear and understand this matter is rooted in the deepest practical necessities. Without a proper idea of the revelation of the final Antichrist, of the grievousness and abominations of his times, of his wonderful career and destiny, of the tribulations which his administrations will inflict, and of the offered privilege of being entirely saved from these awful trials, we cannot half fulfil the Saviour's commands to watch and pray for that salvation, and to aim at being accounted worthy to escape all these things. Without a proper knowledge of the subject treated in this vision, we cannot fully appreciate our Saviour, the offers He makes to us, the redemption He proposes, or the character of the administrations in which His kingdom comes. And particularly for those who are "left," and living on the earth at the time when this Beast comes into power, there is no security, hope, or consolation whatever, except as they understand these things and establish themselves upon them. It will be a time of such "deceivableness of unrighteousness," that if it were possible the very elect would be cheated out of their faith, and deluded to certain perdition. It will be a time of such awful pressure, that no one can maintain himself at all except as he is forewarned, forearmed, and entrenched in the fortifications provided in these revelations. For any one who holds fast to the name of Christ in those days there will be no alternative left but to recant, to accept the mark of the Beast, and go to inevitable perdition with him; or be driven away into the mountains, the wilderness, the dens and caves of the earth. To hope for deliverance by the sword, or to take up arms against the Beast, can bring no relief; for if any one will kill with the sword, with the sword must he perish. If any one is ready to accept flight or exile for his safety, into captivity he will have to go, with no pity for him, and no relaxation of the hard necessity. Even the Two miracle-girded Witnesses, who maintain themselves for a time, are eventually overcome and slain; and no mortal can live where the Beast's power reaches, without letting go Christ for Antichrist.

Many a sore trial of their patience and faith have the saints of God experienced from the persecuting powers of this godless world; but they will all be as nothing compared with the tribulations of these last evil days. Not under the Chaldean oppressions,—not under the Seleucid despots,—not under the bloody persecutions of the Cæsars,—not under the inquisitions of the Popes,—but "here is the patience and the faith of the saints." Under the Antichrist shall all true worshippers be tested and tried as never in all the ages before. Nor can any one hold out faithful then except he be posted and grounded beforehand in the divine teachings concerning the infernal character of the power which then reigns, the sure interference of Heaven for its speedy destruction, and the certain damnation of all who abet its blasphemies or accept its mark.

My dear friends, let me then add a word of solemn caution with regard to this subject. Having listened with so much patient attention to the imperfect sketch I have given, be careful that you do not go away and jest over it as nonsense and imbecility. Remember the words with which this Book of the Apocalypse opens: "Blessed is he who readeth, and those who hear the words of this prophecy,

and observe the things which are written in it." Remember also what the holy Apostle appends to it when he says: "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this Book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the Book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this Book." Mysterious and impossible as it may all seem to man's ordinary experience and reason, the thing is too overwhelmingly important and solemn to be ridiculed, or to be treated with indifference. Nor can any one tell how vitally his own security and salvation are wrapped up in right apprehensions of these very things. I therefore press the admonition which God Himself has affixed to this particular subject: "If any one hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

LECTURE 32

THE ANTICHRIST NOT ALONE—THE RELIGIOUS ELEMENT IN HUMAN SOCIETY—COUNTERFEIT OF THE ADORABLE TRINITY—COMMENTATORS ON THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH—AN INDIVIDUAL PERSON—HIS RISE OUT OF THE EARTH—PERHAPS JUDAS ISCARIOT—HIS TWO LAMB-LIKE HORNS—HIS DRAGON SPEECH—AT ONE WITH THE FIRST BEAST—A SUCCESSFUL OPERATOR—CAUSES "THE EARTH" TO WORSHIP THE BEAST—THE WEIRD ACCOUNT LITERALLY PROBABLE.

Rev 13:11, 12. (Revised Text.) And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he was speaking as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causeth the earth and those that dwell in it to worship the first beast whose stroke of death was healed.

THE Antichrist, though an individual, is not alone. He not only has the ten sovereignties working into his hand with all "their power and strength," but he has a more intimate and more potent companion, hardly less remarkable than himself, duplicating his power, and without whom he could not be what he is.

When Pharaoh lifted himself up against Jehovah, and against God's two Witnesses, Moses and Aaron, the magicians were summoned as necessary helpers, to compete with their miracles, and to withstand their claims. When Balak, king of Moab, sought to destroy Israel, Balaam was in requisition to prophesy for the king as the arm of his success. When Dan, in marauding avarice, settled in Laish, he must needs have the Levite, son of Gershom, to set up a worship for him, though he had to steal both priest and gods. Absalom, the murderer and fratricide, plotting for his father's throne and life, and warring against God's anointed king, could do but little without Ahithophel to aid his treason, and further his parricidal schemes. Jeroboam, in revolt, found necessity for a new religious administration, with new gods and new observances, requiring priests and prophets to abet his wilfulness. Ahab, the seventh head of the line of Israel, could not have been Ahab except for Jezebel, with her herd of foreign priests. And thus the final Antichrist, of whom these were types and forerunners, cannot be the Antichrist without his great spiritual consociate and false prophet.

The religious element is one of the most powerful in humanity. Its great potency appears in all the history of mankind. It cannot be ignored, suppressed, or put aside. It may be misled and perverted, but its presence and power are inevitable wherever man is man. Nothing can securely stand against it. No other power can be sustained without its aid. True or false, human nature must have a religion. If the state does not provide one it must allow of it, and throw some sanction over it, or it kills itself. There can be no society, no kingdom, no commanding administration without it. Even the French Atheists, who pronounced against all traditional religion, and sought to abolish God, yet glided into one, carved images and idols of Liberty and Equality, offered incense to them, sung hymns to them, and knelt down before them in great civic ceremonials. Napoleon, who became the great military head of this revolution, held it as one of his maxims, that the state cannot live without a religion. Alison has told us how the Emperor, actuated by no spirit of oppression, by no jealousy of a rival authority, but out of what he viewed as essential to the solidity of his empire, sought to connect the Pope with his government, and to establish the See of Rome in close connection and subserviency to himself at Paris. And so the Antichrist, though opposing and exalting himself "above all that is called God, or that is worshipped," still finds it essential to have a religion. Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King; and he who proposes to take His place, and to be the true Christ as against the incarnate Son of God, must needs fill out the same departments. To do this his Devil wisdom simply inverts the order, assigns to himself the central and all-conditioning position of absolute King, and accepts and adopts a grand religious establishment, whose head and centre is another great Beast, administering in the department of priesthood and prophecy.

The Eternal Power and Godhead is a Trinity. "The true Christian faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the glory equal, the majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet they are not three Eternals, but one Eternal. Also there are not three

incomprehensibles [or infinities], nor three uncreated; but one Eternal, and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty, and the Holy Ghost Almighty; and yet they are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Ghost Lord; and yet not three Lords, but one Lord. For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by Himself to be God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the Christian religion to say, there be three Gods or three Lords. The Father is made of none, neither created nor begotten. The Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other, none is greater or less than another; but the whole three Persons are coeternal together, and coequal; so that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped."

