

Revelation 19 - 22

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Part 4 of Lectures on the Book of Revelation.

(The Translation by W. Kelly of the Revelation of John is included as the file revtrans.doc. Search for 'revelation /2/ john'.)

Revelation 19

We are now approaching a brighter and happier portion of the book. The providential judgments of God, whether more secret like the seals, more loudly summoning men to repent like the trumpets, or more positive and distinct wrath like the vials, have had their full course. And now, when Babylon who had set herself up to represent God in His grace and truth arrogated to herself exclusively the name of the church, the spouse of Christ — when she was set aside for ever, there was a burden gone — a heavy burden that had long grieved the heavens and corrupted the earth.

There was freedom, so to speak, now for God to make good the precious things which He had in His heart for poor beguiled men; and that too, as it ought to be, through and to the praise of the Lamb. Hence you have two things connected together at the beginning of this chapter. The first is the call to rejoice. "The great whore" had presented an obstinate barrier to blessing; not simply because she was evil, but because her profession had been all that was holy and true, while in effect she it was who above all had been active in corrupting grace and truth as far as possible; she had utterly and systematically denied Christ in effect, though parading everywhere the outward symbol of His cross. In vain for her had God's character shone out in Christ; in vain had God pronounced on man and the world; in vain begun a new creation whose Head took His place in heavenly glory. She associated His name with the flesh and the earth, and there sought and laid up her treasures. In vain had God brought light and incorruptibility to light by the gospel. She plunged men into deeper uncertainty and more positive error than ever, teaching them that every gift of God, and even salvation, may be bought with money; cheating souls to sleep by the hope that all would go on well, and that the Lord was not yet coming in judgment. Thus had she shut up, as far as could be, the streams of blessing from the world. But now the true and righteous judgment of God had smitten her, and there is rejoicing in heaven.

In Revelation 18 there was universal earthly sorrow. The kings of the earth who had committed fornication with her lamented. The merchants that had been enriched by her were wailing, Indeed, there was no class free from her snares, and now all that had had to do with her were full of sorrow over Babylon. But heaven was called to rejoice, and here we have the answer: "I heard as it were a loud voice of much people in heaven," not exactly, I heard a great voice of much people, but "as it were a

loud voice," etc. The words "as it were" have been dropped, but I believe they ought to be inserted; just as a little lower down, in verse 6, it is said, "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters," etc. "And her smoke rose up for ever and ever." As far as Babylon was concerned, this was her sad amen, if I may so say, to the joy of heaven.

But we are not left with a vague rumour of praise and gladness, not knowing from whom exactly it comes. There appear the twenty-four elders, who had understanding of the mind of Christ, and the four living creatures, that had been from the beginning associated with the providential judgments of God, or at least a certain part of them. These "fell down and worshipped God that sat upon the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia" (ver. 4). It is not Christ, who has taken His place upon His own throne yet, but they worship "God that sat on the throne," etc. "And a voice came out of the throne," for all must speak now, "saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as it were the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (ver. 5-7).

This is the second part. Not only is the harlot's day over, but the consummation of the bride's blessing is come. It is important to observe that this is not the moment when the Lord comes to receive the heavenly church. It is a scene in heaven, not the Lord Jesus meeting His saints in the air. A few verses lower down we do get heaven opened, and Christ comes out of it, and the saints follow Him. Nothing, therefore, can be more simple or certain than the inference that the saints were already there. They must have been in heaven before, in order to follow Christ thence when He comes to judge. Now, I ask, how did they get there? They are not said to be now taken up to the Father's house. We have the old familiar parties in heaven. But we have a new fact: the bride is married in heaven — the one for whom Christ reserves the brightest grace and glory — she gets ready; and now is announced, not merely the song of triumph, because of the judgment of evil, but the marriage of the Lamb. "Let us be glad and rejoice." It is grace that flows out to others. "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white." As for the other woman, she had somehow fine linen too, with her pearls and her other adornments. (Rev. 18: 12,) But it was never said of Babylon that it was granted her. We do not hear how she got it. But to the Lamb's wife, to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen. The fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints (verse 8). God does not forget the work of faith or labour of love.

"And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." There is evidently a peculiar solemnity in winding up this account. We are called upon to pause and listen and weigh. "These are the true sayings of God." To the suffering one, the one that had shared the Lamb's path of sorrow upon earth, to her was now given the fullest joy above. But the marriage scene of the Lamb is only intimated, and not described here. The purpose of the Revelation is not to show us the Father's house, nor its inner scenes. God is never even called our Father in this book, because it opens out, not the intimacy of His love to us, but rather the righteous ways of God — the establishment of the kingdom and the end, when He is all in all. True, there must be the stern unsparing judgment of all this evil, and this we have had. But when God's part comes, and the full blessedness of the church, there is but an announcement of it — the bride has made herself ready. It is left there comparatively hidden. We are told of the invitations to it, as it is said in verse 9: "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."

And now I would just ask you to pause before going farther. Is it too much to suppose that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is a different symbol, that is, represents a class of saints different from these blessed ones who are invited to her marriage? Who is it that God means by these two distinct symbols?

As to the bride, the Lamb's wife, few would have the least difficulty. Almost every one sees in her the church — the one that is constantly presented in the New Testament scripture as the heavenly bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. One turns to Eph. 5, where this relationship is brought out, and the development in her behalf of the fulness of Christ's affections. Observe, by the way, that there it is not merely a question of a future epoch, because the Holy Ghost shows that this is a relationship established now. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it" It is true, from the very first moment when God began to form the church on earth by the presence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

The church is always regarded as a real and subsisting body, because wherever the Holy Ghost is, there is the church. The Holy Ghost was sent down, and it is His personal presence that forms the church. That is the reason why those saints who depart to be with Christ are not directly spoken of as the church. Of course, individually they are members of the church, but the scriptures which speak of the church contemplate its existence as the body of Christ on earth. Ordinarily men talk of the church visible and invisible, militant and triumphant, and think that if Christians depart to be with Christ, there more particularly, and in the truest season, is the church. Yet the word of God never so speaks, but predicates the church of such as are called even here below, and are baptized by one Spirit into one body. No doubt, when all are gathered together as a fact in heaven, it will be the church, and is so spoken of in Eph. 5: 27, and perhaps a few more texts. But in general in scripture, where the church is spoken of, it means the actual assembly of God on the earth at any given time. The Holy Ghost was there; and wherever the Holy Ghost dwells, He knits and joins the body into one. This is a weighty truth, and involves the most important consequences.

For I repeat, we are put into this relationship with Christ at the present moment. It is not that we have the hope merely of being made the bride of Christ by and by: we are espoused to Christ now. We shall have the marriage or the actual consummation by and by, when all the members are brought in. But the great and blessed and practical thing for our souls is, that we are brought into this position of union now. It is not only that the affection on which the marriage is grounded is true now; but more than this, the Holy Ghost is on earth uniting the saints to Christ in heaven, and making them as truly one with Him now as they ever will be. When Christ comes, there will be the removal of all hindrances — the putting aside of what Satan employs to make us forget our relationship to Christ, and the change of our vile body according to the body of His glory. But it is important to remember that our oneness with Christ as His body depends on the presence of the Holy Ghost, who has knit us up with Christ in heaven. We are one with Him now.

Here, then, the Holy Ghost seems to show that there are others to be there, not as the bride, but as guests, so to speak. These are the called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. You may remember John the Baptist speaking of himself as the friend of the Bridegroom. I presume that those who are here said to be invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb answer somewhat to the friends of the Bridegroom. They are not angels, for the word "called unto the marriage" would not be said of angels. These last are never characterised as "called" because the elect angels have always abode in their first estate. The calling of God comes to those who are in a low place to deliver them out of it. We have all, I suppose, been in the habit of assuming that if a man is a saint of God he necessarily belongs to the church, and that there is only one common blessing for all saints of all times. Here you find the contrary laid down plainly, and upon the face of scripture. You have here a marriage supper, and one singled out for especial joy, called the bride, the Lamb's wife (composed, it may be, of myriads of people, but here recognized in unity of blessing, being united under one term, that of "the bride," to show that they have the same portion of love and blessedness). But this is not true of all saints, for there are others who are not in this position; they are present as guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb, not as His bride.

"And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." What strikes me is the remarkable way in which that solemn appeal comes in, anticipating that man too would depart from His word. John was going to worship the angel! — the other extreme; but such extremes often meet.

We had a similar caution in the beginning of the book. The Holy Ghost there says, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein." He knew well that many would treat the book lightly, and, not understanding, would count it dry and unprofitable. Alas! for such as say, "There is nothing for my soul there!" There is no book in the Bible where the Holy Ghost so encourages you at the very threshold to hear what God says therein, as the Book of the Revelation. And what makes it the more striking is, that the same kind of admonition occurs at the end, when we have been brought to the close of all the dealings of God, in the last chapter. "And he said unto me, These things are faithful and true . . . Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book:" not merely that keepeth the sayings of some particular and choice parts of it, but of the book as a whole. There is the broadest statement: "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." Thus the Holy Ghost seems to have taken especial pains to warn us against the unbelief of our hearts, as well as against our idolatry (verses 9, 10).

But more particularly (verse 9) it would seem that we have a guard against the indiscriminate notions which have generally prevailed, even among Christians.

"Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." Besides the Bride, there are other blessed persons who will be there. Now, looking at Heb. 12, I find that in the roll of blessing there are other classes besides the church of the first-born ones. "But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly." For it is well known that such is the true meaning and connection of the verse. "The general assembly" does not belong to "the church of the first-born," but to myriads of angels in verse 22. It may help to make it plain to any reader if it be borne in mind that the word "and" is always the connecting link, which introduces every fresh clause. And this is allowed by those who have no pretensions to what is called dispensational light — that is, by men who simply give their opinion on the genuine structure of the sentence. This being admitted, observe what is next given here: "Ye are come . . . to the church of the first-born ones, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." I am aware that there are some who say that all these mean the same thing; that the heavenly Jerusalem, and mount Zion, as well as the spirits of just men made perfect, are substantially no other than the church of the first-born. But just look at the passage again, and consider if such a thought is allowable for a moment. God Himself is spoken of here, and Jesus the Mediator, and myriads of angels. Does any man mean to say, that these are all the same thing? And yet this might as well be said, if the other objects in the scene are not expressly distinct.

What then is the real meaning of these clauses? "Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." When mount Zion was referred to, a Jew would naturally think of the earthly city around that celebrated mountain. But the Holy Ghost says, this is not your portion. You are come to the heavenly Jerusalem;* not to the city of dying David, but to the city of the living God. Then we have "an innumerable company of angels;" and this is called "the general assembly."

*It is not seen here as in Revelation, where it is the symbol of the glorified church itself, but rather as the blessed and ordered home of the heavenly saints, as I think it is in Heb. 11: 10, 16. In the

epistle the city is objective, in the Apocalypse subjective.

Here plainly we have different objects of millennial glory to which the saints were already said to be come in spirit. There is the mount Zion. Next is the heavenly city the image of the glory that is coming by and by — the city for which Abraham and the other patriarchs waited. Then we have the angelic host. Next we see the church of the first-born, not merely the local scene of heavenly glory, but the complete assembly of the heirs who are written in heaven in contrast with the earthly firstborn Israel. Then we rise up to God the Judge of all. The Spirit has led us on from the mount Zion. And now we are brought down from God in His judicial character to the spirits of just men made perfect. It is a very remarkable position in which these are put. We probably, if we had had to do with it, might have set them first; but the object was to correct the Jewish tendencies of those here addressed, and to give prominence to what was heavenly. Then, having the heavenly seat of glory, and the church in their due place, we get God Himself as the Judge of all, and, following this, those saints who had known God as so acting on the earth. Hence they are called here the spirits of just men made perfect. They are, I think, clearly the Old Testament saints. (Compare Rev. 11: 39, 40.) For they, and not the church, are a class that could be most aptly described as the spirits of just men made perfect. They were in the separate condition then, and are so still. This will never be true of the church as a whole. When the moment comes for the church to leave the world and meet the Lord, there will be a part of the church upon the earth, not in the condition of spirits at all: there will be those that are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord. Of the church it is said, "We shall not all sleep." So that this description never can apply to the church of God as such.

We have had the church already separate and distinct from the spirits of just men made perfect. It is not more certain that these are saints than that they are not the church. Carry the light of this back to Rev. 19. We read there of the church having made herself ready, and are not surprised to read also, as a distinct symbol in the same circle, "Blessed are they that are called* unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (verse 9). Are they not plainly all the risen saints, save those baptized into the one body, the bride of Christ?

*Mr. E. puts in his text, and half promises in his note 4 (vol. iv. p. 52), to consider the question whether those called to the Lamb's marriage supper were a class the same as, or distinct from, the bride herself; but no trace appears, that I can see, either in Revelation 3 following or anywhere else.

The note of Daubuz will interest many. "It is one thing to be marriage, and another to be invited to a marriage feast. This is evident; and the Holy Ghost distinguishes very well the different states of these two sorts of persons. The bride, to whom [fine, linen] is given, being the persons to whom a perfect justification and the effects of it are awarded, are persons in a state of resurrection, to whom Christ has performed His pre-contract. But they who are only invited to the feast cannot be the same as those that are married. They who are glorified with Bysse, and thereby declared fully justified and holy must of course be happy; but this happiness is pronounced to another sort of persons. Who are they then? Even the, converted nations, (?) all such men as, having not yet tasted of death and appeared before God's judgment seat, till Death and Hades are removed, are still in this life, and in a state of infirmity as to their flesh; not being indeed impeccable, but assisted very much by very great and extraordinary effusions of grace. However, the Holy Ghost doth not pronounce them holy, which in this place would be taken for perfect holiness, but barely happy; whereas those who have a share in the first resurrection are blessed and holy both. This blessing and happiness consists, as it is expressed in Revelation 21: 24, in this, that they walk in the light of the New Jerusalem," etc. (Perp. Comm. p. 869.) Readers may differ in the measure of their acquiescence with these thoughts; but who will not admit their interest and acuteness?

John then, instead of paying homage to the angel (so natural to the heart), was to feel that the angel is the fellow-servant of himself and of his brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. All such homage is due to God. For we must also remember that the testimony of Jesus is not limited to Christianity, nor to the Spirit's presence in the church. What He works as the Spirit of prophecy (and so He will work in the saints after our translation to heaven) is the testimony of Jesus as truly as what He gives us now as the power of our communion with the Father and the Son.

But now we have another scene. It is no longer what is going on above, but heaven is open: "And behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war." It is not a door opened in heaven, nor the prophet caught up there, as we have seen in Revelation 4. Nor is it anything that had been done then or there. But now heaven is open, and the symbol of the power appears which comes to subdue the earth, not without the signs of victory. The horse is always the symbol of power connected with the earth; and it has the colour of prosperity. It is a white horse. None, I trust, would be so foolish as to imagine that, when this blessed scene really comes, it will be a question of horses literally. It is the symbol that passed before the eye of the prophet, employed to show certain realities that will take place by and by. Heaven is seen opened for the purpose of victory over the earth. And the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is plainly referred to as the rider: He is the one who directs the power — "He that sitteth on him [called] Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth he judge and make war" (verse 11). This is the subject of the chapter. In the next chapter it is not a white horse that is seen, but a throne, which is the symbol of another character altogether. The throne is for rule, not conquest: the horse is for conquest, not a reign. The Lord Jesus is here seen putting forth His power to put down His enemies; as in Revelation 20 we have the picture of His reign.

Next, "His eyes were as a flame of fire." That is, there is divine discernment in judging. "And on his head were many diadems" or royal crowns. And he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself" (verse 12). It is not merely in a certain conferred glory that He comes forth, but in the exercise of His own divine power. It is quite true that He has a name given to Him, as we see in Phil. 2. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." But here it seems not to be that name of Lord which we all confess, but one "which no man knew but he himself." He has a glory that is essentially His own, distinct from that which was His reward and incapable of being shared with others; a glory which He has in His own right as a divine person. The name of the Lord here appears to express this, what He really is in His own nature. So, speaking of His person, it is said in Matt. 11, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." And it is remarkable how this is stated, in order to guard against the workings of our minds. Wherever there is a question of His Son, God is ever jealous about it. When speaking about the Father it is added, "and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him;" but it is not said that the Father reveals the Son to any one. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father" — and there we stop. May we not say that thus God guards against the familiarity with which man would venture to analyze the person of Christ? There is nothing so offensive to God as this irreverence. The humanity and the humiliation of the Lord Jesus Christ are brought out plainly in scripture.

But there is no person in the Trinity whose divine glory is more strongly maintained than the Son's — perhaps none so much. It is remarkable that while the same sort of expression is used about God as such in Rom. 1: 25, and about the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in 2 Cor. 11: 31, as about Christ in Rom. 9: 6, yet there is a further expression about the Lord Jesus that is not used about the Father. God the Father is said to be blessed for evermore, and Christ "God over all blessed for evermore." The Holy Spirit knew that man was prepared to outrage the person and envy the glory of

the Son, and foresaw that, even where they professed to know Him, He would be crucified afresh and put to open shame. Therefore it is that there is no one thing the Holy Ghost more insists upon, than the glory of the Lord Jesus, as indeed He is the constant object of the enemy's attacks. It is the true key to almost every question of doctrinal difficulty one meets among the children of God. Whenever our souls are firmly fixed on God's thought of glorifying Him, all the power of Satan will be used to hinder in vain. When Christ's person and will are fully seen, difficulty, whatever it may be, is at an end. And so with our practical dilemmas also: the moment we catch the connection with Christ, the difficulty is clean gone. Satan would hinder our having anything to do with Christ about it. He shuts out the glory and the word of Christ from our eyes; and when that is the case, we are ready to fall into any snare: for the same blinding power that destroys a worldly man darkens and hinders the Christian.

But to return. We next hear that the Lord "was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood" (verse 13). It is not now suffering but avenging. He is coming to execute righteousness and takes His well-known title in revealing God to us. "The Word of God" had been peculiarly the name when the subject was the manifestation of grace and truth which He used for bringing us round Himself, and putting us in His own position. Here He is the Word of God as manifesting divine judgment. I do not think the Holy Ghost refers to that name in the verse before. It appears to me that the name written which no man knew but He Himself is purposely left in obscurity, that we may not forget the perfect, divine and essential glory of the Son of God.

Now we learn that the Lord for judgment did not come alone. When He came out of the opened heaven, there were armies that followed. "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (verse 14). And observe, that the words, "which were," though they are printed in italics, are rightly inserted. The sense would be substantially the same whether you read it with those words or not; and therefore the English translators, seeing that it ought to be understood, but not knowing that it was really a part of the text, inserted the phrase in italics; but it ought to be adopted. "The armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." I have no doubt that angels will be in the train of Christ, for in some other parts of scripture angels are mentioned as coming with Him, and not saints, as for instance in 2 Thess. 1: 7. In this passage saints are mentioned and not angels. Such is the way of the Lord. He does not state things as man does. He has always a moral object in view, and therefore just brings out that part of the truth which bears on the particular subject in hand. Thus in Matt. 25, where the Son of man is seen seated upon the throne of His glory, all the holy angels are mentioned as being with Him. And why? Because the angels have a special connection with Him as the Head of human glory. (See Matt. 13: 41; 16: 27; Luke 9: 22.) If the Queen of England were setting out upon some great political occasion, she would be accompanied by ministers of state. But if she were going to visit her army, those officials need not be there; but she would require the presence of the great military authorities. If this is so among the things of men, much more is there a suitable order in the things of God. The Lord is called the Son of man in reference to His glory as connected with the earth: and when He takes the world under His government, He has got His angels whom He employs as the messengers of His power. But He is not called here "Son of man," but "the Word of God," and angels are not mentioned in connection with that name. As the Word of God, Christ makes Him known. Here He expresses God in the way of judgment. He had shown Him in the way of grace; as we have in the Gospel of John. Thus the Lord Jesus is the expression of all God's ways, whether in perfect grace or perfect judgment.

Here then, the armies that followed Him out of heaven are saints.* This very chapter decides the question, it seems to me; because in the eighth verse, the fine linen with which they are clothed (and it is the same word that is used) is said to be the righteousnesses of saints. Others might be there, but

could not well be mentioned where the Lord is described as the Word of God. Whereas the mention of the hosts of heavenly saints is very important; and for this reason: the chapter gives us the deeper connection of the saints with Christ. You have the bride of Christ, the marriage of the Lamb, and the consummation of the church's joy in heaven. As far as the world is concerned, no stranger intermeddles with that joy.

*It is difficult to say how Mr. E. understands this. He asks, parenthetically (Horae Apoc. vol. iv. p, 53), "were they not his saints, 'the called and chosen and faithful?'" But in what condition? Were they already changed? Or are they still imagined to be in the separate state? It does not appear, that I can perceive, what his judgment, as to this important question, may be. We know, from p. 50, he infers that no translation of the living saints, or the resurrection of the saints departed this life, will have taken place up to the time figured by the chorus of song at the beginning of our chapter, and this became the scenery of the in-most temple, with its throne and seated Divinity, and the elders and living creatures attendant near it, the mystical representatives of the expectant church in Paradise, remain still figured in the vision as before. That is, he deduces consequences from the most unreasonable assumption, which he had stated, though hesitatingly, in commenting on Revelation 4, 5, that the crowned and enthroned and complete heads of heavenly priesthood mean that portion of Christians who are gone, to be with Christ, separate spirits, not glorified men. This error arises from denying the transitional period, filled with the most momentous changes, which spans the interval between the coming of the Lord to gather His saints to Himself, and the appearing of His coming which destroys the lawless one and all his company. (Compare 2 Thess. 2: 1 and 8.) Is it meant, I ask, that at the marriage of the Lamb, when the Lamb's wife had made herself ready, there was no more than spirits separate from the body? To me all this is quite simple, because I firmly believe that what is properly called the church had been translated and in the glorified state ever since Revelation 4. But on Mr. E.'s hypothesis, all seems inextricable confusion. If I catch the meaning of his note 4, vol. iv. p. 203, he dissents from Daubuz, who contends, from the dress of the hosts that followed Christ, that they were the risen saints, now associated with Christ in judgment and afterwards in reigning. But text and notes of Part vi. chap. iv. present hardly any thing but a jumble of times, places, persons, and dealings of God. I am sorry to speak in such strong terms; but the truth should be dearer to us than every other consideration.

But now God is going to put down all the wickedness of man and of Satan on earth. Hence the Word of God comes from heaven; and those that had been the companions of His rejection are now the companions of His judgment. As it is said in Revelation 17: 14, "The Lamb shall overcome them . . . and they that are with him, called, and chosen, and faithful." There was the announcement that, when the battle came, He would not be alone, but that the saints would be with Him — called by grace, elect, and faithful ones; and accordingly here they are. "The armies which were in heaven followed him, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." They may not be all who will follow, but it is of importance to see that these are saints.

