

The Outlook.

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The commercial, political, and religious tendencies of the present day considered in the light of holy scripture.

We are living in serious times. The most superficial observer cannot fail to perceive that everything is changing around us. Great changes have taken place during the past few years in every sphere, and even greater changes seem probable in the near future. He who refuses to consider the tendencies of the things that are happening is foolish beyond expression.

The Commercial World.

Everything is in a condition of unrest. If we look at the commercial world, the relations between Capital and Labour have become strained to a dangerous degree, and this in nearly every country on earth. All around us we hear mutterings of an approaching storm. From time to time the daily press reports outbreaks here and there of a more or less disastrous character. Combination confronts combination menacingly; Labour Unions on the one hand, and Capitalist Trusts on the other. There is every prospect of the two being locked in the throes of a great death-struggle ere long, unless God mercifully intervenes in some unforeseen way. To every eye anointed by the Spirit of God it is clear that the way is being prepared for the time when men will be suffered neither to buy nor sell unless they accept the mark of the Beast (Rev. 13: 16, 17). Truly "Coming events cast their shadows before," though men in their infatuation frequently perceive it not.

The Political World.

The political world is as disturbed as the commercial world. In the United Kingdom the doctrine of "Government BY the people and FOR the people" is now the darling ideal of the many. Ever since the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832 the masses have been clamouring for increase of power and

influence. Statesmen of all parties fawn upon the people, and pamper them in every way in order to gain their favour, and so secure a few years of office. A strong Government, which will sternly repress lawlessness, and maintain righteousness, seems out of the question in these days. Even Members of Parliament — law-makers — are suffered to preach sedition both in India and at home, and to speak of the Sovereign himself with the gravest disrespect publicly, and no hand is laid upon them. The women also are in motion. The great cities are becoming accustomed to displays on the part of the gentler (!) sex which are a disgrace to any civilised country. That the fear of God has absolutely no place in the minds of these feminine agitators is sufficiently proved by their habitual desecration of the Lord's Day for the purposes of their propaganda. The fact is that the masses are refusing to be ruled. Having been educated in the notion that the people are the real source of power, they are determined to exert their power and be quit of all restraint. Socialism suits the present condition of the public mind, and cannot fail to make progress. When it finds itself in a position to strike, may God have mercy on the nation. Outbursts of Sansculottism are more appalling evils than the selfishness of the rich, against which they are professedly directed.

We need not go far afield in order to find the Spirit of revolution. Within the memory of many of us, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Austria-Hungary, Serbia and Norway have had their Governments subverted. As we write, Russia, Persia, and Turkey are in the melting-pot, with what result time will show. With Socialists and Suffragettes clamouring around us, dare we say that Great Britain is secure from the possibility of these dire calamities?

The nations have come to dread war. With the present-day implements of destruction, both naval and military, it is felt that everything possible should be done to avert it. Every thoughtful man shudders at the thought of Europe's scientifically armed millions coming into conflict. The Russian Czar was probably sincere enough when he proposed the first Peace Congress, though he found his own nation plunged into the horrors of war soon after the Congress closed.

We might say much as to the condition of things in the social Sphere — the growing disregard for parental authority, the jeopardising of home life in the modern mania for pleasure, and the morbid taste of the many for pernicious literature, but we refrain. Concerning the religious position we shall have somewhat to say later on.

The Voice of God in the Scriptures.

Now to what point are things drifting? Is it possible to obtain light from any quarter as to this? Surely It is. We aver without hesitation that God has spoken in His most Holy Word, and it is wisdom on our part to give heed to His voice. But here we are confronted with a serious difficulty. The irreverent tampering of the clergy in recent years with the Scriptures has seriously shaken men's confidence in their divine authority. Strange as it may seem, it is the Protestant rather than the Romanist clergy who have been guilty of this great sin. Both the late and present Popes have acknowledged with no uncertain sound in public documents the divine authority of the Scriptures. For ourselves, we are satisfied that the old faith is the true one, *i.e.*, that the sacred writings are in their entirety God's message to men. No higher ground could possibly be conceived than that which is claimed in 1 John 4: 6 for the writers of Scripture: "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error." If this claim of the Apostle be not admitted, if the inspired writings are not God's infallible standard of truth, then are we absolutely without light as to the future, and are at the mercy of familiar spirits, designing priesthoods, and wolves of every kind.