The truth of this holy doctrine is evinced and reflected in the copy of it which appears in the constitution of the Devil's grand system as the anti-God. The full embodiment of all evil in our world comes out in an infernal Trinity, the mimicry of eternal realities. First, is the unseen and hidden Father, the Dragon, that old serpent, the Devil. The next is the seven-headed and ten-horned Beast from the sea, "the Son of Perdition," begotten of the Devil, his earthly manifestation, who dies, and revives again, and reappears on earth after having been in the invisible world, as Christ, and is awarded the power and throne of his father the Devil. And to this comes a third, the two-horned Beast from the earth, who proceeds from the Dragon Father and Dragon Son, for his speech is the Dragon's speech, and "he exerciseth all the authority of the first Beast in his presence," carrying into living effect the Satanic will of both the father and the son. Thus we perceive three distinct personalities, the Devil, the Antichrist, and "The False Prophet;" and these three are one,—one vital essence, one economy, and one administration. The Dragon sets up as the anti-God; the ten-horned Beast, his son, is the anti-Christ; and the two-horned Beast, proceeding from and operating in the interest of both, is the anti-Holy Ghost. And these three together are Hell's Trinity in Unity, the Devil's Unity in Trinity, as revealed and operative in our world, when iniquity has once come to the full.

At present we are to consider the third in this infamous Trinity, as exhibited in the vision before us. The Lord God of heaven and earth guide us into a right understanding of His truth!

The first, most direct, and most natural question on the subject is: Who and what is this Beast, with two horns like a lamb? Carrying it to the leading commentators for solution, very confused and contradictory are the answers given. Out of some forty whom I could name, one-half say this Beast is the Pope, or the papacy, or the papal kingdom, or the Roman clergy, or the spiritual Roman Empire, or the various spiritual orders under the papacy; whilst no one of them is able to define just exactly what he does mean; for the theory falls so far short of the record that it is continually breaking down in the hands of its defenders. The other half give nearly as many different applications as there are writers. Sir Isaac Newton thinks the Greek Church is this Beast. Galloway thinks the French Republic is intended. Fysh thinks it means the Jesuits. Mulerius thinks it refers to the Roman theologians. Hengstenberg thinks it means the earthy, carnal wisdom, including the heathen philosophies, false doctrines, and the like. Waller says it is "the evil which arises in the Church of Christ." Stuart says it is the heathen priesthood. A nameless writer maintains that it is none other than the principle of the inductive philosophy, the mechanic arts, the mechanical forces. Gebhardt holds that witchcraft and soothsaying, the heathen religion as divination and magic, is meant. Whilst a large number of writers interpret both these Beasts, as well as the image which the second causes to be made to the first, as really one and the same thing, denoting only different aspects of the Romish Church, or the papal system.

To get anything solid out of such presentations is simply impossible. We must therefore abandon entirely the whole system of interpretation which results in such confusion and uncertainty, or conclude, with some, that nothing definitely ascertainable is contained in these prophecies; in other words, that there is here no revelation at all. The fault has not been in the intentions, the learning, the earnestness, the diligence, or the candor of the men concerned, so much as in the unwarranted prepossessions, misconceptions, and defective methods by which they have approached what God has thus commanded to be written. In the simple straightforward way in which we have been contemplating this momentous Book, taking things as they are given, with all the mysteriousness of the contents difficulties have melted away as we approached them, and everything has come out in thorough self-consistency; whilst the whole body of Holy Scripture takes on fresh illumination from the plain literal construction of what by special divine aid and direction the apostolic seer has put on record as the outcome of all. And by adhering to the same processes we may also reach some definite idea of what is intended to be foreshown in this vision of the second Beast.

One of the most embarrassing mistakes in the treatment of this vision is the assumption that we dare not here think of an individual person. But why not? Every item in the record calls for individuality, as do all the relations of the subject. When Jesus told His disciples, "there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt. 24:24), every one agrees that he referred to persons; that is, to individual men, who should severally give themselves out as if they were Christ, or claim to be endowed with all wisdom and power to command the reverence and obedience of their fellows. But when the Saviour thus prophesied of the rise of false prophets, it is impossible to suppose that "the false prophet" which this second Beast is thrice declared to be (chaps. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10), was not embraced. He certainly is one of those many, nay, the impersonation of them all, as he is by emphasis "The False Prophet," as the first Beast is "The Antichrist." But being thus one of many whose individuality is conceded on all hands, he must also be of the same kind and nature with the rest; that is, not a system, church, philosophy, school, corporation, order, or general spirit, but an individual person.

Being a prophet, he must, of course, have a doctrine, a system which he puts forth, an economy which he seeks to sustain, and consociates and followers who operate with him; but with whomsoever or whatsoever coalescing, confederated, or conjoined, he is not the False Prophet on their account, but in his own individual personality. All the prophets that have ever been, whether true or false, pagan, Jewish, or Christian, have been individual persons. And when it comes to "The False Prophet," the last and greatest of his class, the very consummation of all false prophets, we would do violence to all language or the use of terms, not to admit and recognize an individual personality. The Beast, as such, is not a person, but a symbol, which covers the whole economy and administration of the False Prophet; yet, for that very reason, and above all, it includes a personal administrator, in whom the entire thing has its being and centre. It is also impossible for me to conceive how this False Prophet can be made the subject of divine punishments, be cast into the lake of fire, and be kept there in torment from age to age on account of his wickedness, as the record is (Rev. 19:20; 20:10), if he be not a true and real person. Do states, false churches, systems, hierarchies, and the like exist and suffer as such in hell?

Prophecy and prophetic administration imply inspiration and miraculous power. In the case of true prophets the inspiration is from above, and the power from on high. This Beast is a false prophet, the consummation of all false prophets, and his inspiration and power must needs come from beneath. Hence he is represented as coming up out of the earth, as the first Beast comes out of the sea. If the sea in the one case means the political agitation of peoples, the earth in the other case represents what is more settled and firm in human thought and society. And so we find that the religious sentiments and systems have always been more firm and fixed than political sentiments. A prophet has to do with the religious element; and the coming of this Beast out of the earth may refer to the evolution of his system out of the religions that have place among men, and the progress of human society with reference to beliefs and spiritual things. But this may not be the whole meaning.