The description proceeds: "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he may smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God" (verse 15). This is a simple description of the various judgments that the Lord will execute when He comes. First, there is the word of power set forth by the sharp sword going out of His mouth. If any must be destroyed, it is enough for the Lord Jesus Christ to speak. "He spake and it was done." The judgment was executed. But besides, "He shall rule them with a rod of iron." This is the judgment which is referred to in Revelation 2, where there is a promise to those of Thyatira who overcome, that they shall have fellowship with Christ in this judgment of the nations. "And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God." This is the unsparing judgment that we

have seen before in Revelation 14. It is vengeance on religious wickedness, which is always reserved for the severest stroke that God can inflict. "And he hath upon his vesture and upon his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords" (verse 16) — the same title that we have seen in Revelation 17: 14.

But while there was an invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb, there is another and very different supper, the great supper of God. Here it is not the blessed whom God's grace invites. An angel speaks obedient to His word, and the instrument of His power, standing in the sun — the symbol of supreme authority. For it is not now a thing done in a corner. There are no terms of forbearance: all must be thoroughly open. Nor is it now a partial, but a complete and final judgment. "And he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the great supper of God (for so it should be read); that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great" (verses 17, 18). It is the same sort of contrast, I think, that we may have seen in Rev. 14, where we had the first-fruits at the beginning of the chapter, and afterwards the harvest before the chapter closes. Here you have the supper of the Lamb above; and the great supper of God that He will make for those that prey on the remains of the dead.

"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet,* that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image" (verses 19, 20). You will observe that one is here called the false prophet. He has apparently lost his world-power, and is therefore not presented now as the second beast rising from the earth with lamb-like horns (i.e., the imitator of Christ's power); He is the false prophet simply. Whatever dominion he had is now merged, and he is seen in his ecclesiastical character, as a teacher of lies in the capacity of foe to God's truth. Babylon was gone, but there was still this wicked ecclesiastical power who had wrought with the beast, and both now meet with the same tremendous judgment at the hand of God. "These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone."

*Mr. Birks seems to be, I will not say accurate, but less under the influence of human system and bias than most of the Protestant school. Thus, in his *Two Later Visions of Daniel*, p. 337, he admits that it may be inferred, from a careful comparison of several scriptures, that at this time the temple described in Ezekiel will have been built, and that then this fierce and mighty king will seat himself as a sovereign, and claim to be the object of a divine adoration." I doubt as to the identity with Ezekiel's temple, but this is a question of detail. Again in the following page he says, "The Papacy, denoted by the wilful king, in its last hour will fill up the measure of its apostacy, and gather to itself those partial features of antichrist, which are now to be seen in the Mahometan delusion, and its open rejection of the Son of God. At the same time, a leader will arise, the last personal head of the compound system of evil, and the heathen Antiochus, the Pope, and the Turk contribute to supply the features of his iniquity. The wilful king in this last stage of his power, and represented now by this leader, will gather on himself the predicted character of a king of the north, and then come down like a whirlwind on the land of Israel." Here there is the most palpable confusion of the two opposed chiefs, the wilful king in the Holy Land, and the northern king who assails him there. But I cite the passage to show that fair-minded men, spite of preconception, are obliged to admit the all-importance of the future crisis in Judea.

There had been two men singled out from all others for special mercy and glory. One was in the early antediluvian world, when it was fast coming to its close. "He walked with God, and was not, for God took him." And when the world had grown older in sin, and God's separated people had far

departed from Him, God did interpose again, and would show that there are no times, however evil, when His servants may not walk with Him. Thus, when Israel was altogether debased in sin, and God had put His servant in the midst of that wicked and corrupt and apostate people Israel; then and there it was that Elijah gave his testimony, and he too, without dying, was chosen of God to be taken up to heaven.

And here, in most miserable contrast, we find two singled out from all others, — two men as remarkable for Satan, as Enoch and Elijah had been for God. And these men, the heads of their respective powers of wickedness (the open blaspheming power of the beast; and the more intriguing, corrupting energy of the false prophet, who had specially set himself against the Lord Jesus Christ), are found together. If God had interposed to show signal mercy in bringing alive to heaven, so now God interposes to send alive down to hell. They had been leaders in evil; they had worn down the saints and overcome them before men. Now their day comes — "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him." — "These both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone!"

The Lord judges their followers too, but not with so terrible a doom. They remain to be judged another day — they must stand and appear before God. Meanwhile they "are slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." But as for the twain, God required as it were nothing more: they were the worst leaders of the world's lawlessness, and therefore judgment takes its course summarily and for ever. I know of no judgment so tremendous in scripture as that these men, untried, should be cast into hell before Satan himself! Yet the goats or Gentile rebels in Matt. 25 approach it.

And, solemn thought! the time is fast approaching. It is difficult to realize that such will soon be the doom of the rulers of these western lands. They will be found gathered for battle near Jerusalem. For, as Christendom began with Jerusalem, so the last and terrible end of Christendom will be there. As the Roman empire will reappear, so there will be found a chief of its political power sustaining and sustained by the religious chief of the east. Such is the crisis which, as God shows plainly in His word, awaits the world. And I have the firm conviction, without pretending to fix the time that the train is being laid even now. Thus we see the remarkable prominence which in our day is given to the east, and its growing connection with the west. These are facts before our eyes; but it is well known to many readers that these same things have been affirmed years before any of these facts had taken place.* They were stated with the same confidence as now, and to some of those who may read these pages. Thus what is going on in the world comes in as a remarkable confirmation of prophecy. It is not the circumstances which enable us to judge aright; but taking the word of God alone, we may have a full persuasion in our souls. For whether we see the events or not, no man ever believed the word of God and was ashamed. "The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision."

*This was written above fifteen years since. I need hardly add what fresh and strong evidence is furnished by the late war (and peace) in Italy.

The Lord grant that we may remember that there will be a power of deceit in the world that will carry men away! Men may fancy that they will discern and reject the beast and the false prophet. This only shows that they have very little idea of the influence and working of Satan. His most dangerous power lies now, not in that which looks outwardly bad, but in what seems quiet and fair. Thus is it still, as it was when Christ was here. The man possessed with a legion of demons received deliverance and blessing. But what did the Gadarenes do? They besought the Lord to depart out of their coasts.

Let me ask you, do you not prefer something to Christ? You may not show active enmity to His

name. You may hear the gospel: but have you received it? If not, you are rejecting it. God does not allow one to say, there is something to be done first. He has done everything. Therefore, it comes to be a question of positive rejection — bidding Christ depart. The Lord grant that such may not be your present guilt and eternal misery!

Revelation 20

The first three verses of this chapter are closely connected with the one that goes before. For there we see the judgment of the beast and the false prophet, and of their adherents. Here we have what God saw fit to inflict for the present upon the real unseen leader of all the mischief — the devil. But there is this difference, that it is not Christ who deals with Satan. It was the shining forth of His coming that destroyed the beast and the false prophet. They were taken and were both cast alive into the lake of fire. And so we learn in Revelation 20: 10, when Satan's turn came for being cast there also, it is into that lake where the beast and the false prophet already were, and where they shall be tormented for ever and ever. But it was not yet the time for the last and most terrible judgment of Satan. God's trial of the world was not quite over, and therefore, perhaps, God did not interfere by Christ in person, but through an angel. Before Christ inflicts the last crushing blow upon Satan, an angel is employed to limit his power and liberty for a certain period. This is what we have here. Satan is restrained for a thousand years; and the risen saints judge the world.

Many persons have raised difficulties as to this chapter, as indeed to all the rest of the book, on the ground of the figurative language. But no objection could be less reasonable; for figurative or symbolic language is used in scripture from the first book to the last. So that if you neglect one part of God's word on this ground, you are in danger of slighting all. It is the commonest thing possible. Take the language of God Himself in Eden, the words which the Holy Ghost used for the comfort and salvation of souls from the day that man was fallen by sin. Even there we find that God used highly metaphorical language.

But if a soul was needy, and through grace desired to understand God, there was always a sure way. God waited patiently, and taught and led on His children. No doubt there was room for growth; but then there was room for unbelief too, and the evil heart could readily find difficulties to stumble over. But faith always finds out the way to understand God. Not but that there are things hard to such as we are; yet faith pursues its narrow path through obstacles and dangers, because God has said, "they shall be all taught of God." Nevertheless, the language in which God was pleased to pronounce judgment on the enemy and to intimate a Redeemer was so figurative, that an unbelieving Jew like Josephus could pervert it and apply it merely to the natural dislike that men have to serpents, and their desire to get rid of them wherever found! Of course such a notion sprang from not understanding the mind of God, and the Jewish historian was ignorant of scripture and of the power of God.

And remember that I do not use the word "ignorant" here to describe the lack of human learning, any more than scripture does, when it says of certain persons that "they are unlearned and unstable." They might be as wise as Plato and prudent as Aristotle, but they were not learned in God's will and in the knowledge of His mind. This is the learning that we should value and cultivate — a thing that never can be gleaned in the schools of this world. On the contrary, if a man prosecute human learning as a means of understanding the things of God, he is sure to go astray, because this *per se* is never from the Holy Ghost. Doubtless he who has got human learning may make use of it for God. But the great point is, that the man of God must make learning and everything that is of man to be his servant; whereas the mind of man, as such, makes learning his master and becomes its slave. Hence the danger of all such

things proving positive hindrances, even to the Christian, save so far as he is led by the Spirit of God. The only possible way of understanding God's word is by subjection to the Holy Ghost; and the test is Christ, because the object of the Spirit is to exalt Him. Therefore it is that you never can separate growth in the things of God from the moral state of the soul. It is true that a man who has learned a great deal of truth may slip into a bad state of soul: but, in general, sound knowledge of the things of God and a wise gracious application of the truth flow from communion with God.

I have made these few remarks not doubting that many of my readers know them to be true from their own experience; but some perhaps may learn from them why they make small progress in the things of God. The true way is to seek the glory of Christ. Where a man is bent upon this, he must learn, no doubt; but all is open and clear before him, because he is in the current of the Holy Ghost, whose office is to take of the things of Jesus and to show them unto us. "When he is come . . . he shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you:" for Christ, not man, is the aim and end of the Spirit.

Doubtless, as to the earliest book of the Bible, Genesis, all will acknowledge it to be a perfect model of perspicuity. It is the most simple book, containing profound truth, that ever was written. In this book where God was putting us in His nursery school, yet what do we find? Not seldom bold and figurative language. Hence, if I am to give up the scriptures because of figures, I must give them up from Genesis to Revelation.

The revelation of the woman's Seed that was to bruise the serpent's head was the very word on which salvation hung; the blessed truth that faith laid hold of at all times. Take a case. Abel's faith, that expressed itself in the offering which he brought, was grounded upon this word. He believed that the Lord Jesus was coming (though he did not yet know that name), who would be bruised in order to destroy the serpent — One who would suffer, whose heel would be bruised, though eventually He would crush the bruiser.

This shows that faith is a very distinct thing from the ability to explain the figures of a passage, the general sense and certainty of which may yet be clearly seen. So much so that even now, if you were to take a Christian and ask him to explain all the particulars of that verse — what was meant by the Seed of the woman and that of the serpent, the enmity between them and the bruising of the head and of the heel, though he might be perfectly certain that it speaks of Christ, and might understand the general meaning of all, yet he would find a great deal of difficulty in explaining what each thing meant. But there lies the blessedness of God's word, that people are not saved by having clear thoughts on the obscure; but God knows how to direct every soul that is saved to the right object. Their hearts rest upon a Christ who has suffered for them and completely destroyed the destroyer. They may not be able to bring out their thoughts clearly to others; but the faith of the taught knows the truth perhaps as well as the teacher, though the latter alone can develop it with convincing plainness. This shows that even where God employs these figures, the general thought is sufficiently plain. To expound them by words might be an insuperable difficulty to the soul that has no question of the general sense.

Here an angel comes down out of heaven. This angel, in the prophetic vision, has the key of the abyss and a great chain hanging on his hand (verse 1). He is seen laying hold of "the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan," the well-known enemy of God and man; and then follows the use of the key and the chain, the key for shutting him up and the chain for binding him fast. Obviously these are figures, but they are familiar to the simplest mind. There is no one, however ignorant about some things, who need misunderstand what is meant. The Spirit of God takes advantage of the commonest things of every-day life to describe an act of judgment that is about to be

accomplished in His providence by and by. God intends to restrain Satan, and will not suffer his going about to deceive the world as he does now; but it will be only for a season (verses 2, 3). He is not thrown into the lake of fire at once, but is a prisoner in the bottomless pit, which is the expression of the place, under the control of Satan ordinarily, that will then be made the place of his confinement. (Compare Revelation 9, 11 and 17.)

It is certain from God's word that Satan is not yet shut up on the contrary, that he goes about now seeking to deceive and to destroy souls. The New Testament always supposes this. It is perfectly clear that Satan is an enemy still at large; that he is active in his rebellion against God, in the falsehood that he spreads among men, and in the death and ruin that he causes everywhere. But this is to close when, for a certain limited time, the earth will be freed from his deceits. This is all that I need to draw from the passage. I am not going to discuss whether the thousand years are to be taken literally or mystically; for this is a question of detail and decree only. But beyond a doubt the period has a beginning and has an end; nor can it have begun yet, because Satan is not bound. The New Testament epistles suppose that Satan still carries on his devices hinders the work of God, has to be resisted, and is going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. So that there must be a vast change when the time comes for his restraint. And God will have to cast His people upon other parts of His word, which would not apply to the past or the present. The saints then will be in many respects in a totally different state, In that day Christ will be reigning over the earth, having it under His direct control; and assuredly the change will be incalculably great. Satan too will be bound, and God's people then will not require the same discipline through the word of God as those do now who have to encounter the assaults of Satan and his accusations. God will deal with them according to the condition in which they will be placed, and for which His word provides.

Allow me to repeat that it is chiefly the influence of prejudice, with which persons approach the book of the Revelation, that makes it appear so difficult. People say that so many good men have made mistakes in interpreting it, that there is no sure way for the simple to take it up profitably. But this is to the dishonour of God; for He has given the book to be understood by His people at large, peculiarly commending it to His servants. Special promises of blessing He attaches to such as read, hear, and keep it, foreseeing the delusion abroad with regard to its obscurity. But why is it the devil's object to hinder people from reading this book? Why is it that, in what are called Christian churches, every other part of the Bible is read, while the book of Revelation is scarcely looked at? Even the Apocrypha is read by some, while of the "true sayings of God" only a few fragments here and there are used for public services. The reason is because there is no book in the Bible that Satan fears more, and justly too. It announces first his sure humiliation by angelic power, and then his destruction afterwards. Other books show his partial temporary successes; this dwells on his overthrow, and therefore must he dread it. Again, if you have here the account of God's putting down Satan, you have also very fully brought out the awful height of power to which he rises before the end. For the divine principle is never to judge evil until it has rejected all the patience of God, abused His goodness, and become thoroughly unbearable. Had Christians felt that Satan's object was to conceal his own wiles, and power, and ruin, by leading them to neglect this book, they might have been more on their guard. But this is the last thing he wants people to suspect; for then they at once get upon the ground where the Spirit of God can lead them on; whereas, if they assume that the book is so dark as to be, practically unintelligible, they are so far exposed to his delusion, though God is faithful, who will not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able.

In the next verse we get another thing, the portion of the blessed. What will Christ be doing, and what they who are with Him, now that the victory is won? "And I saw thrones; and they sat upon them,

and judgment was given unto them" (verse 4). The heads, civil and ecclesiastical, of the evil in the world had been summarily judged; the hidden source of all was next set aside "till the thousand years should be finished." But now the Lord Jesus has taken the kingdom of the world. Still the object here is not so much to show us Christ's reign, because this was a familiar truth, found throughout all scripture, and one that was well known to the Old Testament saints; and so habitually were they waiting for the Messiah, and so prevalent was the expectation of His kingdom, even in the mass of unconverted Israel, that Satan took advantage of it to make men refuse the grace of Christ coming in humiliation. Here His reigning is of course implied, as the central pivot of the blessing; but His people, or at least His sufferers, are specified with the utmost clearness.

This then may be one reason why prominence is here given to those who reign with Christ. God felt deeply for His saints. They were under keen trial and temptation. He takes pains to show that, if they had suffered, they were also to reign with Him. And therefore, as it seems to me, it is not there said, I saw a great throne, but "I saw thrones."* As the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had said to the disciples, "In my Father's house are many mansions." He does not speak of one peculiar mansion there for Himself, but He says, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Was it not in the same spirit that the prophet here had the vision of these thrones? And they were not vacant. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." They were now to exercise judgment.

*Daubuz notices another distinction well worthy of remark, but in a way which needs correction. "These thrones, whose number is not defined [as in Rev. 4], are to be very carefully distinguished from the twenty-four thrones here mentioned." (Perp. Comm. p. 925.) So say I; but when he goes on to teach that the state of the Christian church and its primitive and militant institution were signified by the enthroned elders, I reject such an explanation, as do almost all Christians. Yet that there is a notable difference between that state of things and the millennial one before us now is manifest. The only satisfactory solution, I am satisfied, depends on the rapture of the heavenly saints, previous to the fulfilment of Revelation 4, and the interval spent before they appear with Christ in glory, as we see in Revelation 19, 20.

Evidently this is an accomplishment of the word in 1 Cor. 6. The apostle there, addressing the saints at Corinth, says, "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" And here they are judging the world. But more than that. The Lord had said to the twelve apostles, "Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Many persons think that this will only be fulfilled in heaven. But there can be no such state of things there. The twelve tribes are not above. They are only known as such upon earth. Here below they will be found as an object of government; and so the prophets speak. What will there be for saints to judge in heaven? When the glorified are there, where will be the men to judge above? All will be blessed there. These will have passed out of the scene of judgment.

It is plain therefore that this scene is one that cannot apply to heaven: and that it supposes the earth as a sphere of judgment. Those in question reign over the earth. I say, "over the, earth," for there is no reason to believe that this world will be the home of the risen saints of God. They may visit it from time to time, as we know the Lord Himself will; but their proper dwelling-place will not be the earth. Even now our blessing is in heavenly places in Christ; much more evidently will it be when we are glorified. The blessing is heavenly in its source, character, and sphere. But while we shall thus have blessing in heavenly places, the earth will be the lower and subject province — full of interest and glory to God, but a comparatively outside domain. Just as a man who owns an estate may have a grand family seat in it; but this does not hinder *his* having property outside, which he must leave *his* house in

order to see. And so it will be hereafter. The glory above will be the rest and centre of the heavenly saints; but besides that they will judge the earth.* Accordingly it is written here, "I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them." They were the destined assessors of the Lord in judging or government.

*There is no doubt that the earliest Christian writers show that a personal millennial reign of Christ was the early prevalent doctrine. But truth needs no exaggeration. It is painful that such a man as Mede (*Works*, book iii. p. 683, 4th edition) should have insisted on interpolating a negative in the statement of Justin Martyr (*Dial. cum Tryph.* § 80), where the father, after confessing the faith of himself and many others in a future rebuilding of Jerusalem and the literal reign and blessedness of risen saints with Christ, admits on the other hand that there are many holding the true and godly doctrine of Christians who do not acknowledge it. The fact is that there is not the slightest manuscript authority for the insertion, and the internal evidence is, in my opinion, decidedly against it. Thirlby has very properly pointed out that Justin distinguishes between two sets of the orthodox, as may be seen by comparing the close of the same section: one of them, in all respects (κατὰ πάντα) right minded, has no doubt about the millennial reign, etc.; the rest were sound in general, but opposed to chiliasm. Nevertheless, Mede's οὐ has been allowed by many in England from Tillotson down to Mr. Bickersteth, and Daillé's μή (*De Poenis et Satisfact.* p. 493) has found favour abroad till recently. Even Mr. Jenour (*Rat. Apoc.* vol. ii. pp. 318, 319) continues to cite the passage in its corrupted form, and without remark.

But that was not all. "And [I saw] the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." Mark the word "souls." It is strictly correct. There are many who, in the main agreeing that this vision represents a judgment exercised by heavenly saints over men upon earth, understand the "souls" spoken of here to mean persons according to a common usage of scripture. But I do not believe that this is the true explanation. Why not take the word "souls" here as meaning those who were in the separate state? Thus, the apostle John saw in the vision, first, thrones with persons seated upon them; secondly, a certain number of disembodied people, the souls of them that had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God; and besides, thirdly, a class of those "the which had not worshipped the beast nor yet his image, and had not received his mark upon their forehead, or in their hand." Had he meant persons in their ordinary state, he might have said, I saw the souls that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, etc.; but not "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded." Just as it was said of Jacob, "All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt . . . all the souls were threescore and six." It is not said there "all the souls of them," or "of the people that came," etc. (Compare Rev. 6: 9.)

Here, then, John beheld in the vision some that were already risen from the dead and seated upon thrones. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." The reference seems purposely general, and implies "the armies" previously described (Revelation 19: 14). Those who followed the Lord from heaven to war are now His companions in His government of the earth. Next, he saw a company "that had been beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." These were not yet raised from the dead, but were still in the condition of separate spirits. And there was a third class — persons who had not worshipped the beast, nor submitted to his pretensions in any form or degree. The two last were distinct but connected classes of people, who when first seen were in the separate state. "And they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." That is, they were reunited to their bodies; for this of course is what is meant by "they lived." It might have been thought that they had missed their blessing, or at least the privilege of reigning with Christ during the thousand years. There were thrones, and persons in their risen bodies who already occupied them. What then was to become of those who, after the

removal of the former to heaven, were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and who were not till long after raised from the dead? What was to be the portion not only of these, but of the last class that at a still later day refused to worship the beast or receive his mark? "They lived." They are now seen, just before the reign, united to their bodies; and, together with those that had been previously raised and already seen enthroned, they reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

*"I cannot consent (says Dean Alford) to distort the words from their plain sense and chronological place in the prophecy, on account of any considerations of difficulty, or any risk of abuses which the doctrine of the millennium may bring with it. Those who lived next to the Apostles, and the whole church for 300 years, understood them in the plain literal sense; and it is a strange sight in these days to see expositors, who are among the first in reverence of antiquity, complacently casting aside the most cogent instance of consensus which primitive antiquity presents. As regards the text itself, no legitimate treatment of it will extort what is known as the spiritual interpretation now in fashion. If, in a passage where two resurrections are mentioned, where certain ψυχὰν ἔζησαν at the first, and the rest of the νεκροί only at the end of a specified period after that first, — if, in ἔζησαν such a passage, the first resurrection may be understood to mean spiritual rising with Christ, while the second means literal rising from the grave; then there is an end of all significance in language, and scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything. If the first resurrection is spiritual, then so is the second, which I suppose none will be hardy enough to maintain; but if the second is literal, so is the first, which, in common with the whole primitive church and many of the best modern expositors, I do maintain, and receive as an article of faith and hope." (Vol. iv. part ii.) I have only to add, as to "chronological place," that as the sitters on thrones, or first group in this vision, are not represented as souls, so they are not meant to be included in "they lived." Their living and destiny to reign with Christ was plain enough from their session on thrones. Of the subsequent martyrs, and the confessors in the final crisis, it is now said, these join the others in resurrection, and share the reign just beginning.