But God has spoken. He has certain definite purposes concerning the earth, and He has been pleased to reveal them in the Scriptures for those who have ears to hear. It is His intention to give the earth into the hands of His Son as part of His vast inheritance. His good pleasure, purposed in Himself, is to gather together in one (or "head up") all things in Christ, both things in heaven and things on earth (Eph. 1: 10). The rightful Heir was refused His inheritance when He came into the world the first time, and He did not enforce His claim. He accepted instead the cross and the tomb, which, though apparently a great defeat, was in reality a victory of the first magnitude. For by the blood of His cross He has made peace, thus rendering it righteously possible for God to bless individual souls now, as well as laying the foundation for a new and perfect order of things in the whole universe by-and-by. At the present moment He who should be sitting upon His own throne in Zion is sitting as earth's rejected One upon the Father's throne in heaven (Rev. 3: 21). But the divine purpose has not been abandoned. The Son of Man will yet be enthroned here — "The Lord shall be King over all the earth" (Zech. 14: 9; Ps. 2: 6). Until this comes about, God takes no active part in the government of the earth, though watching the development of things! from His heavenly dwelling-place, and interposing restraints from time to time when matters seem likely to go beyond His purpose. But the day will come when the silence of heaven will be broken, and the King of kings and Lord of lords will come forth in all His majesty and power (Rev. 19). His kingdom will be established upon the ruins of everything human. Mighty convulsions will precede the holy calm and universal blessedness of His reign.

Is all this mere poetry? Nay, it is sober, solid fact. But we must examine these great matters in detail.

Israel God's Centre.

It is God's intention to deliver and bless the world by means of Israel. Let the Gentile powers behave ever so proudly towards the seed of Abraham, it is nevertheless true that the world's blessing turns upon that despised people. When God scattered men at the time of Babel, He divided to them their inheritance with a view to Israel (Deut. 32: 7, 8), i.e., He put certain nations to the north of Palestine and certain nations to the south thereof, because the future history of the chosen people required them to be in those geographical positions. Strange as it may seem, the map of the world has been, divinely planned in view of one comparatively insignificant people. The history of Israel cannot be discussed here. Let it suffice to say that the people never realised the divine purpose in their election. Instead of bearing a true testimony in the midst of the world's evil, their ways became so abominable that God was constrained to overthrow the throne of David and eject the people from their land. Supreme power in the earth was then given into Gentile hands, and in their hands it remains until "David's greater Son" comes upon the scene and gives happy effect to the purposes of God.

The End of Gentile Rule.

The course of Gentile rule was shown to Nebuchadnezzar in the vision of the image composed of four metals, and to Daniel in the vision of the four wild beasts (Dan. 2; Dan. 7). The empires thus represented are Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Concerning the latter power very much is stated in Scripture. It is singular in this respect that while none of its predecessors will ever again fill any important place in the earth, the Roman Empire is destined to reappear and to become the leading factor in the politics of the last days. It will revive as a consequence of the disturbed condition of the European nations, and it will be energised by Satan for his evil purposes. This is the force of the

symbols "sea" and "bottomless pit," out of both which the Beast is seen to emerge in Rev. 13: 1, and Rev. 17: 8 respectively. It will be a confederation of ten kingdoms, under the presidency of a powerful chief called in Dan. 7: 8 "a little horn." Each State will retain its own Sovereign, as in the German Empire to-day, but the whole mass will be swayed by one head.

The last wild struggle between democracy and monarchy will result in the complete triumph of the latter. Democracy will be squelched in torrents of blood. We do not presume to offer a list of the ten kingdoms in question, but it is interesting to remember that England, France, Spain and Italy were some of the countries included in the ancient Roman Empire. Egypt and Greece, though formerly ruled by Rome, will have no place in the revived Empire, as Scripture predicts for both of these States independent action in the latter-day crisis (Dan. 11: 40; Zech. 9: 13). What will be the potent factor in the reconstitution of the Empire none can say at present. It may be that the growth of Socialism in every country will cause the crowned heads of Europe to combine for mutual help; it may be the Yellow Peril, or it may be the increasing aggressiveness of Russia. We leave this for the future to unfold. It is significant, by the way, that the Press of to-day frequently speaks airily of a possible "United States of Europe." The writers perhaps little realise that the thing of which they speak so lightly is destined soon to become an accomplished fact.