There is a particular oppressor referred to in the tenth Psalm (ver. 15), who is described as "The Man of the Earth," and who meets his fate in the great judgment time. According to the uniform patristic application of this Psalm, the reference must be to one or the other of these Beasts; but, as the first Beast is distinguished as the Beast from the Sea, and the second as the Beast from the Earth, this "Man of the Earth" must be this second Beast, if either. If so, his particular and emphatic characterization as "the Man of the Earth" so early as the days of David must mean something special and peculiar. The apparition to the witch of Endor came up "out of the earth" (1 Sam. 28:13). It was from the spirit-world, usually conceived of in the Scriptures as located under, or in the interior of the earth. Hence a recent writer, with whom I have often found good reason to agree, concludes that this Beast, as to his personality, is a man from the under-world, whom he identifies as Judas Iscariot, returned again to the activities of this world, either by Satanic resurrection, or by some form of obsession, something after the manner of the first Beast, whom he identifies as the Emperor Nero. This would harmonize with the fact that neither of these Beasts dies; each goes down alive into the lake of fire (chap. 19:20). The startling character of the idea is also much relieved when we consider, as Hengstenberg observes, that the separation between earth and hell is at that time very slight, and the communication very easy. Even in the ordinary course of things, either heaven or hell, God or the Devil, spirits from above or spirits from beneath, are always in the background of all the spiritual and supernatural activities upon earth; and very much more potent will be the putting forth of Hell in those last evil times, when everything pertaining to heaven is largely withdrawn, and all that remains in the earth is mostly abandoned for the time to the rule of the infernal powers. I should not wonder, therefore, if this would turn out to be the true interpretation, namely, that this coming up out of the earth means a coming from the under-world, and that this Man of the Earth, this Beast as to his personality, is, in one sense or another, that very Judas, "Son of Perdition," who betrayed his Lord.* He is at least a man, one who fills the office of a prophet in consociation with the first Beast, one possessed of supernatural powers, and one who has all his inspiration and miraculous potency from beneath, in contrast with that of true prophets, which is from above.

This second Beast has "two horns like a lamb." Horns are the symbols of power; but these horns have no diadems, and are like the horns of a gentle domestic animal. Political sovereignty, war, conquest, and the strength of military rule are therefore out of the question here. This Beast is a Prophet, a spiritual teacher, and not a king or warrior. His power has a certain softness and domesticity about it, which is sharply distinguished from the great, regal horns of the first Beast, although in reality of the same Wild Beast order, and belonging to the same Dragon brood.

What, then, are we to understand by these two lamblike horns, or the twofold power of this Beast? Here commentators have been at great loss, and have perpetrated some very absurd things to make their schemes tally with the record. But bearing in mind that the matter relates to a religion and a great religious establishment,—to the head centre of a universal spiritual teaching and worship,—I do not see that close thinkers should have much difficulty on this point.

Taking the whole history of all religions, true and false, from the beginning until now, and searching for the elements of their hold on men's minds, their power, it will be found to reside in two things, which, in the absence of better terms, we may call naturalism and supernaturalism; that is, the presence of revelations, or what are accepted as revelations, from the superior powers, and held to be divine and binding; or conclusions of natural conscience and reason, deemed sacredly obligatory because believed to be good and true. It is difficult to conceive on what other foundation a religion can rest; and analysis will show that on one or the other of these, or on both combined, all religions do rest, and must rest. Here is the seat of their strength, their power, whether true or false, the horns by which they push their way to dominion over the hearts and lives of men. They are just two, and no more. As a religionist, therefore, this Beast-Prophet could have but two horns. But he has two horns, and hence both the two only powers in a religion; therefore he is at once a naturalist and a supernaturalist,—a scientist and a spiritualist,—a Rationalist, yet asserting power above

ordinary nature and in command of nature. In other words, he claims to be the bearer of the sum total of the Universal Wisdom, in which all reason and all revelation are fused into one great system, claimed to be the ultimatum of all truth, the sublime and absolute Universeology. And professing to have everything natural and supernatural thus solved and crystallized as the one eternal and perfect Wisdom, he must necessarily present himself as the one absolute apostle and teacher of all that ought to command the thought, faith, and obedience of man. The possession and exercise of the two horns of religious power certainly can mean nothing less than this.

The same helps to a right idea of the further particular concerning this Beast, to wit, that, though having but the two horns like a lamb, he yet speaks like a Dragon. He is lamblike in that he proposes to occupy only the mild, domestic, and inoffensive position of spiritual adviser. What more gentle and innocent than the counselling of people how to live and act, for the securement of their happiness! But the words are like the Dragon, in that such professions and claims are in fact the assumption of absolute dominion over the minds, souls, consciences, and hearts of men, to bind them irrevocably, and to compel them to think and act only as he who makes them shall dictate and prescribe. Only to the eternal God belongs such a power; and when claimed by a creature, is, indeed, the speech of the Devil, the spirit of hell usurping the place and prerogatives of the Holy Ghost.

Hence, also, in so far as this Beast is able to maintain and enforce these prophetic claims, "he exerciseth all the authority of the first Beast." There is no more complete or exalted dominion under the sun than such a sway over the intellect and will of universal humanity. The first Beast, in all his imperial power, has no greater authority than the common acknowledgment of such claims would give. When this is exercised, all the authority of the first Beast is exercised. But the first Beast is quite willing that his hellish consociate should assert and press these claims; for the two are but different Persons in the same infernal Trinity, the second witnessing to the first, as the Spirit witnesseth to the Son. It is all in the one interest of the Dragon, out of whom the whole administration comes, and it matters not through which of the Persons the Devil work is done, whether by the first Beast as imperial dictator, or by the second as the absolute spiritual adviser and teacher. Therefore the latter exerciseth all the authority of the former, "in his presence," with his approbation and consent, and as his consociate and prime minister.

It is not common for great impostors and powers in evil thus to agree. When Mahomet was ruling at Medina there arose another pretender of the same order with himself. The second proposed to make common cause between them, and wrote a letter to Mahomet which read: "From Moseilma, the prophet of Allah, to Mahomet, the prophet of Allah. Come now, let us make a partition of the world, and let half be thine, and half be mine." But Mahomet answered: "From Mahomet, the prophet of God, to Moseilma, the Liar;" and there was nothing but hatred and war between them. When Napoleon, in the grandeur of his power, sought to avail himself of the authority and influence of the Pope, and to endow the pretended See of St. Peter with glory and honor as an instrument of imperial rule, the Pope answered him with a bull of excommunication. When certain vagabond Jews of Ephesus proposed to adorn and dignify themselves with the credit of casting out evil spirits in the Saviour's name the answer came: "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." (Acts 19:15, 16.) But between these last two outgrowths of hell there is a perfect understanding, harmony, and concord. It is Akiba and Barchocebas repeated on a mammoth scale—the Satanic mimicry of the sacred ministrations of the Holy Ghost to the Divine Saviour's cause.

And a most efficient minister does this False Prophet prove to be. Eight times it is written of him that "he causeth." He is a successful executor. And what "he causeth" is the most extraordinary in all the history of falsehood and wickedness. The account is full and specific, and needs to be considered in detail.

First, we have the statement that "he causeth the earth and those that dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose stroke of death was healed."