Thus we have a bright and interesting light thrown by and on the Revelation. For there are passages in it which this verse helps to clear up; while they, on the other hand, throw light back on a verse which is not intelligible unless these distinctions are seen.

Let us consider yet a little more the different classes here spoken of. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." Evidently these first objects are introduced most abruptly. We are not told where they came from, nor who they were — probably because the Holy Ghost takes for granted, that we know enough about them through the previous statements of the book. Just before they had come out of the opened heaven. (Rev. 19.) When the rider on the white horse, the Lord Jesus, came out as a man of war, the armies that were there followed Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. I have already tried to prove that these were the saints who had been already taken up to heaven, and ever and anon shown to be there from the commencement of Revelation 4. They were seen then and repeatedly afterwards under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned elders. It will hardly be disputed that these elders represent the heavenly saints. I do not pretend to decide whether it is the church exclusively or not. Very likely both the church and the Old Testament saints are included; but one thing at least is very clear, that heavenly saints are meant. They follow Christ out of heaven when He comes to make war with the beast, etc.; and now, when Christ takes His throne, when He is not merely seen on a white horse going forth to conquer and subdue, but He takes the throne to reign triumphantly, they too are seen on thrones along with Him. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them."

Every believer knows that in some sense Christ is to sit on His throne and to judge; but some might think that it was too high a place for Christians to be on thrones with Him; while others, who

have etherealized into mist the direct meaning of the mass of scriptures that treat of the hopes of the saints and the prospects of the world, imagine that they will be merely in the vague distance of heaven, enjoying everlasting happiness with Christ, but having nothing whatever to do with the earth. For my own part, I do not believe that governing the world is by any means the highest part of the saint's glory; but it will be an important element of Christ's glory, and therefore surely not beneath the church. None can overlook or deny this without loss to their soul. When rightly held, it has no little practical influence. For if I am to judge the world then, God would not have me meddling with the world now. This was the very argument that the apostle Paul used when blaming the Corinthian believers, because they went before the judgment-seat of men. It is beneath the Christian calling. Of course, I do not mean by this in any way to slight the powers that be. A Christian ought to be ready any day and in all things to show them respect. He can afford to be the humblest man in the world, because he is the highest one. He has got a better exaltation that will shine most when this world has come to nothing. What a wonderful thing that we are anointed kings now, before the actual glory dawns, like David, who was consecrated king long before, as a fact, he was exalted to the kingdom! The holy, royal oil was upon him, even when he was hunted about by king Saul upon the mountains. So, in a yet higher sense, we too are anointed by the Holy Ghost, and this not only that we may be able to enter into the things of God, but as made kings and priests to God. Hence God looks for us not only to offer spiritual worship to Him now, but under all circumstances to preserve the sense of our dignity as His kings. (Compare 1 Peter 2: 5, 9.) The world may mock and call us fanatics, but the world has done worse to God Himself. Alas! evil communications corrupt good manners; and Christians have fallen from the truth that is according to godliness as to this.

They have sought to have the world and Christ too. People may object that at best it is a hope so purely future as to have no present bearing. But the Spirit of God addresses us as possessing this treasure now, as having in principle all that Christ is going to display in us in His kingdom by and by. Hence we are responsible to God to walk in the faith of it now. It was so in the highest way in the Lord Jesus Christ. He knew that he was a king; and when Satan came and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, offering to give them to Him if He fell down and worshipped him, the Lord utterly rejected all. But Satan, as it were, repeated the offer to the church, and she at length accepted it. In seeking the glory of the world, she has sought honour where Satan is the prince. Can any man read his Bible and not own the truth of this? What did the Lord Jesus do when men wanted to make Him a king? He departed from them. When He stood before Pilate, He admitted that He was a king, but said, "My kingdom is not of this world . . . Now is my kingdom not from hence." By and by it will be. "The kingdom of the world shall become our Lord's and his Christ's." And when it passes into His hands, the reign of Christians will begin. His people will share the kingdom along with Him. Hence faith waits for this: and meanwhile we are put to the test now, "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

To some it will appear presumption to claim such a privilege now. But not so. It is faith, and its fruit is growing separation from the world. The principle is the thing of value. For if a man only strive for the simplest thing in this world that is an object to him, — for some present (even if it be a petty) distinction, there is the trace of the enemy's work. God looks for holy separateness from the world in all His saints: they are not of the world, even as Christ is not of it. Let it only be in proportion to a man's spirituality and intelligence. Thus, when a Christian begins his path of faith, God does not say to him all at once, You must cut off this and renounce that; He leaves room for the exercise of grace and progress in truth. In the day that salvation came to the house of Zaccheus, the Lord said not a word of his odious position in the world as a Jewish tax-gatherer. Nor are we told, in the case of Cornelius, that he must forthwith give up his place as a centurion of the Italian band; because the whole blessedness of

God's ways would be destroyed by laying down and enforcing rules in that fashion. The church is not governed by a code of formalities. She is led on by the power of the Spirit of God according to His word. Just as with a child; when of tender years he speaks as a child, understands as a child, and thinks as a child. One could not wish babes to assume the ways of adults. So it is with spiritual children. The Lord does not look for such to be occupied with the things of men and fathers in Christ. He leaves room for growth in grace. Now, if a man is in a bad state, he takes advantage of grace, and asks, Is there any harm in this? Is there any command for that? Sometimes a soul only refrains from evil doings, in the thought that if he persists he is in danger of being lost. But what God values is simple-hearted obedience; the doing God's will because it is His will, because it is delight to do His will, because it glorifies Him. He saves us by His grace, and saves us so as not to see a single fault in us. And now He says, If I have saved you and put you in such sureness and perfection of blessing before me, the thing that I look for is your heart, its confidence in my love and wisdom, your worship and your obedience.

But God also gives us the knowledge of the coming kingdom that we are to share with Christ our Lord. It is well to remember that the Spirit of God does not bring about the kingdom. Not He, but the Lord Jesus only is the king. Thus Christ's presence is essential to the kingdom, at least in the full manifested sense. It would be a kingdom without a king, if Christ were not personally there; and therefore it is said, "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." Christ Himself was present, and He is the centre of all glory, and blessing, and joy. In Rev. 19 we had Christ and them coming out of heaven in judgment, and thereon in Rev. 20 the kingdom is established in peace over the earth.

This may answer the first question, as to who they are whom John first saw sitting on the thrones, and of course in risen bodies. They are heavenly saints, including (if not exclusively) the church. The next question is, Who are those whose souls were seen not at first united to their bodies? The answer is plain. If Rev. 4, 5 show us glorified saints under the symbol of the twenty-four elders, and corresponding with those first mentioned in our verse, Rev. 6 lets us into another scene. It tells us that there will be saints called to suffer after that, whose souls John then saw under the altar. They had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, and they call upon God to judge and avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth. Who are these saints that appeal to God's vengeance? It is not the church in this case, one can answer with the utmost confidence. It could not be indeed; for the church had been already removed to heaven. But, besides, is the church ever said, in scripture, to call upon God to judge and avenge the blood of saints shed on the earth? It would falsify the very design of God in the church, and in the individual Christian too. We are the epistle of Christ, called expressly to show out His glory in Christ, and His grace towards the world ever since the cross. And as God has allowed men to put to death His own Son, and, so far from judging the guilt, has only made it an occasion for showing more grace still, so the church is called to suffer, and if need be even to death, for His name's sake, without such a thought or wish as calling for vengeance.

Take a plain and signal example of this in Stephen. He was most grievously trodden down. they cast him out of the city and stoned him. But he kneels down and cries, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." It was with a loud voice too, for it was not a thing that his heart did not feel earnestly; and the Holy Ghost desired that those who were round him should know his heart's desire about them, guilty as they were of his blood. Was this calling upon God to avenge his blood? The very contrary; and so all through. Look at the apostles Peter and John, who when they were beaten depart from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. Look again at the first Epistle of Peter; and what do you find there? This is the principle: "If when ye do well and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called."

On the other hand, the world could not go on for a day on such a round as this; it must go to pieces, if evil were not to be punished, and those who did well and suffered wrongfully were merely to give thanks. But such exhortations were not intended for the world. And there is the mistake so often made. Men forget that the church was called to be a witness of heaven — was meant to express the mind and grace of Christ, while walking upon the earth. This is our "one thing" — our business here below. Of course, this need not hinder the providing things honest in the sight of all men. It is right for the Christian to do this, but let him weigh well how he does it. Our behaviour in the most ordinary employment should be a testimony to this — that we are not of the world; that we look not for honour and credit in the world, but to glorify Christ in heaven; that instead of seeking to help on the plans of men, and to be an ornament in the world, our mission is to make Him known to it, and to do His will during the little while we are here.

But to return. We have seen that, though the enthroned elders are in heaven (Rev. 4, 5), there are afterwards saints on earth, new witnesses who are called to suffer unto death for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus; but who, when they die, cry for God to avenge their blood on their enemies. Nor is that wrong in them, though it would be foreign to us, because it is not the will of God concerning us. But when God has formed the church, and, after it has been taken to heaven, has raised up fresh witnesses for Himself on earth, He will begin to deal with the world judicially Himself. And therefore when these holy sufferers cry to God against their adversaries, they will have communion with Him; and this is what faith always seeks — communion with God in what He is actually doing or about to do. God does not thus interfere to judge the world now, and therefore His saints should not ask Him, as these do, to judge and avenge. God now endures in perfect patience the wickedness of the world; and therefore a Christian should rather ask God to turn His long-suffering into salvation for souls. But when Rev. 6 is being fulfilled, God will pour down judgment upon judgment; and the witnesses for God in that day will ask God to judge, and rightly. They take up the language of the Psalms, in general so misunderstood and misapplied now, but then most appropriate and prophetically provided of God.

This shows then, that there is to be a very different state of things after the church has been taken away. God begins then to act in the way of judgment, and those whose hearts are converted, and who desired His glory, will be in great darkness compared with the church. Still, their godly testimony will be intolerable to the powers of the world, who will spill their blood like water. The sufferers will cry to God for judgment, and He will hear them. Look at Revelation 6: 9, 10, 11: "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Observe how this agrees with the two classes mentioned in Revelation 20: 4: "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God." For mark the answer. They cry, "How long, O Master, holy and true," etc. "And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little while, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." When the earlier sufferers, after the removal of the church, had been called out and slain, they were told of another and subsequent class who should be killed as they before the full judgment.

This is exactly what we find in our Revelation 20. First, there are those who sit on the thrones, invested with royal judgment; next, there are those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God; and, thirdly, their brethren who, as it was said in Revelation 6, had yet to be completed. These, when the beast brought out his idolatry, etc., and it was a question of being killed or of worshipping him, refused. . . they were faithful unto death. Well, here they are. "I saw . . . and those who had not worshipped the beast, nor his image, and had not received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands." Thus the Revelation gives us the full answer, as to these three classes.

The twenty-four elders correspond with those who sit on the thrones; the second class are the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, etc., we had in Revelation 6; and then the latter part of the book shows "their brethren that should be killed as they themselves were," and for whom they were told to wait. In Rev. 13: 7, it was said that it was given to the beast to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. And more than that The latter half of the chapter supplies another part of the description, and shows us how these saints came to be characterized in Revelation 20 as those who had not worshipped the beast nor his image, neither had received his mark on their forehead, or in their hand. In verse 14 the second beast is said (Rev. 13) to deceive "them that dwell on the earth, on account of those miracles which he had power to do in the presence of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword and did live. And he had power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed." Now this most clearly pertains to the last or third class. Those referred to in Revelation 14: 12, 13, are probably the same. But again, see Revelation 15: 2: "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." Thus the Revelation answers fully the question, Who are these saints? It shows us, first, the risen saints, who had been taken up to heaven, and who come out with Christ. This is one reason why they are seen separate from the two other classes. They are viewed on the thrones at once, because they are already changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body. But the others are merely seen, up to this moment, as souls, and of course not glorified. We hear of glorified bodies, but never of glorified souls in scripture. The soul of the believer goes to be with Christ after death, but it has to be reunited with the body, before it can be spoken of as in a glorified condition. The only perfect state is, when we shall bear the image of the heavenly; when we shall be raised or changed into His likeness.

If we look at 1 Cor. 15 we shall see that quite plainly. It is said there, "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed . . . and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible, must," not merely put off corruption, but "put on incorruption, and this mortal" must not merely slip off this mortal coil, as men say, but "put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality"-evidently the glorified state — "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Death is not swallowed up in victory when a Christian dies and goes to be with Christ; but when He comes, and the dead are raised, and the living changed. What was done individually in the case of Enoch and Elijah, will be done on a grand scale at His coming. All the living saints then will be changed, and will go to be with the Lord, without passing through death. These, risen or changed, having been taken up to heaven, will come thence with Christ, and are here seen on thrones.

But what next is the history of those saints on earth, who are called after the previous saints have been removed to meet the Lord? The Revelation shows us their sufferings for righteousness' sake and their death. What becomes of them afterwards? The church had been already raised and glorified, and these sufferers are slain before the reign of Christ commences. Are these then, who have so suffered, not to reign? Are they to forfeit their blessings, because they have resisted unto blood, striving against sin? This could never be. "I saw the souls of them that were beheaded . . . and they lived and reigned

with Christ a thousand years." They too are raised from the dead; they join the others already glorified, and all reign together with Christ in "the kingdom."

I apprehend, but I only give it as an opinion, that their resurrection takes place at or about this time. The beast and the false prophet have been put down; Satan has been cast into the abyss, and the millennial reign of Christ and His risen saints is now about to commence. The Lord waits, as it were, for the very last moment. He wants not a soul of His holy sufferers to be left out of this their special reward. The beast had persecuted up to the last, and God delays till that moment, that every one who has suffered with Christ be included in the privilege of being glorified together. If the account of the resurrection had been given when the previously-risen saints were translated to heaven (i.e., before Rev. 4), there might have been doubt and anxiety as to the fate of those who suffer after the church was taken up. One can understand why this notice of resurrection is put here. It was the special object of God to comfort those who subsequently had to suffer and die for Christ, and to show that they would not be forgotten by Him. They are now raised to join the saints already risen; "and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." God puts off their resurrection till just before Christ's reign, and then those that had meanwhile suffered for Him are raised up.

"But the rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection." "The rest of the dead:" — who were they? The beginning of verse 4 includes, as I conceive, not only the church, but the Old Testament saints; that is, all the heavenly saints taken up to be with Christ, when He will have come to receive them unto Himself in the air. Next we had the first band of sufferers before the beast came to the height of his power; and then the last band that suffer because they will refuse to worship him. These were the three classes of saints now alike living and reigning with Christ. "The rest of the dead" must then be the wicked dead, because the first resurrection included all the righteous dead.

It answers, in fact, to what our Lord called "the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14: 14), save that it is more detailed, if not more comprehensive. So then there is a special resurrection that belongs to the just, and this without a word about the unjust. There is a resurrection of the unjust; and when the Apostle Paul spoke in Acts 24 before Felix, he testified to his belief in the resurrection both of just and unjust. But when the Lord Jesus was raising the consciences of his disciples to what was good and of value before God, He set forth the resurrection of the just alone.

But this is not all. There were men trying to bring the doctrine of the resurrection into ridicule.

We find on another occasion that certain of the Sadducees came to Him, putting a difficulty, because of a woman supposed to be married to seven brethren. In the case reasoned on these seven successively died, and last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection then, they ask, whose wife should she be of the seven? The Lord at once points out that the difficulty was founded on ignorance of scripture or of the power of God. In the resurrection they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage, but shall be like the angels; that is, like them in that respect, not in all things, for they will judge angels; but like them in so far as this, that there will be no distinction of sex — neither marrying nor given in marriage. "Neither can they die any more." But He adds, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, [or rather 'dispensation'] and the resurrection from the dead," etc. This would be an extraordinary expression, if all were raised at the same time. "They that shall be counted worthy to obtain that age;" for the last word does not refer to the material world, but to a special dispensation or age, which the unworthy do not obtain. Weigh the force of the phrase. The resurrection of the saints is in an age peculiar to themselves. "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age (the other dead are only raised after it), and the resurrection from the dead." The resurrection of Christ was not

merely a resurrection of the dead, but out of the dead. He left them undisturbed in their tombs. There were certain saints who rose with Him, or rather came out of their graves after His resurrection; but the great mass of the dead were so far unaffected by Christ's resurrection. And so is it with the saints in principle. Theirs is to be a resurrection from among the dead. The rest of the dead must rise at another time; but they who shall be accounted worthy shall obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead. They shall not die any more. Could God show more strongly, than by this language, a distinct and prior resurrection of the saints of God?

Hear also the language of Paul in Phil. 3: 11 "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead." In common Bibles, no doubt, it is "the resurrection of the dead;" but I have no hesitation in saying that this is a complete mistake. The true and only meaning of the verse, according to the best authorities, is, "if by any means I might attain to the resurrection out of (or from among) the dead." It may seem to some but a slight change; but if we want to know the mind of God, it makes a weighty difference; because, if it is "resurrection from the dead," it implies that while the rest of the dead remain in their graves, there is a resurrection not common to all mankind, bad and good, but belonging only to those that are dear to God. The apostle considered this resurrection to be so bright and blessed, that he says in effect, I care not what the sufferings and trouble may be, let the road be what it may — if I am but there; this is what I wait for and desire at all cost, For when he said, "if by any means I might attain," not a shade of doubt is implied as to his having part in the first resurrection; but rather that he so valued the prize as to mind not what the path of suffering might be that led to the goal.

Now let us carry the light of this back to the Revelation. The reference in "the rest of the dead" is to the wicked dead. A resurrection was shown of all the departed saints up to the display of the kingdom. "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished" (verse 5). There is no difficulty really in the passage; but men have their own thoughts and opinions, and cannot make scripture square with them, whereas all is as plain as God could make it. "This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection" (verse 6). How beautifully this answers to what the Lord had said to the Sadducees, "They that are accounted worthy to obtain that age, and the resurrection from the dead!" So again St. Paul: "If by any means I might attain to the resurrection from the dead."

"On such the second death hath no power." Mark once more the force of the Lord's words in the gospel: "Neither can they die any more." As for the persons left to be raised after the thousand years are over, they are to die another and most woeful death — the second death. By it all those who had not part in the first resurrection are to die. Theirs shall be the second death — meaning that extinction of all hopes of blessing when all else is blessed in heaven and earth, and they perpetually abide under the wrath of God. They are cast into the lake of fire. As for those who have part in the first resurrection "they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years;" and afterwards shall they reign in life by Him for ever and ever.

The last three verses that we looked at form a kind of parenthesis in the chapter, something like what we saw in Revelation 12. There the war in heaven and the consequent casting down of Satan came in, and then the history which had been alluded to before (verse 6) was resumed in verse 13. Here is something similar, for the seventh verse continues the history that had been already begun just at the close of the third verse. We find there Satan bound for a thousand years, and consequently his power of seducing the nations into rebellion against God intercepted for a time. After these things, we are told, he must be loosed for a little season. The seventh verse anticipates his loosing and its effects. "When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the

nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together unto the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (verse 8). Evidently therefore verses 4-6 form a parenthesis — important, no doubt, but still a parenthesis, and not a part of the regular history found here. One reason why it is given here may be to show that, during this same period when Satan is bound, there is the blessed side — not only the evil one restrained, but Christ and His saints reigning over the earth. It is never said that we shall reign on the earth.

In Revelation 5: 10, I have already shown that the common version of that verse which conveys this is somewhat inaccurate, and that the true thought of the Spirit of God is not the place where the saints of God then dwell, but the sphere of their reign. "They shall reign over the earth." The importance of the change is not so much as an isolated fact, but because it is connected with the whole scheme of truth; and it is a part of this scheme that the heavenly saints are never to be mingled with people on the earth. The promise of the first place of earthly blessing belongs to Israel, and therefore it would make the utmost confusion, if the heavenly, glorified saints were jumbled with men in their natural bodies in this world. In fact, one of the strongest objections that many Christians urge to the reign of Christ over the earth is founded on the notion that premillennialism supposes the glorified saints to be mixed up with the people then alive here below. But this is a great mistake.

The church will have its own proper glory; but withal there will be two orders or spheres of blessing, and one of a higher character than the other. All things in heaven will be gathered under the headship of Christ; but, beside this, all things on earth will be at the same time under the same government. Such is the peculiarity of the millennium. There will be the heavenly portion above, and the earthly one below, connected together, but not confounded. This is distinctly taught in Eph. 1: 10, where the apostle says that the mystery of God's will has been made known "according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him." I am aware there are many who suppose that it speaks of the gospel dispensation now going on. But this is unfounded. The church is not a gathering of all nations, but on the contrary an elect body out of them all. It never was and never will be a gathering of all nations, peoples, and kindreds, and tongues, into one. Besides, the verse speaks of a gathering of all things. There is a gathering together of the children of God; for Christ died that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. But here it is a question not of persons, but things. When the glorious administration takes place of which the apostle speaks, all things are to be put under Christ's headship. He has all under His headship now in title, but not as an actual displayed fact.

Daniel does not say that all was to be put under the Son of man, nor does the Holy Ghost reveal that secret of God's will in the Old Testament. There was the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven. But the New Testament shows us more; it teaches us that, at the very same time when all things on earth will be put under His government, all things in heaven will be put under Him too. Nor this merely in a providential way as now, but directly and personally. The Lord, of course is above Satan, the god and prince of the world that now is. He does act providentially now; and, beside that, He has the full personal title to exercise all glory, heavenly and earthly. But the time when He enforces the title, and takes all things under His hand, is future. If He had taken it now in an immediate way, all wickedness would be put down. None could sin without judgment; neither would there be such a thing as righteousness suffering, or iniquity exalted. All this is a proof that, in the full actual sense, the Lord Jesus Christ is not yet reigning, however true it may be to faith. Look, for instance, at Psalm 97: "The Lord reigneth." People quote this, as if applied when the Holy Ghost wrote, or now at any rate. But the next words refute this; because, when the Lord does reign as here meant, the earth will rejoice, etc.

Whereas, it is plain from Romans 8, not to speak of every day's experience, that the earth is groaning in misery, and that the whole creation travails in pain until now, which is the very reverse of rejoicing. But when the Psalms meet their full accomplishment, all creation will be delivered and will rejoice under the reign of Jehovah. Faith can say that the Lord reigns now: but He is not yet exerting royal power over the earth.