The Empire will be infidel.. "He (the Beast) opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name." It will also be a persecutor. "It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (Rev. 13: 6, 7). The saints referred to here are not the present Christian community, the whole of which will be removed to heaven before the Empire re-appears. The proper hope of Christians is described in 1 Thess. 4: 13-18. Sleeping believers will be raised, and living believers will be changed and glorified in the moment of the Saviour's descent into the air, which may take place at any hour. The latter-day sufferers are a new order of believers, in whose hearts God's Spirit will work after the history of the Church is closed, The Roman Empire will meet its doom at the hands of Christ When He appears in the clouds of heaven accompanied by His heavenly elect. The destruction of the Empire was shown to Nebuchadnezzar pictorially as the falling of a stone cut out of the mountain without hands upon the toes of the image, and grinding the whole mass to powder (Dan. 2: 34, 35); Daniel saw in vision the Son of Man receiving the universal kingdom from the Ancient of Days, and then coming forth to claim it in power (Dan. 7: 13, 14); John Saw the great King of kings riding triumphantly' upon a white horse in righteousness to judge and to make war (Rev. 19: 11-16).

The annihilation of the Empire will be a merciful deliverance for the world. Its tyranny will be insupportable. Idolatry of the most advanced type will be forced upon the nations. Every man must accept a brand upon his flesh, or be debarred from doing business in any shape or form (Rev. 13: 8, 15, 16). The head of the Empire is expressively likened to the sun "having power given unto him to scorch men with fire" (Rev. 16: 8). Men's rapturous welcome of the great leader will give place after a time to a wail of despair when they learn the true character of that to which they have committed! themselves (Rev. 13: 4). Democracy will end in the most galling despotism Europe has ever known, from which no deliverance will be found until the strong hand of the Son of Man shows itself from heaven. In the past, revolutions have bred dictators; history will repeat itself in this respect in the disturbed future. The doom of the cruel oppressor is peculiarly terrible. Taken red-handed at the head of armed hosts madly gathered together to oppose the Lamb at His appearing, he, with his coadjutor the False Prophet (of whom more later), is cast alive into the lake of fire. This pair of transgressors will not pass through death and resurrection, as other sinners, but, without experiencing either, will be despatched from the field of battle to Gehenna (Rev. 19: 20). To such an end will come Europe's greatest ruler — its insane pride and boast in the last days.

A few words more as to the ten kingdoms of which the Roman Empire of the future will be composed.

Fifty years ago the map of Europe presented a vastly different picture from that which it presents to-day. The ancient dominions of the Caesars were parcelled out into nearly a hundred independent States. That the number could ever be reduced to ten must then have seemed very unlikely. But since that time the several States of Italy have come together; the many States of Germany also. A yet further closing up is predicted in Scripture, which will alter the map of Europe for the last time before the earth's true Sovereign appears.

Jewish Restlessness.

By far the most interesting sign of the times is the restlessness of the Jewish people. The fig-tree, long ago cursed by the Lord Jesus for its fruitlessness, is putting forth its leaves again (Matt. 21: 19; Matt. 24: 32). National aspirations, which have lain dormant for ages, are re-asserting themselves once more. The Zionist Congresses, now being held annually, are not the work of a few fanatics, whom the world can afford to treat with contempt; the movement is backed by many of the most influential and wealthy of the Jewish race. The kindly offer by the British Government of territory in East Africa for the planting of a Jewish State under British suzerainty has been declined as altogether inconsistent with the expectations of the people. Their eyes are upon the inheritance of their fathers, and nothing will satisfy them but to be possessed once more of the land of Israel. The Turkish Sultan has on several occasions discussed the project with Zionist leaders, but up to the present, nothing has come of the negotiations.

The establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, when it takes place, will be one of the most important events in the history of our planet. It will prepare the way for the stirring events of the last days. It is in Jerusalem that the Antichrist of Scripture will first assert himself. Accepted by an unbelieving people as the long-promised Messiah, he will become their civil head. He is the King of Dan. 11: 36-39, against whom the Kings both of the North and of the South declare war. The Jewish State being wealthy, and not over strong, and having many dangerous enemies, a seven years' treaty will be made with the restored Western Empire. This short period is the closing part of the remarkable prophecy of the seventy weeks, spoken of in Dan, 9: 24-27. The treaty in question being made in independence of God, and moreover with the most blasphemous power in the universe, is stigmatised in Isa. 28 as a "covenant with death" and an "agreement with hell," and it will avail the people nothing in the time of emergency.

It is at this juncture that Satan is cast out of the heavens into the earth (Rev. 12: 7-12). Being no longer able to oppose the Lord Jesus in His priestly character, he will busy himself in raising up opposition to Him as Prophet and King. The Beast and the False Prophet are his chosen instruments for this purpose.

The Antichrist.

Politically, the Antichrist will be of but little importance, being only the ruler of a small buffer-state; but religiously his influence will be very far-reaching. In his day the profession of Christianity will be nonexistent. "The salt of the earth" being removed at the Saviour's descent into the air according to 1 Thess. 4: 16, 17, the mass of merely nominal Christians will speedily renounce even

their empty profession. In a word, the predicted apostasy will set in (2 Thess. 2: 3). The present tampering with divine truth in almost every religious circle is preparing the way for this catastrophe. Our grandfathers, could they rejoin us for a season, would be shocked beyond measure to hear pulpit orators flouting the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, the virgin-birth of Christ, His miracles, His atoning death and resurrection, and the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and of eternal punishment. Yet this is done today in every quarter of Christendom. As a direct result of the apostasy, the Antichrist will advance his pretensions. There will be three objects of worship in his day: the Roman Emperor, the Antichrist, and the Dragon (Rev. 13: 4; 2 Thess. 2: 4). These are men's substitutes for the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all then utterly discarded. The dream of universal conversion before the opening of the Millennial era, though piously held by many true Christians, finds no support in Scripture. On the contrary, it is distinctly asserted that before the glory of the Lord arises "darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the peoples" (Isa. 60: 2). Instead of the Church converting the world, the world will convert the Church. The latter is happening even now before our eyes. From Jerusalem as a centre the new religion, strongly backed by miracles, will spread itself over all Christendom. The thoughtless multitudes in this and other lands, who know all the great facts of the Gospel, yet care nothing for theory will shortly become frantic in their acclamation of the new system. "Who is like unto the Beast?" will be their jubilant cry (Rev. 13: 4). The Eden promise, "You shall be as God." is at last fulfilled; Man is deified, and the Creator is bowed out of the world.

The desirability of a universal religion — a religion that will suit the tastes of all — has been frequently spoken of. The "Review of Reviews" (June, 1908), in describing the Theosophist propaganda of a well-known Methodist (who yet retains his church membership without protest) remarks: "Nowadays all religions tend to approximate. The sharp corners and cruel angles are smoothed down. It is possible to preach in a Christian pulpit doctrine to which Jews, Buddhists and Moslems would listen with approval." It is reserved for the Man of Sin to bring this kind of thing to perfection. His system will be palatable to the mass. Woe to the godly few who refuse to conform to it!

The temporal power of the Antichrist will be seriously inconvenienced by Russia, a power ever bitterly hostile to the Jews. The King of the North, who invades their territory, and works the fearful havoc described in Dan. 11: 40-43 and other passages, is an ally or puppet of Russia, and acts by her instigation. This is the evident meaning of the words in Dan. 8: 24: "His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power." This Northern Kingdom has yet to be created out of the Asiatic dominions of the Turkish Sultan. When it does come into being (and a fresh outbreak of atrocities in Armenia might easily bring it about) it will lean upon Russia as its natural supporter. The future King of the North is the representative of the ancient Seleucidae, and will manifest the same antagonism towards the Jews as they formerly did. He will be actually engaged in the siege of Jerusalem when the heavens open and the Son of Man appears and overwhelms his forces with destruction (Zech. 14: 1-4). The Western hosts, hastening to the relief of Jerusalem, in keeping with the treaty already referred to, and finding the Lamb and His heavenly hosts there, madly turn their arms against them, to their own irretrievable ruin (Rev. 19: 17-21). This is the battle of Armageddon — the last great conflict between East and West (Rev. 16: 14-16). There the costly militarism of Europe will find its grave and from that dread battlefield both the Beast and the False Prophet (the Western Emperor and the Antichrist) will be despatched to the lake of fire, fully a thousand years before the mass of the ungodly.

Russia's Destruction.

Russia will not be represented at Armageddon, having its own special part to play in the tragedy

of the last days. This great power was spoken of in Scripture, and its last disastrous enterprise described in detail, nearly fifteen hundred years before Ruric arrived at Novgorod with his Varangians and laid the foundation of the Empire. Our reference is to the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy. Instead of "chief prince" in Ezek. 38: 2, 3 read "Prince of Rosh." This is the rendering in the Greek Septuagint, and also in the English Revised Version. "Rosh" means Russia; "Meshech and Tubal" refer to her ancient European capital Moscow, and her well-known Asiatic mart Tobolsk. Even Gibbon, the historian, who had no love for God's Word, appears to have been impressed with this Biblical reference to the Northern Empire.

The ruin of her ally, the King of the North, will cause Russia to arise and put forth all her strength for the extermination of the restored Jewish State. A number of satellite powers will join her in the enterprise, among others Persia and Ethiopia (known to us as Abyssinia). Persia and Ethiopia have been for many years centres of political intrigue on the part of the European powers, each endeavouring to checkmate Russian influence and establish its own. The diplomatic game may as well be abandoned; Persia and Ethiopia are destined to fall under the thumb of the Muscovite. The voice of divine inspiration so declared it two thousand six hundred years ago. Every political question will find its solution in connection with Israel. The King of the North and his Asiatic confederates will find their grave in Palestine, the Western Emperor and his European hosts will meet their doom there also, and upon the same rock the vast Russian power will be utterly wrecked. Russia's meddling with the returned Jews will be her last piece of meddling. The prophet graphically describes the fury of Jehovah as it bursts forth against this malignant enemy of His people. His story of slaughter is terrible reading. The carnage will be so great that it will be a national work on the part of the people of Israel for seven months to bury the bones (the birds leaving nothing more); and the number of Russian weapons left upon the field will be so enormous that the whole nation of Israel will not require to cut firewood for seven years afterwards (Ezek. 39: 9-16). "Thus will I magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am Jehovah" (Ezek. 38: 23).

National Revival of Israel, Edom, etc.

Let it be distinctly understood that it is against the whole twelve tribes of Israel the malice of Russia is directed. Only the two tribes, representing the ancient Kingdom of Judah (known to us to-day as "the Jews") will be in the land when the Antichrist is in power there. They being directly responsible for the betrayal and murder of the true Christ will suffer retributively under the oppressive rule of the false Christ. The ten tribes,

who were deported by the Kings of Assyria about seven and a half centuries before the Saviour's first coming, will be regathered to their own land by the blast of the trumpet at His glorious second coming (Isa. 27: 13; Matt. 24: 31). Where these tribes are at the present moment need not concern us. He who scattered them will know where to lay His hand upon them when the appointed hour for their restoration arrives.

Concurrently with the re-appearance of Israel upon the platform of the world's politics there will be seen again many of the powers with which Israel had dealings in the past. Edom, Moab, Ammon, and the Philistines, among others, have quite a shoal of prophecies yet to be fulfilled in them. In Greece, Italy, and other prophetic powers the national spirit has markedly revived in recent years. It reminds us of the Lord's words in Luke 21: 29: "Behold the fig tree, *and all the trees.*" If the fig tree is Israel, "all the trees" represent the powers which have to do with her. All must take up their respective positions in order to play their allotted part in the last scenes. Europe, Asia and Africa will contribute

the various actors required. America, so far as Scripture speaks, has no special place in the prophetic future.

The Appearing of the Son of Man.

The days preceding the final crash will find men at once confident and uneasy, inconsistent as this may seem. The Lord Jesus has likened their false feeling of security to the indifference that marked men in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah and the deluge (Luke 17: 26-30). Having both a religion and a leader to their taste, and having brought all their works to a higher pitch of development than the world has ever known, "Peace and safety" will be their satisfied cry (2 Thess. 5: 3). They have broken the divine bands asunder, and have cast away from them the cords of Jehovah and His Anointed. The earth is theirs in full possession, and they flatter themselves that it will abide for ever. Yet underneath all the infidel boasting of that day there will be a certain indefinable dread which perhaps men will scarcely care to broach to one another. The Son of God has expressed it thus: "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after 'those things which are coming on the earth'" (Luke 21: 26).

The revelation of the Son of Man from heaven will come as a terrible shock to the world. In one moment its boasted leaders will be brought to nought, and their enterprises will perish. Accompanied by all His heavenly saints — the redeemed of earth — and attended by His holy angels, the once-crucified One will subdue all before Him. His enemies being swept out of His path, He will establish His throne in Zion "for Jehovah hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is My rest for ever, here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Ps. 132: 13, 14). Israel will then be the head of the nations, and no longer the tail. To Israel's metropolis every country must send its ambassadors at least once in the year in token of allegiance to the great King who reigns there. Chastisement will be inflicted upon any country that fails in this obligation (Zech. 14). Each nation will have its own Sovereign during the Millennial era, but all will be repaired to acknowledge the supremacy of the Lord Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. This is God's answer, as far as earth is concerned, to the humiliation of Calvary.

During a thousand years the government of the earth will thus be in the hands of the Son of Man, the tempter being under divine restraint in the bottomless pit. Peace and blessing will characterize that glorious age. The science of war will no longer be studied. The dread of conscription will be gone for ever. Righteousness will be administered with equity to all; high and low, rich and poor, alike. Want will be unknown, and every burden will be removed. The social problems which baffle to-day the intellects of the world's wisest statesmen and philanthropists will then be solved perfectly and for ever. Earth's long moan will be hushed by a divinely sympathetic hand. The true hope of the world is most assuredly the long-rejected Lord Jesus Christ. When will men see it? Neither wise legislation nor lavish benevolence will succeed in healing the woes of men, though they may mitigate them in some degree. No human hand however well-disposed, can make the crooked straight nor the rough smooth. But when He who is infinite in power and wisdom rises up from the Father's throne and asserts Himself, perfect deliverance and fulness of blessing will be brought in for all.

The Religious Outlook.

The political and commercial outlook is thus grave enough. Human sin and folly are destined to plunge the world into a veritable whirlpool of agony before the mighty yet gracious hand of the

Redeemer shows itself front heaven for deliverance and blessing. What is the religious outlook? It is certain that in religious circles there is much the same spirit of self-complacency as is observable in the world. Glowing statistics are published, learning and modern thought" are idolised, and imposing clerical Congresses are paraded with enthusiasm. "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing " is the boast, as predicted long ago (Rev. 3: 15). The few who express themselves with misgiving about the present trend of things are brushed aside with contempt as cranks and pessimists. But Scripture shows that a similar feeling of security prevailed amongst the religious chiefs of Jerusalem on the very eve of its destruction (Jer. 7).

Is the present complacency of the professing Church justifiable? What do the Scriptures say? It will perhaps help at this juncture if we briefly indicate the true nature and character of the Church of God as revealed therein. The Church (or assembly) of God dates from the day of Pentecost. On that memorable day the Holy Spirit descended from heaven as a result of the divine acceptance of Christ's atoning sacrifice and His departure out of this world unto the Father. By the baptism of the Spirit, all believers were united to the Head in glory; and became members of His body. They were also constituted the temple of God, in which the Holy Spirit was pleased to take up His abode. The new order of things was in every particular the exact opposite of that which had prevailed from the days of Moses. No earthly sanctuary, no priestly order, no religious festivals nor legal enactments, were prescribed for Christianity. The religion of "the upper room" was marked by unworldly simplicity. Strict separation from the world and all its ways characterized the new community. The living Saviour in the glory of God satisfied all their hearts, and for His coming they looked with fervent. desire. With burning lips each and all declared the exceeding riches of God's grace as God was pleased to give ability and opportunity. No one dreamed of waiting for official authorisation before speaking of the things which delighted their hearts.

How soon the fine gold became dim! Paul and his fellow-apostles had a fierce fight to wage with those who were determined to assimilate Christianity to Judaism. Through their faithfulness the heavenly character of Christianity was preserved for a season. But these spiritual heroes had no successors. Paul saw none to follow him but grievous wolves and perverse men, and could only commend the saints to "God and the Word of His grace" (Acts 20). Peter and John also, in view of their departure, cast the flock wholly upon the Scriptures as their safeguard and stay. Apostolic energy having ceased, everything in the Church gradually changed its character. The spirit of self-assertion soon bred a clergy; a little later a diocesan episcopacy; and, when full-blown, a Papacy. Christendom became in time an unholy blend of Judaism, Paganism, and Christianity. The hope of the Lord's coming being dropped, the Church sought ease and honour in the world. The Scriptures, so grievously slighted in their teaching, became a sealed book. While "the Church" ruled supreme, the grossest horrors prevailed. Men call those centuries "the dark ages," and one historian has said "the annals of the Church are the annals of hell."

In due course came the Protestant Reformation — the mightiest religious upheaval that has yet been witnessed. The Bible became an open book once more. But Scriptural simplicity was not recovered. The civil authorities took religious matters in hand, with the result that State Churches were formed. These, which soon became as intolerant as Popery, ultimately drove out from; amongst them those who dissented from their Rubrics, and so various Nonconformist bodies came into being. But both the State and the Free Churches were one in their reverence for the Scriptures, their fidelity to the great fundamentals of Christianity, and their horror of Popery. But troy do matters stand to-day? The Church of England is honeycombed with conspiracy, hundreds, if not thousands, of its clergy being members of Romanising Societies. The Bishop of London is suffered without rebuke to fraternise with

Greek idolatry in St. Petersburg and the Archbishops of Canterbury and York are allowed to speak in Convocation of "our sister-Church of Rome," without protest from those around them. In addition to all this, many of the clergy openly scoff at the inspiration of the Scriptures, and repudiate some of the most sacred verities of the faith, as the Saviour's virgin-birth, etc. The ranks of the Nonconformist ministry also contain a large number of men who are best described as religious infidels. Socialist leaders are welcomed into their pulpits with acclamation. There are doubtless faithful individuals in many quarters, but we speak of what characterise the mass.

Let us briefly state the present religious position in England, where perhaps things are seen at their best. Romanism is gaining ground everywhere, largely helped by the encouragement which misguided Protestant parents are giving to its educational system; the Church of England is filled with Ritualism and Rationalism, with fierce contentions such as Parliament finds itself obliged to notice, the Nonconformist bodies are riddled with infidelity and worldliness; multitudes are carrying on an illicit intercourse with demons under the name of Spiritualism. and to increase the confusion, swarms of American heretics are diligently canvassing the land with their blasphemies — Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventism Millennial-Dawnism, and Christian Science.

Whither are things drifting? What will be the outcome of the present condition of affairs? We believe Rev. 17 supplies the answer. A gorgeously appareled woman is seen riding upon a scarlet-coloured beast, which, from the description given, is manifestly the revived Roman Empire. The woman's name is emblazoned on her forehead: "Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots, and the abominations of the earth" Protestant expositors teach with all readiness that this evil woman is the Church of Rome, and some Papist expositors admit it. But this is not the whole truth. If Babylon is Rome, where are all the other so-called churches represented? It is beyond controversy that the Apocalyptic vision shows us one woman only. The reason, we believe, is this: that ere the vision is fulfilled "the re-union of Christendom" so often discussed now, will become an accomplished fact. Painful and repugnant as the thought may be to godly men, every professedly Christian body will coalesce before the end comes A way will be found whereby the Roman, Greek, Anglican, and other Churches can unite and submerge all differences. Union, at whatever expense as regards truth, is the cherished ideal to-day. The Scotch Presbyterian amalgamation of a few years ago, the more recent Methodist amalgamation, and the federation of the Free Churches, are all steps in the direction indicated. Instead of many Churches, one vast and pretentious, but unutterably corrupt, system will be seen at the end. "The Church of the future!" Familiar words in present-day literature, but suggesting painful thoughts to those who seek to view matters in the light of the word of God.

The woman rides the Beast. For a brief season ecclesiasticism will be supreme in Christendom once more. "The Church" will again rule the State. The civil power will tolerate this for its own purposes until it finds itself in a position to shake off the incubus. Then will happen what is described in Rev. 17: 16, 17: "The ten horns which thou sawest, and the Beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their Kingdom unto the Beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." The Beast and the ten horns are the Western Emperor and his ten associated Kings. These being utterly apostate, will riot tolerate even Babylon's caricature of Christianity, but will wipe it out with overwhelming destruction. The horrors that are wrapped up in the words of the two verses just quoted, none at present can know. The wholesale butchery of clergy in France when the Revolution was proclaimed, and the desecration and confiscation of religious property, suggests in a lurid way something of what will then be witnessed. It is infidelity's utter suppression of everything suggestive of Christianity.

But the hand of God also is in the great catastrophe. Hence, in Rev. 18: 5 we read: "Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities." The saints in heaven rejoice over Babylon's downfall, and praise God for it with Hallelujahs. "True and righteous are His judgments; for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand." This happens on the eve of the Saviour's public manifestation from heaven. That great event, in which the "caught up" ones of 1 Thess. 4: 17 will share, will be the first divine step towards the complete adjustment of all earthly affairs. When Christ and His heavenly bride (composed of all true Christians) are in the ascendancy here, every problem, whether religious, social, commercial, or political, will be perfectly and divinely solved. Till then everything is out of course. Well, therefore, may we pray: "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6: 10).