The meaning of "the earth," distinct from its inhabitants, some represent as a wordiness or pleonasm, meaning only all them that dwell upon the earth. But there is no proof that such is the fact. The Holy Ghost is not liable to load down His utterances with redundancies, as we in our infirmities often do. And I am always suspicious of that sort of exegesis which has occasion to throw out words and phrases from the divine records, as if they meant nothing. If there is any meaning to be attached to the particular statement that this Beast comes up "out of the earth," a corresponding significance must attach to the statement that "the earth," in contradistinction from the dwellers on it, is made to worship the Beast. It may be difficult for us to understand it, but we are not therefore to conclude that there is nothing in it.

If the coming of this Beast "out of the earth" means a coming from the place of depraved spirits, the worshipping ascribed to "the earth" may mean worship rendered by these evil spirits. The statement would then be, that this Beast first of all induces the tenants of the under-world to adore the great Son of perdition, who was wounded to death and became alive again. When it is said that "the whole earth wondered after the Beast," we can readily understand it to mean the inhabitants of the earth; but when the earth is named separately along with its inhabitants, we can hardly be at liberty to construe it of the inhabitants only. Neither is it impossible for this great miracle-worker, who can cause fire to come down from heaven, and who has power to make an image speak, also to cause the rocks and hills, the woods and trees, the fountains and streams to give forth tokens of acknowledgment and reverence to the great, miraculous, Saviour-omnipotent claimed to be present in this marvellous man.

But, whatever the fact may be with regard to "the earth," there can be no question about "the dwellers in it." They are induced to accept the Beast as the Deity, and to worship him as God. In the first instance, when this man's great wonderfulness and power

burst upon the view of the world, the astonishment, admiration, and celebration of him as the Invincible seems to have been spontaneous, a mere wild breaking forth and overflow of astounded popular feeling. But it was evidence of an impression in a direction of which the Devil could well avail himself for the better accomplishment of his ends. The second Beast accordingly appears as a sacred prophet to direct it, reduces it to a system, and enters upon the organization of a new religion, an infernal religion, of which he is the sublime oracle, and the Antichrist the supreme god.

The attempt proves a grand success. "The earth and those that dwell in it worship the first Beast, whose stroke of death was healed." It seems like a fable from the land of dreams—like the wild story in Southey's *Thalaba*, in which the sorcerers

Hasten to the inner cave,
And all fall fearfully around the giant idol's feet,
Seeking salvation from the power they served.

For here, almost, if not quite, as there, the picture is, that

Where the sceptre in the idol's hand
Touched the round altar, in its answering realm,
Earth felt the stroke, and ocean rose in storms;
And ruining cities, shaken from their seats,
Crushed all their inhabitants.
His other arm was raised, and its spread palm
Upbore the ocean weight,
Whose naked waters arched the sanctuary,
Sole prop and pillar he.

But, with all the weird strangeness of the record, the literal realization of it is neither impossible nor improbable. The consideration of the arguments and influences by which it is brought about we must reserve for another occasion, but we have only to recur to what has been to satisfy ourselves that there is nothing in it to which depraved human nature is not competent, and even predisposed and prone. Alexander was but a young man when he died, and never was more than a natural man; yet he claimed and received divine honors as a god. Reading in Homer that the ancient heroes were sons of gods, he did not see that they were any better than himself, and hence began to think himself the son of Jupiter, and so announced to the priests, who oracularly proclaimed him such, and exhorted all inquirers to render to their victorious king the honors of a deity. The vile and infamous Antiochus Epiphanes was awarded an apotheosis, and assigned a place among the holy gods in the worship of Egypt. Herod, with all his baseness and his crimes, was hailed as a god, and took it as his due. (Acts 12:21–23.) Julius Cæsar was honored as a god, and after his death many temples were raised and frequented for his worship. Statues, temples, altars, and trophies were consecrated to Augustus Cæsar. Tiberius rendered sacred homage to his statues, and also accepted similar honors to himself and his favorite, Sejanus. Trajan worshipped Nerva, and honored him with a chief priest, with altars, and with sacred gifts. The younger Pliny proclaimed it as Trajan's due, that his statue should be cut in ivory, or cast in gold, and that the choicest victims should be sacrificed to his divinity. Caligula claimed to be a god, clothed himself with the acknowledged names of deity, assumed the attributes and ornaments of all the divinities, accepted temples, prayers, offerings, and sacrifices as pertaining to him, appointed a college of priests, consisting of all the richest men in Rome, to superintend the ceremonies of honor and worship to his sacred majesty. He even boasted that every nation of the earth, except the Jews, adored and worshipped him. The King of Parthia, kneeling before Nero, said to him: "You are my God, and I am come to adore you as I adore the sun. My destiny is to be determined by your supreme will;" to which Nero replied: "I make you King of Armenia, that the whole universe may know it belongs to me to give or to take away crowns." Domitian filled the world with his statues, to which sacrifices were continually offered, and required that all letters written or published in his name should always begin, "Our Lord and God commands." And so common, universal, and stoutly demanded was this worship of the successors of the Cæsars, that the chief reason for the martyrdom of the Christians of their day was, that they would not sacrifice to the emperor as God.

It may be said that these were ancient, pagan, and benighted times, and that such abominations can never again be palmed upon mankind. But they were the times which produced our classics. The same has also occurred in later days, with far less reason or apology, and among those who claimed to be the most advanced and enlightened of mortals. How was it in the comparatively recent period of the French Revolution? How was it with those world-renowned savants, whose boast was to dethrone the King of heaven as well as the monarchs of the earth? Did they not sing halleluias to the busts of Marat and Lepelletier, not only in the streets of Paris and Brest, but in many of the churches all over France? How came it that Robespierre was named and celebrated as a divinity, a superhuman being, "The New Messiah!" Can we blot out what Alison, and Lacretelle, and Thiers have written, that "Marat was universally deified," that the churches received his statues as objects of sacred regard, and that a new worship was everywhere set up in their honor? Is it to be ignored how the foremost men of the nation, in state ceremony, conveyed a woman in grand procession to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, unveiled and kissed her before the high altar as the Goddess of Reason, and exhorted the multitude to cease trembling before the powerless thunders of the God of their fears, and "sacrifice only to such as this?" Nay, at this

very hour, there resides a man in the city of Rome, whom one-half of Christendom itself hails, honors, and adores as the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Vicegerent of God upon earth, Infallible, and sole possessor of the Keys of heaven,—a man whom the greater festivals exhibit as a Divinity, borne along in solemn procession on the shoulders of consecrated priests, whilst sacred incense fumes before him, and blest peacocks' feathers full of eyes wave beside his moving throne, and every mortal on the street where he passes, uncovers, kneels, and silently adores;—a man who, once a year, takes his seat upon the high altar of the sublimest church in Christendom, in the broad light of this favored century, and there receives the adoration of the whole college of his most exalted subjects, who reverently bow amid chants, music, and burning lights to kiss the toe of "His Holiness!"