When Christ comes in His kingdom every opponent will have to be put down, and consequently there must be judgment. The beast and the false prophet were set aside, as we see in Revelation 19, and then comes the reign. And although everyone is not to be converted, no open sin will be permitted. It may be a "feigned obedience" that is rendered by a large part of the people upon the earth, but still in some sort it will be obedience, even from "the sons of the stranger." That is the true thought of the millennial reign. It means a time, not when there will be no evil, but when evil will be suppressed by the presence of the Lord; when the heavenly glory will be in immediate connection with the delivered and gladsome earth; when the earthly people will be restored to their own land, converted, and owning that blessed One whom their fathers crucified; for in Zech. 12-14 we see the very circumstances, at least as to the earth, that I allude to. In the last chapter the Lord is "king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord and his name one." This is precisely the millennium. All nations are seen coming up to own the Lord: if any refuse, they are to be chastised. The Spirit of God particularly notices the punishment, viz., the withdrawal of rain from such nations as should not come up to keep the feast of tabernacles. In Egypt, where such a want would not be felt, the land having other sources of fertility, there should be another punishment, "the plague wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen," etc. Plainly, then, the prophecy shows us the earthly glory under the reign of the lord.

But Ephesians 1 points us not merely to the heavenly glory, but to the union under Christ of the heavenlies and the earthlies — of all things both which are in the heavens and which are on the earth. It is not that all are to be reduced to the same level, but that all must be gathered in one united system, as having one head over all, even Christ. But the church is not included in any of these things. We are not confounded with either; on the contrary, we are spoken of as those who have obtained an inheritance in Christ over all. The church is not to be a glorious people only, over which Christ is to reign. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ — not merely heirs under Christ, but with Him — according to the blessed type given at the very beginning of man's history, where, while Adam had the glory of being head over this lower world, his wife shares the dominion in virtue of her union with him. The church is the spiritual Eve of the Lord Jesus, the bride of the last Adam. This may somewhat explain the force of the words in Ephesians 1: 10, 23, and it shows us the importance of the day we are looking at in Revelation 20. For "the thousand years" answer to this very period, when the administration will be in the hands of the Lord Jesus, the exalted and manifested Head over all things, and the church will share all along with Him.

There is another remark that I would make. It is the New Testament alone that gives us the statement of the period of the reign. It is there that we find its duration of a thousand years defined. Almost all prophecy refers to it, but here its bounds are assigned, and its relation to the eternal state which succeeds.

In one sense Christ will reign, and the saints also, for ever and ever. So it is laid down doctrinally, apart from time, as in Romans 5: 17, where it is said, "they shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." This does not refer to the millennial reign particularly, which is only a part of the reigning in life by Christ Jesus. Our life in Christ, being an everlasting one, involves to my mind that in a certain real and important sense there will be a reigning blessedly and gloriously with Christ for ever and ever. But, on the other hand, where we hear of a kingdom given to Christ, which He surrenders before the end to

God even the Father, this special reign for a limited time has also a bearing on the heavenly saints. Of course the proper divine glory of Christ is distinct from these glories and can be communicated to none. But God spoke of a special reward — the reward of suffering for Christ. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." All this bears on the millennial reign. Christ will be then publicly exalted in the world — in the very place where He was despised and rejected. And the saints will be publicly exalted with Christ in the place of their shame and sorrow, where they have followed Christ with feeble and faltering steps, but where they clave to the name of Jesus, in spite of loss and reproach. But besides these special rewards, there is the glory, blessedness, and joy which will never pass away.

The millennium will be a time when many saints are to be brought to the knowledge of the Lord. It will be the great harvest of blessing — the time celebrated with such rapture in the Psalms and Prophets, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. This does not imply necessarily that every person who knows the glory of Jehovah will know His grace, and be converted. Nevertheless, many will be brought to the Lord. But there will also be a true and real knowledge of God given at that very time. For the Holy Ghost will be poured out from on high in a special manner, of which the day of Pentecost was in comparison only like the former rain, while that will be as the latter rain. It was the foreshadowing of future fulness of blessing — greater at least in extent — which will be realised in the millennium.

Now the saints of "that day" will never suffer as a privilege, never know what it is to follow Christ in reproach, and to be cast out with Him. Consequently they will not reign in the kingdom. All saints from the beginning, and up to the millennium, will have suffered with Christ more or less. But the church having pre-eminently known the fellowship of His sufferings, will have special glory. And those saints who will be brought in after the millennium has commenced, and who have never known His sufferings, will not so share the kingdom. Those before it will be brought into the scene of glory, and changed, because corruption never can inherit incorruption. Therefore, when they are brought in where God makes all things new, there can be no question of their bearing the likeness of Christ, because they are part of the family of the last Adam, and as being in connection with Christ, and having His life, that life will have all its way as to both body and soul: they will be changed into His likeness. It is true that we have no positive statement as to the millennial saints, when this change will take place. But we may gather, I think, from general principles, that it will be in the interval after the millennium is over, and before the new heavens and new earth appear with their blessed inhabitants. But this silence of scripture has left room for some to be beguiled into the strange notion that the millennial saints will remain in their natural bodies, marrying and giving in marriage, throughout all eternity! Such a notion as this has no warrant whatever in the word of God. It resulted from always interpreting the expression "for ever and ever," as if it must mean eternity necessarily and in every case; whereas in some places it does, in others not.

Supposing that God's word speaks of an earthly state of things, and uses the expression, "reigning for ever and ever," as in Daniel 7 and Luke 1, it cannot be understood absolutely. The words must be limited by the subject-matter of which God is speaking. Thus in human things, if a man buys a house "for ever," it does not mean throughout eternity, but as long as the world goes on in its present form and way; his right holds good while the earth subsists as left in the hands of man. So God uses the phrase, "for ever and ever," when treating of earthly things and people. Only the case is far stronger than in ordinary human transactions: for a revolution may despise and destroy every such deed of conveyance. But the kingdom of Christ, before which all opposing authority must bow and become null, will assuredly secure Israel in all the promises of God. Thus "reigning over the house of Jacob"

cannot but be modified by this — as long as the house of Jacob exists as such. But when the expression is in connection with the new heavens and earth in the full sense, Israel is no longer found nationally: such earthly distinctions disappear, when men are raised from the dead or changed. When eternal life or eternal punishment is spoken of, we must take the expression in the largest sense, because these things have nothing to do with the earth; they belong to the resurrection-state. If applied to earthly things, it must be taken in a limited sense, but when applied to things outside this world, it must be taken absolutely in all its extent. So in Daniel 7: 27 "the kingdom under the whole heaven," which is given to the people of the saints of the high places, is said to be an everlasting kingdom. This, I apprehend, is the same period that is called here the thousand years.

The Holy Ghost, in the New Testament, gives us the winding up of all the ways of God, and shows us that what may have appeared to the Old Testament saints to be an absolutely everlasting condition, is limited and qualified by further revelations, which make known to us two stages, as it were, instead of one. Thus the earthly kingdom spoken of in Daniel is to be "everlasting" in this sense, that it will never pass out of the dominion of Christ — never be taken out of His hands and given to another (as previous empires had been taken from their respective rulers), but it will remain as long, as God has an earthly kingdom at all in His hands, and in the hands of the saints of the high places. When the earthly state ceases, and that kingdom is given up, Christ reigns everlastingly, though in another way. For in the eternal state it will evidently not be a question of all people, nations, and languages serving Him.

This chapter passes cursorily over the millennial state, as far as men on earth are concerned. If persons wish to look at the earthly part of the thousand years, they must search into the Old Testament. There it is spoken of constantly as "that day" — when the Gentiles will be brought in and blessed — when God's name will be exalted — when there will be a suspension of all warfare and strife. It is the day when the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom like the garden of Eden, and when the ransomed of the Lord shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads — and all sorrow and sighing shall flee away. These words are descriptions that the Holy Ghost gives of this blessed period in the kingdom. Many have been disposed to take the prophetic accounts of the millennium figuratively; but they must allow that these figures may be much more fully accomplished than they suppose. In other words, I take the glowing accounts given of the millennium in the Old Testament prophecies as emblems of real and abundant blessings on earth. These figures may have a sort of spiritual meaning too. But, allowing this, we do not take away the simple and natural meaning of the phrase. For instance, scripture speaks of the wolf and the lamb, and other animals that now devour one another, living together in union and peace. They may be applied as figures to describe what will be morally true of men, though I do not myself believe that this is the real intent.

For why should not God bring back the creatures that He has made, and about which He takes a far greater interest than men suppose, to a state at least as good as that in which they were created? Why should not God root out all the evil consequences that sin has brought in, physically as well as morally? Because the sin of Adam had effects far beyond his own race: all that was put under his dominion got into ruin and disorder. And this is not a mere imaginative notion of ruin, nor a fanciful exposition of Old Testament prophecy. It is the doctrine plainly and positively laid down in Rom. 8. It is written there that "the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that had subjected the same," in plain allusion to the fall of him that was over the creature. He fell; and creation, being under the headship of Adam, fell alone, with him. It was he who made it subject to vanity; misery and death came in through him. For there is no reason to suppose that death would have reigned with regard to the brute creation of the Adamic world, any more than with regard to man, if sin

had not entered. I am aware that the wise men of this world often speak of fossil remains which show the death of animals before man was created. Into such disquisitions I do not enter, but would only say that there was not the same state of things under Adam. Supposing now the facts and inferences of geologists to be sound — whatever living creatures may have been made and destroyed in the earth before Adam was created, scripture is entirely silent about them; and so I desire to be in expounding it. They are questions of no moral importance, and therefore a Christian need not meddle with them. I add that these theories, if true, do not contradict scripture in the slightest degree. For there is no trace of man connected with that state of things which preceded Adam; and scripture passes over it, hastening to what is immediately connected with him. When the human race begins upon the earth, the moral dealings of God are gradually developed. But man quickly fell, and then creation was degraded through its fallen head. Death, as far as regards the Adamic world, entered through the disobedience of Adam — death directly as to men, and, as a consequence, its ravages spread throughout all the lower living creation.

When the Second Man, exalted above the heavens, shall come again, He will not merely have such a dominion as the first Adam had, when all things in heaven and earth shall be put under His glorious sway. There is not a single spot or creature of God's universe but what will feel the effects of His glorious power, whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. Thus, if once man fell, bringing in sin and death and misery, and if all the attempts of the race to remedy the mischief, outward and inward, have been but expedients and no real cure, the Lord Jesus will be the good and sovereign and almighty Healer of every evil and sorrow of creation. And God will have such joy — His own joy — in relieving all the wretchedness that sin had brought about according to His estimate of the worth of His Son. And if all up to this time will have been but the filling up of man's cup of woe, how blessed will be the time when God reverses the history, and when His own Son, no longer rejected and despised, shall fill the throne of His earthly and heavenly glory! When all wickedness shall be put down, and righteousness for ever exalted, not by bare power and glory, but by the One who in grace had borne all the sorrow first, and suffered the consequences of all the wickedness, according to the full holiness of God, upon the cross! And how sweet to think that God will there show that there is not an evil, nor a degradation, nor a pang for which He has not some suited and glorious answer in and through His Son! For He will then put forth all His might to glorify His own Son in the presence of all flesh, even of those who sent the message after Him, "We will not have this man to reign over us." But when the blessed One returns, having received the kingdom, and will reign as the risen exalted Son of man, all creation will feel the gladdening effects of the Saviour's headship and rule.

The Lord will exalt Israel on earth and make them, who have been so peculiarly His bitter enemies, to lead the song of praise with their once rejected Messiah, now in the midst of the congregation. Then it is that they will take up Psalm 100, the psalm of thanksgiving, and will invite all lands to come and praise the Lord; yea, to enter His courts with praise. What a contrast to all that has gone on, or is going on still! How different from the hatred which the Jews have ever shown against the mere sound of grace going out to the Gentiles! For when Paul tells them how the Lord had said to him as he prayed in the temple at Jerusalem, "Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles, they heard him to that word; but it was more than their proud hearts could brook, and so they lifted up their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: it is not fit that he should live." But how will grace have changed and enlarged the narrow hearts of Israel, when they will themselves go forth with the invitations of mercy to the Gentiles who had insulted them in all their weary wanderings over the face of the earth, and who had trodden down Jerusalem during their appointed times

The Jews, like Cain, have the mark of the Lord on them that they shall not be utterly

extinguished, in spite of their blood-guiltiness. But the Lord will give them repentance in the latter day, and thenceforward they will be the suited and blessed heralds of His grace to the uttermost parts of the earth.

This time of blessedness under the Messiah is what is found so often and so fully in the Old Testament scriptures. The gospels, too, open with similar expectations on the part of the Jewish saints. But farther light begins to dawn as the rejection of Christ becomes more decided, till at length, redemption being accomplished, the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven, and He brought out the full mind of God. Then it was that the distinction between the kingdom and the eternal state was made plain. (1 Cor. 15: 24-28.) It was shown that the earthly reign of Christ, which in the Old Testament might have appeared unlimited, will in reality come to a close when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power.

There are many who think that the millennial state of things is to be gradually brought in by the preaching of the gospel, and other agencies that are now in operation. No doubt they look for God to bless them in a still greater degree; for no Christian, perhaps, would say that present appearances warrant such expectations. But they think that if, instead of the few, there were many servants of God, and that if it pleased God to bless the word to the conversion of multitudes everywhere, and if a spirit of greater love and union and devotedness prevailed among those that love the name of Christ generally, there and then would be the reign of Christ on the earth.

Now, I would ask, How do we know that there is to be a millennium at all? You answer, From the word of God. But how is the millennium to be brought about? Humility would answer, we must learn this too from the word of God. We all acknowledge that the earth is to be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. How is this to be effected? It is remarkable that in the very scripture (Isaiah 11: 9) where these words occur, the Holy Ghost intimates that judgment must precede this time of blessing. (See verse 4.) In that passage the universal spread of the knowledge of Jehovah is made to follow His smiting the earth with the rod of His mouth, and His slaying the wicked with the breath of His lips — the very scripture that the apostle Paul applies in 2 Thess. 2: 8 to the destruction of antichrist, the man of sin. The Lord Jesus shall consume him with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness or manifestation of His coming.

It is perfectly true then and agreed, that there is to be a millennial time of blessing on the earth; and the answer to the question how it is to be introduced is this: the same scripture which reveals that blessed change tells us that it is to be brought in by the Lord's coming and smiting the wicked one; in other words by judgment, and not by the preaching of the gospel, The gospel is of all importance for calling souls from earth to heaven; but it is not the means of dealing with the whole world, and filling it with blessing. It is the means of gathering the church out of the world to Christ. When judgment has had its full course, then the Lord will send out His servants. The Lord will give the word, and great will be the company of those that publish it. "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." The present dispensation is one of gathering out in separation from the world. The gospel ought to be preached to all but not with the vain hope that all are ever to believe it. Thus the Lord, in Mark 16, while bidding His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, takes pains to add, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." He prepares them for an individual and partial reception of it. Thus they would not be cast down, if they found but a few here and there who received the word of life. It might be but a Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. And what were they to the crowds who listened to the apostle on Mars' hill? It was a matter of joy and thankfulness to hear of any who believed to eternal life, for it is thus that God preserves His servants from being cast down. It

is well to know that all are not going to receive the gospel, but that God is accomplishing His own purposes. Therefore, when the Lord blesses the word and awakens the conscience of a poor sinner here and there, it is a cause of rejoicing.

But we know that as a whole evil will increase, and "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." How can that be, if the millennial blessing is to be the result of the present or such like efforts of Christians in the gospel? But the Lord is to smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and to slay the wicked with the breath of His lips, which is said to be like a stream of brimstone. (Isaiah 30: 33.) Is that like the gospel? It is the exact opposite — a figure of destructive judgment. The gospel delivers from Tophet, but the judgment of the Lord casts into it irrevocably. Clearly then it is a judgment from the hand of God Himself, and not one which man, much less the church, will execute. It is not the business of the church to cast into Tophet. No power but God's can consign to hell.

But there is another thing that characterizes the millennium — the binding of Satan in the abyss. Can the church bind Satan? Will anyone tell me that Satan can be absolutely hindered from deceiving the world by men? But there can be no universal blessing for the world till he is bound; and every Christian must acknowledge that God alone can either bind or crush Satan. He may employ an angel, or associate the saints with Himself, as it is said in Rom. 16: 20, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." The church is united to Christ, and then will be actually with Him who, as the woman's seed, is to bruise the serpent's head; but the power is in Christ, and not in the church. He will put down all adversaries when that day of judgment comes; as it is said, "He will smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron." (Rev. 19.) And we shall do the same in virtue of our association with Christ. (Rev. 2.) In the reign of peace (Rev. 20: 4, 6) we shall still be associated with Him. It is by the church in its heavenly condition, not while we are on the earth, that Satan will be thus bruised.

But it is perfectly clear, on the other hand, that the millennium is not exclusively the reign of the glorified saints; the earth as such, with its inhabitants, will be brought into deliverance and blessing. This we saw in Eph. 1: 1.0, where the true key to its character appears — the union of heavenly and earthly glory under one and the same Head, in whom also we, the body, have obtained an inheritance. There will be Jews and Gentiles, blessed as such in their natural bodies on the earth, the subjects of the kingdom; while the glorified saints will be the instruments of blessing to the earth.

Now the earth is made miserable, and men hardly know how far they are gone in rebellion through sin. This is not all; for there is an unseen enemy, a dark and untiring adversary of God and man, who has his hosts of wicked angels subject to himself (Rev. 12), and uses them as the instruments of his seduction. All this will pass away; and those very scenes which are now filled by wicked spirits, the heavenly places (not of course the place where God dwells in His unapproachable glory, but the lower heavens that are connected with the earth) will be a part of the dominion of the church in glory, and the heavenly saints will be as much used to be the means of joy and blessing to the world as the wicked spirits are now the chief agents of all its misery. They may for a little season emerge from their prison after the millennium, to lead the distant nations of the earth into a last conspiracy against the Lord; but they will never regain their former access to the heavenly places, where their influence was the more subtle and dangerous.

Then will dawn the day of the greatest glory for the world. Of course, I am not speaking of the cross; for there is no exaltation Christ will ever have given Him that can be compared with the real, deep glory of His death. It has as it were put it into the power of God to show mercy according to His own heart; and therefore there is not a single joy of the millennium but what will flow from the cross of

Jesus. Nay, it has eternal consequences, and not for the millennium only. But the age to come, or millennium, while very important, and a time of wonderful blessing, will be imperfect. And for this reason: there will be men still in their natural bodies upon the earth, many of whom will be unconverted. Accordingly, this chapter shows us that, after the termination of the thousand years, "Satan will be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together unto the war; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (verses 7, 8). We do not read this in the Old Testament; for as it does not intimate the close of the reign, so neither does it show us the epoch when Satan will be let loose. The terms in which the judgment, upon the evil one is spoken of there might be construed into a single stroke, which made an end of the matter,

From Isaiah 24 we learn that the scene of the punishment of the high ones is to be on high, as the kings of the earth will be punished on the earth. It is evident that by the host of the high ones the Spirit of God does not refer to exalted men on the earth (for they are in contrast with the kings of the earth), but to the powers of evil in the heavenly places. (Compare Eph. 6: 12.) This is exactly what we find, though with fuller detail, in Rev. 12, 19, 20. The kings of the earth meet with their punishment on the earth, while Satan and his minions suffer, the host of the high ones, on high. Satan is cast out to the earth, and his angels are cast out with him. Their place is found no more in heaven. The particulars are not given till the Revelation. That day will see the judgment of all foes above or below. For that this is the millennial day requires no proof.

Next in Isaiah 25: 6 it is said, "And in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." It is a time of blessedness never known before. Nor is it confined to a certain number gathered out as now, but "in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast," etc. "This mountain" is said of the land of Palestine, because it will be to the whole earth the spot where Jehovah will be exalted. Of course this is to be understood morally, not physically. Remark what we have in the next verse. "And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people." The Lord will destroy the darkness that is over the face of all nations now, "and the veil that is spread over all nations." But this era will be also characterized by the resurrection. "He will swallow up death in victory," evidently referring to the first resurrection spoken of in the Revelation. Then only is the victory complete. (Comp. 1 Cor. 15.) "And the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it." It is the time of blessing for the Jewish people, "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us." Here beyond a doubt it is persons upon earth that need to be saved. The church is saved already, and we do not wait for "that day" to come that our God should save us. They will be saved in the day of glory; we are saved in the day of grace. "This is our God: we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of Jehovah rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill." There we have one of the neighbouring enemies of Israel trodden down; for it is to be a day of judgment as well as blessing

In Isaiah 26 it is written, "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city," etc. In the latter part of it, which I would refer to because of its importance, Israel says, "We have been with child, we have been in pain . . . we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth," etc. "Thy dead men shall live" (the words "together with" having no kind of business there), "my dead body shall they arise." "Thy dead men," that is the Jewish people, who are regarded in a figure as being dead; just as in Ezekiel, where they are represented as not only dead but in their graves.

But as the Lord causes His wind to pass over those dry bones, and they live; so here, "Thy dead men shall live, my dead body shall they arise." Not merely thy dead body, but mine. I own them — they belong to me. Jehovah appropriates them as His, dead though they may be. But they are to be so no longer; they shall "arise." "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee." This is not like the church. The heavenly saints do not enter into their chambers on earth, but are taken away to be in the Father's house in heaven. But here is a question of the Jewish people. They are comforted, and are told to arise out of their degradation; "for thy dew is as the dew of herbs." "Come, my people hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." The indignation that God had so long against His people will be turned now into indignation against their enemies. The Assyrian, used heretofore as God's rod for chastening Israel, must now meet with his own final doom. "For, behold, Jehovah cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." And yet this is manifestly the time when He introduces the millennium, not after it is over. Jehovah comes out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth. Is this Eke the gospel, where instead of proclaiming the remission of their sins He comes to punish them? Not at all. Further, "In that day Jehovah, with his sore and great and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent: and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea." Doubtless there is a general reference to the wicked one, Satan the ancient serpent. Only here he is not viewed as having a place on high, but defeated and rejected here below. He is not spoken of with the same minuteness as in the Revelation, which gives us the full light of God on the subject and the details.

Moreover we find that at the end of the millennium God will show that the day of glory (the thousand years, which form the part of the day of Jehovah, when Satan is bound and the Lord Jesus reigns manifestly) will no more convert souls of itself than the day of grace and the publishing of the gospel to the ends of the earth. For if the day of grace requires the immediate power of God to save an individual soul, of course the same power will be requisite here below in the day of glory. Whilst the Lord is there, evil will be kept down; there will be no leader of man in his evil. But the moment Satan is allowed to come out of his place, and again exercises his power, we have plain proof that the heart of man is unchanged. He goes out to the four corners of the earth to deceive the nations, and gathers them together for destruction.

These nations are called by a symbolic name, which is a sort of allusion to the enemies of Israel spoken of in Ezek. 38, 39. But they are not the same, and must be carefully distinguished. For in Ezekiel Gog is literally an individual person — the prince of the vast north-eastern territories and peoples, known in our time as the empire of Russia. Gog is to be the then leader of that country, which is called in scripture "the land of Magog." Indeed this is the positive meaning of the words rendered in our Bibles "chief prince." It ought to be "prince of Rosh." But when the scriptures were translated into Latin, which had a great influence on succeeding versions, the Russian empire did not exist, and could not be known by that name. For the north of Europe and Asia was then merely inhabited by hordes of wandering barbarians, called Sarmatians, Scythians, etc. So when the corrector of the old Latin, Jerome, came to the Hebrew "Rosh," he thought it must be taken not as the name of a people, but as a common noun, meaning "head" or "chief;" just as the Franks, besides giving their name to a neighbouring country which they conquered, also meant "free men." Hence probably in our version "Rosh" was translated chief, which the Hebrew word might equally well bear, if a proper name were not required by the context; for "prince of chief, Meshech and Tubal" makes no good sense. Therefore, I suppose the translators, not knowing what better to make of it, put the clause down vaguely as "chief prince of Meshech and Tubal." However, it is well known that learned persons who had no light, or a

very partial one, on prophecy — scholars who examined the subject a hundred years ago — concluded that Russia was meant. But what is much more important, the Greek version, or Septuagint, made nearly two centuries before Christ, left it as Ῥώς. They did not know what place or race was meant; but seeing that Meshech and Tubal were given as proper names, they understood the preceding word similarly. Thus Gog is really to be "the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal," which will all be found in the Russian empire.* Ezekiel then shows that, when God restores Israel and plants them in their own land, Russia is to be the last great enemy that comes up to attack them, and meets with its own demolition from the hands of God on the mountains of Israel. His prophecy, I think, does not bear on recent events, save as these may lead on to it; much less is it to be confounded with the gathering of Gog and Magog described in verses 8, 9. It cannot mean the same as these; for the Jewish prophet speaks of a vast confederacy before the millennium, or at least at the very beginning of it; while in the Revelation it is after the thousand years are past.

*So even Gesenius in the later results of his researches. It has been objected on the authority of Luitprand's *Chronicle, etc.*, that the only people then called Russians by way of distinction were the dynasty of Norsemen, who under Ruric acquired the throne of Muscovy. "Gens quaedam est sub Aquilonis parte constituta, quam a qualitate corporis Graeci vocant Russos; nos vero a positione loci vocamus Nordmannos." (*De Rebus Imp. et Regg.* v. 6, p. 95, ed. *Antverpiae*, 1640.) But I do not see the force of the argument. If Ezekiel predicts that the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal shall come up to Palestine in the latter day, what has the mediaeval history of the people Rosh to do with it? If Cush or Phut is to suffer in Egypt or in the lower Euphrates, it matters little from what point they first migrated. The prince of Rosh may have sprung from the Northmen, and acquired sway over the descendants of Meshech and Tubal: how does the coming of the Russi from Scandinavia hinder this? Besides there is no doubt of the emigration of a large part at least of the Northerners from the East. The Cushites, Goths, Scyths, are pretty nearly at bottom the same people, as the Druidical religion is of an Oriental source, the north of India having been one great settlement. It is too much to assume that this ecclesiastic nicely distinguished the men of the north who were beginning to make themselves felt and feared at Constantinople. The plain fact is before us that the Seventy translate this, ἄρχοντα Ῥώς, Μεσὸχ καὶ Θοβέλ. Now Ῥώς is the designation the later Greeks use for the Russians, as we see in the Byzantine historians.

Gog and Magog here are symbolical expressions, founded, it is true, upon the prophet of the Chebar, but entirely distinct. The word by Ezekiel has its accomplishment when Israel is restored. (See Ezek. 36, 37.) Gog comes up when they are dwelling in their unwall'd villages, and thinks to make them an easy prey; but the Lord interferes. Gog is put down, and Israel live and flourish quietly in their land. Here they are symbols borrowed from Old Testament circumstances, but applied to a time long subsequent. The last enemy which Israel had to encounter before the millennium was the literal Gog; the last rebellion after it derives its name from that well-remembered effort, of the outside nations. Countless swarms from the four quarters of the earth, under the guidance of Satan, will repeat (never to be repeated again) what the Russian chief will have done before them. They will go up on the breadth of the earth, and compass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city. Of course the earthly people and city are meant; for Israel will then be a body of saints, a holy people, and Jerusalem will be the beloved city, not in mere name, but then in truth the city of the great King. These nations come up and surround them, and God will, if I may say so, be compelled to destroy them for ever. "Fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (verse 9). Fire is always the figure of God's judgment. Thus do they perish. Their leader is not touched by this judgment: a worse fate is reserved for him. "And the devil that deceiveth them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where also [are] the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." His

followers are destroyed by a divine judgment upon earth, but the devil who had led them by his deceits is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.

But there is another scene that follows — the most solemn for man where all indeed is solemn. "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sitteth on it, from whose face fled the earth and the heaven; and there was found no place for them" (verse 11). Mark it well. There are many persons who suppose this to be the time of the coming of Christ, and who consequently put the millennium before His coming. But this will not bear the light of scripture. Without going to proofs outside the chapter, I would just take another ground, which is short and simple, and to my mind perfectly conclusive of the question. When the Lord Jesus comes, He comes to the earth from heaven. This is the universal belief, as far as I know, of all persons who have any defined thoughts about the matter. But such is not the case here. For the Lord sits on a great white throne, and instead of His coming from heaven to earth, both earth and heaven are all gone. It cannot be His coming to the earth, for there is no earth to come to. The entire system of earth and heaven, as they now are, will have vanished out of the scene not annihilated but destroyed; for there is a great difference between those two thoughts. However, the earth is no longer found filling its own place; it has disappeared. The great white throne is not therefore on the earth at all; for from the face of Him that sat on it the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. Lest it should be thought that their fleeing away was a mere figure of speech, it is added that "there was found no place for them." And it is said in 2 Peter 3 they shall be dissolved and their elements melt with fervent heat. Observe then that, when Christ is seen seated on the great white throne, the earth and the heaven are fled away. What are we to draw from it? Either the Lord Jesus Christ must have come before this, or He will never come to the earth at all; for it would not be the same thing to suppose that He merely comes to the new earth. after all judgment — even of the wicked dead — is over. Now we know that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" — "ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." The general faith of Christians is that He will come back to this earth. His feet shall stand in a day yet future on the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and which thenceforward is to be not destroyed, but divided in the midst as a witness of it. These circumstances cannot apply to what St. John calls the new heaven and new earth, but before the last physical change. When the great white throne is found the earth is gone, and therefore the coming of Christ to the earth must have been before that final scene of judgment. In point of fact, too, we have had the coming of Christ already described in Revelation 19, and His reign in the early part of Revelation 20. This gives distinctness to the character of the great white throne.* Nothing can be more simple, if you take it in the order in which God arranges it. But man is ever perverse; and so he blots out the coming of Christ from chapter 19 where it is given, and imagines it in Revelation 20: 11, where it is not and cannot be.

*Most extraordinary is the error for which the later editions of the *Horae Apoc.*, vol. iv. pp. 210-218, are distinguished from their predecessors: the great white throne is now supposed to have been in exercise at the opening as well as at the close of the thousand years. The late Duke of Manchester and a few others had endorsed the same fancy. If Mr. E. "does not see anything in St. John's description" of the blessed reign over the earth, in contrast with the fleeing away of heaven and earth in the subsequent picture, to negative the idea, reasoning, I fear, would be vain. The omission of a detailed account of the Lord's throne in the previous verses is no real difficulty. His reign, and that of the glorified saints generally, we have seen to be distinctly implied in verse 4: they had been amply promised and predicted elsewhere. The needed revelation in this place is exactly what God provides — the comfortable assurance that those called to testify and auger, after the translation of the Old Testament saints and the church, would equally reign with Him during the thousand years, not to speak of eternal blessedness, which was a matter of course.

Observe also that the judgment of the great white throne is not a general judgment, any more than the resurrection spoken of here is a general resurrection. The idea of mixture then is mere imagination. I hold that every soul of man (i.e., of those that have died) must be in one or other resurrection. But scripture shows us that, the resurrection of the just is a totally different thing and at a different time from the resurrection of the unjust: they have nothing in common, save that in both cases soul and body must be reunited for ever. There is no scripture for an indiscriminate rising of all. A few passages are used to make out a show of proof. The Lord says in John 5: 28, "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,* and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." But this does not show that they will rise at the same time. The hour is coming in which both these classes shall rise; but instead of saying that they are all to rise in one common or indiscriminate resurrection, He takes pains to state that they that have done good are to come forth from their graves for a life-resurrection, and they that have done evil for a judgment-resurrection. There are two resurrections, then, not a common one. The very passage that men cite to prove a general resurrection teaches in fact the reverse. St. John's Gospel shows their distinctness in character; his Revelation shows their distinctness in time.

*Not a syllable intimates that there will be one majestic uttered summons, as Dr. Brown assumes. (*Christ's Second Coming*, 4th ed., pp. 193, 194.) Nor is the last trump, or the trump of God, connected with any save the righteous. This trumpet-sound, we know from scripture, is one. The voice of the Son of God, scripture with equal distinctness informs us, is to call from the grave both those that have practised good and those that have done evil; but the passage itself indicates two contrasted resurrections, which are separated by a distinction far deeper than, though confirmed by, the difference of their respective epochs. The question whether His voice is to be kept up through a thousand years is a mere cavil. There is nothing to forbid, but on the contrary everything, in my opinion, to strengthen the thought that the Lord will cause His glorious voice to be heard in closing judgment after the millennium, as in crowning grace before it.

Persons may say, "the hour is coming implies that all are to be raised much about the same time. But the word "hour" is often used in scripture (and indeed everywhere else) in a large sense. It might comprehend a thousand years or more; so that if one resurrection took place at the beginning of the millennium and the other at the end of it, it might still be the same "hour." "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear it shall live." (John 5: 25.) This refers to what has been going on ever since Christ was on earth up to this very moment. "The hour" there takes in nearly two thousand years; and surely it is not too much to infer that "the hour" in verse 28 might embrace, if necessary, a period equally long. Scripture decides it. The same John who shows us the rise of all flesh from the grave, divided into two contrasted resurrections of men characterized by opposite moral qualities, shows us with no less plainness and certainty the interval between these resurrections. The chapter that we are now examining in the Revelation is the answer to the question, and proves that there will be an interval of at least a thousand years between the two.

But this is not all. There is a deep fundamental difference in the nature of the resurrections, as well as a distinction of time. In the gospel of John, the first is said to be a resurrection of life, the second is one of judgment. In the former are the righteous; all who are judged in the latter are the evil. Our translators call it the resurrection of "damnation" though the Teal meaning of the word is "judgment." It is the same word that is used in a verse or two before (verses 21-27). "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." And it is necessary to bear this in mind, that Christ, while as the Son of God He gives life, as Son of man comes to execute judgment in His

kingdom. He gives life to the believer, and executes judgment on the unbeliever. So there are two resurrections answering to these titles. There is the resurrection of life or the resurrection of the believer. It is the application to his body of that power of life which he has already in his soul. But those who have refused Christ, what will they have? The resurrection of judgment. They have despised Christ now; they cannot escape the resurrection of judgment then.

Looking then at Revelation 20, is not this what we have here? First there was the resurrection of life, of "those that have done good." "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." What was said about them? They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. It is a life-resurrection. But look at the others, the wicked — "they that have done evil." "The rest of the dead lived not again till the thousand years were finished." What have you here? "The rest of the dead lived not again till," etc. So they do rise. "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne." None but dead are there, and how differently do they appear before the throne! "And the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (ver. 12).

Now I fully believe that the saints of God will have all their works examined: what they have done in the body will come out. We shall have praise or censure according to our faithfulness or unfaithfulness, when the Lord Jesus takes His place on the judgment-seat, and we stand before Him and are manifested there. It is St. Paul that tells us this. (Rom. 14; 2 Cor. 5)

But the Holy Ghost's object by St. John is to contrast the two resurrections. Therefore not a word is said in the account of the first resurrection about our appealing before Him, that each may receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad; but we are represented as judging others. Such is the way in which the life-resurrection is described. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them." They do, of course, give an account of themselves to the Lord, and receive accordingly; but the Holy Ghost has His own wise reasons for omitting all allusion to it here. It is a resurrection of life in the gospel; and so it is in the Revelation. But when we come to the rest of the dead who have not done good, when they are raised and stand before the throne, what a contrast to a life-resurrection! They have only done evil; and when the book of life is opened, no name is to be found there; for this is not a resurrection of life but of judgment. They are to be judged according to their works, written in these other books; but their works are calling aloud for judgment. Their works being only and always evil, they are judged according to them; and what is the result? There might be a difference among them in some respects: there were great and small. But they were all alike in this — they were not found written in the book of life; and whosoever was not found written there, "was cast into the lake of fire." Not a word is said or hinted that they were written there. This is a resurrection of those who have no part in that book, and they are cast into the lake of fire. It is, as if God were saying, The books of their works call for judgment: is there nothing to be said in defence of these wretched men? The book of life is accordingly opened; but they are not found there: the last hope is gone; and if "any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire" (verse 15). It is the resurrection of judgment. There is no life, no mercy there. Those that had their part in the life-resurrection had been raised long before, and never come into judgment at all; for it is said (John 5: 24), "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment [the same word as in verses 22, 27, 29]; but is passed from death unto life."

Nothing then can be more certain than that this is a separate resurrection, distinct in character, and long severed in time. The resurrection of life had taken place long ago, and now comes the resurrection of judgment. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it." The depths which man could but imperfectly explore cannot hide for a moment longer. Nay, the unseen world, over which he

has no control, is also forced to give up its miserable inmates. "Death and Hades delivered up the dead that were in them: and they were judged each according to their works" (verse 13). And their works condemn them. Not a word is said about them in the book of life, and they are cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. They are raised from their first death to be cast for ever into that place of torment, whence there is no escape.

The, other scripture of most weight, often used for the purpose of proving a general resurrection, is the one in Daniel. What do we find there? It is written in Daniel 12: 1: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people [meaning Daniel's people, the Jews]; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Evidently, this is not the millennium. "And at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." This is not the time when the church is delivered; for we have been delivered long ago through the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. But since the cross of Christ, the Jewish people have only been in misery: that cross was their guilt. They cried, "His blood be on us and on our children." The time of their greatest suffering is to be immediately before the hour of their deliverance. (Jer. 30: 7.) Our deliverance, as theirs, is through the sufferings of Another; but what we suffer is after our deliverance. For the Jews it is a different destiny. They have a tremendous tribulation to go through yet; and it is to be the worst they will have ever had. But immediately after this their final deliverance comes — "At that time thy people shall be delivered," etc. They will not only be delivered as a people, but they will be saved and converted individually, according to God's purpose — "every one that shall be found written in the book." "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

This is commonly applied to the resurrection; but I am persuaded that it does not apply to the rising of the body. It is a figure which is taken from it indeed, and which supposes that great truth to be known. But it is the same kind of expression, and applied to a similar subject and end, that I have referred to in Isa. 26: 19, where Israel was described as "my dead body," and was called on, as one dwelling in the dust, to awake and sing. So here it is said, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." This does not suit any scheme of interpretation, if it be applied to a literal bodily resurrection of good and bad at the same moment. You will observe that this is before the millennium. It is evidently before the time of deliverance and blessing. There is a time of trouble immediately after which Daniel's people are delivered, and those who might have been forgotten (sleeping as it were among the Gentiles), reappear, but not all for the same end — some to shame, and some to everlasting life. (Compare also Isaiah 66: 20, 24.) This does not answer the purpose of those who quote the text. For their idea is, that there is the millennium first, and then the resurrection of good and bad. This resurrection, literal or figurative, is before the millennium, and after it is a time of greater trouble than Israel ever knew.

My conviction therefore is that Dan. 12 refers to the Jews. First, in verse 1, those who are to be delivered are spoken of in connection with the land of Palestine. Then it is shown that many of them who have been sleeping in the dust of the earth will come out of their degradation, will awake, some to everlasting life, etc. Some of those Jews that are to come forward out of their hiding-places all over the earth would prove to be rebels and be treated accordingly; while others will learn that the Lord has wrought with them for His name's sake. We may compare this with Ezekiel 37, where the dry bones set forth the house of Israel. No doubt can be left on any serious mind as to that passage; for the Lord Himself has interpreted it as the figure of the future resurrection of Israel. "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves." And if in Daniel it is said that some

are to have everlasting life, Ezekiel says that the Lord will put His Spirit in them. It is a spiritual as well as a national restoration. So the passage in Daniel refers to a figurative resurrection of Israel, when some will awake out of their moral death.

We may now come back to Rev. 20 with the increased conviction that the doctrine of one general resurrection is a total mistake, and that God's word teaches a resurrection of the just and another of the unjust. This which is spoken of at the close of our chapter is solely of the wicked dead; it is a resurrection of judgment. I appeal to you whether you could rest the salvation of your souls on your works. I admit that our works will be examined, and that we shall receive accordingly; but this is not the same thing as being judged according to them. In the one case the person is accepted, but his works are reviewed for praise or blame; in the other, the person is judged according to works that are not mingled, but altogether bad and only such. For a natural or unconverted man has no life towards God; therefore he can have nothing but evil works to be judged for. Not so with the believer. No doubt there are works sometimes mingled, sometimes even worse in him: but he has a standing beyond all that he is; else salvation were impossible righteously and in peace. He has the new nature that God has given and will not take away; he has also redemption, the forgiveness of sins — both in Christ. His works will be examined, and they have a most important bearing on the position that the Lord will assign him in His kingdom. To be saved or lost is never a question of reward, but of the grace and power of Christ. When we talk of reward, it is a debt due for work done; but when of salvation, it is never spoken of in scripture as a reward of works. It is the grace of Christ — the fruit of His work and suffering, which God has given us in sovereign love.

And when we stand before Christ, it will not be to take our trial for condemnation or acquittal: this would be to deny our justification and the value of His own work. All our ways will be manifested in God's light, and the Lord will bring us triumphantly through; but He will not pass over a single deed, word, or thought that has been against Him. And as a Christian now can before God examine his ways, pass judgment upon them, and thank God for His faithful discipline; so it will be in a still brighter and more blessed and perfect way before the judgment-seat of Christ. It will then be no question of being saved only, but of vindicating the Lord's glory and goodness. Solemn certainly; but is it a thing that we ought to dread? We shall have to be thankful for it through all eternity. For self-judgment even now is no small blessing — next perhaps in value to the joy of grace which leads to our worshipping God and serving Him faithfully in the Spirit. We shall not have a word to say in justification of any fault; but the Lord will have much to say for us. He will bring out all that we have done, and we shall receive according to it. For evil we shall suffer loss; for good He will give us reward.

But what a difference is here! The dead now stand before the throne: what an end! Not annihilation, but incomparably worse — destruction. They have no life — nothing but dead works. They refused Christ; they rejected whatever testimony God tried them by; and what do their works deserve? They are cast into the lake of fire. Death and Hades are now no longer needed; they are personified as the enemies of God and man, and as such are in the vision (verse 14) cast into the lake of fire also.*

*Some will be startled to hear that Mr. E. (H. A., vol. iv. pp. 197-204) applies Matt. 25: 31, etc., to the rapture of the living saints, the dead having been immediately before raised and caught up. Then follows, as he conceives, the catastrophe of an unprecedented disruption of the earth's crust, as far as the Roman world is concerned, the risen saints being perhaps (!) the attendants of the Lord's coming and judgment. In a note to page 291 it is said that, though there may be a primary reference to the judgment of the living at Christ's coming, yet secondarily a more extensive judgment of the dead too may be included. The truth is that all is confusion. In fact the sheep are distinguished from the King's

brethren, as well as contrasted with the goats. Not a word implies resurrection or rapture to heaven. It is a glorious scene on earth, subsequent to Christ's appearing, and therefore to the removal of the heavenly saints, and a judicial dealing not with the dead but the living; and not with all the living, but all the nations or Gentiles who are disposed of on the ground of their behaviour to the King, as presented by His brethren who had announced the kingdom (cf. Matt. 24: 14) before the end came. There is not a trace of resemblance to the scene of the great white throne, nor any judgment of the dead. There is no issue beyond the solemn and final one, for those concerned, of honouring or despising the King in His messenger. Besides, the insuperable difficulty for Mr. E and for most expositors is the place which the revelation of the first resurrection occupies, viz., after the destruction of the beast. The non-recognition of a previous rapture of saints, to whom the Apocalyptic sufferers are added just before the millennium, is the occasion of these errors, the denial of the true and proper character of the church being probably the grand source of all.

We hear of none but unbelievers here. Only such indeed come into judgment, as we know from Him who assures us that believers do not come there; and none with whom God enters into judgment are or can be justified. It is the judgment of the dead after all the righteous who slept in Christ had been raised to reign with Him long before. The saints who lived do not enter this judgment, though no doubt they, like ourselves, shall render an account of all to God.

Revelation 21

It would have been a happier division of these chapters if Revelation 21: 1-8 had been made a part of the same series of events which was given in Revelation 20, following it in unbroken succession. There is a very decided termination of the chain at the close of the eighth verse of this chapter. Thence to the end, and taking in the first five verses of Revelation 22, we have another connected portion. The first eight verses refer to a totally different time from what follows. From Revelation 21: 9 we have to go back again to the millennium; whereas the previous verses of the chapter are the fullest account that the word of God furnishes of the new heavens and new earth, in the proper sense of the words. This is subsequent to the thousand years' reign, to the great white throne, and of course to the complete dissolution of the heavens and earth that now are, which were found when that throne was set up. Then, when this account of the eternal state is closed, the Spirit of God supplies a very important appendix, if I may be allowed the expression, on the state of things during the millennium, which was not given when that epoch was noticed in the historical sequence of Rev. 19, 20, 21: 1-8.