Let there come, then, a man from among the distinguished dead; let him prove by signs evident that he is verily a great emperor returned to life again; let him show the intelligence, the energy, the invincible power, and whatever else has made and marked the glory of the mighty, and let there come with him a great prophet to exercise all this power in the one direction of a new universal religion, advising and urging with eloquence and miracle, in the name of the absolute Wisdom, the worship and adoration of that man, as the only right worship in the universe; and what is there in humanity to withstand the appeal! As surely as man is man, the same that he has hitherto been, it will and must be a grand success. As certain fact, the Saviour so anticipated, and says, that if it were possible to break Jehovah's promises, the very elect would be deceived.

There is, then, to be a new religion for our world, as scientists and reformers already claim and proclaim. It will also be a powerful and universal religion. It will ground itself in pretensions to the profoundest wisdom, intelligence, reason, truth, and progress. It will sway the earth, and carry with it all who are not written in the Lamb's book of life. It will be the final coronation of the progressivism of human perfectibility. But it will be a religion whose God is Antichrist, and whose sacraments are the seals of damnation, inevitable and eternal. God save us from unfaithfulness to His Gospel, that the "strong delusion" which leaves no hope may never touch any one who hears this warning of what is to come!

LECTURE 33

THE FALSE PROPHET CONTINUED—THE CONDITION OF THINGS WHEN HE COMES—HOW HE IMPOSES ON THE WORLD—MIRACLES TRUE AND FALSE—MAKING FIRE COME DOWN FROM HEAVEN—HIS ARGUMENT FROM THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF THE BEAST—THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST—ARGUMENTS FOR IT—THE CAUSING OF IT TO SPEAK—THE ADMINISTRATION COMPLETE—THE BLOODY TYRANNY—THE MARKING—THE HELPLESSNESS AND HOPELESSNESS OF MEN UNDER THE BEAST—WISDOM CONCERNING HIS NAME.

Rev 13:14–18. (Revised Text.) And he doeth great miracles, so that he even maketh fire come down from the heaven to the earth in the pretence of men, and he deceiveth those that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to work in the presence of the beast, saying to those who dwell on the earth they should make an image to the beast, which had the stroke of the sword, and lived.

And it was given him to give spirit to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should even speak, and should cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond to receive a mark $\chi\rho\kappa\upsilon\mu\alpha$, stamp or brand] on their right hand, or on their forehead, that no one shall be able to buy or sell except he who has the mark, the name of the beast or the number of his name.

Here is the wisdom. Let him who hath understanding reckon the number of the beast; for it is a number of a man, and the number of him is 666.

IN the last Lecture we were engaged in considering the Beast from the earth, the False Prophet, the consociate and prime minister of the final Antichrist. We then saw something of his origin, his character, the sphere of his operations, the nature of his pretensions, and his success in introducing a new universal worship, or religion. But we did not then get through with him. It remains to be considered how he imposes on the world, and what oppressive and murderous use he makes of his power. The Lord help us to understand the matter truly!

Before proceeding directly to the subject it may be well to glance first at the antecedent state of things, by which the way is paved for his operations. No great movements or revolutions in human affairs ever come without preparative conditions and causes, some preliminary plantings which gradually mature until they ripen into the great ultimate results. It was so with the reformation wrought by Christ. It was so in the reformation which culminated in connection with the labors of Martin Luther. It has been so in science and philosophy. It has been so in every great political revolution. And when such gigantic changes and disasters come as foreshown in this chapter, they necessarily have had their roots in something which has gone before, of which they are the fruits, and which the nature of the times has served to favor and develop. Nor have the Scriptures failed to indicate various preliminary conditions and forerunners which serve to introduce the final false Christ and his abominations.

Speaking of the Man of Sin and his doings, Paul writes that that day shall not come, "except there come a falling away first." There is then to be a general sinking from the true faith, and the substitution of human conceits, philosophies, and "science falsely so called," in the place of the divine verities, eating away the substance of true religion and dissolving its hold on the hearts and minds of men. Such a terrible deceit could not be unless all society were first thoroughly corrupted. And so it will be. The Apostle says: "Know this, that in the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;"—times "when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. 3:1–6; 4:3, 4.) Among the active causes of all this we are forewarned of a certain boastful and blatant scientism and naturalism which does not hesitate dogmatically to negative the doctrines of faith, and likewise of a demonic spiritualism, which denies that Jesus Christ has come, or is to come, in any literal sense, and sets up quite other revelations as the hope and dependence of the world. In so many words, it is affirmed "there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying [as a matter of doctrine and science], Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation;" and furthermore, "that in the latter times some [certain men] shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and teachings of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats." (2 Pet. 3:3, 4; 1 Tim. 4:1–3.) As a necessary concomitant and result, we are further told of a perturbed, restless, and disabled condition in political affairs, a weakening of the laws, an unmanageableness of things of state and social order, making all the old formulæ and codes of none effect, and engulfing the whole world in a quagmire of confusion, from which there is no retreat, and whence the only prospect is of worse disaster ahead. The Saviour assures us that as before the flood "the earth was corrupt before God, and was filled with violence," justice and law having been supplanted by the base will of the corrupt multitude, so it shall be when the present world nears its end. (Matt. 24:37–39.) Besides, it is a time when the patience of God is about wearied out with the perverseness and inventions of the wicked,—when judgment has commenced,—when the One who hinders the revelation of the Man of Sin is taken away,—when the Holy Ghost, so long grieved and insulted, begins to withdraw from the world then approaching its doom,—when the holiest and best of earth's population is taken away, caught up to the heavenly pavilion,—when the very candlestick of sacred illumination is removed,—when they that love not the truth are given over, judicially blinded, and allowed a loose rein to believe lies and hasten their own damnation,—when the doors of the abyss are unlocked, and the powers of perdition are given wider liberties,—and when Satan is angered to the intensest degree, because he knows that "he hath but a short time." And in this crisis and condition of things, when evil is ready to bloom forth in final maturity, and every form of it is confluent, and all that impeded it has well-nigh disappeared, the great embodiment of Hell's subtlety and deceit begins his ministry. The world, having rejected the Evangely of God, is therefore ripe and ready for the Gospel of the Devil, and his great Apostle comes.

Observe, then, in the next place, by what means this Prophet brings the world to his unholy cause.

We have seen what his pretensions are. We have seen that he has the two horns, i.e., all the powers by which a religion, as such, makes its way upon the minds and hearts of men. We have seen that he presents himself as the bearer and interpreter of the absolute truth, the master and prophet of all that can rightfully demand the attention and obedience of any being. And what he thus professes and claims, he also proposes to prove and demonstrate, by exhibiting a supernatural control of all the forces and powers of Nature. "And he doeth great miracles.... And he deceiveth those that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to work in the presence of the Beast."