But perhaps it may be asked by some objectors, What is the authority for dividing the chapters thus? Why not take the whole of Revelation 21 (as it was probably understood by those who made the division) as one and the same time? Why not suppose that the account of the New Jerusalem in verse 10 refers to the same date as the mention of it in verse 2? The answer is simple. In the eternal state God has to do with men. All time distinctions are at an end. There is no such thing then as kings and nations. Accordingly, this we do find in the first eight verses. Take for example the third verse: "And I heard a loud voice out of heaven [or the throne], saying, Behold the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God." Whereas, if we look at the latter part of the chapter, we have again to do with nations and earthly kings. "And the nations shall walk by means of its light; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory," etc. When eternity begins, God has done dealing with things according to the order of the world-kings and nations, and the like provisions of a temporal nature. All this implies government, as government supposes that there is evil which requires suppression. Consequently, in the latter part of our chapter it

is not the eternal condition which we have, but a previous state, the early verses (1-5) of Revelation 22 being the continuation of this description. There a tree is described, "and the leaves of the tree [are] for healing of the nations." That is, at the time of which the verse speaks not only are there nations, but they are not removed from the need of healing, and God supplies what they want. This must convince any unprejudiced mind that the Spirit of God in Revelation 22 does not refer to what follows the last judgment, when all that is connected with the world is entirely closed, but that He goes back to a previous state when God is still governing. It will be observed also that in the portion relative to the millennium (that is, from verse 9 of Rev. 21) we have dispensational names, such as the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb; not so in Revelation 21: 1-8, which discloses eternity, where God shall be all in all.

But it may help souls still further to remark, that it is the manner of God in this book to take a retrospect. I say this to show that I am not at all arguing for something without precedent, in the order in which, as I conceive, these events are arranged. Take, for instance, Revelation 14. There we had seen a regular sevenfold series of events, in the course of which the fall of Babylon occupies the third place. After that comes the judgment on the worshippers of the beast; next the Holy Ghost pronounces the blessedness of those that die in the Lord; then the Lord's coming in judgment, presented in two ways, as reaping the harvest, and as trampling the winepress (the harvest, a judgment of discrimination, and the vintage one of pure vengeance). Babylon there has got its place assigned very clearly. But long after this in the prophecy, when the Spirit of God has given us the seven vials of God's wrath, we have Babylon again. The fall of Babylon is under the seventh vial. And this is important: for the Holy Ghost then proceeds to describe the character and conduct of Babylon, that required such a fearful visitation from the hand of God. In this case the Holy Ghost has carried us down in Revelation 14 to events subsequent to Babylon's fall, and even to the Lord's coming in judgment; and then He returns to show us details about Babylon and her connection with the beast, and the kings of the earth, in Revelation 17-18.

Now it appears to me that this exactly answers to the order of the events in Revelation 21. There is a striking analogy in the way in which Babylon and the heavenly Jerusalem are introduced, and though, of course, there is the strongest and most marked contrast between the two objects themselves, still there is enough to make it manifest that the Holy Ghost had them together in His mind, as it seems to me. Thus, in Rev. 17: 1, it is said, "There came one of the seven angels that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither; I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sits by the many waters." Such is the announcement, where the vision goes back to describe Babylon and her doom. Just so are we introduced to the counterpart of this vision in Rev. 21, which looks back at the bride, the Lamb's wife. "And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." As Babylon had had its place defined in the historic line of events, and then that line being completed, the Holy Ghost stopped to disclose, retrospectively and at full, those moral ways which had forced God, so to speak, to judge her; so exactly the Lamb's wife, the New Jerusalem, had been seen in both capacities, in the final sketch of the history up to the very end. And now the Holy Ghost goes back to describe the same New Jerusalem, with reference to the millennial reign, and the kings and nations then to be on earth. We have seen the bride, the Lamb's wife, that had made herself ready, in Revelation 19: 7. We have had in Revelation 21: 2 the New Jerusalem spoken of as coming down from God out of heaven, still fresh in bridal beauty, after more than a thousand years have passed away. But now in 21: 9 the very important fact comes out, that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is the holy city Jerusalem. "There came unto me one of the seven angels . . . and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain

great and high, and showed me [not that great city, but] the holy city Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." John was called to see the bride, and looking, he saw the heavenly Jerusalem. Thus, if we had the bride in relation to the Lamb in Revelation 19, and as the holy city, New Jerusalem, in relation to the eternal state, verse 9 and the following verses of this chapter show us that, during the interval between the marriage of the Lamb, and the new heaven and earth in the eternal state, she has a very blessed place in the eyes of God and man. It is the church's millennial display.

These few prefatory remarks may clear the way, and prove that I am not assuming more than can be demonstrated in taking the first eight verses as the proper sequel of the series of events found in Revelation 19 - 20, and the rest of this chapter from verse 9, as a retrogressive description of the millennial state. There are evidently the strongest reasons for it, and indeed, any other interpretation is, I conceive, out of the question, if the context be duly weighed. It is impossible for an unbiassed and instructed person, who carefully considers the circumstances here described, to suppose that what follows the 9th verse can synchronize with the section which immediately precedes. They are, as already remarked, two irreconcilable states of things.*

*Had Mr. Elliott sufficiently weighed these considerations, I cannot think that he would have left the readers of the *Horae Apoc.* (vol. iv. pp. 210-218) in such perplexity as to the chronological place of these visions of the New Jerusalem. The reason why "such strong arguments," as he confesses, "press antagonistically" for the millennial and the post-millennial reference is, because each aide has a measure of truth left out of the account by the ether. On the one hand, it is not only the cursory but the most careful reader who is compelled to allow that Revelation 21: 1-8, fairly interpreted, is post-millennial. On the other hand, the internal evidence from verse 9 is equally conclusive that, with this new vision of the Seer, we begin a retrospective glance at the same city during the millennium, though of come its own intrinsic blessedness and glory will abide for ever.

What is it that the Holy Ghost shows the apostle, after the old heaven and earth had disappeared and the last judgment? "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and the sea was no more." These words are not to be taken in a mere preparatory and moral sense. The prophet Isaiah had spoken in that way. In Isaiah 65 a new heavens and a new earth were announced: but how differently! There the language must be taken in a very qualified sense indeed. "For, behold (verse 17), I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed." Clearly this is a very bright change, but it is an earthly condition. There are infants and old men here; and though the description is purposely contrasted with anything the world has yet seen, still it is a time-state of blessedness, and not of eternity. The apostle John shows us in the Revelation the new heaven and the new earth, not in a relative sense but in the most absolute. In the Old Testament they are limited, because connected with Israel upon the earth. So it is said of the Lord, "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end." This is an Old Testament hope, though said in the New, and it means of course that He shall reign over the house of Jacob as long as it exists as such upon the earth. When the earth disappears and Israel is no longer seen as a nation, they will be blessed, no doubt, in another and better way; but there will be no reign of Christ over them as an earthly people here below; so that this kingdom, while it has no end as lone, as the earth subsists, must necessarily be, limited by the earth's continuance. It is thus that I understand the new heavens and the

new earth spoken of in Isaiah. The New Testament uses the phrase fully and absolutely, as an unending state; but in the Old Testament it is tied down to the earthly relations of which the Holy Ghost was then speaking.

What makes it still clearer is that the next verse (Isaiah 65: 21) goes on to say, "And they shall build houses and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit . . . mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord," etc. Now all this is most cheering. So again, "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord." Glowing and beautiful as this picture is of what the Lord can accomplish, it is in connection with the earth and an earthly people. It is not the eternal state, but an exceedingly glorious day when death will be the exception and life the rule. I say that death will be thus rare, at least in the Holy Land, because of that verse, "The child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed." The meaning is, that if a person dies at a hundred years old, he will still be comparatively a child; and that even when death occurs at that age, it is only as the result of an express curse of God. Thus will it be during the millennium.

And this seems to answer a question often asked: What will become of all the righteous people during that wonderful reign? If the first resurrection is then past, and in the second resurrection none but the wicked dead are raised, what can be the destiny of the righteous who live during the millennium? The truth is, there is no scripture proof that such die during the thousand years. What is said supposes the contrary. Therefore, if they die not during the millennium, there are no righteous to be raised at the end of it. The resurrection at the end remains consequently for the wicked dead solely. The righteous will be raised before the millennium the wicked after it. The just who live during the reign of Christ are not called to die at all, as far as scripture informs us. We may be sure that these millennial saints will be changed into the likeness of Christ; they will be transplanted into the new heavens and earth. We are not called upon to conjecture how this will be. It is sufficient for us to know that, though they are not described as dying during the millennium, and therefore do not need to be raised; yet when the new earth appears men are found upon it quite distinct from the New Jerusalem (i.e., the symbol of the glorified heavenly saints). I believe that verse 3 warrants this statement. "Behold, the tabernacle of God [or the city that descends] is with men," etc.

Another proof that Isaiah does not speak of the eternal state described here is this: When the new heavens and earth are seen by the New Testament prophet, the old are said to be passed away, and the sea no longer exists. Not so in Isaiah's prophecy. There it was rather the spirit or pledge of the new that came into the old; a shadow of what was to be, and not the very image or accomplishment of the thing. They are said prophetically to be "new," because of the great joy and blessing that God will give to His people Israel in their land. In the Revelation "there was no more sea." In the Old Testament, on the contrary, "the abundance of the sea (it is said) shall be converted unto thee . . . Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first." (Isaiah 60.) There can be no just doubt that this chapter speaks of the same time as Isaiah 65. "For thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." This and other passages prove that there is still to be sea at the time spoken of by Isaiah: the isles and ships necessarily suppose it; and "the isles afar off" are introduced between the two statements of the new heavens and new earth in Isaiah 65 and Isaiah 66.

Here in Revelation not merely the present dispensation but the present heaven and earth have passed away, and give place to "all things made new." Doubtless the new heaven and earth will be made out of the old. Just as the resurrection-body will be formed out of the present body of humiliation by the power of God, so are the present earth and heavens destined to a kindred transformation. After

the dissolution they will reappear in the form of the new heavens and earth. "No more sea" would be impossible without a miracle, as long as life in its present condition has to be maintained. The sea, as my reader knows, is absolutely necessary to animated nature as it is. Man could not exist without it; and so with regard to every animal and even vegetable upon the face of the earth, not to speak of the vast world of waters. But when time is done — when there is no longer the natural life that is sustained by God — when the millennium shall have yielded the brightest witness to this as well as to every other fruit of His wisdom and goodness and power — a new state of things altogether will ensue, and this perfect and everlasting. There will be new heavens and a new earth; for the first heavens and first earth are passed away; and there is no more sea. Perfection is come for the universe.

But that is not all — Into this dwelling-place and scene of order that God will have made, so remarkably distinguished from all that has been before, and even from that which accompanies the reign of His own Messiah, John sees "the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice out of heaven, saying, Behold the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God" (verses 2, 3). I apprehend that the New Jerusalem is the tabernacle of God. It is where He abides in a very special sense. And this tabernacle of God descends out of heaven to be with men. The heavenly saints compose the tabernacle of God; while those that are found upon the new earth are simply described as "men." They are no longer Jews and Gentiles then, as in the millennium; this will have all passed away with "the first or former things." Every distinction which had to do with time is at an end. When a saint is risen or changed, he is no longer a Jew or a Greek; he is a man, though bearing the image of the heavenly. So here God has to do with men, and "he shall dwell with them and they shall be his people; and God himself shall be with them, their God." Instead of regarding it from a distance, God will not merely come to visit the scene that His hand has made for man as of old in the garden of Eden; but He will dwell eternally in their midst. "And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; and no sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, shall any more be; for the first things are passed away" (verse 4). Unquestionably the figures that are used to describe this state of things are derived from Isaiah — figures which the Spirit of God had applied primarily to millennial blessedness. Isaiah predicts a glorious but earthly condition, which God will make true of the just during the millennium. Blessedness will then be the rule, sorrow the exception. Similar terms, but with striking differences, the Holy Ghost now takes up and applies in a far deeper and really unqualified sense.

And if we look for a moment at 2 Peter 3 we shall find, I think, a link between Isaiah and Revelation. It is written in 2 Peter 3: 10, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. . . . The heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." Now it appears to me plain that this is what takes place at the epoch of the great white throne. For the moment the Lord is on that throne, the earth and heaven flee from before His face, and there is found no place for them. It is a part of "the day of the Lord." which day comprehends the whole time from the Lord's interference to judge the world, taking His great power and reigning, until He delivers up the kingdom, after the millennium and the subsequent judgments are over.* "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

*My friend Dr. Brown will forgive me for thinking that the argument, even in its amended shape (*Second Advent*, p. 289), which he "believes it to be impossible to answer," is a complete and obvious fallacy. I deny that the day of the Lord, as St. Peter uses it, is the mere epoch of the Lord's coming, but rather the entire period covered by His reign and judgment. Hence the millennium, as well as the final dissolution of the actual heaven and earth, may and do occur within the compass of His day, while His coming may precede them both. His mistake lies in identifying the day with the coming of the Lord.

Now this is the state described, with fuller details of time and character, by the apostle John. The new heaven and earth are what we find in the beginning of Revelation 21. These are the new heavens and earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." Righteousness is at home there, because there God dwells, and this can only be because righteousness is the pervading feature. It is plain that the Holy Spirit in St. Peter refers to the passage of Isaiah, as it is said, "We according to his promise." But still He gives it a larger and deeper meaning. And St. John, the last of the New Testament writers, takes up the same thought, and puts each truth in its place. He shows us that while the millennium may be a partial fulfilment of it, the full force of the expression will not appear till the millennium is over; and then, when all is according to divine thought and purpose, God will rest, and men — not Israel only, but redeemed and glorified men — shall be His people, and He their God.

To one other scripture I must refer, in order to connect the various passages which bear on the eternal state. In 1 Cor. 15: 23 we read that every one is to be raised in his own order: "Christ the first-fruits [who is raised already]; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when he delivers up [which is the true reading] the kingdom to God, even the Father, when he shall put down all rule and all authority and power." This is the task of Christ during the millennium: He will abolish all opposing rule, subjecting to Himself every adversary and all things unto the glory of God the Father; for such is the ultimate object of His exaltation, as we see from Phil. 2. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." This exactly harmonizes with Rev. 20 - 21, where we find, first the reign of Christ, then death destroyed, and after that the new heaven and earth, which is the time when Christ is said in 1 Cor. 15: 24 to deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. Not that Christ will cease to reign divinely: but the special human reign of Christ will terminate — that is His reigning for a given period over an earthly people, and the world at large, which the heavenly saints in glory will share along with Him. This will end. All the righteous will at last be in a risen or changed condition, all the wicked dead cast into the lake of fire, and the kingdom closes. Its surrender to God the Father in no way touches the personal glory of the Lord Jesus. The kingdom that Christ has during the millennium is not what He has as God, but as the risen man — as the One who was humbled, but has been exalted. This He delivers up to God, even the Father (Himself also as man taking the place of subjection in glory, as of old He did in grace on the earth), that God — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — may be all in all — God as such having the place of supremacy throughout eternity. But although the human or mediatorial kingdom of Christ will terminate, not so the divine kingdom; and therefore we, being made partakers of the divine nature, are said to reign for ever and ever. (Rev. 22.) So in Romans 5 it is said, "We shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Of course, partaking of the divine nature does not touch the incommunicable glory of the Godhead. But it remains true that we have an eternal life, and that its endless character flows from the fact that it is given to us by One who, though truly man, is a divine person, by Him who is the living One and was dead, and, behold, is alive for evermore. "We shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ" — a reign which is not limited in time any more than sphere.

You will observe that it is God who is prominent through this portion, exactly answering to what we saw in 1 Cor. 15: 28. "And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he

saith [to me], Write; for these words are true and faithful" (verse 5). He speaks that sits on the throne. We do not get the Lamb mentioned. It is the glory of God in the fullest possible sense that we have here. "And he said to me, They are done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." No doubt Christ is the Alpha and the Omega too, as we find in Revelation 22: 13; but it is not the Lord as such that acts and speaks here, but God. "I will give him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be a God to him, and he shall be a son to me" (verses 6, 7). Nothing can be plainer than that it is God as such who is speaking all through. "But for the cowardly, and unbelievers, and abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers and idolaters, and all the false, their part [shall be] in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (verse 8). A most awful word of warning, and especially as used here! For mark the force of it. It is then God shall be all in all — God who is love. But He is not merely love, which is a false and infidel thought; He is light as well as love. It as much appertains to God to be holy as to be gracious; and the very same portion of His word teaches us both these truths. And here is the final proof of it. In love He comes down to be with His people. They may be men, but they are no longer in weakness and sorrow; for God Himself has wiped away every tear from their eyes. But He is light, and therefore in presence of all things new, where righteousness dwells in peace, when there is no evil or sin, but separation from it for ever by the power of God; even then the portion of the wicked is in the lake burning with fire and brimstone. Note well that this is the eternal state. Remember that in the eternal state there is the doom, the never-ending doom, of those who have rejected Christ and taken their stand on their own miserable self. Here is the award from God Himself. Their part is the second death, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, as the Lord Jesus so touchingly expresses it No declaration can be more solemn than that of Rev. 21: 8, not only because of its character, but because of its place. When God will have rest in the new heavens and earth — when He will come down to abide among men, because there will no longer be any evil to check — His dwelling with them — then it is that the awful scene presents itself of evil and its hopeless unending torment. This is what God teaches us in His picture of the eternal world. There is not only the bright side, but none the less the lake of fire, which has its course; nor does a word intimate that its horrors will ever come to an end.

But now the Holy Ghost, having brought us to "the end" in the most absolute sense, leads us back again. We have seen the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, when this eternal condition begins. But what is its relation to the millennial earth? If we had only the previous revelations, we could not have answered this clearly. The bride, the Lamb's wife, has had her joy consummated in heaven; then as the New Jerusalem, after the millennium, she has taken her place as regards the new heavens and earth; but what is her relation to those here below during the millennium? This is now made plain. "There came one of the seven angels that had, etc. . . . and talked to me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Its lustre [was] like a stone most precious, as a jasper stone crystal-clear." It appears to me that this account of the city's bright lustre like a jasper has a very close connection with what had just before been said of it, as having the "glory of God." For when God Himself was seen on the throne in Revelation 4, He was in appearance like a jasper and a sardis. Here the New Jerusalem has God's glory, and its lustre is jasper-like. But this is not all. "It had a wall great and high," and after this we are told in the 18th verse that "the building of its wall was of jasper." Hence it is plain that this is peculiarly the stone which is used to describe the glory of God, as far as it can be seen by a creature — not the glory of God which the creature cannot see. For God has a glory which no man can approach unto. But He is pleased also to display His glory suitably

to the capacity of a creature; and the precious stone used to set this forth is in the book of Revelation the jasper.

Besides this, we are told it had "twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel." The number "twelve" is particularly mentioned throughout the account of the New Jerusalem. It was just before said that the city had the glory of God, in the hope of which we rejoice. (Rom. 5: 2.) Here we find that this hope, for which we wait and in which we rejoice, is enjoyed. But God is pleased to remember that He is dealing with people on the earth, and the New Jerusalem has a very special relation to men during the millennium. Accordingly, there are twelve gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written upon them. At the gates stand twelve angels, showing their subordination. In this day of glory the angel is happy to be a porter at the gate of the heavenly city — happy, if he do not enter, to have his work and mission outside. "Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." (Heb. 2.) "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6.) "And the wall of the city hath twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (verse 14:). Eph. 2: 20 gives us, I think, the force of the symbol. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints . . . and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." No doubt the whole building is growing up into an holy temple in the Lord. But we are built upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets," both of the New Testament. If Old Testament prophets had been meant, they would naturally, to avoid mistake, have been set before apostles; but the expression as it stands seems purposely framed to guard against such a misconception. The prophets of the Old Testament were the filling up of the law, besides testifying future things, judgments, the new covenant, etc. The law and the prophets, as it is said, were until John. (See also Matt. 5: 17.) Their authority never can be destroyed. But when Messiah was rejected by Israel, and redemption was accomplished on the cross, there was a new foundation laid for a new work of God, entirely distinct from what the law or the prophets, or even John the Baptist, contemplated. It is the foundation of the [New Testament] apostles and prophets, and it is upon this that the New Jerusalem is built. Now God has brought out His full mind as a foundation of truth.

Certain things were yet reserved in Old Testament times. Look at Deuteronomy (Deut. 29: 29). "The secret things," says Moses there, "belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the works of this law." Revealed things here have to do with the law and its consequences, for the purpose of enforcing obedience. But the secret things, which then belonged to God, are themselves now revealed — the resources of grace, when all was ruin under the law. And this is what the apostle Paul lays such stress on, while he tells us how that by revelation God made known to him the mystery or secret, "whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." And so Col. 1: 26. The Holy Ghost had brought out what had been a secret thing in the days of old. The mystery is revealed. This full revelation of truth appears to be called the foundation of the apostles and prophets on which the Church is built. Therefore it is said in 1 Tim. 3: 13, that the Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth." The truth has come out, and God has as it were no secrets now. All that He chose to reveal. all that would be of service to the creature, and to the glory of His own Son, God has brought out; so that, in this sense and in every other, it may be said, that "the darkness passeth, and the true light now shineth." So then upon this broad and deep foundation — where not merely the dealings of God with individuals, or a people connected with His promises or His government are shown out; but where all that can be known of God by the creature has been revealed

in His Son — upon this foundation the Church is built. And this is now made manifest to His saints, which was hidden but is now revealed. "The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb." They were the instruments of this revelation.

"And he that talked with me had a golden reed as a measure, that he might measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth quadrangular, and the length is as great as the breadth. . . . The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal" (verses 15, 17). It was the image of the perfection of a city "whose builder and maker is God." I do not mean that this description is to be taken as if it were of a literal city. I conceive that it is a purely symbolical picture as to certain relations of the bride, the Lamb's wife. The scripture itself most positively says that it is (not the dwelling-place of the redeemed, but) the bride herself described as a city. Just as the apostate church, the vast idolatrous ecclesiastical system so often spoken of in this book, was symbolized as the great city Babylon; so here the glorified Church is characterized as the bride, the Lamb's wife, in contrast with the great harlot, and as the holy city descending out of heaven from God, in contrast with the great city which rules over the rulers of the earth. When we read, then, of the city forming a quadrangle, of equal length, breadth, and height, it is simply to be understood as figurative of its perfectness. At the same time these symbols must not be run into one another. For immediately after it is said, "he measured the wall thereof, of an hundred and forty-four cubits, — a man's measure, that is, of an angel" (verse 17). Now the city's height was previously given as equal to the length and breadth, i.e., twelve thousand furlongs. This of course is enormously greater than a hundred and forty-four cubits, which is expressly made to refer to the height of the wall. First, we have the general idea of a city which is every way square, a cube in fact; then, when we come to the details of the wall, a height is given which shows that we are not to look for mere literal consistency as if it were a portrait. The number twelve keeps up the idea of a perfection in reference to man.

"And the building of its wall was of jasper; and the city [was] pure gold, like clear glass" (verse 18). We have already found the meaning of these two figures, the gold and the glass, in an earlier part of the book. The Lord counselled the Laodicean church in its fallen state to buy of Him "gold tried in the fire." It is invariably the figure of divine righteousness — of righteousness that can stand the searching fire of God's judgment. Human righteousness could not bear it, and so is never represented by gold, but rather by white linen. God could cleanse this and leave it without spot or stain. But fire would be destruction to it; whereas, with regard to the gold, it would only bring out its perfection. Accordingly this city is of pure gold, "like clear glass." Holiness, now fixed and without flaw, also marks the city. With regard to our need of holiness, the means of it are represented under the figure of water, because it is a question of cleansing from defilement in a practical way. In the Revelation this is not the case; for from the fourth chapter the saints who are put in connection with holiness are risen saints, and consequently are beyond the means of cleansing. They are therefore represented, as also in the case of that body of saints mentioned in Revelation 15, as on a sea of glass, because it is purity and this in a fixed unalterable condition. Their state is no longer that which might need to be cleansed. It is holiness that repels everything defiling. So here the city is of pure gold, like unto clear glass. In Rev. 15 it is remarkable that the sea of glass is said to be mingled with fire, which was not the case in Rev. 4; and this because the saints spoken of there had not only gone through this complete purging, and were now in a state of unalterable purity, but they had gone through the last terrible tribulation, of which fire is the known figure. From this tribulation the raptured saints of Rev. 4 had been exempt. Thus then we have the city of pure gold, like clear glass; that is, divine righteousness has its full way now, and holiness beyond nature that nothing can touch.

"And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones:

the first foundation jasper, etc. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one severally of the gates was out of one pearl:* and the street of the city was pure gold, as transparent glass" (verse 19-21). Without pretending to give the spiritual meaning of the various precious stones, we may learn thence that in every variety of beauty will God array His people in that day of glory. There will be different rays of His glory reflected through them, set forth by these different precious stones. In God's own case it is not so. His essential glory is not described after this fashion. It is full concentrated light. It is not what is broken up into a variety of hues, if we may so say, as in the case of the glory He confers on the church. God is light, and He dwells in light which no man can approach unto. The rainbow of many colours was the sign by which God showed His covenant with creation, and His various ways with poor man. But when it is the lustre of the saints in heavenly glory, and the way in which God will display the beauty of His people, — for He does see beauty in them, — these precious stones are the emblems employed.

*Some readers will be astonished to hear that a man of Michaelis' reputation should adduce this as an instance of "false translation." (*Int. N. T.*, vol. iv. p. 507.) It is not un instructive to mark the process of mind it betrays — the very same which leads many to reject the Bible, and this writer himself to asperse the Apocalypse. "A pearl, whether we consider the rotundity of the figure, or the softness of its mass, is very ill-qualified to become the gate of a city, even if that city exists only in poetical description." But what if it be morally didactic in a symbolic prophecy? "The word used in the Greek is margarith", and that ought to be rendered precious stone! for this is the meaning ascribed to the word in Chaldee . . . M. is used perhaps in the same sense, Matt. 13: 45, 46." To refute this seems to me quite needless. Every one can see how definite is the Seer's description of the various precious stones, and the spiritual man will feel the blank created by the absence of the "pearl."

"And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one severally of the gates was of one pearl." Such they appeared to men outside: something quite beyond nature. It is a description that alludes to the earthly Jerusalem; but in the latter city, what is really found existing in nature will be brought to adorn it. Here the beauty of the church is set forth by a supernatural imagery: each one of the gates was made out of one pearl. They are symbols which set forth the perfect and divine beauty that God will put upon His people. This is already true of them in Christ, but actually and personally will they thus shine in that day. Each gate being of one pearl would show I suppose, the special likeness of Christ and fellowship with Christ, which God will grant to His people — to the church. In Matthew 13 we have, as I conceive, the Lord Jesus as a merchantman in quest of goodly pearls; who, when He had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that He had and bought it. It is the beauty of the church, as viewed in God's mind, which if one may say it, fascinated the Lord Jesus, so that He parted with all His earthly glory to get that pearl: a strong expression indeed, but not too strong to convey His appreciation of the church. But we know that if the Lord saw any beauty in the church, it was all derived from Himself. He saw the church as she was in the mind and purpose of God, and sells all that He might purchase this pearl of great price, which after all is but the reflection of His own beauty. So here, the spotless pearl, the perfection of moral beauty that had been so precious in the eyes of Christ, is the figure of what, even at the entrance, will appear in the eyes of men and angels.

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God, the Almighty, is its temple, and the Lamb" (verse 22). This is very important For perhaps some one may say, What has all this to do with the saint now? I answer, The world must wait for the day of glory to see the beauty of the church. And we, like the world, are so often unbelieving, that we are apt to see only the dark painful circumstances of the church, if we escape the delusive dream of an improving Christendom. Which of us carries habitually constantly in our hearts the delight of the Lord Jesus in opening out what the church is going to be —

may, what it is in His eye and to His heart? Our unbelief as to this is one main secret source of our murmuring and rebellious spirit. I do not say that we ought not to feel the failure of God's church as things are on earth: God forbid such a thought! But we might feel it more lovingly and more keenly too had we a deeper sense of its nearness to Christ and the glory it is soon to shine in. A good deal of what we feel, when evil is seen in the children of God, is because self is touched. We are all inclined to deal hardly enough with a person's vanity, pride, or things of the kind. Why? Is it not too frequently because it wounds us? We have possibly not had the share of respect and importance to which we fancied ourselves entitled, and we are readily sore about it. But this is not according to Christ. Not that we should be insensible to the ways of the flesh and the world, but we should feel all with Christ and not for ourselves. What can enable us? Nothing but the heart filled with Christ and the exceedingly blessed place in which He puts us. We are called to exhibit the Lord Jesus now. It is not merely that we are to be members of His flesh, and of His bones, but that so we are now; and therefore love and desire for God's glory would lead us to seek ways answering to this in the church and before men. What God will show to the whole universe by and by, He would have us to look for in His people now.

When that day comes there will be no hindrances; but the action of the Holy Ghost is to make good in us what will be perfectly manifest then, and what is true in principle now. If there is a spot upon another who is to shine alone, with Christ then, this stirs up our affections that the evil may be removed in God's way and for His glory. And this it is which so increases our sense of shame that such blots should be upon ourselves. It is evident to me that the Holy Ghost reveals the description of the divine glory that is to be in the church, in order to act with great practical power on our souls now, the word being mixed with faith in them that hear it. The real reason why it so little profits us is that we are such unbelieving believers. We are believers; but is it not humiliating that we can pass over such precious fruits of Christ's love, such bright visions of assured glory, as if we did not need them now, or as if they were not the faithful and true words of God? We shall be in glory by and by, and know as we are known; but it is revealed to those who are not in it yet, that their souls may be full of the joy of it now, and that the effects of it may be manifest even to the world that despises them. The Holy Spirit is the earnest of the inheritance, as well as the seal of redemption.

But this is true not of the beauty only in which the church is to shine then; there is another thing, which ought to have a mighty influence upon us now. There is an immediate relation to God in the way of worship: and what then? The symbol here used is that of a city, and therefore we are not described as priests. If we were spoken of as persons, we should be described as brought near to God, that is, as priests; and so we are in Rev. 20: 6. But here it is a city — and a city in which there is no temple: not because there was no special seat of the presence of God there, but because His presence filled it all and equally. The access to God is immediate. But this also is a truth applicable now. (Hebrews 10.) Here below there is no temple nor priests now between us and God. Undoubtedly we have above the great and faithful High Priest — a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. But there will be below, during the future kingdom, for those on earth that need Him, when "He shall sit as a Priest upon his throne." Thus, to the Christian there is neither temple nor priest on earth now. We stand, as to our faith, in the immediate presence of God, with His perfect favour shining on us. If persons do not feel this, it is because they do not believe it. We must always believe a thing on God's word first; and the more simply we believe, the more shall we enjoy the comfort, strength, and fruits of the truth.

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God, the Almighty, is the temple, and the Lamb. And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, that they should shine on it." No earthly nor even heavenly lights of the old creation are wanted there. "For the glory of God lightened it, and the light

[literally, lamp] thereof is the Lamb" (verse 23). How wonderfully all this description falls in with a few words in John 17, to which I must refer before going farther.

In His astonishing prayer (if we can call that a prayer, which is more like the Son unbosoming Himself to the Father) the Lord says, "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." It was divine, but not His Godhead glory, for this never can be *given*, belonging to God, and none else. The Lord Jesus had Godhead glory, but not given to Him, because He had it essentially; He had it in His own right, as being God, from all eternity. But what the Father gave to Him as man, He gave to His disciples: "that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." Now this exactly corresponds with what we have in the Revelation, for the holy city is seen there descending out of heaven from God: and the Lamb is in it, and the Lord God makes Himself known, so to speak, specially in Him; for the Lamb is not merely the light, but the vessel of it, or light-bearer. We may consider the light diffused, as it is said, "the glory of God had lightened it;" but if we want to see the light concentrated, where are we to look? The Lamb is that light. Thus does God make Himself to shine through all the glorious city: the Lamb is the great concentrating object, diffusing light over the whole scene. This, then, is the order of it — "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know,"* etc. The Lamb makes God known to them, as they make Him known to all others. This is what appears in the Revelation. "The nations shall walk by means of its light." not in the light of the Lamb immediately, but by means of the light of the heavenly city: precisely what we find in John 17; "that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." There is, I apprehend, what answers to the nations walking by means of the light of the city. Through these nations the church had passed in the days of her pilgrimage, and been despised because of her fellowship with Christ. (1 John 3: 1.) For, as He had been there and unknown, "therefore the world knoweth us not." But now, when the bright day shines, when Jesus, long absent and rejected, the blessed and exalted man, the Lord from heaven, comes in His glory, Himself the faithful witness and accomplishment of the glory of God, as indeed He is the brightness of it, He will not be seen apart from His bride.

*It is very evident that the author of the H. A. (vol. iv. pp. 184, 196) does not understand this passage, which he justly conceives to be too often misapprehended and misapplied. For while he rightly affirms that verses 22, 23, apply to the time of glorification, the only time of perfect and displayed unity, it is a mistake to confound this with the unity prayed for in verses 20, 21, which is as clearly a question of grace and testimony to the world, as the other will be of glory and the world's knowledge. The truth is that unity is asked. for in three forms. There is, first, that which is absolute and in the twelve apostles, in verse 11, "that they may be one, as we." Secondly, there is that which should embrace those who were to believe through the apostles' word, "that they all" (whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free) "should be one" (not by virtue of the law of Jehovah and the enforced rites and ordinances of the Levitical system, but by the revelation of the Father and the Son); "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe" (not yet know, but believe) "that thou hast sent me." Such a testimony the gathered saints were while they walked in heavenly unity here below. Then comes the third and crowning form, which it is impossible for the world to deny, when they behold the saints appearing in the same glory with Christ; and therefore it is added, "that the world may know that thou hast sent me," but this is not all, "and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." How gainsay it, when Christ and the church burst upon their astonished eyes in a community of glory? But this does not interfere with the preceding truth, which ought not to be weakened, that the Lord desired the present unity of all His disciples, as a means and powerful witness to the world that they might believe in His mission from the Father. In fact, this abides an important

part of practical responsibility, and it is not wise to turn from it. because it is grossly perverted to purposes of earthly power and pride by the world-church in all its varieties. In the Acts of the Apostles we are shown the facts, while the Epistles demonstrate the importance of the doctrine.

"We shall appear with Him in glory;" and the nations shall walk by means of the light of the glorified whom they had so long cast out. Even their kings bring their glory *to it*.* It is necessary to state this, lest persons should imagine that there was a communication of a direct kind between the inhabitants of the earth and the heavenly city. But though the city was seen to come down from heaven, it is not here said to come down to the earth, so as to be with men, as it does when the new heaven and earth are come. Here its glory is over the earth; accordingly the kings and the nations bring their glory and honour unto it, in the way of homage, I suppose, to Him who dwells there. "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there." No danger threatens the city; on the contrary, "They shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations to it." Of course, it is in the same sense as in verse 24. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing unclean, or one that works abomination and a lie: but those that are written in the Lamb's book of life." Thus, the fullest scope is given to the holiness of God, and the impure and abominable and false excluded from His presence, as indeed they are morally and altogether unfit for it; but withal His sovereignty is maintained intact. None enter there, except those enrolled in the book of life of the Lamb.

*Not *into*, but *unto*, for which in Greek there is but one word, εἰς.

It has been already remarked that the first five verses of Rev. 22 are necessary to complete the vision: but I think it better to reserve them for my next lecture, when the conclusion of the book will also be shown in due order.

Revelation 22

It is one of the interesting features of this book, that it can only be properly understood when taken in connection with all the rest of the word of God. And, singular to say too, God has linked together, in a very remarkable manner, the last book of the scripture and the very first. For example, here we fall upon images which the Holy Ghost uses to describe the blessedness of the heavenly city in its relation to the earth during the millennium; and whence are these images derived? I must go to the beginning of the book of God, to Genesis — nay, to the very beginning of Genesis itself. There I find a tree of life, rivers, etc., to which evidently the Holy Ghost refers in the passage before us.

Now this seems to me to be a striking indication of God's object, so dovetailing His whole word together, that in order to acquire the full meaning of any part, I must take it in connection with the whole. And this is all the more important, inasmuch as that same word of God shows us different states and dispensations in total contrast with one another. There was the time of innocence; there was the time when there was nothing but sin, as far as man was concerned — evil without a cheek, until the judgment of God came in the flood and destroyed all, save the few in the ark. Then was given the law, and then the gospel, each having a wholly different object. And now we await the great closing scene of this age, when all that God has wrought on the earth, all that revelation has brought out of His mind, but corrupted by man, will have been manifested in its results. In order to understand what the Holy Ghost tells me about these results, I must begin at the very beginning. Now, looking at Genesis we find that, though there is a sort of analogy in the time of innocence when God was dealing with the creature responsible of course to maintain his place of innocence, yet there is a most blessed contrast in the future, which brings out still more conspicuously the depths of grace which God will show in this holy city.

Let us look then a little at the differences. In Genesis we find that there were four rivers; and of these rivers, although we know little or nothing of the two first, at any rate it is clear that the two last, the Euphrates and Hiddekel or Tigris, were connected with some of the most painful passages in the history of God's earthly people at a later day. On these rivers were built the two most famous cities of antiquity; the Tigris on which Nineveh stood, and the Euphrates on which Babylon was built. I speak now, of course, of a time long subsequent to Adam, or even the deluge. And though the flood may have effaced, as it doubtless did, many other features of the antediluvian earth, still we find these two rivers again. As for Paradise, it was gone, but these rivers were to play an important part in the history of man, and especially of that which acquires a moment greater than its own, from being mingled with the vicissitudes and the chastenings of God's people Israel. These two rivers were identified with the powers that were to be the ruin of Israel and Judah respectively. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria, which carried the great mass of the ten tribes of Israel into captivity. Babylon was the power afterwards used of God for the captivity of that which seemed to stand firm for God, no less than for David's house, but which ere long fell into greater unfaithfulness than backsliding Israel. Thus these rivers, which had been at first connected with Paradise, became afterwards the representatives of the powers of men that were used to scourge the guilty people of God.

Then again there were two trees in the garden of Eden: one of the knowledge of good and evil, and the other of life. Now whatever might have been the blessing vouchsafed to man in the tree of life, it was wholly useless to him, because the other tree put him to a test which man could not stand. He broke down; he listened to the voice of his wife who had herself listened to the serpent, and he became rebellious. The consequence was that the tree of life was no longer available for his use: had it been so it would only have perpetuated a life of sin and misery. So that while there was judgment in the act of God that placed the cherubim with the flaming sword to shut out man from the tree of life, mercy was mingled with it. God had reserved for man a better thing — the tree of grace, if we may so say. Thus when we come to the closing account, we have neither the various rivers of Eden nor a tree to test man on God's part. There is but one river and one tree. All that was connected with man's weakness and sin, and the chastening of God's people is gone. The relies of shame and the discipline of sorrow are needed no longer. The paradise of man had failed, Israel had failed, the church had failed. Now it is the paradise, the people, and the city of God, who is showing Himself and His glory there; and therefore all that was merely for the testing or the discipline of man completely disappears; and now shine out God's love, His heavenly grace, His faithfulness to Israel, His sovereign mercy to the Gentiles, His righteous and beneficent rule. The Lord and Saviour had come in; He had by Himself borne the effects of what God's people deserved, and had made it possible for Him righteously to show them nothing but love, giving them life and atonement and cleansing through Himself, His Son.

"He showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and of the river on this side and on that side [was] the tree of life, bearing twelve [manner of] fruits, each month yielding its fruits; and the leaves of the tree [are] for healing of the nations" (verses 1, 2). Now here it is evident that we have pure grace reigning through righteousness, as far as the tree and the river are concerned. There is nothing liable to be corrupted by the power of Satan. Neither is there anything like the cherubim, jealous in keeping away man, alas! sinful. Quite the contrary. This tree of life brings forth fruit every month. Of course it is a figure. There will be no mere literal tree or river; but as the river of life's water symbolizes the abundant life and blessing which will flow through the city (that is, the Bride, the Lamb's wife), so here follows the benignant provision for healing the nations. There is a reserve as to the twelve fruits, which may set forth a far higher and more various supply for the constant refreshment of the heavenly saints; but the leaves are expressly said to be for the healing of the nations.

This is the more remarkable, for it must be familiar to us that, even in the coming day of glory the earthly Jerusalem, though in some respects figures are borrowed thence, furnishes in others a very different picture in the prophets. Take, for instance, the description in Isaiah 60. It had been said in Isaiah 59 that the Redeemer should come to Zion, and then in chapter 60 we have the description of the city. "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night," etc. But what is the principle of the earthly Jerusalem's relation to the nations? "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." It is unsparing righteousness and judgment which govern God compels honour to be paid to His people who had been despised and trampled down among the nations. For we know how the Jews, even now in Christendom, are looked on with contempt and scorn: and if from their wealth, or other causes they get into favour with the world, it is considered a wonderful piece of liberality Men give themselves a good deal of credit for it, and in general act thus on most mistaken ground, either sceptical or pseudo-Christian. They have been so habituated to despise them that these concessions are only wrung out, and often through such false principles as the rights of men, etc. Of course I am merely referring to facts well known in the history of the world; as Christians, we have nothing to do with such questions, though we may judge them. For a Christian is set here for one purpose only — to witness for Christ, rejected by the world but exalted in heaven; to act in accordance with the grace and glory of a Christ who is now at the right hand of God. When this is lost sight of, he is salt without savour. A person may be philanthropic and essay to do much good in the world; but God has a higher object for us than any plans of ours.

And this brief digression flows out of our present theme. For whether it be the church before glory, or when glory comes, as here, the only becoming thing for us is the manifestation of grace. It is the character of grace that always gives the truth of God about the church; it is the manifestation of Himself, as He has displayed Himself and still does in Christ. This the apostle brings out in Ephesians 5, where it is said, "Be ye therefore followers [imitators] of God." And how? "As dear children, and walk in love." In what way? In the chapter before he had spoken of Christ as the offering through which God could forgive sin (verse 32), and therefore we ought to forgive one another, "even as God in Christ hath forgiven you." But in chapter 5 he goes much farther. "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." There is the full character of grace at once, which gives him who knows and walks in it the power of Christ in going forth among men. If I see my brother here or there, his mind filled with erroneous thoughts and hopes, and himself without conscience or with feeble qualms doing things contrary to the Lord, how would God stir my affections towards him? I must always act out of the grace in which God deals towards the saint, and I must lift up his soul, if I can, to know what God feels towards him and His will about him. If he perceives the grace in which God has acted, he will be prepared to learn what he owes to Him. Thus the apostle always speaks. Look again at the Ephesians. What had St. Paul been doing from the beginning of the epistle to chapter 5? He had shown the perfect love of God towards them, and the place of oneness with Christ in which He has set them: and now he as it were says, Walk you in the love Christ has shown you.

We find the same thing here. It is not now the thunders, and lightnings, and voices out of God's presence. All this has completely disappeared. In Rev. 4 such were the sights and sounds which emanated from the throne. They were suited then, and necessary to uphold and express the holiness of Him who sat there. They were the witness of His feeling when, the church being removed to heaven, man was left to exalt himself, only checked by providential judgments. Here there is nothing of the sort. The throne of God and of the Lamb is seen; and what issues from it? A river of water of life, bright as crystal. And why is this? Because the throne here is set in connection with the heavenly city, and this city being the symbol of the glorified saints, the church's habitual character even in glory is

grace. Not only was it a river of life, not of death, but the leaves of the tree were for the healing (not destruction) of the nations.

Jerusalem here below is the city of earthly righteousness — the place where God will have brought the Jews through exceeding trouble. They must undergo a terrible tribulation first — the time of Jacob's trouble, but he will be delivered out of it. It will be a righteously measured chastening, because of their sins. They will pass through all that sorrow which God Himself is judicially to inflict; but the indignation is to cease, and this with the destruction of those who were its instruments. "For yet a very little while and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction." God will take up the cause of His people, and the calling of Israel in the millennium will savour of that righteousness which has marked the dealings of God towards them publicly, whatever may have been the hidden spring of grace. All the nations shall go up to Jerusalem when the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains. And "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." The law is the rule of righteousness; grace is another thine, altogether. It is not a rule of righteousness, with death the inevitable penalty. It is true that grace reigns through righteousness, but then it is the righteousness of God, not of man; and this, under His gracious culture, fills the saint with the fruit of righteousness, which is through Jesus Christ to His own glory and praise.

Here we have then a scene of perfect grace. Nothing could exceed the blessing in relation to man. The number twelve is always used in reference to the dealings of God with man by means of human administration. Seven is the number of perfection in relation to the things of God, or rather to the spiritual side, whether good or evil — twelve in relation to the human side. Thus, when God chose the patriarchs, there were twelve: they had a reference, I suppose, not only to the tribes which sprang from them, but to the rest of mankind generally. And again, when the apostles were called, there were twelve, answering to the twelve tribes of Israel. The moment we have the apostle who was specially entrusted with the great work of putting the church on its firm and heavenly foundations, irrespective of earthly arrangement, the number twelve is broken, and apostles independent of the twelve appear. (Acts 14: 4, 14; Eph. 4.) This may explain a little further what I meant by saying that the twelve gates, twelve foundations, etc., which we saw in Rev. 21, set forth the aspect of this city towards man. It is viewed in its public governmental character. So in the tree too. By its bearing *twelve* manner of fruits, and yielding its fruit *every month* is shown the aspect of it towards man. Accordingly we are told next that "the leaves of the tree were for healing of the nations."