Miracles have ever been the chief evidence of the presence of what is worshipful and divine. It is by these especially that men's faith is begotten and controlled. It is by seeing and experiencing what is manifestly above and beyond all natural human power, and what cannot be accounted for on natural principles, that the human mind is forced to a conviction of the presence of some great and worshipful potency superior to Nature. It was by such demonstrations that Moses evidenced Jehovah's almightiness and his own legation as Jehovah's prophet, till the most inveterate unbelief was compelled to admit and confess that here was "the finger of God." It was one of the ways in which Jesus proved His Messiahship, and established for all ages that He is a teacher sent from God; for, as Nicodemus said, no man could do the miracles which he did, except God were with him. Paul, in enumerating the powers by which he persuaded the Gentiles to faith in the Gospel, says, that it was in very deed the power of signs and wonders which Christ did by him in the power of the Holy Ghost, that he made his conquests. (Rom. 15:18.) And this arch-prophet of falsehood knows well how needful and mighty is the force of miracles to establish his credit, and to secure belief in his claims. The religion of God is a religion of miracles, and to make his infernal deception appear the only true and rightful religion, he needs to mimic and counterfeit all that supernaturalism on which the true faith reposes. To this, therefore, he sets himself, and becomes one of the greatest workers of signs and wonders the earth has ever seen.

Nor need we be surprised at this. There is a supernatural power which is against God and truth, as well as one for God and truth. A miracle, simply as a work of wonder, is not necessarily of God. There has always been a devilish supernaturalism in the world, running alongside of the supernaturalism of divine grace and salvation. "Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and his servants,

and it became a serpent." Here was divine miracle. But Pharaoh went and called his wise men and sorcerers, and "the magicians of Egypt also did in like manner with their enchantments; for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents." Here was devil miracle, in imitation of the divine. In the same way the turning of the waters to blood was counterfeited, as also the plague of frogs. Only when it came to the creation of swarms of insect life, did the magicians give up, and admit that this was beyond their power. (See Exod., chaps. 7, 8, and 9.) So, again (in Deut. 13:1-5), God assumes and asserts that there may be supernatural revelations in behalf of idol worship; for He gives it as a law for His people: "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spoke unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." So the Saviour tells us that many will come up in the day of judgment, saying, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works (all manner of miracles)? And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:12, 23.) Of the "false Christs and false prophets" whom he foretold, he says they "shall show great signs and wonders." (Matt. 24:24.) Paul says of Antichrist, and the doings in connection with him, that his "coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." (2 Thess. 2:9.) "Lying wonders" does not mean unreal wonders, mere trick, jugglery, and legerdemain; but wonders wrought for the support of lies, that is, devil miracles. Mere pretended miracles have nothing of miraculous power; but in this case the worker comes "with all power." There is no emptiness or unreality about them. They are genuine miracles, wrought in the interests of Hell's falsehoods. The test of a miracle is its supernaturalness; the test of its source, is the doctrine, end, or interest for which it is wrought. If in support of anything contrary to God and His revealed will and law, it is no less a miracle; but in that case it is a work of the Devil; for God cannot contradict himself. (See 1 John 4:1-3.) It is also plainly intimated in the Divine Word, that, in judgment upon the wicked world for its refusal of Christ, and its setting at naught of all the divine miracles, the present bonds and limitations of Satanic power will be relaxed, the Devil and his demons allowed freer range upon this planet, and those in love with falsehood and unrighteousness given over to delusions then so much stronger than ever before. (See 1 Kings 22:18, 22; 2 Chron. 18:18, 22; Isaiah 6:9, 10; Ezek. 14:9; Rom. 1:21, 25, 28; 2 Thess. 2:11, 12.) It is therefore in strict accord with all history and revelation, that the consummate False Prophet "doeth great miracles, and deceiveth those that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him [permitted him of God] to work."

An example of these great miracles is described. The power of the False Prophet extends so far, "that he even maketh fire come down from the heaven to the earth in the presence of men." It is useless to talk of trickery and mere sham in this case. Of the rebels, in chapter 20, it is said: "Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them;" and of the Two Witnesses it is said: "If any one willet to injure them, fire issueth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies." (Chap. 11:5.) In both these instances we have literal fire; for it consumes men; and the same terms in this case must mean the same thing. Nor is it the first time Satan shows his power over the fire and lightnings of heaven. When God allowed him to assail and tempt Job, the report came: "The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them." (Job 1:16.) It was Satan who directed and brought down that fire; so then he is able to do again for his own great Prophet. There is also special reason why this particular miracle should be wrought at this time. The Two Witnesses showed this command over fire, and it was necessary to offset it by something of the same character. Besides, it was the test by which Elijah proposed to decide between the Godhead of Baal and Jehovah, insisting that "the God that answereth by fire" is to be accepted as the true God. And "the fire of the Lord fell" at the call of Elijah, and thus settled the question of Jehovah's Deity and majesty over against the impotent Baal. (1 Kings 18.) There needs therefore to be a meeting of that test on the part of this new Prophet, in order to make out his claim, as over against the God of the Bible. And as men refuse to abide by the Jehovah-answer by fire, this man is permitted to imitate that test, that it may appear how very ready and facile wicked people are to believe the Devil's miracles in preference to those of God.

Whether the fire in this case is allowed to be used for destruction, as it was in the ministry of Elijah, is not said; but it certainly comes, and it comes "in the presence of men"—men, not babes, not idiots, not imbeciles. The subtle performer anticipates all suspicions of imposture, and provides against the possibility of having it said that it is nothing but a cheat, a mere piece of cunningly-devised pyrotechnics. When it comes to supernaturalism and miracle, people call for an open field, a fair test, the exclusion of every chance for collusion, and thorough care against deception by mechanical contrivances or a better knowledge than they have of nature's laws. The skeptical heart of man is jealous of miracles. But here every demand is met; for the whole world is convinced, and all its science satisfied. Out of the open sky, on the broad plain, in the clear light of day, under the keen scrutiny of the keenest adepts of science, before the most competent of witnesses, this agent of perdition calls, and the fire comes and descends to the earth, attested as an unmistakable reality!

Every year, at Easter time, the Greek patriarch at Jerusalem goes through the farce of calling down fire from heaven, by which all the lamps of the Greek churches and shrines are lit for that year. Dean Stanley, from having been an eyewitness, has given a graphic account of the proceeding, and the terrific furor which attends it.* But there, the one who gets the fire is locked up alone in the darkness of a ceiled and covered vault, and no one sees the fire until it is put forth through an aperture at the top of the cell. No sensible person is deceived by it. It stands acknowledged a poor and disgraceful trick. It is not so in this case, for here every one's

scruples are satisfied. The closest investigators and observers see and confess that the miracle is genuine, and are persuaded that the god of this man is divine, even on Elijah's test, though without doing full justice to Elijah's case.

Thus substantiating his own professions, this infernal Prophet points next to the supernatural character of the man whom he seeks to have adored. Hengstenberg agrees that the reason or ground on which the worship of the ten-horned Beast is solicited and urged, is the continually repeated and tremendously emphasized fact, that he was wounded to death, and that the stroke of his death was healed. With all his wonderful power, wisdom, and greatness, this is his sublimest personal characteristic; and on this account the adoration of him is chiefly founded.

It is on account of Christ's obedience unto death and resurrection from the dead, that He has His place and glory, as the head of all power, and the object of worship, honor, and blessing. The songs of heaven are to "the Lamb that was slain." The Antichrist is the mimic Christ; and he must have honor too, because he died and is alive again. Though "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures," and "showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs," and after forty days was visibly taken up into heaven, whence also He shed forth a regenerating and miraculous power, proving that He is forever exalted at the right hand of the Father almighty, worthy of the everlasting adoration of all creatures; still the wicked world will not believe in Him, nor award Him the honor that is His due. But when the Antichrist comes, because he died of a sword-wound, and went to his fitting perdition, and reappears from out the abyss, it will be preached, and taught, and argued that he above all is worthy of the homage, credit, and worship of mankind! And because a miracle-working prophet says so, and because they have the infernal Beast in his grand administrations before their eyes, they who could see no reason for hearkening to the miracle-working Apostles, listen, and are persuaded in favor of this new gospel, and agree that the foul monster shall be their Lord and only Deity!

And to make the infamous delusion the more easy and effective, this False Prophet avails himself further of the abomination which has been the besetting sin of the race, the great defilement of the ages. I cannot explain exactly what it is, but there has always been a peculiar witchery in the worship of idols. Even Aaron himself was persuaded to make a golden calf, and within hearing of the thunder of God's almightiness the people gathered themselves together, and paid willing homage to the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. This infernal messenger knows the advantage to be gained from this strange proneness of mankind, and therefore he counsels and directs, as the chosen method for giving due homage to the god, that "they should make an image to the Beast which had the stroke of the sword, and lived." A statue was to be constructed; and it was to be at once a statue "to the Beast," and "of the Beast,"—a material likeness of himself, set up in sacred honor of his majesty. Hengstenberg observes that one image is spoken of, "but in regard to the sense a multitude of images is meant." If so, this would give a sort of ubiquitous presence to the Beast, and would greatly facilitate his worship in all parts of his dominion. The vision, however, without excluding the idea of multiplication, contemplates but one original, which, according to other passages bearing on the subject, has its location at Jerusalem, and finds its way into the temple built for Jehovah, and is there set up as "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet." (Dan. 9:27; 11:45; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4.)

The worship of such a statue would be the worship of the Man himself, for this was the understanding and meaning of all image-worship. It is on this idea that Rome sanctions the veneration of images of Christ, the Virgin, and other saints. Chrysostom says: "When the images of the emperor are sent down and brought into a city, its rulers and multitude go out to meet them with carefulness and reverence, not honoring the tablet or the representation moulded in wax, but the standing of the emperor." Hence Basil says: "The image of the emperor is also called the emperor, because honor paid to the image passes to the original." "He that honors not the image, honors not the person represented." So also Athanasius says: "He who worshippeth the image, in it worshippeth the emperor; for the image is his form and likeness." And so in all the history of ancient Rome, whatsoever was done to the statue of a god or man, was construed as done to him whose statue it was. The making of this image of and to the Beast is therefore a formulation of the worship of the Beast.

Nor is it difficult to trace what sort of arguments will be brought to bear for the making of this image. In the ages of great worldly glory and dominion statues were raised to the honor of the great of every class, but who of all the great ones of the earth is so great as the Antichrist! Statues have ever been common for the commemoration of great events; but what greater event and marvel has ever occurred than that in the history of this man, in that he was wounded to death, and yet is restored to life and activity, with far sublimer qualities than he possessed in his first life? How much more worthy of memorialization this than the scar of Scipio, or the appearance of a star supposed to be miraculous which Octavianus commemorated on the consecrated image of his imperial foster-father? If the grand old Romans thus honored their human emperors and benefactors, why withhold this veneration from one so evidently and eminently superhuman? And who will there be among the proud sons of earth to stand out against such arguments? The leaders of the apostate world will cheerfully acquiesce in the pre-eminent propriety of such a memorial, and an image of the Beast, and to his sacred honor, is made and set up, particularly emphasizing his great characteristic, that he once was wounded to death, and that he has come back to life again with his death-wound healed.

But with the image constructed and in its place, another hellish wonder is wrought, perhaps the most marvellous of all the doings of

this minister of perdition. "The idols of the heathen are silver and gold; they have mouths, but they speak not." (Is. 31:6, 7.) But the powers of falsehood have by this time become mightier than of old. To the False Prophet it is given "to give spirit to the image of the Beast, that the image of the Beast should even speak." The unbelieving may laugh, and sneer, and say, "It is nonsense and impossibility." And so, indeed, it may be to them and their power. But, of old, it was written, "Woe to him that saith to the wood, Awake! to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach." (Hab. 2:19.) And here is the man who does it. For thus it stands recorded in the Revelation of God. And when it comes to pass, men will be only the more carried away by it, because of their previous unbelief of the possibility of anything of the sort. As God's word is true, and heaven and earth will sooner pass away than one jot or tittle of it go unfulfilled, this thing will be done. As the power of God restores breath and life to the Two Witnesses, so shall this arch magician have power to give animation and speech to this dead statue. And why not? The infernal power which brings up a dead man from the abyss, and reinstates him in all the activities of a new life of wonder and greatness, certainly can be at no loss to make an image speak, and through its metallic mouth to give forth his oracles. Old Pagan and Christian writers have recorded instances in which the idols spake, and gave forth oracles. The Papists affirm the same for veritable truth concerning some of their images. The Hindoos to this day hold and maintain that a degree of life and supernatural power takes possession of their images when solemnly consecrated according to the prescribed ceremonies. And we are hardly warranted in declaring that it is all falsehood and misbelief. But if there be no truth or reality in these affirmations and beliefs, the thing will become literal fact under the ministrations of this son of perdition. This image speaks; and the closest observation of all the science, wisdom, and skepticism of the time is satisfied of the fact. There will be no machinery, no collusion, no make-believe, no trick or deceit about it; for the whole world is convinced. The image speaks. Oracles and commands come out of the dead metal. People may institute and apply what tests they please, and scrutinize with all the science the earth affords, but the result of all is the universal admission, that the image does speak. The Scriptures cannot be broken; and John, in the spirit saw, and has written it down by command of God, that "it was given the False Prophet to give spirit to the image of the Beast, that the image of the Beast should even speak." The Beast is supernatural; the False Prophet is supernatural; and the image, though made by man, likewise takes on of the supernatural; and all the savants of the time agree and maintain that it is even so. They cannot help it. They cannot hold out against absolute demonstration.

Thus it is, then, that the False Prophet imposes on the world, wins credence to his professions and claims, and sways the public sentiment to the acknowledgment of a new divinity, demanding a new religion, whose vulgar abominations are thought but right and reasonable.

But with the grand machinery thus organized and completed in a Devil church united with a Devil state, the consummated Devil-rule goes into full effect. With the Beast systematically deified, an image set up and consecrated to his adoration, and the testimony, argument, and eloquence of a great miracle-working Prophet ringing through the world in his behalf, the Oracle speaks and the edicts issue—edicts from which we would think Pandemonium itself would recoil with horror. Behold, and see, the "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" which the unbelieving world so much adores, when once fully matured and put into universal command.

There be some in those days who cannot accept the new worship,—elect ones whom God has written in the Lamb's book of life, who cannot be deceived. There be Jews, with whose being it is ingrained never to accept the worship of an idol, and Christian believers, whom nothing can buy over to an abomination so foul and blasphemous. The voice of God's Two Witnesses is heard over against the grand speeches and miracles of the False Prophet, and some there be who take heed to its warnings, and keep themselves aloof from the terrible idolatry. But how do these fare at the hands of this sublimated embodiment of the supreme Reason and finished Progress of which it prates? Where is the "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity" for them? From the mouth of the image, by the sanction of the great Prophet, and by the authority of the idolized Beast, the demand is, "that as many as will not worship the image of the Beast shall be killed."

Abbé Barruel has told us about the worshippers of Liberty and Equality in France, how that on a great civic occasion at Brest, while the municipal officers, the justices of the peace, the tribunal, and the National Guards, were lying self-prostrated before a carved image of Mirabeau, some one whose conscience pricked him exclaimed: "Wretches, you are guilty of idolatry!" but his voice being heard above the noise of drums and trumpets, the adorers of the idol at once cried out: "Kneel down, or you shall die!" But what was only mad impulse and sudden fury then, is finally framed into a great imperial enactment, into a sacred universal law, which admits of no exceptions and no exemptions. No one, of any class or race, is allowed to live under the dominion of these Beasts, if unwilling to conform to the worship they set up. Hence the flight of the Woman into the wilderness, her miraculous help and defence, where the Beast endeavors in vain to overwhelm her.

Thus, in the name of Democracy and popular rights, comes absolute Dictatorship and Imperialism; in the name of Freedom, comes complete and universal enslavement; in the name of the better Reason, which tramples on religion and Revelation, comes a great consolidated system of gross idolatry; in the name of a charitable Liberalism, which disdains allegiance to any creed, comes a bloody Despotism, which compels men to worship the base image of a baser man, or die! Here is one star in the crown of this worlds boasted Progress.

But the religion of Christ has its holy Sacraments;—its mark of baptismal consecration on the forehead, and its pledges of sacred

fellowship and communion given into the hands. This god of the godless also travesties these. The subjects of Antichrist must show their allegiance and wear the badge of their infernal Lord. The False Prophet "causeth all, the small and the great, and the, rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, to receive a χ ρ α ν μ α , a stamp or brand, on their right hand, or on their forehead." As masters in old time branded their slaves, and as owners of stock brand and mark their cattle, so are the people branded under the Antichrist. Declining the Baptism of Christ, they must take upon their bodies the sign and seal that they are sold and held as the goods and chattels of hell! Money and place cannot buy them off. The rich and great are not exempted any more than the poor. The master must submit the same as the veriest slave. The ten kings themselves lie under the inexorable requirement.

The "mark" itself is at once a number and a name. The Apostle tells us what it is. As he gives it, it is made up of two Greek characters which stand for the name of Christ, with a third, the figure of a crooked serpent, put between them, χ ξ ς , the name of God's Messiah transformed into a Devil sacrament. This horrid sign must every one receive on one of the most conspicuous parts of the body, cut, stamped, or branded in, there to abide indelibly. No one may either "buy or sell" without this "mark," and all who do receive it take upon their bodies the token and seal of their damnation!

To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be baptized into His name, for the washing away of sin, and the securement of eternal life, is too much for some people. It is to them a humiliating nonsense, to which their superior dignity cannot stoop. But when the Devil-Messiah comes, in him they will believe and trust; to him they will sell themselves, and to his branding-irons they will submit as helpless slaves and cattle, with no choice but to yield or die; and yielding, to perish everlastingly. I say, perish everlastingly, for there is no more salvation for any one upon whom is this "mark." From heaven the clear, distinct, and awful sentence is: "If any man worship the Beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the Beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name." (Chap. 14:9–11.) This also proves that this Beast is not the Pope; for not all under the Pope are lost. And it is just for the eternal ruin of such as will not accept the true and only Christ that this monster is permitted. People dislike the truth and refuse to obey the holy Gospel, and this minister of hell is allowed to make them the victims of his awful delusions that they may reap the fruits of their unbelief. And all is thus mercifully foreshown, that they may see and know to what a consummation their antichristian philosophies, beliefs, philanthropies, reforms, and proud self-will in sacred things is tending, and so learn righteousness before it is too late. God's Christ rejected is the opening of the soul to the Devil's Messiah, to the great impersonated lie of the universe, whose meretricious good is but the lure to infinite degradation and eternal death. And when men's dissatisfaction with the Lord's Christ and His institutes has worked itself out, and the seeds which it generates have come to their ripened fruits, they will find themselves in the position of slaves and cattle of a mighty tyrant, against whom they can do nothing but hold still, and receive upon their flesh the indelible seal of inevitable damnation.

Hence the peroration with which the vision closes. If men wish light, they can find it in these showings. If they wish to be wise, "here is wisdom." And if any one hath understanding, let him learn the number of the Beast and stand aloof. The arithmetic of it, and the hidden indication which it carries of the precise man who is to be the final Antichrist, need not concern us much. The endless guesses and experiments with which expositors have occupied themselves and their readers on this point can be of very little practical worth to us. When the monster comes, "the righteous shall understand." Our business is rather to reckon up the number of the Beast as to his moral identification. It is here that the chief stress falls, and where the greatest exposure lies. The figures 666 may spell Nero Cæsar in Hebrew, and "the Latin," in Greek; but whether this is certainly what the Spirit meant, no one can now tell; neither would it help us if we knew. The wisdom here, as required by us, is the wisdom to detect and discern the antichristian badness, the ill principles which lay men open to Antichrist's power, the subtle atheism and unfaith by which people are betrayed into his hands. Six is the bad number, and when multiplied by tens and hundreds, it denotes evil in its greatest intensity and most disastrous manifestation. This number of the Beast's name thus gives his standing in the estimate of Heaven, and fixes attention on that rather than on the numerical spelling of the name he bears on earth. If we can only know the principles pertaining to his badness; if we can only have understanding to detect his spirit which already works so powerfully in so many specious forms about us, we shall have accomplished the most needful reckoning of the number of his name. And without this, we may be carrying his damning "mark" upon our souls, even whilst we think ourselves forearmed against his power by what we have discovered of the word by which his contemporaries designate him. The moral insight into his nature is the wisdom we require, rather than the orthography of the name by which he is called. In this, therefore, let us try to skill our souls, cleaving ever to our only Lord God, and His Son Jesus Christ our Saviour, in the meekness of a confiding faith and obedience, that no marks or stains of the Beast, or his abominations, even in spirit, may ever be found upon our souls.