Another thing is clear, that this scene refers not to the eternal, but to the millennial state. For in eternity nations will not exist as such; neither will any need healing then. Carefully bear this in mind, however, that if we look at the heavenly city itself, it is eternal. It will make little difference to the city whether seen in the millennium, or in the eternal state that succeeds. There were two descents of the city in Rev. 21 — one at the beginning of the millennium, and the other at the commencement of the eternal state. The second verse of that chapter gives us its descent when the eternal state is come, and the tenth verse its descent for the millennium. The reason, I think, is that at the end of the millennium the old heaven and earth pass away; and naturally the city would disappear from the scene of the convulsion. Then, when the new earth dawns on our view, the heavenly city again comes down, and takes its place permanently in the new heavens and earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. This is necessary to remark; because, while at the end of the thousand years all will be changed, still the heavenly city will abide for ever. "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." There will be certain offices which the glorified church will cease to discharge towards the earth after the millennium is over: but its intrinsic blessedness remains the same. Consequently, it is said here, "There shall be no more curse." Thenceforth this is as true evermore for

the heavenly city, as it can be for the new heaven and earth afterwards.

"And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face, and his name [shall be] on their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, [or more,] and they shall have no need of lamp and light [of the sun]" — the one representing the light of man's making, and the other of God: but all that suited this world is past for the city. "For the Lord God shall shed light upon them: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (verse 3-5). The expression "to the ages of the ages," I apprehend, must be taken in the strongest sense here. It does not refer only to what is called "the kingdom," though of course the reigning begins then. In 1 Cor. 15: 24 it is a kingdom which Christ delivers up at a definite point called "the end." "The end" implies that the thousand years and the judgment of the dead have taken place; for this judgment is part of Christ's "kingdom" — its great closing act, we may say. All this forms a part of the kingdom; and when it is over, and death, the last enemy, has been destroyed, then the Lord Jesus delivers up the kingdom to God.

The object of the kingdom is to reduce every enemy to subjection; and this being accomplished, that special human kingdom terminates. But if there will then be a great change as regards the earthly saints in their natural bodies below, not so with those who are in the heavenly places, already glorified. They will reign for ever and ever: it will be true throughout all eternity. These words seem here to be used without restriction. All the account, from the 9th verse of Rev. 21 to verse 5, inclusively, of Rev. 22, presents the relation of the heavenly city to the earth during the millennium. But there are certain features in it which are true everlastingly. One of these characteristics, besides its unchangeable intrinsic glory, is, that the service of the saints will be for ever and ever. So as to the reigning. The mode of the reign, as of the service, may be changed after the earthly kingdom is closed; but, in themselves, they will, I apprehend, endure for ever and ever.

Now we are come to the closing comments of the prophet, and the conversation that takes place between him and the angel in reference to the prophecy, as well as the final message from the Lord Jesus Himself. Strictly speaking, the fifth verse ends the prophecy. But just as we have a prefatory charge at the beginning of the book, so here we have a sort of formal conclusion.

You will observe that the coming of the Lord Jesus is referred to no less than three times, and that each has a different connection in these farewell words of the Lord. The first time is in the 7th verse, evidently in dependence on verse 6. "And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show to his servants the things which must come to pass shortly. And, behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book" (verses 6, 7). The Lord Jesus here links His coming with the blessing of the man who attends to the words of the prophecy. In strict connection with this, the Holy Ghost solemnly commends the prophecy which was now brought to a close. The Lord Jesus, no doubt, foresaw the measure of slight which would be put upon this book, and the efforts of men to put it aside.

I do not like to refer to particular religious societies; but allow me to say a word about one which is a reformed body and well known. And yet, extraordinary to say, in that which is arranged for the express purpose of giving the entire word of God to the people in daily portions, how is it that the book of Revelation is given? — Why, it is only used, a little bit at a time, on one or two special occasions, and at other seasons not at all, while even part of the Apocrypha is read! It appears to me that the Lord was here guarding His people against all such disrespect, open or more subtle, to the book of the Revelation.* Nor is it merely where these lessons are fixed, that there is a slight put upon it: let not others, differently situated, suppose themselves to be guiltless. Take those who have no formal division of the scriptures day by day: do you find this book honoured by them as the Lord enjoins! You will

learn that in general, though God's children have not agreed to dishonour it, yet, as a practical fact, this book has been pushed aside, save for controversial, historical, or imaginative purposes. There is hardly an attempt to expound it simply and practically. Few servants, indeed, deal it out in due season, so as to make it a part of the household bread of the family of God. Even when interpretations of it are ventured on, are they not in general most crude — the far-fetched notions of an antiquarian, or degrading comparisons with an infidel historian or a daily newspaper?

*I have hardly spoken more plainly here than the Dean of Canterbury does on Rev. 1: 3. "If the words are to be understood as above, they form at least a solemn rebuke to the practice of the Church of England, which omits with one or two exceptions the whole of this book from her public readings. Not one word of the precious messages of the Spirit to the Churches is ever heard in the public services of a Church never weary of appealing to her *Scriptural* liturgies,"

What a solemn thing it is to depart from God's word! The Lord Jesus puts the book before His people as a light shining in a dark place — not at all as a mere exercise for men of learning in a speculative mood. It was meant for all the children of God, for their souls' profit, and to help their communion with God. He wanted them not only to know His grace, but the judgments that were coming upon the world. He desired them to understand that the book, which shows the world's course and doom, equally indicates their deliverance out of the judgment. For the Revelation makes it plain, that, before there is a word of the judgment, the church is seen in the presence of God: from the beginning of Revelation 4 we see her above. How plain it is that the words of the prophecy are all of the greatest importance to God's people! He desires they should be happy in the fellowship He gives them with Himself before these things come to pass. "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." And why has it been comparatively so valueless as to its practical bearing? Because the prophecy has been severed from the promise. The word of grace, "Behold, I come quickly," has not been distinguished from "the sayings of the prophecy of this book." And hence the church's portion has been confounded with the judgments of the world. The Revelation supposes that God's children are waiting for the coming of Christ, which ought indeed to be their bright hope from day to day. Where this is not the case, I believe that it is morally impossible to enter into or enjoy its disclosures. "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book." The Lord is coming quickly. But if we are not looking for Him with hearts at rest through His grace, we are sure to pervert His sayings, instead of turning them to profit.

When John heard and saw these things, he fell down to worship before the feet of the angel that showed them. He had done so previously (Rev. 19: 10).* Possibly the grandeur of the vision may have led him to suppose that it was Christ Himself taking that form. But he is immediately corrected. The angel says to him, "I am thy fellow-servant," or rather, "the fellow-servant of thee, and of thy brethren the prophets." As it stands in our Bible, the statement is somewhat ambiguous. It might seem, as it stands, to convey that the angel was one of his brethren, the prophets. Of course this is not the meaning; but instead of being the Lord, and an object of worship, the angel was the fellow-servant of John, and of John's brethren the prophets. "See thou do it not; for I am the fellow-servant of thee, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God,"

*It may be as well to observe here, that, in the reciprocal proposition, so often vaguely applied or misapplied, "the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus," we are not to understand a testimony to Jesus," but that which He gave, and, in general throughout the Apocalypse, His prophetic testimony, whether committed to an angel or to His servants. It is incorrect therefore to say that this means to Jesus; which is regularly expressed either by the dative, or if a genitive be used, with *περί*. The angelic communicator was but a fellow-servant of John's: God was to be worshipped.

But he adds more, and a very important thought it is, practically, for God's children. You may remember in the last chapter of Daniel it is written (verse 4), "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Now mark in what a wonderful place God has put His church, as we gather from comparing Revelation 22.

He was sending His word to the most favoured man that could be found among all the favoured prophets of the Old Testament — "a man greatly beloved." But although there had been given him so plain and distinct a prophecy of Christ's coming and death, other words were added, as to which it was said, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book even to the time of the end." Here the same Spirit addresses John, and says to him, "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand" (verse 10). How comes this to pass? The whole calling of the church is at the time of the end. From the day that the church began its actual existence here below, it was the time of the end; and all through her history, still it is the time of the end. Of course I do not mean that it is distinctively the time of the end for the Jews, who must wait for the development of all on the platform of literal facts; but therein lies the peculiarity of the church's calling. She is above times and seasons, though she knows them; she has nothing to do with dates, or signs, or outward events, any more than with the world, of whose history they are the natural and necessary accompaniment. The church is lifted up above such a scene; she is heavenly. Such is the place where we are put by the grace of God, entirely outside all the computations which refer to the government of this world.

As for the Jew, of whom Daniel was the type, he must wait till the time of the end is historically come, till the knowledge is given by God to those who have understanding then. Until that time all is sealed up for Israel. This is not the case with the church represented by John. To him it is said, "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book."

But here is the error made by many excellent persons. Sir Isaac Newton, a man of the highest reputation in human science, applied this shutting up and sealing of the book in Daniel to the church. The consequence was that he gave it up as a thing that could not be understood till the time of the end. Had he compared the passage in Daniel with the closing words of St. John's Revelation, he would have learnt that the very words that were hidden from the Jewish prophet are expressly opened to the Christian. If Daniel was to seal, John is expressly told not to seal. And why? Because Christ had come, and is gone into heaven. and is on the right hand of God, ready to judge quick and dead; He was rejected, and from that moment it is morally the time of the end. And so the New Testament writers speak. The apostle John says, "Little children, it is the last time;" Peter writes, "The end of all things is at hand;" James, "The Judge standeth before the door." So wrote St. Paul: "Now all these things happened unto them as ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" [or ends of the ages are met]. And so Heb. 9: 26. Thus you have substantially the same great truth from the Epistles of Paul, of Peter, and of James, down to the Revelation.

This it is, I conceive, that is supposed, when John is told not to shut up the words of the prophecy of this book. It is to be used and understood now in virtue of the knowledge of Christ and with the Holy Ghost given by Christ as an unction whereby we know all things. To us the time is always at hand. The words of this book are not sealed to us; so that it is unbelief, if instead of taking the book as it were to Christ who is the light to reveal this as all else, we submit it to the world and its wisdom which can but darken. This, I doubt not, is the root and reason of the mistakes and difficulties so prevalent with regard to the interpretation of the book. In order to understand this and every other part of scripture, I must see what God is doing for the glory of His Son. As a Christian I am encouraged to read the prophecy: its sayings are not sealed to those who have the mind of Christ. If I were a Jew, I should have to wait till

the time of the end arrive in the full prophetic sense, i.e., the end of the age. Then the wise among the Jews shall understand; they are the godly intelligent remnant. With such a remnant in principle (called, it is true, into better hopes) the church began.

But some may say, There were certain things in Daniel which were to be sealed, and others which were not: why may not these last (not the first) have been the things John was there told not to seal? I reply that the Revelation supposes all the truth we find in Daniel and a great deal more. It could not be understood, if Daniel were not; while there are many truths added in the Revelation which were not given to Daniel. Such a plea is therefore unavailing. The fact is that Daniel speaks in the most general terms, and is told to shut up the words and seal the book — not merely certain parts of it. The Revelation goes over the same ground as Daniel with respect to the last empire, giving many things of a still wider scope and far more profoundly — things which grew out of the Christian apostacy, in addition to the previous ruin of Israel and the future wickedness both of them and the Gentiles. Therefore, if there was any book in the New Testament which one might naturally expect to be sealed up, it is the Revelation; for as it is the last, so it is the most difficult, abstruse, and comprehensive of all the books of the Bible. Therefore when the Holy Ghost says, "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book," I conceive that we have implied a clear intimation of the peculiar privileges of the Christian. It supposes him to stand in the full light of God; and thus what may have been hidden before is now fully revealed, seeing that Christ has come and made us members of His body, and given us the Holy Ghost who searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. This, to my mind, is the reason why it is said, "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book." It is a consequence of redemption.

It is important in another way not always seen. The events signified by the prophetic visions of the Revelation never enable one to understand the book itself. If they were to take place today, this would not of itself give intelligence as to the Revelation. The sole key to prophecy is the Holy Ghost, who is the only One that can make known its relation to Christ; and, without seeing this relation, we never understand it. Take one of the clearest and most defined of prophecies — that of the seventy weeks in Daniel. Persons generally allow that it has been accomplished. But ask of them its real meaning; and they will show how little it is understood. They have a vague idea that it is accomplished, and little more. It is not therefore the events themselves which explain the word: we need the teaching of the Spirit, which is as necessary to interpret prophecy as any other part of the scriptures. Events may be the accomplishments of particular prophecy and a witness of its truth to those who doubt; but they never of themselves afford the just interpretation of the prophecy. They undoubtedly corroborate it when accomplished, and may be useful to stop the mouth of a gainsayer. But (as it has been long ago remarked by another) you must understand the prophecy itself, before you can apply it to the events; and when you do understand it, you have what God desired to give your faith, independently of the events. In fact, to refute such a notion we have only to weigh what is said here, as everywhere else in it: "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand." The value to us, to the church, is *beforehand*, whatever may be the use for those who shall be in the scene when the events arrive.

But now listen to a most solemn truth. When the time is actually come of which the prophecy treats, what is the condition of men? It is fixed, for ever fixed for all — hopelessly for some. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him work righteousness still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Verse 11). That is, it is not the time when there can be moral change; not a time when there can be the conversion of sinners — When a man who is under the power of Satan can be delivered from it and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. All this is at an end. *Then* he that is unjust must remain unjust, and he that is filthy remains

filthy still. Men are solemnly settled in the condition in which they are found. The day of grace is over, the day of judgment will be come, and the door will then be shut.

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to give each as his work is" (verse 12). Evidently this confirms what has been remarked. When that day comes, it is the judgment of the living. It is the Lord's coming, not here spoken of as an encouragement to him who hears and keeps the words of the prophecy of the book, but rather in the way of discriminating judgment. "I [am] the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (verse 13). That is, the Lord Jesus, beside what is peculiar to Himself, takes the same title here that God Himself did in Rev. 21: 6. As God was the sum and substance of all revelation, being, or action, so was Christ. "No man hath seen God at any time: the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." "Blessed [are] they that do his commandments [or wash their robes], that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. Without [are] the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the whoremongers, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one loving and practising a lie" (verses 14, 15).

But next we have another thing. It is not the Lord's coming now, as an encouragement to those who should keep the sayings of the prophecy of this book; nor yet His coming as dealing with every man, His advent in the way of judgment and His reward with Him to give each individual as his work is. We have seen the holy and the righteous having their portion, and the filthy and unrighteous their judgment. But the Lord has His own proper and full relation to the church. Consequently His voice is now heard with marked emphasis here: "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David" (verse 16). That is, He refers to His divine and His human character. But beside this He has a special relationship to us — "the bright [and] the morning star."

When the Lord comes in His glory to the world, it is as the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings, for those that have been broken, and scattered, and peeled, — a people terrible from their beginning hitherto. But then He appears in terror to tread down those that have despised Him under His feet. Not so does He present Himself to us. It is not for us the image of the sun, when man should sleep no longer. When the Sun of righteousness calls man up, not then to work as he works now; it summons him that he may bow to Him whom he had long slighted, and in due time hear his doom pronounced by the Lord of glory, whom he can despise no longer. Thus will He appear to the world, and "all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble. And the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith Jehovah of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."

But for those who watch during the night of man's day before the Lord appears in His glory, for those who watch with bridal affections, not sleeping as do others — how does He speak to such? How is He made known to them? "I am the bright, the morning star." Blessed star of morn before the day comes! We watch not for the day, but for *Him* during the night, and He will give us the morning star, the harbinger of the dawn. A blessed place it is — the place of our love and hope: it will never be disappointed of its joy, and the Lord Jesus Christ will surely come, as the bright and morning star to us. He cheers us while we wait, and will quickly come for us Himself. We may have to tarry somewhat; at least it may seem long to us. For those who waste their time in slumber, it will be alas! too short; but for those that wait for Him and yearn to see Him, the hope might seem to be long deferred. Instead of growing weary and sick, may our hearts, on the contrary, be filled with the joy and constancy of assurance that the Lord is coming soon! He is the bright and morning star.

But more: "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." What a blessed thought for us that the Holy,

Ghost Himself is the One who takes up the word and says, "Come!" He groans with us, entering into our sorrows, now that He is come down. He is not the less divine, I need not say; but withal He has condescended to identify Himself, as it were, with our hearts, and be the sharer of our feelings. But it is not groans that we have now; not such is the mind of the Spirit, when He thinks of the Lord Jesus coming for us. There is the calm and peaceful earnestness of desire. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is most strengthening to know that it is the voice of the Holy Ghost Himself which says to the Lord Jesus "Come." It would not have been nearly so blessed, had only the bride said, "Come." But it is "*the Spirit and the bride.*" She had done many things wrong, had made many mistakes in thought and feeling and ways. But now it is the Spirit, the Holy Ghost Himself who says, Come. *He* it is who leads the heart to desire the coming of Jesus; *He* is the energy of the church in bidding Jesus welcome. "The Spirit and the bride, say, Come." It is in looking up to Jesus that the church or the Christian says, Come; not looking down to the poor sinner and telling him to come. The Holy Ghost leads and inspires the heart of the bride thus to cry, not only in sympathy of sorrow, but in communion with the joy with which she looks up in the hope of the Bridegroom's return.

And not only so, but "let him that heareth say, Come." If I have only heard the voice of Jesus, I am entitled to say, Come. Perhaps there are some who say, Oh that I could be happy in asking the Lord to come! How can I say, Come, when I am so unworthy? The Lord warrants you to say, Come. It is not merely the bride filled with the Holy Ghost that says, Come — entering into her full privileges; but "let him that heareth say, Come." Have you heard His voice, and tasted that He is gracious? Do you not know that He is the good Shepherd? I might be the very feeblest and weakest one, shrinking through ignorance from the Lord's coming at once; yet here I have the Holy Ghost inviting me to take up the very same word that the Spirit and the bride take up. "Let him that heareth say, Come."

Most evident it is also here that the going out of the first affections of the heart towards Christ and His coming does not harden the heart towards the poor world, nor make us indifferent to the conversion of the lost; but the very contrary. Whatever estimate man may form of their own efforts, my conviction is, that the people who most desire the conversion of sinners are, *caeteris paribus*, those who most desire the coming of the Lord Jesus. I do not believe that the men that want to put Him off are those that pray and labour most for the conversion of souls. What is it leads such to desire it? They labour for it because they see souls perishing everlastingly, and they justly feel that all are miserable without Christ. But they have these feelings only in common with all their brethren. We all believe that men will be cast into hell if they do not receive the gospel, and it grieves us to see them rejecting the Saviour; we have these feelings as well as they. But we have another spring which they have not. It is indeed the Lord's way, and this is better than theirs. He understands what is good for poor sinners and poor saints incomparably better than His servants do. Now *He* shows here that it is the same Spirit who looks up to Jesus and says, Come, who also can turn us round to lost sinners with the invitation, "let him that is athirst come." It is there we have the other side. It is not here the Spirit directing the church in looking up to the Lord and saying, Come; but the heart is now directed to the world and saying, "Let him that is athirst come; whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (verse 17).

The sinner is not told to say, Come. Observe the great and plain difference in the latter part of the verse. In the first two clauses they say, Come; but in the latter part they do not bid Jesus come, but are invited to come themselves: "Let him that is athirst come," etc.

Thus God shows that the first thought of my heart should be towards Jesus. If true to Him, I shall desire His coming. The Spirit prompts and sanctions this desire. And what is the effect on my feelings towards the world? It will give me a heavenly reason for desiring the conversion of sinners. I shall have the same moral motives, and the same affections, which act on my brethren who put off the coming of

the Lord. And I shall have besides all the impetus which the hope of Christ's speedy coming can give me, and the sense of the danger of those to whom His coming can be nothing but certain judgment, even in this world. The more a Christian looks for Christ's coming at any moment, the more ardent must be his desire, and the more earnest his importuning, that souls should come and take the water of life.

In this verse 17 then God unfolds our twofold relation. He shows me my relation to Christ, which ought to be the first thought of my heart — not merely that my soul should be at peace if He came, but filled with the earnestness of affection that desires His coming. And He shows me that, when I am right there, I shall turn round with quickened zeal in the sense of the grace of Christ, and shall say to every one that is athirst, Come. More than that. If I see a soul that may not perhaps thirst deeply, but who is willing to come, I shall not tell him to wait till he is very thirsty. I shall bid him come at once, and welcome; for the word is, "whosoever let him take the water of life freely." If there is only the desire of the heart, it comes from God, and no one rightly says, You must wait till you have gone through this or that experience. If a man has not got so far in realizing his state, I am not to keep him away. The water of life is for whosoever will. He is directed to come and drink of it freely. What fulness of grace fills the scene when the Lord brings our place before us!

"I testify to every one that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add to these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any one shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, that are written in this book" (verses 18, 19). You will observe that the tree and the city mentioned here answer to what we found in verse 14. Those that do His commandments (or rather, according to the critical text, "those that wash their robes") are blessed, and have a title to the tree of life, and entrance by the gates into the city. But as for such as take away from the words of this book, God shall take away their portion from both the tree and the city which are written of in this book. They shall have no access thereto.

The Lord had said if any man would add to or take away from the words of the prophecy of this book, in either way dishonouring it, He would assuredly know and feel and resent it. But He could not close with such words as these. He has reserved, as it were, the best wine to the last. He had already spoken of His coming in the way of judgment, and of His coming for the church, in full grace; and now He could not leave us with a note of sorrow. He must bring back our hearts to gladness and joy at the thought of His coming again; and so He says, "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen." Immediately John as representing the church answers, "Come, Lord Jesus." It is the ready reply of his heart to the Lord.

And if it is our privilege to look to Christ and hear His voice; if we have known some little of the joy of being even now in union with Himself, made members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones; if we are waiting as those conscious of our bridal relationship to Christ, and assured that we shall have the bride's portion, in presence of the Lamb for evermore, the Lord grant that this may be the answer of our hearts and lips — "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. May we not cherish high thoughts for ourselves, nor for the church, much less for the world! It is a blinding delusion to look for better days while Jesus is away. There are good days in store, even for this poor world — days of heaven upon the earth; but the Lord must come before them — and He must have us for Himself first of all. The Lord will never have a time of real abiding joy for the world as a whole, till He has had the Church with Himself. For, as we see in Romans 8, "the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." The manifestation spoken of there will be in glory. St. Paul had been speaking before of the glory which shall be revealed in us, when our bodies shall be changed, and made

like the glorious body of Christ. We are not like the Son of God now, as regards our bodies. Too well we know that we bear the image of the earthly still: but we shall bear the image of the heavenly. And then, when God sees us shining in the likeness of His own Son, He will have no reason to be ashamed of us. He will not present us before the universe, till our bodies are as worthy of Him as is the new life that He has given to our souls. When the sons of God are manifested, then creation will cease to groan, and the earth and heavens, filled with blessedness, will declare both the glory and the goodness of God. "The floods will clap their hands, and the hills be joyful together before Jehovah." Then it will be found that the blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory that the Lord has set before us, will issue in praises of joy and gladness, which will reach the most distant parts of earth, and the utmost bounds of creation.

May the Lord grant that we may say, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus;" that we may say it for ourselves, as for all the church, and, in a sense for all creation too, the blessing of which depends on our being manifested along with Christ! Meanwhile, the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints!