

THE APOCALYPSE OF ST. JOHN

WITH EXPOSITIONS OF EACH CHAPTER

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PREFACE

UNDOUBTEDLY the most mysterious book in the whole Bible is the Apocalypse of St. John. Written, according to St. Jerome, in the fourteenth year of the reign of Domitian, that is, some sixty years after the Ascension of Our Lord, its first purpose was to give courage and assurance to the persecuted faithful of the infant Church, confronted by the tremendous forces of Paganism. But that was not its sole purpose. It is written for the Church of every age, to keep Christians in mind of that fierce and ceaseless conflict between the Kingdom of God and the Powers of Darkness, and to encourage them by the certainty of the ultimate triumph of the former. On the one side is the Church of Christ built on a rock, on the other are the Gates of Hell. The struggle goes on throughout the ages. Often it seems that victory for the Gates of Hell is imminent, but "they shall not prevail."

To read the accounts of this conflict portrayed in the vivid imagery and symbolism of the Apocalypse, produces in the soul feelings of intense awe. The mind is lifted from earth to heaven; it is brought back to earth, and taken midway to the sky; it is lowered again to earth, to beneath the earth, to the bottom-most pit, then up again to earth or heaven, and so on, till

time and space seem to count for nothing, and a new earth and new heaven appear. Night is gone, tears are wiped away, the great conflict is at an end, and alone the Throne of God stands out in brilliant majesty, holding our gaze until we fall down in worship with the mighty Seer who has heard and seen, and has drawn the curtain aside, that every generation of Christians may see and hear.

But before the end is reached, what a succession of vivid scenes, imagery and symbolism! The seven Letters are as so many invitations to the great drama about to be enacted. Then the veil is lifted. Seven seals, seven trumpets, seven signs, seven vials, seven stages of Babylon's ruin, seven visions—until the number symbolic of completeness has unfolded the whole revelation in seven septenaries! And how varied and animated the scenes! Horses white, red, black, and pale, each with its rider a harbinger of woe! The white robed martyrs under the altar of God, the white robed host which no man could number before the throne of God. The earth set on fire, the sea turned into blood, locusts like unto horses arrayed for battle, an avenging host of cavalry to the number of two hundred millions! A Woman clothed with the sun who gives birth to a male Child; the watching dragon; the battle in the sky, Michael and his angels against the dragon and his angels! A beast from the sea, a beast from the earth, a Lamb and His men-virgins, angels flying in mid-

sky;—and so on, with a might and a flow that is terrific and sublime!

Naturally, a book so full of symbolical representation has lent itself to a variety of interpretations. An apocalypse is a prophecy, and it is of the nature of prophecy to be vague. Hence, although the main argument of the book is quite clear—the great warfare between good and evil, God and His saints on the one side, Satan and his emissaries (whether on earth or in the sky) on the other, Paganism versus Christianity, Injustice against Justice, until the eternal victory for the Kingdom of Heaven is gained—yet the identification of the various symbols is no easy matter. For the fight “is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in regions above” (Ephes. vi, 12). Only by a careful study of the language and imagery of the great Hebrew prophets, notably Daniel, Ezechiel and Isaias, of the figurative expressions used elsewhere in the New Testament, and (to a much lesser extent than is sometimes demanded) by reference to Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature, can the interpreter of St. John's Apocalypse hope to find the keys to fit the symbolism in its details.

Father Robert Eaton of the Birmingham Oratory here presents to Catholic readers an exposition of the Apocalypse which is based on sure scholarship, is expressed with admirable

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simplicity, and which gives a clear insight into the meaning of the prophecy. His intention has not been to produce a critical commentary useful only for the advanced student of Sacred Scripture—though the latter, if he has not yet studied the Apocalypse in detail, could not do better than begin with Fr. Eaton's commentary. Instead, he has had in mind the intelligent Catholic reader who is eager to know more about the Sacred Writings, but who cannot afford time for prolonged study. Like the Ethiopian civil servant of Acts viii, 27, many of our Catholic men and women find that the only leisure for reading is at odd times, as when travelling to and from business. There is no reason why the Scriptures should not be read at these times ; and Father Eaton, like another St. Philip the Deacon, is ready to lend his services to such as these, in order to show them what the Scriptures mean. They will find him a sure and safe interpreter. May his little commentary obtain all the success it so well deserves.

To-day, when the forces of Modernism and Paganism are gathering together for a renewed, and perhaps the final, assault on the Church of God, the two parts of the Scriptures that especially deserve serious meditation are the Books of the Machabees at the end of the Old Testament, and the Apocalypse of St. John at the end of the New Testament. The former describes Hellenistic Modernism which almost

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succeeded in wiping out the religion of Israel ; the latter describes Paganism in its onslaughts against the religion of Christ throughout the ages. And in order to meet the next attack from Paganism, we do well to have in our hands a commentary on the Apocalypse.

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CHAPTER I

THE Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to make known to his servants the things which must shortly come to pass : and signified, sending by his angel to his servant, John.

2 Who hath given testimony to the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ, what things soever he hath seen.

3 Blessed is he, that readeth and heareth the words of this prophecy ; and keepeth those things which are written in it ; for the time is at hand.

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia. Grace be unto you and peace from him that is, and that was, and that is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his throne,

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth, who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

6 And hath made us a kingdom, and priests to God and his Father, to him be glory and empire for ever and ever. Amen.

7 Behold, he cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of him. Even so. Amen.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.

9 I John, your brother and your partner in tribulation, and in the kingdom, and patience in Christ Jesus, was in the island, which is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus.

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10 I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11 Saying : What thou seest, write in a book, and send to the seven churches which are in Asia, to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamus, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks :

13 And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like to the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14 And his head and his hairs were white, as white wool, and as snow, and his eyes were as a flame of fire,

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace. And his voice as the sound of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars. And from his mouth came out a sharp two edged sword : and his face was as the sun shineth in his power.

17 And when I had seen him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying : Fear not. I am the First and the Last.

18 And alive, and was dead, and behold I am living for ever and ever, and have the keys of death and of hell.

19 Write therefore the things which thou hast seen, and which are, and which must be done hereafter.

20 The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. And the seven candlesticks are the seven churches.

NO Book of Holy Scripture has been commented upon more fully than the Apocalypse of St. John, with which the Bible comes to an end, yet no Book is probably so little known and appreciated. It is the one Prophetical Book of the New Testament, and for various reasons people seem afraid of it, and declare they cannot

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understand it. In it the future of the Church of Christ, the struggles both on her behalf and against her, together with her final victory at the end of the world, are vividly portrayed, so that its chief aim may be said to be to give consolation and strength to those who seek to fight the good fight, and be true witnesses to "the Truth as it is in Jesus" (Ephes., iv, 21).

It is very certain that St. John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," is the author of this Book, and we may safely assign A.D. 96 as the date of its composition. It was to the lonely Island of Patmos, in the Aegean Sea, off the west coast of Asia Minor, that St. John, the only then surviving Apostle, was banished in the terrible persecution raised by the Emperor Domitian against the Church. He had been summoned from Ephesus to Rome, and had there passed unscathed through the cauldron of boiling oil at the Latin Gate, the Feast of which is kept on May 6. Sentence of banishment was then passed upon him, and he was sent to work in the mines of Patmos, which, like all the penal colonies of Rome, was an island most desolate and bare. And there in a kind of cave, known to this day as The Saint's Garden, Our Lord vouchsafed to His Disciple the full and glorious revelation contained in the Book of the Apocalypse.—"Blessed is he," so we are told for our encouragement at the beginning of our study,— "blessed is he that readeth and heareth the words of this prophecy, and keepeth those things

which are written in it. For the time is at hand" (i, 3). These words remind us of a truth which should ever be borne in mind as we read the Apocalypse—viz.: that it is a very history and portrait of the times in which we live. "It reaches from end to end mightily"—that is, from the Crucifixion to the Last Judgment. And "just as it is scarcely possible for each combatant in a war to form an opinion as to the general course of it, or even of a single battle, so is any complete comprehension of the struggles of the Church denied as a rule to individual Christians." The Apocalypse does but furnish us with a series of pictures, to develop and impress upon us what Our Lord so clearly, in His discourse to the Twelve at the Last Supper, declared to be the future experience of His Church in the world to its end. That future is determined by God, and not by man; God is long-suffering, and "waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, patiently bearing till He receive the early and the latter rain" (Jas., v, 7); "through many tribulations are we to pass into the Kingdom of God." But the cause of God shall triumph in the Kingdom of the Just made perfect, for He is the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end; and "to him that thirsteth God will give of the fountain of the water of life freely."—"He that shall overcome shall possess these things, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son" (Apoc., xxi, 6, 7). "The final issue of the conflict is

never doubtful: God and His righteousness will ultimately prevail through the advent of One of the race of David, Who is both a Redeemer and a Judge."

This is the main drift of the story of this Book, these are the main features emphasised by it. Much has been written about the difficulties of its language, the obscurity which at times arises from its symbolical form, and the difficulties which surround its interpretation; but any discussion of these would here be out of place. It is our aim to make the sacred text as clear as possible as we proceed, and this may involve some treatment of the points just alluded to; so let what has been said suffice as introductory matter to our study.

The contents of the Apocalypse have been divided in many ways. We will here adopt the arrangement given in the "Westminster" version—dividing the Book into "septenaries," *i.e.*, into such parts as are indicated by the number seven, to which its structure readily lends itself. So we have a Prologue (ch. i, 1-8), with its Preparatory Vision of Our Lord (ch. i, 9-20), and then the Letters to the Seven Churches (*i.e.*, to *all* the Churches, for seven is a number denoting completion), which are in Asia. "John" (so he begins rather abruptly in verse 4, and no one can doubt to whom he refers—the Book begins in the epistolary style of St. Paul, but, unlike St. Paul, the writer merely gives his name, without any expletives such as

“ an Apostle of Jesus Christ,” etc.)—“ John to the seven churches which are in Asia,” *i.e.*, the Roman Province called “ Asia,” with Ephesus as its chief city, of which we read so much in the Acts (ch. xix especially). We shall look in vain through all Scripture for any more full and superb portrait of Our Lord, in His Kingship, His Majesty, His Divinity, than is furnished us in verses 5-7. They should be committed to memory by all. And yet another picture of Our Lord is afforded us in verses 12-19. He is clothed to the feet with the robe of His Kingship, and wears the golden girdle of His love for men. His head and hair are white, as white wool and as snow, for He is the Ancient of Days, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and last, who is, and who was, and who is to come. His eyes are as a flame of fire, for all things are naked before Him, and He reads the hearts of all ; His feet are like unto fine brass, as in a burning furnace, for He will trample on His enemies, and make them His footstool. His voice is as the sound of many waters, and when “ He sends forth the sceptre of His power out of Sion,” in His right hand (the hand of blessing and friendship) are seven stars, seven perfect gifts, a very wreath of perfection, while from His mouth there issues a sharp two-edged sword, the sword of His word, not one jot or one tittle of which shall pass away, though Heaven and earth may pass away.

And to St. John, fallen at the feet of Our

Lord as one dead, is given the order to “ *write* the things which shall be shown him ” ; and the order is given by One Who “ is the first and the last, who was alive, and was dead, and behold He lives for ever and ever, and has the keys of death and of hell.”

CHAPTER II

THE EPISTLES TO EPHESUS, SMYRNA, AND
PERGAMUS

(1-17)

UNTO the angel of the church of Ephesus write : These things saith he, who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks :

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil, and thou hast tried them, who say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars :

3 And thou hast patience, and hast endured for my name, and hast not fainted.

4 But I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity.

5 Be mindful therefore from whence thou art fallen : and do penance, and do the first works. Or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou do penance.

6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaites, which I also hate.

7 He, that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches : To him, that overcometh, I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God.

8 And to the angel of the church of Smyrna write : These things saith the First and the Last, who was dead, and is alive :

9 I know thy tribulation and thy poverty, but thou art rich : and thou art blasphemed by them that say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer. Behold, the devil will cast some of you into prison that you

may be tried : and you shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful until death : and I will give thee the crown of life.

11 He, that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches : He that shall overcome, shall not be hurt by the second death.

12 And to the angel of the church of Pergamus write : These things, saith he, that hath the sharp two edged sword :

13 I know where thou dwellest, where the seat of Satan is : and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith. Even in those days *when Antipas was* my faithful witness, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

14 But I have against thee a few things : because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat, and to commit fornication :

15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaites.

16 In like manner do penance : if not, I will come to thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He, that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches : To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna, and will give him a white counter, and in the counter, a new name written, which no man knoweth, but he that receiveth it.

IT is to the Angel (or Bishop) of the Church at Ephesus (*i.e.*, to the diocese of Ephesus, the chief city of Asia, as we should now say,) that St. John first writes. The town owed its wealth and position to its being the most frequented trade-route into the interior, and to the cult of the heathen goddess Diana, whose temple was one of the wonders of the world. It was for long the abode of St. John, and it was probably there that Our Lady died. Notice the consolation

conveyed in the second verse of the letter (ii,2). Our Lord is with us all days, even to the end, and does not forget His own. He "knows our labour" (and the Greek word for "labour" here is a very strong one, and means "labour till you drop from sheer weariness and exhaustion"). The presence of false apostles, of liars, has been the special trial to those who have "endured for His Name," and "have not fainted." It is the same to-day: the relaxing atmosphere of religious indifference, which we daily breathe, is apt to sap our strength, and cool our fervour. And such had been the case at Ephesus, as verse 4 tells us. Read verses 4 and 5 with great care. The warning is so stern, yet so kind, so full of hope that "penance" (a change of mind, as the word emphatically means), will come, and restore all things.—At least in their loss of fervour there has been *one* virtue to which they have clung—the virtue of holy purity. Sharply, and as in a spirit of triumph, is this saving fact here placed on record in verse 6. "But *this* thou *hast*"—it is thy own—it has made thee the friend of thy Lord—it has kept thee the child of Mary, His Mother—for "thou *hatest* the deeds of the Nicolaites, which I *also* hate!" (Of the Nicolaites more will be said later on. They are named again in verse 15). Thus with a word of praise "to him that overcometh" (a phrase of frequent occurrence) "to him that fights the good fight, and daily takes up his cross," the first of these

seven Letters (of which we may say in passing that they are the very finest "spiritual reading" we could desire), draws to a close. Perseverance in grace is the chief lesson of this Epistle, and its concluding verse points to self-denial as the essential condition of being the friends and faithful servants of Our Lord to the end.

The city of Smyrna, situated some thirty miles from Ephesus, was one of the most famous and beautiful cities of the ancient world. Its situation was magnificent, making it a great port and centre of trade, while the surrounding country was most fruitful and fair to behold. Though evangelised later than Ephesus, the Church had quite early found a footing there, probably in the days of St. Paul, and when St. John addressed to it this Letter, it was ruled by the saintly Bishop, St. Polycarp, who had been appointed to the see by St. John himself, and who was martyred about the year A.D. 154. Owing to the silting up of the River Cayster, the trade of Asia Minor was diverted from Ephesus to Smyrna, which is still one of the richest cities in Asia, with a population of about 250,000 inhabitants, nearly half of whom belong to the Russo-Greek Church. The name Smyrna has a mystical meaning. It is a Greek word, meaning myrrh (one of the gifts of the Magi to Our Lord), a reddish aromatic gum, bitter to the taste, used for making incense, and for embalming the dead. The name is, therefore, emblematical of patience and endurance under suffering

and persecution, and the Epistle to Smyrna is an epistle to those who mourn, who suffer with Our Lord, who are tried as gold in the furnace. Hence Our Lord, in its opening verse, gives Himself precisely the title which will convey the greatest measure of comfort and encouragement to His readers. He is "the First and the Last"—true and to be trusted from beginning to end—the One Who was dead, Who for our sakes became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, Who loved us and delivered Himself for us, but rose from the tomb, with death no longer having dominion over Him, with glory and empire awaiting Him. And as it was with the Master, so shall it be with the Disciples. He can speak freely to us of our trials, for He has tasted their bitterness. "I know," He says, "thy tribulation and thy poverty"—words of tender pity and comfort, that came also in the Letter to Ephesus—words of the Good Shepherd Who can say: "I know Mine, and Mine know Me." (Jn., x, 14). "But thou art rich"—"rich towards God" (Lk., xii, 21), rich for Eternity, for "where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also" (Mt., vi, 20; cp. James, ii, 5-7).

And the Epistle proceeds in the same strain: "You are blasphemed by them that say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." Smyrna being an excellent place for the making of money, the Jews were strong and plentiful there, and were noted for their hatred of the Christian name. In this passage they do

but represent all those who thwart us, who are unkind and make life bitter for us, who take a morbid, sinful pleasure in lessening the brightness of our days. How awful is Our Lord's description of those who thus break the law of charity! He calls them "the synagogue of Satan," yet, He continues, "fear none of these things." "Fear not them that can kill the body, and then have no more that they can do: fear only those who can scandalise one of these My little ones." (Mt., x, 28). As to these, they are "children of a hard face, and of an obstinate heart; they are a provoking house," yet "fear none of them," though "you be sent as sheep amid wolves." "If they have called the Good Man of the House Beelzebub, how much more them of His household? Be ready for stripes. Behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried, and you shall have tribulation ten days." Ten days! Not more! As we might say: "for a week or so," and then the end shall come, and the reward! It is a curious and a striking phrase, almost, if not quite, unique in all Scripture. It means "a short time," quite vague and indeterminate, but at any rate, "the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to come." (Cp. Our Lord's words: "a little while," in St. John, xvi, 16-22; also cp. II Cor., iv, 17; I Pet., i, 6-9; v, 6-11). Wherefore, "be faithful unto death," and you shall receive "the crown of life" (for which phrase cp. James, i, 12), and "shall not

be hurt by the second death"—a phrase peculiar to the Apocalypse (cp. xx, 6, 14; xxi, 8), which is really the same as the "hell," or "gehenna," spoken of by Our Lord in Mt., v, 29; Mk., ix, 43-48; Lk., xii, 5.

Throughout the Epistle to Pergamus, we find a tone of severity, which contrasts strongly with the compassionate tone of the Epistle to Smyrna. Pergamus was situated in Mysia, in Asia Minor, and was noted for its beauty, its public buildings and library, and for the number of its heathen temples. It was the residence of the Roman Governor, and a very centre of hatred of the Christian name, and of all the abominations and impurity connected with the pagan worship of false gods. We may easily imagine how difficult was the life of those who were followers of Our Lord, not only because from time to time at least they must face persecution and even death itself for the Faith, but also because of the degenerate and immoral atmosphere they had to breathe, making the pursuit of holiness and the maintenance of purity the more difficult. Yet in spite of this, an Epistle in quite severe tones is addressed to them—"To the Church of Pergamus, write: These things saith He that hath the sharp two-edged sword." So it opens, without one word of excuse for the difficulty of their position. The severity which thus arrests our attention, serves also to emphasise the importance of the lessons to be learnt. "I know where thou dwellest, where the seat of

Satan is." Such is a picture of the city! Poor little flock, their pastures lie where the seat of Satan is, and the Shepherd knows it well. So far there is sweetness and compassion in the letter, and it continues a moment in the same strain. "And thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith." In the midst of all the Cæsar-worship of Pergamus, in the midst of sin and infidelity, "they had held fast to the Name which is above every name," they had bowed their knee to none save to the adorable Name of Jesus; they had not denied their faith, but had confessed Christ and Him crucified, before men." Nay more, as the Epistle goes on to say, one of their number had shed his blood for the faith: "Antipas, my faithful witness, was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth." We know nothing more of this blessed martyr, but there, "where Satan dwelleth," he had "counted all things as dross, that he might gain and suffer for Christ."

So far, so good; but there is fault to be found. "I have a few things against thee." We need make no emphasis on the use of the plural number. It is the phrase we have heard before—"I have something against thee"—something serious, something inexcusable, something to be changed, and quickly changed. What is it? "Thou hast there in thy midst them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat (things sacrificed to idols) and to commit

fornication. Thou hast also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaites." This passage requires some explanation. It refers to a well-known event in the history of God's chosen people, recorded in the Book of Numbers, xxxi, where the false prophet Balaam, untrue to his lights and sacred calling, taught Balak, the King of the Moabites and the enemy of the Israelites, to beguile them into the double sin of idolatry and fornication. And these Nicolaites (the origin of whom is somewhat obscure) disregarded (amongst other things) the restrictions imposed on the Gentile Churches by the Council of Jerusalem with regard to "things strangled and the pollutions of idols" (Acts, xv, 29). Thus much by way of explanation. What, then, was the sin of those who belonged to the Church of Pergamus? What has Our Lord against them? First, their wrong attitude towards false believers and unsound morals is severely reprehended. They had the faith, and were proud of it; but they had not realised and embraced the high standard of purity and holiness of life which the possession and profession of that faith involve. They had not, indeed, worshipped false gods or idols: but they had clung to the feasts and revelries connected with the pagan feasts and idol-worship. Their purity has been tampered with: they are no longer clean of heart, but sharers in "deeds of darkness which must not be named." They act as though faith and right morals had no

connection, adding sin to sin of a kind that, quicker and more fatally than any other, separates the soul from God. They are allowing the flesh to crush the spirit, forgetting the bitter fruits of the flesh which are, as St. Paul says: "fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, and such like; of the which I foretell you, as I have foretold to you, that they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God" (Gal., v). But "they that are Christ's crucify their flesh with the vices and concupiscences." This the Christians of Pergamus seemed to have forgotten; do Christians of to-day forget it also? "Oh, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men." (Cp. I Pet., ii, 11, 12.) Is there not reason to fear that the laxity to be found in Pergamus of old, is to be found in our midst to-day, and is daily gaining ground? We live in unlovely times, for they are so impure, and the children of the Church are not innocent in these matters. There is a laxity about reading, about speaking, about places of amusement, that increases by leaps and bounds; propriety no longer rules, as she did a few years ago; things are winked at now that a few years ago would never have been tolerated; our standard is being dragged down, and a bare respectability is enthroned as queen, instead of the purity that befits the children of Mary Immaculate.

"I have something against thee," for thou

allowest "a stumbling-block before my children," Our Lord may well say to His friends to-day. "Do penance" (as the Epistle goes on to say); "for if not, I will come to thee quickly, and will fight against thee with the sword of my mouth. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."—"To him that overcometh" (to pass on to the touching words with which the Epistle ends), "to him that overcometh (himself)"—who checks his passions, who avoids dangerous occasions, who prizes his purity, who ever keeps rigidly on the safe side in all matters pertaining thereto,—“to him I will give the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone.” The hidden manna is immortality, life everlasting, the fulness of peace, the vision of God—rightly called "hidden" now, for it is a food of whose sweetness we can form no conception. "We are now the sons of God, but it has not yet appeared what we shall be, but we shall see Him as He is" (I Jn., iii, 2). "Eye has not seen, nor hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for those who love Him," for those who "overcome" themselves. (Is. Lxiv. 4). We are also to receive a "white stone." At the trials of old, a white pebble dropped into the urn denoted acquittal, while a black one denoted condemnation. The colour white is always connected with joy and victory, and its use in the Apocalypse in this way is very marked. Hence they spoke of old of "white

days," as days of joy and good fortune. Such a "white day" is in store for us, if we "overcome" ourselves, a day of welcome, when the "white stone" of acquittal will be given to us, with the words: "Come thou blessed of My Father: see God for evermore, for thou art clean of heart." And "on the stone a new name written," the name of Christ. No one knows that name, but those who receive it: no one receives it, but those who *are* it. "It is a knowing that is identical with being." They are Christ's: they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth: Christ has been formed in them: they loved cleanness of heart and for the grace of their lips shall have the King for their friend: they are purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb: in their mouth was found no lie: for they are without spot before the throne of God. (Apoc. xiv.)

THE EPISTLE TO THYATIRA

(18-29)

18 And to the angel of the church of Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like to a flame of fire, and his feet like to fine brass.

19 I know thy works, and thy faith, and thy charity, and thy ministry, and thy patience, and thy last works which are more than the former.

20 But I have against thee a few things: because thou sufferest the woman Jezabel, who calleth herself a prophetess to teach, and to seduce my servants, to commit fornication, and to eat of things sacrificed to idols.

21 And I gave her a time that she might do penance, and she will not repent of her fornication.

22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed : and they that commit adultery with her shall be in very great tribulation, except they do penance from their deeds.

23 And I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give to every one of you according to your works. But to you I say,

24 And to the rest who are at Thyatira : Whosoever have not this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will not put upon you any other burthen.

25 Yet that, which you have, hold fast till I come.

26 And he that shall overcome, and keep my works unto the end, I will give him power over the nations.

27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and as the vessel of a potter they shall be broken,

28 As I also have received of my Father : and I will give him the morning star.

29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

THE Epistle to Thyatira is the longest and the most obscure of the Epistles to the Seven Churches, and, like the Epistle to Pergamus, it is decidedly severe in its tone. Thyatira was a town of some commercial importance, a centre of communication, and a garrison town, but not noted for any beauty of building or of situation. Indeed, it stood on an open high road, and "the whole impression which its situation gives is one of weakness, subjection, and dependence." This very weakness demanded a strong guard to be maintained

there—and such in fact was the case. It is well to bear these facts in mind, for they curiously enunciate and emphasise the main lesson we are to gather—a lesson of being strong when all around is weak—a lesson of trust in Our Lord's ultimate victory, though appearances are always against Him—a lesson of confidence in the arms at our disposal for the vanquishing of temptation. The world seems to conquer and to hold sway, but its victories are shorn of reality. The Church holds her own ; she lives and conquers ; and the children of the Church bring about her victory by subjection to the yoke of Christ, by suffering with their Lord, by bearing their daily cross, by the testimony they offer to the truth of their cause, by their loyalty, their spirit of hope, their strong faith, their unshaken trust. "These things"—so it opens—"these things saith the Son of God (the only place in the Apocalypse where Our Lord is so called), who hath eyes as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass"—a description of Our Lord that speaks of His all-searching gaze, that nothing is hidden from Him, and that in His march He treads down His enemies, and makes them His footstool, if they will not be His friends. "I know thy works, and thy faith, and thy charity, and ministry, and thy patience—and thy last works which are more than the former." No words of greater praise could be given to any religious body. As a rule, the last works are less than the former : the tendency is for the

last state to become worse than the first, as St. Peter tells us (II Pet., ii, 20), but here, there is growth, and life, and an increase of fervour. "But (in spite of this) I have a few things against thee, because thou permittest (note that word, for it suggests the whole nature of the change) the woman Jezabel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servant to commit fornication, and to eat of things offered to idols. And I gave her time to do penance, but she will not repent of her fornication. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and they that commit adultery with her shall be in very great tribulation, unless they do penance from their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give to everyone of you according to their works." Volumes have been written upon these sentences yet no certain conclusions have been reached as to who this Jezabel was that was working havoc in the Christian community at Thyatira. "Fornication" here need not bear its ordinary, terrible sense; it may be taken of a perversion from the truth; but clearly some powerful influence for evil was carrying on its destructive work at Thyatira, and that influence for evil was winked at, and tolerated. No protest was made: the followers of the evil persuasion were welcomed in society: the danger of their sophistries was not appreciated: the duty of Christian aversion was forgotten, and, because

God was slow to punish, it was thought that what was done and taught amiss, did not matter, whereas all the time "He Who searcheth the reins and hearts," He "Who hath eyes as a flame of fire and Whose feet are like unto fine brass," was noting all, was angry at the enemy who thus was allowed "while men were asleep to oversow cockle among His wheat." Thus forcibly is the situation described, and the danger pointed out.

The Epistle then turns to those who thus far at least are faithful to light, and duty, but who may be wavering and apt soon to yield, pointing out to them their work, and its power for good, and its ultimate reward. "But I say to you, the rest who are at Thyatira: whosoever have not this doctrine, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will not put upon you any other weight; but that which you have, hold fast until I come."—Note carefully that phrase, "the depths of Satan." Who can tell what they are, who can measure the depths of his deceit, the depths to which he can degrade souls! It is for us to "hold fast" our faith, our sacraments, our lights, our fellowship with Our Lord, our duties in His regard—"until He comes." The odds may seem against us, the fight too one-sided and severe, but we are on the side of victory, and can "do all things in Him Who strengtheneth us." "Believest thou this?" It is for us to embrace and welcome our apostolate and mission to the world, and by

prayer, by purity of life, by charity, by patience, by example, "to go about doing good," surrounded indeed and harassed by foes, but ever cautious, prudent, ever bold and firm, ever victorious, consistent and true, "holding fast that which you have, until Our Lord come." "And he that shall overcome and keep the works (of Christ) to the end, to him I will give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, and as the vessel of a potter, they shall be broken, yes, even as I received from my Father." Here we find, as has well been said, "the promise which historically fulfils itself in the Church's influence upon the world. No other Society can be compared with her as a factor in the shaping of national character and life: and the individual disciple, in proportion as he is loyal, bears his share in the subjugation of the world to Our Lord." Our mission is to leaven society, to be the salt and light of the world, even as was that of Our Lord Himself. "Even as He received from the Father," even as "He came to do the will of Him that sent Him," even as He came in lowliness and yet with power, "as having nothing and yet possessing all things," in love and yet with strength, so do we. And if we be true to our gifts, diligent in their use, bold in our prayers, generous in our work, patient in our suffering, loyal in our faith, "we shall have power over the nations." "We shall rule them with a rod of iron," and "as the vessel of a potter, we shall break "in pieces

those who are "the enemies of the Cross of Christ." And what shall be our reward? The Epistle tells it to us in its concluding verse: "I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." What is the meaning of this promise: "I will give Him the morning star"? Various interpretations have been given.—The morning star is Our Lord, Who when the long night of this world is past, shows the light of the eternal day to those who have loved Him to the end. So St. Bede; and indeed, as has well been said, "the whole promise points to the second Coming of Our Lord, and yet does not exclude the foretastes, which are given to the faithful in the growing illumination of the mind, and the occasional flashings upon it of the yet distant light of the "perfect day" (Prov., iv, 18). But perchance the interpretation favoured by Cornelius a Lapide may be preferred to this. He says: "All the Seven Epistles end with a promise of this kind, but the figure under which the promise is given varies according to the special needs of the particular place to which each Epistle is addressed. So in one it is a crown, in another a star, in another a seat on a throne. In the case of Thyatira it is a star, for stars are guides, and Thyatira needed prudence, the guiding virtue, above all." Here, then, in one word, is our lesson: prudence sustained by trust, ever looking to the end, ever preparing for the end, knowing in Whom we have believed,

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and having confidence in Him, for He has overcome the world. We are sent as sheep amidst wolves ; let us, then, be wise as serpents, simple as doves, not throwing our pearls before swine, not giving that which is holy to dogs, but " being wise in good, simple in evil " (Rom., xvi, 19).

CHAPTER III

THE EPISTLES TO SARDIS AND PHILADELPHIA

(1-13)

AND to the angel of the church of Sardis, write : These things saith he, that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars : I know thy works, that thou hast the name of being alive : and thou art dead.

2 Be watchful and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die. For I find not thy works full before my God.

3 Have in mind therefore in what manner thou hast received and heard : and observe, and do penance. If then thou shalt not watch, I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee.

4 But thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments : and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy.

5 He that shall overcome, shall thus be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

7 And to the angel of the church of Philadelphia, write : These things saith the Holy One and the true one, he that hath the key of David ; he that openeth, and no man shutteth ; shutteth, and no man openeth :

8 I know thy works. Behold, I have given before thee a door opened, which no man can shut : because thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

9 Behold, I will bring of the synagogue of Satan, who

say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them to come and adore before thy feet. And they shall know that I have loved thee.

10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the whole world to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly : hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12 He that shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God ; and he shall go out no more ; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God, and my new name.

13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

THE city of Sardis was one of the great cities of primitive history, but is now only a small, insignificant village. Its situation on the great Roman Road, marked it out as a ruling city, and was such as to make it almost impregnable ; yet, through want of vigilance on the part of its inhabitants, who were both slack and over-confident, with a name for luxury and loose-living, Sardis had fallen more than once, and may truly be named the city of failure. As in the case of Thyatira, its natural situation and history suggest at least, if they do not proclaim and enforce, the main lessons of the Epistle addressed to it—the lesson of watchfulness and vigour in God's service. Alone among all the Churches, it receives no word of praise at all. This Epistle is the *only* one that does not open with some words of encouragement and comfort.

No mention is made, as in the other Epistles, of any burden to be borne, of any conflict with enemies, either within or without : all seems to have been at peace, but it was a peace that led to indifference, and an indifference that led to death ; and of Sardis the awful words are true that it " had the name of being alive and yet was dead," in the eyes of God, which " behold all the earth " ! The city was not apparently wanting in outward manifestations of spiritual life and activity, yet in the eyes of Him Whose eyes are as a flaming fire, it was dead. Like the barren fig tree, it had no fruit, but only leaves, and from it we may learn the possibilities and facility of self-deception, our need of careful self-examination, and the benefits of open confession. This verse, so stunning in its effect, is at once followed by words of awakening : " Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain which are ready to die, for I find not thy works full before my God "—a perfect compendium of spiritual direction. Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation : realise your own weakness, and the presence of danger on all sides, at every hour : remember " to keep thy heart," to guard its affections " with all watchfulness " (Prov., iv, 23), " and strengthen the things that remain, which are ready to die." Purify your motives, redirect your intention, be converted afresh to God, embrace once more your work, your position in life, your rule of life ; " gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost,"

and see for the future that "your works are full before God." It is these last words that contain the main lesson of this Epistle. The word "full" does not mean "perfect," but rather "finished," neatly turned out of hand, done with care and devotion, to the very best of our ability. Such works are "full" before God, and acceptable to Him. But prayers said without thought, sacraments received without preparation, without thanksgiving, duties done with impatience, works carried through because they *have* to be carried through, but all the while in discontent, without love, without joy, such works are not "full." Quickly do they generate a spirit of sloth and indifference, which makes them "ready to die," and makes it true of us, that though we have the name of being alive, we are full of death. And at once the Epistle, in verse 3, supplies a motive for this process of spiritual renovation. "Have in mind, therefore, in what manner thou hast received and heard, and observe, and do penance." Beautiful reminder, indeed, of God's generous goodness to us! "The Gospel has not been to us in word only, but in power also, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much fulness: we were converted to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven (whom He raised from the dead), Jesus, who hath delivered us from the wrath to come" (I Thess., i, 5-11). God gave us the faith, and we received it with joy: there was a time when we would have

"plucked out our own eyes" (Gal., iv, 15), for the truth: are we what once we were, or has familiarity bred contempt? Have we fallen from our first fervour?—But, "if we will not watch" (as the Epistle goes on to say), "I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee." There was a maxim in vogue before Our Lord came, to the effect that the gods had feet of wool (*dii laneos habent pedes*), so stealthy was their approach: and Our Lord has enlarged upon the idea. "Let your loins be girt, let lamps be burning in your hands, and you yourselves like to men who wait for their lord, when he shall return from the wedding: that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching. Wherefore, be you ready, because at what hour you know not, the Son of Man will come—at the evening or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning, lest coming on a sudden, He find you sleeping!"

But now the Epistle breaks off into a new and a more joyful strain. "Thou hast a few names," it says (and by "names" is meant "persons") "in Sardis which have not defiled their garments, and they shall walk with me in white, because they are worthy. He that shall overcome, shall thus be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before

my Father, and before his Angels. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches"—a joyous conclusion to an epistle most solemn in its general tone. The whole letter, indeed, is woven together of words and ideas uttered by Our Lord many times in the days when He sojourned on earth, and now repeated by Him, as it were, from heaven, to set His seal for their truth and importance. Curiously enough the words thus woven together by St. John come entirely in the three synoptic Gospels, and none of them in his own. The blessing on "the few names in Sardis which have not defiled their garments" reminds us of the interview between Almighty God and His servant Abraham, recorded in Genesis, xviii, where Abraham pleads for the city of Sodom, that God would spare it, if there be fifty just men found in it, nay, if there be "five less than fifty"; nay, if there be forty; nay, if there be thirty; nay, if there be twenty; nay, if there be even ten!

The Epistle to Philadelphia opens with a great picture of Our Lord, as being of the House of David, and as "holding the keys of death and hell" (Apoc., i, 18). In Apoc., v, 5, He is again described as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" and in xxii, 16, as "the Root and stock of David." (Cp. Lk., i, 32, 33; Is., xxii, 22). And the figure of the Keys leads naturally to that of the Opened Door, with which we become familiar in the Acts.

(Cp. Acts, xiv, 26; I Cor., xvi, 9; II Cor., ii, 12). The city of Philadelphia was remarkable for the beauty of its situation, and being on the borders of Mysia, Lydia, and Phrygia, and on the threshold of the whole Eastern country, the Church there had peculiar opportunities for spreading the Gospel. It lay at the extremity of a long valley, which opens back from the sea, and the road along this valley ascends to the Phrygian land and the Great Central Plateau, the main mass of Asia Minor. This road led to the East in general, and was the great Asiatic trade-route of mediæval times. Philadelphia was thus the keeper of the gateway to the great Central Plateau.—(Ramsay). But it was often and severely visited by terrible and devastating earthquakes, so that its inhabitants lived in constant state of dread, and the city never grew to any great size. Yet while other cities, far more splendid, far more powerful and important, have disappeared, Philadelphia remains to this day, a missionary city, with its resident bishop, five churches, and about a thousand Christian inhabitants. As Gibbon has said in a passage of great eloquence: "In the loss of Ephesus, the Christians deplored the fall of the first Angel, the extinction of the first candlestick; the desolation is complete; and the temple of Diana and the Church of Our Lady will equally elude the search of the curious traveller. The circus and three stately theatres of Laodicea are now peopled with wolves and foxes; Sardis is

reduced to a miserable village; the god of Mahomet is invoked in the mosques of Thyatira and Pergamus, and the populousness of Smyrna is supported by the foreign trade of the Franks and Armenians. Philadelphia alone has been saved by prophecy or courage. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperors, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom about four score years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans. Among the Greek colonies and Churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect—a column in a scene of ruins, a pleasing example that the paths of honour and safety may sometimes be the same.” (*Decline and Fall*, ch. 64).—“I know thy works,” so the Letter opens, but no description of these “works” follows, for the “know” of Our Lord here is one of unqualified approval, and in this Letter, unlike so many of the others, there is no word of censure, and hardly one of warning. “Behold, I have given before thee a door opened”—and fully had they availed themselves of this great grace. To be fishers of men, to draw souls to Christ, had been the main work of the Church at Philadelphia, and its fruits are strongly set forth in the next verse. “Behold, I will bring of the synagogue of Satan who say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie: behold, I will make them to come, and adore before thy feet, and they shall know that I have loved thee.” Could any words set forth more glori-

ously the work of winning souls to the cause of Christ? They are outside now, hostile, bitter proud, stiff-necked, and contemptuous: they are of the synagogue of Satan, and deride the truths of Christ, and despise the Church, His spouse; but wait; there is that open door, which no man can shut; and through its ample portals light and truth are ever winging their way, reaching those that are not of the fold. They stand at the door and knock, their locks full of the dew of grace and good-will, and they carry the day. The synagogue of Satan is abandoned, and those who were there come and “adore before the feet” of those who themselves adore in the places where the wounded feet of Christ have trodden. Thus pointedly is the work of the Church of Philadelphia described. The rest of the letter is but a blessing to them all in their fight for the right, an encouragement to persevere, a description of the reward to those who hold fast, and are faithful to the end (verses 10-13). And it is there that our lesson lies. Each one of us, like the Church at Philadelphia, is situated nobly and on the high road to many countries—to many countries in the East, where the Sun of justice, the Orient from on High, is rising in His warmth and beauty, to shine upon and enlighten many who now “sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.” And along this road are many, ever coming and going, looking to us for an alms, though we dwell in a land visited by earthquakes and tremblings. And for

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each one of us, by Him who shutteth and no man openeth, who openeth and no man shutteth, a door has been opened, which no man can shut. It is the door of good example, of influence for good over others, which only one man can shut, and that man is ourselves. We have only "a little strength," but "we can do all things in Him who strengthens us." It is our work and privilege to bring many from the synagogues of Satan, from the ways of evil, from the haunts of ignorance, to the knowledge of truth and the practice of virtue, by the power of our prayers, by the fervour of our Communion, by the purity and consistency of our lives, by the power of our example, for we are the light of the world, the salt and leaven of society.

THE EPISTLE TO LAODICEA

(14-22)

14 And to the angel of the church of Laodicea, write : These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, who is the beginning of the creation of God :

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold, nor hot. I would thou wert cold, or hot.

16 But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth.

17 Because thou sayest : I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing : and knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire tried, that thou mayest be made rich ; and mayest be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not

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appear ; and anoint thy eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

19 Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise. Be zealous therefore, and do penance.

20 Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne : as I also have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.

THE Epistle to the Church of Laodicea, the last of the seven addressed by St. John to the Churches of Asia, is the most severe and awakening of them all in its tone, and comes to us like the trumpet call at eventide, with no uncertain sound, to say that to-morrow is the judgment ; wherefore be ye ready, with loins girt, with lamps well-trimmed. There is indeed a very distinct and marked gradation in all the seven Letters. The names given to Our Lord who dictates the Letters, are in each case different : so, too, are the promises spoken at the conclusion to "those who overcome" : and there is traceable in all these a fitness to various epochs of God's dealings with men, from the Fall of our first parents down to the consummation of the world. The Epistle to Laodicea marks the climax. It brings before us a superb picture of Our Lord ; on the one hand, of His gentle dealings with those who cling to Him, on the other hand of His hatred of all half-measures,

disloyalty, and attempts to serve two masters. Wherefore, "he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches."

"To the angel of the Church of Laodicea write : these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, who is the beginning of the creation of God." That name, "the Amen," applied to Our Lord—the only place in Scripture where it is thus used—tells us at once the character of what we are to read. It bids us awake, and look to the end. "The Amen" who speaks is He who alone can say, "Amen, Amen, I say to you"—and it is interesting to note that it is only in the Gospel of St. John that Our Lord is ever recorded to have used the *double* Amen. "These things, then, saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, who is the beginning of the creation of God," that is, who is the active cause and author of all creation, "the Word that was in the beginning, with God ; the Word by whom all things were made, and without whom was made nothing that was made." What does He say? Let him that hath an ear to hear, give careful ear. "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot," neither boiling nor icy, as the words would be more correctly translated. "I would thou wert cold or hot : but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin (I have a good mind) to vomit thee out of my mouth." It is Our Lord Who speaks, Who never, so far as we know, called any one to be His disciple from

among the lukewarm, but did call many from among those who were icy cold. He called Matthew from his money, Zaccheus from his wrongdoings, and Mary Magdalen from the depths of her wickedness. It is Our Lord Who speaks, Who has given us a proof of love greater than which no man can give, that He lay down His life for His friend. May He not look for some enthusiasm among His own? He looked for it at Laodicea of old, but found none ; does He find it in our midst to-day?

The next verse is equally plain and scathing : "Thou sayest I am rich, and made wealthy, and I have need of nothing : and thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Like the Pharisee, "you trust in yourselves, and despise others" : "you thank God that you are not as the rest of men" : you are blind to your real state and dangers : you have the name of being alive, but you are nigh to death : you never stop to think, you close your ears to the truth about yourself, you are proud and self-satisfied, you are consequently insincere, and the land of your soul is made desolate indeed. And then the whole tone of the Epistle changes, and there comes from Our Lord an appeal of surpassing force and tenderness. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be made rich : and mayest be clothed in white garments, that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear : and anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest

see." There is reference here to the circumstances and condition of Laodicea. It was a city with very extensive money-transactions: Our Lord would offer them instead His fire-tried gold. It was a city famous for its wool of blackest hue: Our Lord has garments of snowy whiteness to offer instead. It had also famous scents and ointments: Our Lord has His own eye-salves. Let us further remark the tone of gentle irony—the irony of divine love—that runs through the verse, as when after the Agony in the Garden, Our Lord said to His disciples: "Sleep ye now, and take your rest." So here: "I counsel thee": as though Our Lord would say: "I am your friend, and have your welfare at heart: the ways of sin and tepidity are not for you any longer: I have told the truth to you and shown you to what they are leading you: come now once more to Me: deal with Me, buy of Me: so I counsel thee, for I cannot force thee, or command thee." "All ye that thirst, come to the waters: and you that have no money make haste, buy, and eat: come ye, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price. Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which doth not satisfy you? Hearken diligently to me, and eat that which is good, and your soul shall be delighted on fatness. Incline your ear, and come to me: seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near" (Is., lv). "I counsel thee to buy of Me," no

longer of the world: "buy of Me gold (thoroughly) tried in the fire, that thou mayest be made rich" (towards God): buy of Me a faith that is tried by affliction; be clothed in the white robes of justice, for though you have known Me, you have not yet "put on the Lord Jesus"; and "anoint thy eyes with the eye-salve" of grace, which stings indeed while it heals, destroying all self-deception, and restoring spiritual vision, that your conscience may guide you aright, that you may appreciate your insufficiency, and may no longer think yourselves to stand, but may take much heed lest you fall.—Such is the fervent appeal, the earnest warning, of Him Who is the Amen. The name tells us that it may be our last! "Whilst you have the time, be at peace with thine adversary: whilst you have the time, I counsel thee to buy of Me." And now there follows, in conclusion, a full and tender unfolding of Our Lord's dealings with the sheep of His flock. "Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise: be zealous, therefore, and do penance." It is Our Lord again, bearing His own Cross, and bidding us follow on with ours. We are being prepared as stones for the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem, for which we are to be fitted "without sound or hammer, or any such thing." Yet, the hammer and chisel must do their work somewhere, and that is now, in this life. The grapes that are crushed yield the rich wine, not those that are untouched. Whom the Lord loveth He

chastiseth, and He scourges every son whom He receives : He spared not His only Son : wherefore, O my God, make me humble, and submissive to " Thy loving correction, which shall make me great " : enlighten my eyes that I may know in very truth that " it is a token of great goodness, when sinners are not suffered to go on their ways for a long time, but are presently punished " (II Macc., vi, 12). And Our Lord concludes : " Behold I stand at the door, and knock " (cp. Canticle, v, 2-6). Our Lord only *knocks*. He does not force the door open. " Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is full of dew, and my locks of the drops of the nights : if any man shall hear My voice, and open to Me the gate, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."—So let us conclude our study of the Epistles to the Seven Churches of Asia, in which we have " lifted our eyes to the mountains of eternity, whence help may come to us." It has come to us from a Voice that was the Voice of Our Lord upon the waters, bidding us be of good courage, and insinuating the things that are to our peace. It was a Voice from Home that declared the value of the price paid for our place in one of its many mansions, the need of being faithful unto death in order to receive the crown of life.

" To him that shall overcome " . . . these words, as the refrain of a song from the Jerusalem that is above, that is our mother,

have repeatedly been heard, coupled with the assurance of Divine perfection and aid, for " behold I stand at the door, and knock." " To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with Me in My throne, as I also have overcome, and am set down with My Father in His throne."—And now, in the chapters yet to come, like St. Paul, we are " to come to the visions and revelations of the Lord," and " be caught up into Paradise " (II Cor., xii), and, like St. Stephen, we shall " see the heavens opened " (Acts, vii, 55), and listen to some at least of " the glorious things that are said of thee, O City of God " (Ps., 86).

CHAPTER IV

AFTER these things I looked, and behold a door *was* opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard, as it were, of a trumpet speaking with me, said : Come up hither, and I will show thee the things which must be done hereafter.

2 And immediately I was in the spirit : and behold there was a throne set in heaven, and upon the throne one sitting.

3 And he that sat, was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine stone ; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats ; and upon the seats, four and twenty ancients sitting, clothed in white garments, and on their heads *were* crowns of gold.

5 And from the throne proceeded lightnings, and voices, and thunders ; and there were seven lamps burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.

6 And in the sight of the throne was, as it were, a sea of glass like to crystal ; and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living creatures, full of eyes before and behind.

7 And the first living creature was like a lion : and the second living creature like a calf : and the third living creature, having the face, as it were, of a man : and the fourth living creature was like an eagle flying.

8 And the four living creatures had each of them six wings ; and round about and within they are full of eyes. And they rested not day and night, saying : Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and who is, and who is to come.

9 And when those living creatures gave glory, and honour, and benediction to him that sitteth on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever ;

10 The four and twenty ancients fell down before him

that sitteth on the throne, and adored him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying :

11 Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honour, and power : because thou hast created all things ; and for thy will they were, and have been created.

THE Revelation which God gave on the Lord's Day to St. John, to make known to His servants the things which must shortly come to pass, concerned first of all, as we have seen, the battle-field of life on earth, with a full description of its dangers, and an assurance of the reward that awaits those who overcome the foe, and are faithful to the end. This has gloriously been set forth in the Epistles to the Seven Churches of Asia, *i.e.*, to the Churches of the world. The scene is now changed, and we are bidden lift our eyes and gaze on the opened door of heaven itself, that we may be shown "the things which must be done hereafter," and be convinced of the very real bearing of our conduct here below on our place in Eternity hereafter.—The language, and the sequence of ideas, show conclusively that these chapters are written by the same hand that wrote the Epistles to the Seven Churches, while their plan is as clear as it is majestic. The imagery throughout is very Hebraic, and we are reminded especially of many passages in the Prophet Ezechiel, who like St. John, begins his vision of the throne of God thus : "The heavens were opened, and I saw the visions of God" (Ezech., i, 1), and who

adds : " the likeness of the throne was a likeness as of the appearance of a Man above upon it " (i, 26). (cp. also Daniel, vii.)—The jasper, the sardine-stone (red in colour, deriving its name from Sardis, where it was found) and the emerald were worn in the breast-plate of the high-priest of the Temple (Exod., xxviii, 17, 20). The jasper was a clear crystal (xxi, 11), and is here suffused with the warmth of the red sardine-stone, while round about the throne is the emerald-coloured rainbow, the symbol of peace between God and men (Gen., ix, 13). God's Sanctity, God's Love, God's Mercy, are thus brought to mind in the opening vision. And who are the four and twenty ancients? (cp. Is., xxiv, 23, and Dan., vii, 9). They are the twelve Patriarchs of the Old Law and the twelve Apostles of the New, as we may gather from xviii, 20, and xix, 4. They form the walls and foundations of the New Jerusalem in the closing chapters of this Book : (Cp. Mt., xix, 28) ; they remain seated in Judgment, while the ways of God to men are vindicated by the Opening of the Books now to follow. The " lightnings, and voices, and thunders " remind us of the giving of the Ten Commandments by God on Mount Sinai (Exod., xx, 18), for the Word of God " is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword : it reaches unto the division of the soul and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and interests of the heart " (Heb., iv, 12). By the seven lamps we

may understand the Seven Spirits of God which are before the Throne (i, 4). In Zacharias iv, the seven-branched candlestick of the Old Law is made to symbolise the Holy Ghost, without some mention of Whom here the picture of the throne of God would be incomplete.

St. Irenaeus suggests, as is well known, an explanation of this somewhat obscure passage, viz : that the " four living creatures " stand for the four Evangelists. They are " living " indeed, for they have recorded the words and deeds of Him Who said : " Heaven and earth may pass away, but My words shall not pass away." The lion stands for St. Mark, whose Gospel begins with the preaching of St. John the Baptist, which was " as the roaring of a lion." The calf is the emblem of the priesthood (sacrifice), and stands for St. Luke, whose Gospel begins with the priesthood, in the person of Zachary. The man stands for St. Matthew, whose Gospel begins with the Manhood of Our Lord, while the eagle stands for St. John, for he ever soars aloft, and treats mainly of the Divinity of Our Lord. But this, though attractive and devotional, can hardly be the first and true explanation.

Fr. Allo urges that we get the real explanation by keeping close to the passages in Ezechiel I (cp. also Is., vi, 1-3), where the adjective " living " is applied to the Cherubim, for on this adjective much stress should be laid. It at once associates closely those blessed spirits with Creation,

and with Man, so that we find them connected with leading events in the history of Man, e.g. the Fall, (Gen., 111, 24); the Ark (Exod., xxv., 18); also with God's immanence over created nature (cp: "Thou that sitteth upon the Cherubims, shine forth": Ps., lxxix, 1; also Is., xxxvii, 16). The whole passage is thus a personification of the works of God *ad extra*, as Creator, Preserver, and Mover. It shows forth the immanent power and wisdom of God, so active in all created nature, offering to God the homage of Nature as its Maker, and Preserver, its Source and its End. "Nature, including Man, is represented before the Throne, taking its part in the fulfilment of the Divine Will, and the worship of the Divine Majesty." (Cp. Is., xlv, 24; Job., xxvi, 7; Eccus., xv, 19; xxiii, 28). And this view is much emphasised by the symbolism of the "eyes before and behind," pointing to God's ceaseless vigilance over all the works of His hands, and His tender Providence in their regard, for they "execute His word, hearkening to the voice of His orders" (Ps. 102). "Thousands of thousands minister to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stand before Him" (Dan., vii, 10). The theme of praise in verse 11 is again the boon of creation. How slow we are to recognise that creation is an act of God's love towards us, for which we can never render sufficient thanks! God *chose* us to be created, and His choice was an act of His love! So has He "loved us with an everlasting

love": so has He "given us a delight in His doings, and enabled us to rejoice in the works of His hands" (Ps., 91): so can we "speak of the glory of His kingdom, and tell of His power" (Ps., 144).

CHAPTER V

AND I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals.

2 And I saw a strong angel, proclaiming with a loud voice : Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof ?

3 And no man was able, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth, to open the book, nor to look on it.

4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open the book, nor to see it.

5 And one of the ancients said to me : Weep not ; behold the lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

6 And I saw : and behold in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the ancients, a Lamb standing as it were slain, having seven horns and seven eyes : which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.

7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne.

8 And when he had opened the book, the four living creatures, and the four and twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints :

9 And they sang a new canticle, saying : Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book, and to open the seals thereof ; because thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, in thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people and nation,

10 And hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.

11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the ancients ; and the number of them was thousands of thousands,

12 Saying with a loud voice : The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction.

13 And every creature, which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them : I heard all saying : To him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, benediction, and honour, and glory, and power, for ever and ever.

14 And the four living creatures said : Amen. And the four and twenty ancients fell down on their faces, and adored him that liveth for ever and ever.

IN this chapter we see for the first time the Book of Life, in which "all has been written" (Ps., 138). "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and with the just let them not be written," was the most awful prayer that could be breathed against a foe (Ps., 68), while in chapter iii, 5, the blessing on those who "overcome" is precisely that "God will not blot out their names out of the Book of Life" (cp. Phil., iv, 3). The Book is in the "right" hand of God to show its importance ; it is "written within and without," for it records not only the known events of the present and of the past, but also the secrets of the future, known only to God (cp. Ezechiel, ii, 19) ; and it is "sealed with seven seals," to denote completeness, *i.e.*, "how completely its contents are hidden from the knowledge of angels and of men, and that only through the Lamb could they be revealed."

Note the solemnity of the scene described in verses 2-4. "Weep not," for our Lord, the lion of the tribe of Juda (cp. Heb., vii, 15), hath

prevailed—*Christus vincit, Christus regnat! Mors et vita duello conflixere mirando, Dux vitæ mortuus regnat vivus!* “I have overcome the world,” said Our Lord of Himself (Jn., xvi, 33). “Despoiling the principalities and powers, He hath exposed them confidently in open show, triumphing over them in Himself” (Col., ii, 15): “horns are in His hands, for *there* is His strength hid: death shall go before His face, and the devil shall go forth before His feet” (Hab., iii, 4) for “being consummated, He became to all that obey Him, the cause of Eternal Salvation” (Heb., v, 9). “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.” (I Jn., ii, 2), “blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us” (Col., ii, 14). “By his own Blood, He entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb., ix, 12). “The Lamb has ‘seven horns’ as a symbol of His strength: ‘seven eyes’ as a symbol of His omniscience” (cp. Mt., xxviii, 18).

And “we must all be manifested before the Judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil” (II Cor., v, 10), for “the Father hath given all Judgment to His Son” (Jn., v, 22). Notice carefully the phrase “the Lamb *as it were* slain,” for it refers to the Sacrifice of the Mass. Notice, too, the majesty of verse 7—the perfect ease

with which “the Book is taken out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne,” and then “opened.” There is a beautiful reference to the Communion of Saints in the mention of the “golden vials (or goblets) full of odours, which are the prayers of the Saints,” *i.e.*, of the faithful still on earth; and this reference is repeated in vi, 10, and viii, 3, 4. The chapter concludes with the “new canticle” of the New Law—the Canticle of the Precious Blood—not “sung in a strange land,” or “with harps hung on the willows in the midst of Babylon” (Ps., 136), but “a new canticle, on the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings” (Ps., 143), to the praise of “the Lamb that was slain,” “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,” Who “gave Himself a Redemption for all” (I Tim., ii, 6). “In Him it hath well pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell: and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, making peace through the Blood of His Cross, both as to the things on earth, and the things that are in Heaven” (Col., i, 19, 20).

CHAPTER VI

AND I saw that the Lamb had opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures, as it were the voice of thunder, saying : Come, and see.

2 And I saw : and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and there was a crown given him, and he went forth conquering that he might conquer.

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature, saying : Come, and see.

4 And there went out another horse *that was red* : and to him that sat thereon, it was given that he should take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another, and a great sword was given to him.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature, saying : Come and see. And behold a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of scales in his hand.

6 And I heard as it were a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying : Two pounds of wheat for a penny, and thrice two pounds of barley for a penny, and see thou hurt not the wine and the oil.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature, saying : Come, and see.

8 And behold a pale horse, and he that sat upon him, his name was Death, and hell followed him. And power was given to him over the four parts of the earth, to kill with sword, with famine, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying : How long, O Lord (holy and true), dost thou not judge and revenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ?

11 And white robes were given to every one of them one ;

and it was said to them, that they should rest for a little time, till their fellow servants and their brethren, who are to be slain, even as they, should be filled up.

12 And I saw, when he had opened the sixth seal, and behold there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair : and the whole moon became as blood :

13 And the stars from heaven fell upon the earth, as the fig tree casteth its green figs when it is shaken by a great wind :

14 And the heaven departed as a book folded up : and every mountain, and the islands were moved out of their places.

15 And the kings of the earth, and the princes, and tribunes, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of mountains :

16 And they say to the mountains and the rocks : Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb :

17 For the great day of their wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand ?

IN the last chapter we came to the beginning of a great event, to the opening of a great scene, the Opening of a Book, "written within and without, sealed with seven seals" (cp. II Cor., v, 10). But "no man was able, neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth, to open the Book, nor (even) to look upon it." Yet "the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, *hath* prevailed to open the Book, and to loose the seals thereof." He is "the Lamb that was slain," "worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction," and the deeds for

which He was slain are all written in that Book (cp. Mt., xvi, 27). Let Him, then, "open one of the seals," while we obey the summons to "come and see." There is an air of almost breathless excitement in the sacred narrative, as the procession of the "horses" now begins. Few passages in the Apocalypse have been so variously interpreted as this one, but let us be content with one interpretation of it, and that a simple one. The "horse" is a symbol of warfare and victory, even as the ass is a symbol of peace and submission. The white horse comes first, and its colour speaks of Purity and Innocence, of what is undefiled and precious in the sight of God, of Him "Who feedeth among the lilies." Our Lord is the rider of this "horse," for He is the Lamb of God, Who taketh away the sin of the world. In the fulness of time, He went forth from the Bosom of the Eternal Father, "conquering and to conquer," His road "the unspotted way," and with almost His last word on earth He bids His friends "have confidence," for "He has overcome the world" (St. John, xvi, 33). [We shall meet this figure of Our Lord as the Conqueror again in Ch. xix, 11-16.] The second seal is now opened and "another horse that was red went out." The red horse is a symbol of War. Our Lord, because He was a Saviour, was also a Warrior, who came not to cast peace on the earth, but a sword. The world is a field of battle since He came to redeem it, even more than it was whilst

yet He remained the Desired of all nations. Against the devil, the world, and the flesh, He declared war, and between His Church and the Prince of this world there will be war to the end. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and (only) the violent bear it away. Such is the application of the imagery in verse 4. And now the third seal is opened, "and behold a black horse—and He that sat on him (the rider is again Our Lord) had a pair of scales in His hand." The black horse is a symbol of mourning and famine, and we have here a striking illustration of Our Lord's spirit of penance and self-denial, the spirit of Him, Who, "having joy set before Him, endured the Cross, despising the shame" (Heb., xii, 2), teaching us to daily take up our cross, "mortifying the deeds of the flesh, chastising our bodies, and bringing them into subjection, lest we become cast-aways"; (I Cor: ix, 27) while we are reminded of how He has transformed human sorrow, and given it fresh beauty, fresh meaning, by Himself becoming a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief, so that they that sow in tears, may reap in joy.

The "pair of scales" is a detail that needs some explanation. Weighing food is a Scriptural symbolism for famine (cp. Lev., xxvi, 26; Ezech., iv, 16). Hence "scales" indicate a time of scarcity, and this is the key to verse 6. In ordinary times, *eight* (not "two") pounds of wheat would be sold for a penny. (Cp. 4 Kings, vii, 18, where, as in this passage, there is a

simple ratio between the price of wheat and that of barley, due probably to the fact that they were constantly bartered for each other without the intervention of money). Thus the voice predicts a "famine," in which food grains would be raised in price about 800 per cent.—and all "luxuries," such as "wine and oil," must be indulged in but little. "A shilling for a penny loaf, and a shilling for three dough cakes," will bring home to the reader the famine prices here intended. Indeed we are "to fast in the days of the Bridegroom," and they are days in which "blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted"; but "woe to those who laugh," who "mock" Our Lord, and "laugh Him to scorn," for life is a reality, and "unless we do penance, we shall perish," "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt., iv, 17), (cp. II Cor., vii, 9).—The opening of the fourth seal reveals "a pale horse," whose rider is Death. It is Our Lord, Who has conquered death, and deprived it of its sting and victory. Death is still "bitter"; death still "separates"; but death is now "precious in the sight of God," if it be the death of His saints—a falling asleep in the Lord, with the words: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."—"As in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive" (I Cor., xv, 22), for "Christ hath indeed destroyed death, and hath enlightened life and incorruption by the gospel" (II Tim., i, 10). As the fifth seal is opened, we are introduced to

those who, more than others, have "drunk of the chalice" of Our Lord, and been acquainted with the great factors in life already symbolised by the "white, and red, and black, and pale horses"—Virtue, Warfare, Penance, Death. "The souls of them that were slain for the word of God"—the Martyrs, whose blood is the seed of the Church—the Martyrs who cry: "How long, O Lord? how long?"—as the Martyrs of England may cry, for their blood was shed four centuries ago for the Faith once delivered to the saints, and has it yet produced the conversion of this country? Not yet; but "rest a little time," for "with God a thousand years are as a day, and a day as a thousand years" (cp. Rom., xii, 19; Is., xxxiv, 8; Ezech., xxiv, 8). At the opening of the sixth seal, "there was a great earthquake"—a symbol of Persecution, such as Our Lord foretold would be the lot of His Church in every age. In such times "the sun," *i.e.*, the light of the Church, is eclipsed (cp. Zach., xiv, 6; Joel, ii, 10, 31), and becomes "black as sackcloth of hair," and there is a general upheaval, the fruits of which are now shown for all to see. Then will they cry (and seven classes are mentioned in verse 15): "We fools: fall upon us, ye mountains, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (cp. Our Lord's words to the women of Jerusalem, on the road to Calvary, Luke, xxiii, 30, 31).

CHAPTER VII

AFTER these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that they should not blow upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor on any tree.

2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the sight of the living God ; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea,

3 Saying : Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, till we sign the servants of our God in their foreheads.

4 And I heard the number of them that were signed, an hundred forty-four thousand were signed, of every tribe of the children of Israel.

5 Of the tribe of Juda, were twelve thousand signed : Of the tribe of Ruben, twelve thousand signed : of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand signed :

6 Of the tribe of Aser, twelve thousand signed : Of the tribe of Nephthali, twelve thousand signed : Of the tribe of Manasses, twelve thousand signed :

7 Of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand signed : Of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand signed : Of the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand signed :

8 Of the tribe of Zabulon, twelve thousand signed : Of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand signed : Of the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand signed.

9 After this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands :

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying : Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb.

11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients, and the four living creatures ; and they fell down before the throne upon their faces, and adored God.

12 Saying : Amen. Benediction, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour, and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the ancients answered, and said to me : These that are clothed in white robes, who are they ? and whence came they ?

14 And I said to him : My Lord, thou knowest. And he said to me : These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

15 Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple : and he, that sitteth on the throne, shall dwell over them.

16 They shall no more hunger nor thirst, neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat.

17 For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall rule them, and shall lead them to the fountains of the waters of life, and God shall wipe away the tears from their eyes.

IN this chapter, we reach a pause in the great drama of the opening of the Seals, and we have a vision of the Chosen People of God, who walked worthy of their vocation, and sought to prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight His paths.—The “four corners of the earth,” on which the four Angels stand, restraining for a while “the four winds of the earth” (*i.e.*, the four scourges of Death, cp. Zach., vi, 5 ; Mt., xxiv, 31) speak to us of the ancient view that the earth was a flat surface. Then we read the passage chosen as the Epistle for the Feast of All Saints, in which the 144,000 (12,000 from “every tribe of the children of Israel”), are named as “signed with the seal of the living

God" (cp. II Cor., i, 22; Ephes., iv, 30). The tribe of Dan alone is not named, and this omission is variously explained. It is simplest to say that in Scripture such groups of names are usually given in certain fixed numbers "to denote a large and well-ordered multitude" (cp. Apoc., ix, 16), and that, as the tribe of Joseph is here *duplicated* by his own name and that of his son Manasses, *one* of the other twelve must needs be omitted—and that one is Dan. The chapter concludes (verses 9-17) with a description and vision of the blessed in the city of God, of which glorious things are said (Ps., lxxxvi, 3), (Cp. I Cor., ii, 9).

CHAPTER VIII

AND when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven, as it were for half an hour.

2 And I saw seven angels standing in the presence of God; and there were given to them seven trumpets.

3 And another angel came, and stood before the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer of the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar, which is before the throne of God.

4 And the smoke of the incense of the prayers of the saints ascended up before God from the hand of the angel.

5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it on the earth, and there were thunders and voices and lightnings, and a great earthquake.

6 And the seven angels, who had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound the trumpet.

7 And the first angel sounded the trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mingled with blood, and it was cast on the earth, and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

8 And the second angel sounded the trumpet: and as it were a great mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood:

9 And the third part of those creatures died, which had life in the sea, and the third part of the ships was destroyed.

10 And the third angel sounded the trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, burning as it were a torch, and it fell on the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters:

11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood. And the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

12 And the fourth angel sounded the trumpet, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the

moon, and the third part of the stars, so that the third part of them was darkened, and the day did not shine for a third part of it, and the night in like manner.

13 And I beheld, and heard the voice of one eagle flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice: Woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth: by reason of the rest of the voices of the three angels, who are yet to sound the trumpet.

IN the opening verse of chapter viii, we have "one of the most solemn moments of the Apocalypse," when the seventh seal is to be opened. Seven Angels (the perfect number), are seen standing in the presence of God, and each Angel had a trumpet, and with these they will shortly herald the punishment of the Jews who failed to observe the Commandments, which had been given them at Sinai amid the sound of trumpets (Exod., xix, 19). (Cp. Joel, ii, 1; Osee, viii, 1). But first, in verses 3-5, the sacred writer gives us a picture of the ascent of the prayers "of all saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God (cp. Ps., cxl, 2; Lk., xviii, 7, 8). Then, passing quickly from this vision of peace, we open our ears to the sounds and lessons of the trumpets. It is best to take these closely together, as indicating the punishment and consequences of sin, which incurs the divine vengeance. The imagery seems much borrowed from the Ten Plagues of Egypt. (And cp. Ezech., v, 2-12). There may be some allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem, *e.g.*, in the phrase "for all green grass was burnt up," recalling the words of

Isaias (xl, 7): "indeed the people is grass" (cp. I Pet., i, 24). Or again in the symbolism of the "great mountain cast into the sea," we may trace a reference to the Princes of Israel who by Ezechiel (vi, 3) are termed "mountains," while "the sea" figures the mass of the Jews who met their death by violence, as in a sea of blood. When the third Angel sounds his trumpet, "a great star falls from Heaven," and the name of the star is Wormwood—a name applied in Scripture to the perversion of Justice (Amos, v, 7; vi, 12); to the fruits of idolatry (Deut., xxix, 12), and to divine chastisements generally. (Cp. Jer., ix, 15; xxiii, 14, 15; Lam., iii, 15-19). This star has fallen on the fountains of waters that refresh the earth—the fountains of Our Saviour whence we should draw waters with joy—and "the waters were made bitter, so that many men died" through drinking them. And when the fourth Angel sounded his trumpet yet further calamities ensued—the punishment of darkness, to those who "preferred the darkness to light" (cp. Exod., x, 21-23). The chapter concludes with a note of warning as to what the three Angels "who are yet to sound the trumpet" may have to proclaim. The Douay version speaks here (verse 13) of "the voice of one eagle," but a better version has more simply: "I heard an angel flying in mid-heaven."

CHAPTER IX

AND the fifth angel sounded the trumpet, and I saw a star fall from heaven upon the earth, and there was given to him the key of the bottomless pit.

2 And he opened the bottomless pit : and the smoke of the pit arose, as the smoke of a great furnace ; and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke of the pit.

3 And from the smoke of the pit there came out locusts upon the earth. And power was given to them, as the scorpions of the earth have power :

4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree : but only the men who have not the sign of God on their foreheads.

5 And it was given unto them that they should not kill them ; but that they should torment them five months : and their torment *was* as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man.

6 And in those days men shall seek death, and shall not find it : and they shall desire to die, and death shall fly from them.

7 And the shapes of the locusts *were* like unto horses prepared unto battle : and on their heads *were*, as it were, crowns like gold : and their faces *were* as the faces of men.

8 And they had hair as the hair of women ; and their teeth were as lions :

9 And they had breastplates as breastplates of iron, and the noise of their wings was as the noise of chariots and many horses running to battle.

10 And they had tails like to scorpions, and there were stings in their tails ; and their power was to hurt men five months. And they had over them

11 A king, the angel of the bottomless pit ; whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek Apollyon ; in Latin Exterminans.

12 One woe is past, and behold there come yet two woes more hereafter.

13 And the sixth angel sounded the trumpet : and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before the eyes of God.

14 Saying to the sixth angel, who had the trumpet : Loose the four angels, who are bound in the great river Euphrates.

15 And the four angels were loosed, who were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year : for to kill the third part of men.

16 And the number of the army of horsemen was twenty thousand times ten thousand. And I heard the number of them.

17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision : and they that sat on them, had breastplates of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone, and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions : and from their mouths proceeded fire, and smoke, and brimstone.

18 And by these three plagues was slain the third part of men, by the fire and by the smoke and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths, and in their tails. For, their tails are like to serpents, and have heads : and with them they hurt.

20 And the rest of the men, who were not slain by these plagues, did not do penance from the works of their hands, that they should not adore devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and wood, which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk :

21 Neither did they penance from their murders, nor from their sorceries, nor from their fornication, nor from their thefts.

“AND the seven Angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound the trumpet” . . . these words of chapter vi, verse 6, are the beginning of a long and some-

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what difficult section, which only concludes at chapter xi, verse 18. The reader must not be surprised or disturbed if he finds therein certain matters "hard to understand." It treats of "the things to come," in another world, which eye hath not seen, the realities of which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive, and which it is really beyond the power of human language to describe. The sacred text gives but a suggestion of the truth, yet a suggestion full of instruction and grandeur; so let us probe our way through it, with all gratitude and interest.—At the sound of the fifth trumpet (ix, 1), the sacred writer "saw a star *having* fallen from heaven," as the words should be translated. This star is Lucifer (cp. Isaias, xiv, 12-15), of whom Our Lord said: "I saw Satan like lightning *falling* from heaven" (Lk., x, 18). Our Lord witnessed the actual fall; not so St. John. And "to *him* (the star is thus identified with a *person*), was given the key of the bottomless pit," whence the Beast of the Apocalypse comes in xi, 7, and xvii, 8 (cp. Lk., viii, 31). Now it is God alone who has "the keys of death and hell" (Apoc., i, 18); but the key of hell is "given" to Satan, for he is permitted by God to use the key, in carrying out the designs of Divine Providence. Then, in verse 3, mention is made of locusts, which in the Old Testament always convey the idea of vast numbers (cp. Jer., li, 14), but which are harmless to men, though fatal to the "grass of the earth." They

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are here, however, endowed with the power of scorpions, or "stinging" locusts (cp. Jer., li, 27; Ezech., ii, 6), which inflict great pain on men and by their sting produce prolonged blood-poisoning. And so, though they are not to kill men, leave is given them to "torment them for five months," *i.e.*, not for ever, but for a limited period of temptation, and "not above what they are able to bear." "The life of man is a warfare," the spirit and the flesh ever contending, for "these two are contrary to one another." And the warfare is keen indeed—so keen that men "shall desire to die, but death shall fly from them," as was the case with St. Paul, who under the pressure of his trials, was "weary even of life," and yearned "to be dissolved, and to be with Christ" (cp. II Cor., i, 8; Phil., i, 23; Rom., vii, 24; II Cor., xii, 7-9).

And now a great description follows of "the locusts," the evil spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls. They are "like unto horses," so determined are they to conquer; they wear "crowns of gold," for they thirst for dominion; they have "hair as the hair of women"—a strong figure indicative of the attractiveness of sin, and its deceptive power, for Satan is a liar and the father of lies, his favourite instrument being that of flattery. (For the whole passage, cp. Joel, ii, 4-10.) To complete the picture, "their teeth were as lions," to denote their ferocity and the destructiveness of their attack; their "breast-

plates of iron," as were those of Goliath when he challenged David, so as to frighten men into submission, without attack or any resistance (cp. I Kings, xvii, 4-8). Lastly, "they had over them a king," with emphasis on "they," for the natural "locust hath no king; they all go out by their bands" (Prov., xxx, 27). And to this king three names are attached: Abaddon, or Destruction (cp. Job, xxvi, 6; Prov., xv, 11); and words of like meaning in Greek and in Latin. The inscription on the Cross of Our Lord on Calvary was written in the same three languages (Jn., xix, 20). So closes the heralding of the fifth Angel, every word proclaiming the bitterness of the attack of Satan and his angels on the purity of men. "One woe is past," of the three mentioned in viii, 13, and yet two more remain! They are as the echo of Joel's, "Ah, Ah, Ah," because the day of the Lord is at hand! (Joel, i, 15).

The sixth Angel now sounds his trumpet, and a voice is heard from the horns (omit the word "four") of the golden altar, which is before the eyes of God. How solemn a setting of the picture! At once our attention is drawn to "the great river Euphrates," which at that time divided the Roman Empire from that of Parthia, and these two were keen rivals to one another. Some allusion to the destruction of Jerusalem has clearly been discernible in the earlier verses of this chapter, and now in the mention of this "great river" (alluded to again

in xvi, 12), we may see further allusion to the downfall of the Roman Empire, for Parthia was the solitary example existing at the time of a power at all capable of injuring Rome. Note the tone of urgency, and the keenness of the preparation that runs through every line of the next few verses. The curious phrase—"prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year"—(verse 15), merely points to a certain vagueness as to the hour when God shall arise, and His enemies be dispersed, for "we know not the day nor the hour when these things shall come to pass." In verse 16 mention is made of two hundred millions of horsemen (the Parthian and Persian armies consisted mainly of cavalry)—a symbolic number, "meant to convey to the minds of readers in the first century an army capable of overwhelming even Rome, then mistress of the world." And these horsemen have breastplates (verse 17) of fiery red (hyacinth), and smoky blue, and sulphurous yellow: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions (the lion is the symbol of Persia), and, like St. Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts, ix, 1), they "breathed forth threatenings and slaughter." How wonderful is the onward flow and might of this great passage! It culminates in verse 21 by a mention of the four chief crimes that were characteristic of pagan Rome, now to be blotted out—murders, sorceries, fornication and theft. (Cp. Apoc., xviii 23; xxi, 8; xxii, 15.)

CHAPTER X

AND I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow *was* on his head, and his face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire.

2 And he had in his hand a little book open : and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth.

3 And he cried with a loud voice as when a lion roareth. And when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write : and I heard a voice from heaven saying to me : Seal up the things which the seven thunders have spoken ; and write them not.

5 And the angel, whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven.

6 And he swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things which are therein ; and the earth, and the things which are in it ; and the sea, and the things which are therein : That time shall be no longer.

7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound the trumpet, the mystery of God shall be finished, as he hath declared by his servants the prophets.

8 And I heard a voice from heaven again speaking to me, and saying : Go, and take the book that is open, from the hand of the angel who standeth upon the sea, and upon the earth.

9 And I went to the angel, saying unto him, that he should give me the book. And he said to me : Take the book, and eat it up : and it shall make thy belly bitter, but in thy mouth it shall be sweet as honey.

10 And I took the book from the hand of the angel, and ate it up : and it was in my mouth, sweet as honey : and when I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

11 And he said to me : Thou must prophesy again to many nations, and peoples, and tongues, and kings.

THERE is now a pause in the sounding of the seven trumpets, and St. John gives us an account of an intermediary vision vouchsafed to him. Even as in ch. vii, the two descriptions of the sealed Israelites and the palm-bearing multitude came after the Sixth Seal, so here the vision of the Mighty Angel and the prophecy (passing insensibly into a vision) of the Two Witnesses, follow the Sixth Trumpet. This "mighty angel" (for others, cp. v, 2 ; xviii, 1 ; xviii, 21), reflects some of the attributes of the Divinity (cp. i. 7). In his hand he holds a "little book" ("little" in comparison of the Book with the seven seals mentioned in v, 1), which contained the revelation of the overthrow of the Roman Empire. For this reason, the Angel sets his foot upon both sea and land, to proclaim the power of God over the whole great Empire. And lo ! "seven thunders," *i.e.*, all thunders, from the thunders at the destruction of Sodom to the consummation of the world, "uttered their voices" ; they spoke intelligently, not merely producing a noise (cp. Jn., xii, 28, 29), and what they said St. John was "about to write down," when a voice from heaven stayed his hand. "Write it not," it said ; upon which the Mighty Angel, standing still both on the sea and on the earth, "lifted up his hand to heaven" (better, "lifted up his right hand") (cp. Dan., xii, 7), his left hand still holding the "little book." His action was symbolic of taking an oath (cp. Gen., xiv, 22),

and the oath was : " time shall be no longer : *i.e.*, no more time shall be lost, and there shall be delay no longer." (Cp. Ezech., xii, 22, 23). *Consummatum est!* " the mystery of God which hath been hidden from eternity in God Who created all things, shall be seen, that the manifold wisdom of God may be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places *through the Church*, according to the eternal purpose which He made in Christ Jesus Our Lord " (Ephes., iii, 9-11). But for this great announcement we must wait till xi, 15 ; meanwhile, " the little book " is disposed of, very differently to the treatment given to the Book with the seven seals. It is not merely to be read, but also to be " eaten," that " the mingled sweetness and bitterness of the divine communications it contained be assimilated to the full." (Cp. Ezech., ii, 9 ; iii, 1-3).

CHAPTER XI

AND there was given me a reed like unto a rod : and it was said to me : Arise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar and them that adore therein.

2 But the court, which is without the temple, cast out, and measure it not : because it is given unto the Gentiles, and the holy city they shall tread under foot two and forty months :

3 And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.

4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks, that stand before the Lord of the earth.

5 And if any man will hurt them, fire shall come out of their mouths, and shall devour their enemies. And if any man will hurt them, in this manner must he be slain.

6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy : and they have power over waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues as often as they will.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast, that ascendeth out of the abyss, shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

8 And their bodies shall lie in the streets of the great city, which is called spiritually, Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord also was crucified.

9 And they of the tribes, and peoples, and tongues, and nations, shall see their bodies for three days and a half : and they shall not suffer their bodies to be laid in sepulchres.

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

11 And after three days and a half, the spirit of life from God entered into them. And they stood upon their feet, and great fear fell upon them that saw them.

12 And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying to them : Come up hither. And they went up to heaven in a cloud : and their enemies saw them.

13 And at that hour there was made a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell : and there were slain in the earthquake names of men seven thousand : and the rest were cast into a fear, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe is past : and behold the third woe will come quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded the trumpet : and there were great voices in heaven, saying : The kingdom of this world is become our Lord's and his Christ's, and he shall reign for ever and ever. Amen.

16 And the four and twenty ancients, who sit on their seats in the sight of God, fell on their faces and adored God, saying :

17 We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, who art, and who wast, and who art to come : because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and thou hast reigned.

18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest render reward to thy servants the prophets and the saints, and to them that fear thy name, little and great, and shouldest destroy them who have corrupted the earth.

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven : and the ark of his testament was seen in his temple, and there were lightnings, and voices, and an earthquake, and great hail.

THIS chapter opens in a very graphic way, for the sacred writer, who thus far has merely recorded what he heard and saw, now becomes an actor in the sacred drama. His part is "to measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that adore therein." This idea of "measuring" is familiar from the pages of

the Old Testament (cp. Ezech., xl, 3, 6 ; Zach., ii, 1), and occurs again in Apoc., xxi, 15. It conveys a notion of power ; of a commission to take stock of a place, and to report upon it accurately. It is clothed with great solemnity ; moreover here the speaker is Our Lord, not the Angel of the preceding chapter. We have come in fact down to earth, to the Temple in Jerusalem, whose office it was "to prepare the way of the Lord, the Desired of all nations, when, in the fulness of time, He should come unto His own." The Mystery of the Incarnation is on the horizon : it will be heralded by the seventh Angel and his trumpet in verse 15 ; meanwhile we are to learn the object-lesson of the Temple in Jerusalem, crowned by its destruction, because of its rejection of the Messias. (Cp. Our Lord's lament, Lk., xix, 41-44.) So St. John, at this juncture, is bidden take no account of the Gentile world (verse 2) ; *their* call will come later ; "salvation is of the Jews," and of the Jews alone are we treating now.—(Cp. : 4 Kings, xxi, 13 ; Lament., ii, 8 ; Ezech., xliii, 3). "And the holy city they shall tread under foot two and forty months," *i.e.* the 1260 days of verse 3 (cp. xii, 6, 14). The reference is, no doubt, to Our Lord's words : "Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the gentiles, till the times of the nations be fulfilled" (Lk., xxi, 24). These periods of times are also named in Daniel (vii, 25, and xii, 7), and the key to all such prophecies is to be found in

Ezechiel, iv, 6—"a day for a year, yea, a day for a year I have appointed to thee, and thou shalt turn thy face to the siege of Jerusalem"—"And I will give"—the speaker is still Our Lord. Note the tone of authority and definiteness in the verse.

Who are the "two witnesses," "clothed in sackcloth"—the traditional dress of prophets (Is., xx, 2), or perhaps "a touch of local colouring distinctive of the mourning of the Jews in the first century"? This is a difficulty, and will ever remain so. As Swete well says: "Neither Moses and Elias, nor Elias and Eliseus, nor Enoch and Elias, can exhaust the meaning of the two witnesses who prophesy through the whole period of Gentile domination (1260 days), though, as verses 5 and 6 show, the *first* pair at least are in the mind of the writer, suggested doubtless by Mal., iv, 4, 6, and by the vision of the Transfiguration (Mk., ix, 4; Lk., ix, 30, 31)." But yet "the fact that the witnesses have yet to die (xi, 7), and that they appear to be put forward as well-known characters, points rather to a ratification of a contemporary Jewish belief, which made the witnesses Elias and Enoch, men who have not tasted death from their birth" (Gigot).—Olive-trees and candlesticks (verse 4), speak of the priesthood and kingship of Our Lord, the Light of the world. The olive-tree (cp. Zach., iv, 11, 14) is specially a symbol of the Jewish Church, and of the Christian. (Cp. Rom., xi, 17-20.) The

two designations richly picture those who in all ages bear witness to Our Lord, and "continue with Him in His temptations" (Lk., xxii, 28). They shall ever share a full measure of their Master's protecting love (cp. Mk., xvi, 17, 18), so that "if any man will hurt them, fire shall come out of their mouths, and shall devour their enemies" by the fire of the word they utter. (Cp. Jer., v, 14.) The references in verse 6 certainly recall Moses and Elias specially to mind (cp. Exod., vii, 17, and 3 Kings, xvii, 1) and tell of the power of the ministry of the witnesses, "until they have finished their testimony." And in that day, "the beast" (whom we shall meet again in xiii, 1), (cp. Dan., vii, 3), the Prince of this World, "who has no part in Our Lord" (Jn., xiv, 30)—the beast "cometh," and "shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them." "The hour will come when whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth a service to God" (Jn., xvi, 2). "The heathens shall come into Thine inheritance, O Lord; they shall defile Thy holy temple: they shall make Jerusalem as a place to keep fruit: they shall give the dead bodies of Thy servants to be meat for the fowls of the air, the flesh of Thy saints for the beasts of the earth. They shall pour out their blood as water, round about Jerusalem, and there shall be none to bury them" (Ps., lxxviii, 1-3; cp. verses 8, 9, 10, of this chapter). The very name of the City shall be changed by reason of

the deeds there perpetrated; no longer Jerusalem, the City of Peace, but now Sodom (cp. Is., i, 10; Jer., xxiii. 14; Ezech., xvi, 46; Osee, iv. 14), and Egypt, the land of captivity (cp. Ezech., xxiii, 21. 27), shall be its name—and in that City “the Lord was crucified”!—(Cp. Jn., xv, 20)—“Men of all races and nationalities gaze at the spectacle which lasts three and a half days—as many days as the years of the witnesses’ prophesying—a short triumph in point of fact, but long enough to bear the semblance of being complete and final. The delight of the spectators is represented as at once fiendish and childish (v, 10); they not only leave the bodies without burial (for which crime cp. Gen., xxiii, 4; Ecclus., vi. 3; Is., xxii, 16), but refuse to permit the friends of the martyrs to bury them. (Cp. Tobias, xviii. 1). Further, they celebrate their victory by keeping holiday and exchanging gifts. Notice the very telling reason given for this ill-mannered outburst of joy: “because the two prophets tormented them”! How true in every age! “These things are hard sayings, and who can bear them?” (Jn., vi, 61, 67).—And so, with a brief picture of the ultimate triumph of the witnesses, the story of this episode comes to an end (cp. I Thess., iv, 16, 17.) “The second woe is past and behold the third woe will come quickly” (perhaps in xii, 12)!—There are writers of name who have made the downfall of the Roman Empire the basis of the story described in this

chapter. But we have chosen rather the destruction of Jerusalem as furnishing its main theme, and in so doing, we are able to give an interpretation to a most difficult passage, that is consistent and supported by good authority. Such, then, is the measuring of the sacred writer with his rod.

And now in verse 15 we hear the trumpet-call of the seventh Angel! He has “good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people” to proclaim. We are to “hear of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given towards us” (Ephes., iii, 2); “we look for the Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowness” (Phil., iii, 21). Behold He comes: in the head of the Book it is written that He should do His Father’s Will, and His Father wills that “all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim., ii, 4). A great change is at hand: “in times past we walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that worketh on the children of unbelief, in the desires of the flesh, and were by nature children of wrath” (Ephes., ii, 2, 3); but “now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ” (Apoc., xii. 10). (Cp. Apoc., xix, 6, 16). All this is superbly set forth by “the great voices in heaven,” in verses 15-17. And of this Kingdom there shall be no end! (Cp. Dan., ii, 44; vii, 14, 27).

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Note the solemnity of verse 19, which should strictly speaking, run on into ch. xii! "The temple of God is opened"—apparently but for a moment, since it is opened again in xv. 5. And amid great signs, we are given a vision of Our Lady Immaculate, Queen of Angels, Queen of Apostles, Queen of all Saints—Mother of the Incarnate Word.

CHAPTER XII

AND a great sign appeared in heaven : A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars :

2 And being with child, she cried travailing in birth, and was in pain to be delivered.

3 And there was seen another sign in heaven : and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns : and on his heads seven diadems :

4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth : and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered ; that, when she should be delivered, he might devour her son.

5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with an iron rod : and her son was taken up to God, and to his throne.

6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she had a place prepared by God, that there they should feed her a thousand two hundred sixty days.

7 And there was a great battle in heaven, Michael and his angels fought with the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels :

8 And they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9 And that great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, who seduceth the whole world ; and he was cast unto the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

10 And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying : Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ : because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before our God day and night.

11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of the testimony, and they loved not their lives unto death.

12 Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell therein. Woe to the earth, and to the sea, because the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman, who brought forth the man child :

14 And there were given to the woman two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert unto her place, where she is nourished for a time and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman, water as it were a river ; that he might cause her to be carried away by the river.

16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river, which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon was angry against the woman : and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

18 And he stood upon the sand of the sea.

IT is our Blessed Lady who now " cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her Beloved : this is she that cometh forth, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array " (Cant., vi. 9, 10). And at once there is described most wonderfully the envy of the devil against the Child of Mary from the very first—the malice of the great red dragon, who had by his rebellion swept a third part of the angelic host into perpetual enmity of God—the birth of Emmanuel, who shall " rule all nations with a rod of iron " (cp. Ps, ii)—and the utter rout of the fallen angels by St. Michael

and his Angels, so that their place was found no more in heaven. The whole story of the Incarnation and its fruits (cp. Isaias, vii, 14) is told in language that is gloriously strong and figurative, quite easy to understand, and all culminates in the great proclamation of verse 10 ; yet a few short notes on certain words that occur in these verses may be of use to the student. In verse 1, the crown of twelve stars refers to Our Lady as Queen of the Twelve Apostles. (Cp. Apoc., xxi, 14.) In verse 3 the dragon has " seven heads and ten horns." The dragon is the Serpent of Gen., iii. 1 ; his " seven " heads tell us of the *plenitude* of his power (Ephes., vi, 12), while his " ten horns," a complete crown of strength, portray the determination with which he pushes his cause in the world. In verse 4 the dragon is portrayed as ready " to devour " the Divine Child, for, as Our Lord says, " he was a murderer from the beginning " (Jn., viii, 44). In verse 5, the word " to rule " would better be translated " to shepherd," for the Child is " the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls " (I Pet., ii, 25). (Cp. Jn., x, 11-16 ; Apoc., xix. 15. In the flight of the Mother " into the wilderness," in verse 6, there may be some reference to the Flight into Egypt, but more probably to the flight of the early Christians to Pella, on the east of the Jordan, on the occasion of the persecution raised at the time of St. Stephen's death. (Cp. Mark, xiii, 14 ; Acts, viii, 1.) The 1260 days denote the period

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of the Jewish war. For the imagery of the fall of Satan in verse 9, cp. Our Lord's words: "I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven" (Lk., x, 18). (Cp. Jn., xii, 31.) In verse 11, it may be noted that the word "to overcome" usually denotes *martyrdom* in the Apocalypse (cp. Apoc., ii, 7; iii, 21), *i.e.*, "the testimony of those who loved not their lives unto death." (Cp. Mt., x, 39; Jn., xii, 25.)—The conclusion of this chapter (verses 12-18), depicts the incessant warfare between the Church and the World. Quite naturally now, the "woman" (v. 13) stands for the Church of Christ, the Church Militant. The devil "knows that he hath but a short time," for "it is the last hour" (cp. Apoc., xx, 9), and soon he and his angels shall be cast into everlasting fire (Mt., xxv, 41). He will make the most of his opportunities. But "wings as of a great eagle," wings of protecting might and love, shall ever hover over the Church, in her solitude and affliction, for her Divine Founder is with her all days, even to the consummation of the world, enabling her to rescue her children from being drowned in the river of iniquity, "which the dragon casts out of his mouth, that he may carry her away." "The gates of hell shall not prevail against her" (Mt., xvi, 18). So we leave the Evil One "standing upon the sand of the sea," baffled and enraged, as he surveys the sea of human life. (Cp. Apoc., viii, 8.)

CHAPTER XIII

AND I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy.

2 And the beast, which I saw, was like to a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his own strength, and great power.

3 And I saw one of his heads as it were slain to death: and his death's wound was healed. And all the earth was in admiration after the beast.

4 And they adored the dragon, which gave power to the beast: and they adored the beast saying: Who is like to the beast? and who shall be able to fight with him?

5 And there was given to him a mouth speaking great things, and blasphemies: and power was given to him to do two and forty months.

6 And he opened his mouth unto blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. And power was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation.

8 And all that dwell upon the earth adored him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb, which was slain from the beginning of the world.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.
10 He that shall lead into captivity, shall go into captivity: he that shall kill by the sword, must be killed by the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

11 And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns, like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon.

12 And he executed all the power of the former beast in his sight; and he caused the earth, and them that dwell

therein, to adore the first beast, whose wound to death was healed.

13 And he did great signs, so that he made also fire to come down from heaven unto the earth in the sight of men.

14 And he seduced them that dwell on the earth, for the signs, which were given him to do in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make the image of the beast, which had the wound by the sword, and lived.

15 And it was given him to give life to the image of the beast, and that the image of the beast should speak; and should cause, that whosoever will not adore the image of the beast, should be slain.

16 And he shall make all, both little and great, rich and poor, freemen and bondmen, to have a character in their right hand, or on their foreheads.

17 And that no man might buy or sell, but he that hath the character, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

18 Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast. For it is the number of a man: and the number of him is six hundred sixty-six.

“**A**ND the dragon stood upon the sand of the sea!” These words completed the last chapter, and we now pass from Jerusalem, where the Incarnation was inaugurated, and whose conduct and destruction formed the background of the whole picture in chapters xi and xii, to Rome, where the Princes of the Apostles preached, and where they sealed their faith by their blood. We should read and re-read chapter xii, which forms the half-way house in the story of the whole Book. For many chapters previously, we have studied the harvest

of the Incarnation, to be reaped in the days of the Final Judgment to come, when Books are opened, and Seals are broken, and trumpets sound, and every man shall have his due praise from God. Then, suddenly, we are taken back to the first hour of God's Eternal Day, when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us. We are on earth once more, at Bethlehem and there begins the warfare between Our Lady's Child and the Prince of this world. “*Now* is the acceptable time: *now* is the day of salvation: *now* is come salvation, and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ.” *Now* is the season of victory “by the Blood of the Lamb”: “therefore, rejoice, O heavens, and you that dwell therein: have confidence, for our Saviour has overcome the world” (John, xvi, 33). They are the days of battle indeed—days described so fully by Our Lord in His discourse to the Twelve at the Last Supper (Read John, xv and xvi). Satan and all who were “thrown down with him” are keen and ready for the fight: and lo! in defiance, “he stands upon the sand of the sea” of Eternity! In chapter xiii we shall read, in figures many and grim, of the never-ending warfare he wages against the Lord and His anointed.—“Close at hand, St. John (now) sees the Roman Empire, and, more widely still, the recurrent persecutions hurling themselves against the Witness which the Church ever opposes to an anti-Christian world; widest of all, the unceasing

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conflict of the spirit of Christ and Antichrist. The Church shrinks back upon herself; she is narrowed down to her ramparted refuge of doctrine and of worship; she is on her defensive in a world that should have been all Holy-City, all Holy-Land, but ever tends to become the unholiest of cities (Sodom), the sinfullest of lands (Egypt), nay, one huge Calvary, upon which all the while Christ is re-crucified. From that one faithless Town which nailed Jesus to His Cross, St. John's eye now roves to Rome, whither St. Peter had seen Christ travel to be slain, in His martyrs, once again, and then to the whole angry, murderous world. Then returning, after the hour of silenced voice, of catacomb-existence, he sees revival—moral and social shock sets the world to tremble; obstinate perversity destroys in its despair a portion of the old order; not its majority, one would say, since but a tenth of the city falls, and the remainder, fear-converted, worship God" (Martindale).

O loving wisdom of our God!

When all was sin and shame

A second Adam to the fight

And to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood

Which did in Adam fail,

Should strive afresh against the foe,

Should strive, and should prevail.

So let us plunge into the somewhat difficult and highly-coloured narrative of this chapter, abounding in images drawn from the Old

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Testament, illustrating the one great theme of the contest between the Church of Christ and the world.

"I saw the beast coming up out of the sea," by which the dragon is standing. Clearly the dragon and the beast are friends, and soon (v. 2), "the dragon gives the beast his own strength and great power." Already, in xi, 7, allusion has been made to this Beast, where it stood for the Roman power that destroyed Jerusalem, "the city where the Lord was crucified"; and now we find it at home, in all its glory, the avowed enemy of the Church of Christ. In the great "dream" of Daniel (Dan., vii, 3-15), a passage which should here be read by all, "four great beasts are seen to come up out of the sea"—each of which stands for an earthly kingdom and empire, that has had its rise, its zenith, and its fall. The Babylonian, the Median, and the Persian Empires are no more; but Rome remains. St. John now sees but one of the four, and its name is Rome, now mistress of the world. Very full, and very wonderful, is the picture of the Beast in verses 1 and 2. It has "seven heads, and ten horns"—for the number seven covers the whole dynasty of the seven Cæsars. Allusion is made again to them in Apoc., xvii, 9, where "the seven heads are seven mountains, upon which the woman sitteth, and they are seven kings"; and the name of the woman was "Babylon," and Babylon among the Hebrew Christians was the mystic name of Rome. To

those Cæsars *divine* honour must be paid, and divine honour *was* paid, and this was the source of all the trouble, as we shall see! This explains "the names of blasphemy" on the heads of the Beast, who has the cat-like vigilance and craft of a leopard, the slow strength and power to crush of a bear, and the roar to terrify of a lion (cp. II Thess., ii, 3-11). Such is the tyrant, Nero by name, that is now to deal with "the little flock" of Christ!

In verse 3, St. John makes allusion to an incident in the life of Nero, which probably took place in A.D. 68. Pursued by his enemies, he inflicted upon himself a wound, of which he died; but a rumour got abroad in the Eastern provinces of the Empire that he was still alive, and in hiding. The force of the allusion is just merely to show that the persecuting power of Nero lived on in all its vigour under Domitian (cp. xvii, 8), while in verses 4-6 a vivid picture is given of the extent to which this Emperor-worship was carried. Temples to the Cæsars were to be found in the chief towns of Roman-Asia—at Ephesus, Pergamus, and Smyrna—"all the earth was admiration of the Beast: all the earth adored him." Nay, words that apply to God alone, *e.g.*, "who is like to thee?" (cp. Mich., vii, 18; Is., xl, 25; xlvi, 5), are applied to the Beast. "And who shall be able to *fight* with him?" was the proud boast of his followers, pointing, as has been well observed, to the *motive* which prompted this blasphemous worship. "It was not moral greatness, but

brute force, which commanded the homage of the Roman Provinces. The invincible *power* of Rome exacted and won divine honours for the worst and meanest of men." Yet note the repeated "there was given to him" in these verses, showing the true and ultimate source of all power, without whose permission the very Dragon and the Beast combined are powerless!" "And power was given him to do (*i.e.*, to carry on) two and forty months"—a limit of time derived from Dan., vii, 25 (cp. xi, 2). In verses 7 and 8 we are told of those who felt his scourge, of the universality of his sway, and of those who were on his side in this unholy warfare (cp. Apoc., xvii, 8; xx, 12, 15; xxi, 27). But "if any man have an ear, let him hear"; "be not seduced; God is not mocked"; "the patience and the faith of the saints" shall effect a change, and the proud shall meet his fall (v. 10). "Such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword; and such as are for famine, to famine; and such as are for captivity to captivity" (Jer., xv, 2); "they that take the sword, shall perish by it" (Mt., xxvi, 52); neither shall "their names be written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world."

But "the end is not yet," for see! "there is another Beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns (symbols of strength), like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon." He was "a false prophet, who cometh to men in the clothing

of sheep, but inwardly is a ravening wolf, and by his fruits he shall be known" (Matt., vii, 15). Notice that this Beast "comes up out of the earth;" he is "of the earth, earthy"; and he is called the False Prophet in xvi, 13; xix, 20; xx, 10. He may be St. Paul's "Man of sin" (II Thess., ii, 3), but it is perhaps best (and quite satisfactory) to say that the *first* Beast really represented the vast Roman Empire, as an *institution* dominating everywhere, rather than any particular Emperor; whereas this "second" Beast is an *individual*—and his name is Nero! The "second" Beast is eminently an anti-religious power, while the "first" is eminently a civil power. "And he did great signs!" for to deceive mankind is the chief prerogative and power of Satan. A definitely new cult was abroad, viz.: to promote the religious use of the busts and statues of the Emperor, so that when Christians were brought before Imperial officials, an image of the reigning Emperor was always produced for them to adore. "Magic", too, was held in esteem in high quarters. (Cp. St. Paul and Elymas, at Cyprus Acts xiii, 6, and the ventriloquism in Acts xvi, 6.) As Swete well sums up the situation described in verses 13-17: "The Second Beast represents the sorcery and superstition of the age as engaged in a common attempt to impose the Cæsar-cult upon the Provinces, behind which there lay the Satanic purpose of bringing ruin upon the rising Christian churches. And in its wider

significance, the symbol may well stand for *any* religious system which allies itself with the hostile forces of the world against the Church of Christ"—and this is true in every age! "We shall be by no means rash, if we consider the miracles of the Second Beast to represent *real* happenings" (Martindale). Here is wisdom! Here is revelation! Here is history—the history of the early times, made by the Beast, whose number is 666, whose name is Nero. (Both Hebrew and Greek letters stood for numbers, and Nero Cæsar in Hebrew letters make 666).

CHAPTER XIV

AND I beheld, and lo a lamb stood upon mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty-four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads.

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the noise of many waters, and as the voice of great thunder; and the voice which I heard, was as the voice of harpers, harping on their harps.

3 And they sung as it were a new canticle, before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the ancients; and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred forty-four thousand, who were purchased from the earth.

4 These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb:

5 And in their mouth there was found no lie; for they are without spot before the throne of God.

6 And I saw another angel flying through the midst of heaven, having the eternal gospel, to preach unto them that sit upon the earth, and over every nation, and tribe, and tongue, and people:

7 Saying with a loud voice: Fear the Lord, and give him honour, because the hour of his judgment is come; and adore ye him, that made heaven and earth, the sea, and the fountains of waters.

8 And another angel followed, saying: That great Babylon is fallen, is fallen; which made all nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice: If any man shall adore the beast and his image, and receive his character in his forehead, or in his hand;

10 He also shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mingled with pure wine in the cup of his wrath,

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and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the sight of the holy angels and in the sight of the Lamb.

11 And the smoke of their torments shall ascend up forever and ever: neither have they rest day nor night, who have adored the beast, and his image, and whoever received the character of his name.

12 Here is the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying to me: Write: Blessed are the dead, who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow them.

14 And I saw, and behold a white cloud; and upon the cloud one sitting like to the Son of man, having on his head a crown of gold, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15 And another angel came out from the temple crying with a loud voice to him that sat upon the cloud: Thrust in thy sickle, and reap, because the hour is come to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust his sickle into the earth, and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire; and he cried with a loud voice to him that had the sharp sickle, saying: Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vineyard of the earth; because the grapes thereof are ripe.

19 And the angel thrust in his sharp sickle into the earth, and gathered the vineyard of the earth, and cast it into the great press of the wrath of God:

20 And the press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the press, up to the horses' bridles, for a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

THE scene now changes, and in a moment we are caught up from flames of anger and persecution into the pastures of the Good

Shepherd, where we shall want for nothing. The Lamb of God is seen "standing," as with power, upon Mount Sion, the highest part of Jerusalem, the Old Testament symbol of heaven, the symbol of the security and peace that ultimately belong to the people of God. (Cp. Is., xxviii, 16; li, 11; Heb., xii, 22; Apoc., xxii, 3, 4.) Mention has already been made (Apoc., vii, 4), of the hundred and forty-four thousand, who now appear again, safe with the Lamb in heaven. The voice from heaven (v. 2) is not *their* voice, but that of the whole court of heaven; the singers are the Angels, ever interested in the affairs of men. (Cp. Luke, xv, 7, 10; Ephes., iii, 10; I Pet., i, 12.) The 144,000 can "say (can 'understand' and 'join in') the canticle," for never have they been "defiled with women," *i.e.*, never have they been guilty of the idolatry demanded of them by Rome, or of having had strange gods before them, in preferring lives of sin to lives of virtue and self-control. (The Apocalypse thus frequently symbolises idolatry as fornication and prostitution.) "They follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth"; "they are without spot before the throne of God" (cp. Mt., v, 8); they are "first-fruits," who offered to God their bodies (Rom., xii, 1), the spiritual sacrifice of praise (Heb., xiii, 15), of alms (Heb., xiii, 16), of heart and will (I Pet., ii, 5). (Cp. Rom., xvi, 5; I Cor., xvi, 15.)

And now we have visions of Angels, each with a part to play, each with a message to give. The

first (v. 6) bears "the eternal gospel," *i.e.*, the Gospel that speaks of Eternity and of our preparation for it (v. 7). The second Angel (v. 8) proclaims the downfall of the Roman Empire, Babylon by name (cp. I Pet., v, 13; Is., xxi, 9; Jer., li, 7, 8; Apoc., xvii, 2), while the third (v. 9) explains the reason of it, and the fate of those who in any age "drink of the wine of the wrath of God", rather than refresh their thirst by "drawing waters with joy from their Saviour's fountains" (cp. Gen., xix, 28; Is., xxxiv, 9). All this is crowned by the exquisite music and encouragement of verse 13, a new Beatitude, while we lift our eyes (v. 14) to see "one sitting like to the Son of Man" (cp. Dan., vii, 13), who "in the time of the harvest, will say to the Angel-reapers: Thrust in the sickle and reap, for the hour is come to reap: the harvest of the earth is ripe: gather the cockle and bind it in bundles to burn: gather the wheat into My barn." (Cp. Mk., iv, 29; Mt., xiii, 30.)

Thus far this chapter presents no serious difficulty, and we are carried along by the beauty of the language and imagery; but the last four verses are not too easy to understand. There is a kind of *crescendo* running through the chapter: the warm theme of Judgment assumes a white heat, as Angel after Angel, with their sickles, their sharp cries, their diligent service, comes in view. The vintage is quickly gathered into the great press of the wrath of God, for the Angel with "power over fire," that is over the adminis-

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tration of punishments, has begun to work. And where does this take place? Outside Jerusalem (Heb., xiii, 12), for on the Mount of Olives (Zach., xiv, 10) stood the wine press of the King, where once He knelt in humility and pain. It is another Agony now—another Wrestling—a Battle hot and fierce—the King's horses are there, covering an area of a thousand and six hundred furlongs, to pull the chariots of the redeemed of the Lord to their home in the Jerusalem which is above, which is free, which is our mother; and blood comes out of the press, for those who "resisted unto blood, striving against sin," gain of the day, and "by the Precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled, their consciences were cleansed from dead works, to serve the living God" (Heb., ix, 14). (Cp. Is., lxiii, 1-7.)

CHAPTER XV

AND I saw another sign in heaven, great and wonderful: seven angels having the seven last plagues. For in them is filled up the wrath of God.

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that had overcome the beast, and his image, and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God:

3 And singing the canticle of Moses, the servant of God, and the canticle of the Lamb, saying: Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O King of ages.

4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and magnify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come, and shall adore in thy sight, because thy judgments are manifest.

5 And after these things I looked; and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed with clean and white linen, and girt about the breasts with golden girdles.

7 And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden vials, full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the majesty of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

THE Incarnation of Our Blessed Lord, when, in the fulness of time, God sent His Son into the world, made of a woman, made under the Law, to draw all men to Himself, yet to be a

sign of contradiction, to send not peace but a sword, is the great theme ushered in by the first verse of ch. xii. That verse is the central point of this Book. "Our Lord came unto His own, but His own in (Jerusalem) received Him not." And since, in the days of her visitation, that city would not recognise the things that were to her peace, her enemies came, and dug a trench about her, and beat her flat to the ground, and the children that were in her, not leaving a stone upon a stone. The destruction of Jerusalem has already been told us both fully and graphically (ch. x and xi); but a power even more formidable than Jewish blindness and prejudice was to face the Kingdom newly established by the Son of David. The Roman Empire, with its Cæsar-cult, its world-wide dominion, its lust of power, its greed of gold, confronts the rise and progress of a new kingdom, on which the sun shall never set, and of which there shall be no end. But the weak shall confound the strong; "God has arisen, and His enemies shall be dispersed"; yet the battle with the Dragon and the Beast shall be long and severe, ending in the triumph of the Cross. Such is the "story" of this great and final Book of Holy Scripture. It is the history of the world, with Our Lord as its centre: a record of the conflict between the Church and the world: and it closes with the triumph of the Church in the new Jerusalem, which is above, which is our mother, where God shall wipe away all tears

from our eyes, where we shall drink freely of the fountain of the water of life. Of the conflict with the power of Rome we have the history in ch. xv and xvi. Most wonderfully is the opening of the closing scene of warfare heralded in by the first verse of ch. xv: "And I saw another sign in heaven—great and wonderful—seven Angels—having the seven *last* plagues—for in them is *filled up* the wrath of God!" The words arrest attention, and point to the end of the long-drawn conflict, completing the physical manifestations of the wrath of God. And as we hearken to them, and are held spell-bound by their power, the sacred writer seizes the opportunity to insert a parenthesis, leaving the actual Vision of the Seven Bowls to ch. xvi.—It is a vision of the Martyrs—the Martyrs of the Catacombs among others, who have "overcome" (that favourite Apocalyptic word) "the beast and his image, and the number of his name." They are "standing" (an image of power and conquest) on a sea of glass (symbol of the purity of the white-robed army), and the sea of glass is "mingled with fire," the red glow of which speaks to us of the fire of pain through which they have passed, and of the anger yet to fall on those who condemned them to such tribulation (cp. Mt., iii, 12), for "God is a consuming fire" (Heb., xii, 29). "Their exodus from the spiritual Egypt (xi, 8), has led them through the Red Sea of Martyrdom, now exchanged for the Crystal Sea of Heaven." And

now, with "the harps of God" in their hands, like the Elders in v, 8, and the 144,000 in xiv, 2, they sing "the canticle of Moses, and the canticle of the Lamb." Throughout verse 2 there has been strong reference to Exodus, and this is now emphasised (cp. Exod., xv, 1). In singing the canticle of the Lamb, the Martyrs acknowledge that it is by our Redeemer's merits they have conquered. They share the victory of their Lord over sin and death (Apoc., iii, 21). (Cp. Jn., xvi, 33; Apoc., i, 18). Like the *Magnificat*, the words of their song come almost exclusively from the Old Testament (Ps., lxxxv, 9; Ps., cxxxviii, 14; Amos, iv, 13; Deut., xxxii, 4; Jer., x, 7; Tobias, xiii, 10; Mal., i, 11). It is strongly and strangely Hebraistic throughout, all concerned with the glory of God, and the issue of the great world-drama in which they have played a part.

"And after these things," the seven Angels come forth from the Temple vested in ceremonial garments! Their vestments are those worn by the priests of the Temple when engaged in the liturgical services (Lev., xvi, 4; Exod., xxviii, 39, 40). The Great High Priest Himself, the Son of Man, is depicted as wearing these garments in i, 13. (Cp. Apoc., xix, 8.)—Their golden girdles are symbols of royalty and of the priestly functions. Indeed they are "ministering spirits" (Heb., i, 14) sent to do the will of God! And to them by "one of the four living creatures" (cp. iv, 6; v, 14;

vi, 1), control is given over the forces of Nature, so far as may be necessary for giving effect to the Divine Will (cp. xiv, 18). Their vials are "full of the wrath of God," whereas the bowls of the Elders (ch. v) were full of the incense of the prayers of the Saints. (Cp. II Cor., ii, 15, 16.) "And the temple was filled with smoke"—again a piece of Old Testament symbolism. (Cp. Is., vi, 4; Exod., xix, 18)—"and no man was able to enter into the temple, until the seven plagues of the seven Angels were fulfilled,"—for no mercy shall be shown to idolatrous Rome.

CHAPTER XVI

AND I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels : Go, and pour out the seven vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth, and there fell a sore and grievous wound upon men, who had the character of the beast ; and upon them that adored the image thereof.

3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea, and there came blood as it were of a dead man ; and every living soul died in the sea.

4 And the third poured out his vial upon the rivers and the fountains of waters ; and there was made blood.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying : Thou art just, O Lord, who art, and who wast, the Holy One, because thou hast judged these things :

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink ; for they are worthy.

7 And I heard another, from the altar, saying : Yea, O Lord God Almighty, true and just are thy judgments.

8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun, and it was given unto him to afflict men with heat and fire :

9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God, who hath power over these plagues, neither did they penance to give him glory.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast ; and his kingdom became dark, and they gnawed their tongues for pain :

11 And they blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and wounds, and did not penance for their works.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates ; and dried up the water thereof, that

a way might be prepared for the kings from the rising of the sun.

13 And I saw from the mouth of the dragon, and from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.

14 For they are the spirits of devils working signs, and they go forth unto the kings of the whole earth, to gather them to battle against the great day of the Almighty God.

15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

16 And he shall gather them together into a place, which in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial upon the air, and there came a great voice out of the temple from the throne, saying : It is done.

18 And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and there was a great earthquake, such an one as never had been since men were upon the earth, such an earthquake, so great.

19 And the great city was divided into three parts ; and the cities of the Gentiles fell. And great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the indignation of his wrath.

20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 And great hail, like a talent, came down from heaven upon men : and men blasphemed God for the plague of the hail : because it was exceeding great.

THE hour is come, and the story moves quickly. The voice of God is heard (xvi, 1) : "Go and pour out the seven vials of the wrath of God upon the earth !" The command is given to all the seven simultaneously, and, one by one, they now advance to execute their task. At once we see the close affinity in the narrative

to the record of the Plagues of Egypt in Exodus, and to the visitations which accompany the seven trumpet-blasts in ch. viii-xi. Plagues Nos. 1, 6 and 9, are mentioned here, also Blasts Nos. 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7. The fourth alone is entirely new; and it should be noted that while no personal suffering is inflicted on Man by the first five of the Egyptian plagues, or by the first four of the Trumpet-visitations, he is attacked *at the very outset* of the present cycle. (Swete.) [With verse 2, cp. Exod., ix, 9, 10, and for those "who had the mark of the beast," *i.e.*, the Cæsar-worshippers, cp. xiv, 9-11.] The second Vial (in verse 3), corresponds generally with the second Trumpet (viii, 8), and both are suggested by the *first* Egyptian plague (Exod., vii, 14), where all waters were turned into blood. The "sea" is often used in the Apocalypse as a symbol of mankind generally.—The rivers and the fountains of waters are now made blood (a more terrible affliction than in viii, 11), and the Angel of the Waters (a new expression) gives the reason why, his words being confirmed by an Angel from the Altar.

The results of the outpouring of the fourth and fifth Vials are the same—an increase of blasphemy of the Name of God (cp. Is., lii, 5; James, ii, 7; Rom., ii, 24; I Tim., vi, 1), a hardening of the heart, as with Pharaoh in Egypt of old, so that they refused to God the tribute of conversion which He demanded of them.

The story increases in its awful details. The

fifth Vial was poured out "on the seat of the beast," *i.e.*, on the city of Rome itself, but now we must go yet further afield, and the enemies and rivals of Rome from distant parts, "the kings of the whole earth," shall play their part in the divine vengeance. This is the most interesting section of all, and perhaps the most alarming, as it is also the most difficult to explain. Clearly St. John was under the influence of strong emotion when he wrote these lines, and we may trace something incoherent and rugged in the wording. He seems to lose his sense of form, and no longer pays attention to style. He exhibits things by pictures which to *us* may seem extravagant, because we belong to a different age and environment, but which to his readers in the first century would be comparatively clear. We are taken hurriedly to the banks of the Euphrates, that "great river" already mentioned in connection with the sixth Trumpet (ix, 14, 15), but here to be treated in a totally dissimilar tone and way. The Sixth Trumpet loosed the Angels who were detained at this River, and who, when released, set in motion an enormous host; while the Sixth Vial drains the bed of the River, and thus opens the way for the advance of the "Kings from the East"—the advance-guard of the forces flocking to the last war (v, 14). It is the spectre of War, as Fr. Allo insists, that has again appeared. It has done so already (cp. vi, 4; ix, 13; xiv, 19), and it will do so again (cp. xvii, 16; xix, 17; xx, 7),—seven

times in all ! Now St. John always regards War as the greatest of exterior calamities, following the example of the Prophets and the sad experience of History. So here he figures the Parthians, at that time the most dangerous enemies of Rome, as his own enemies, and thus, without at all sharing in the superstitious beliefs of his day, he has here condensed the floating terrors which the very name of the Parthians caused throughout the Roman Province of Asia, to make them the most striking picture of the devastation he is recording.

The drying up of the waters of the Euphrates suggests the drying up of the Red Sea (Exod., xiv, 21), or of the Jordan (Josue, iii, 17), (cp. Is., xi, 15 ; Jer., li, 36 ; Zach., x, 11). As Ratton remarks : " St John had to convey to the servants of God in the first century tidings of hostile invasions, which would ultimately break up the Roman power. The Euphrates was his only possible illustration. Moreover, the Prophet Jeremias had predicted this of the enemies of God " (xlvi, 10).—In verse 13 (to continue the story), mention is made of the Dragon (the same as in xii, 3, *i.e.*, Satan), of the Beast (as in xiii, 1), the brute-force of the world, the Roman Empire, also of the False Prophet, not mentioned before by this name ; but his association here, and in xix, 20, xx, 10, with the first Beast, points to his identity with the second Beast of xiii, 11. He stands for the " false spiritual power which made common cause with the temporal power in

doing the work of Satan." These three " unclean spirits " are like frogs, and there may again be reference to the plague of Egypt (Exod., viii, 2 ; Lev., xi, 10), but the parallel is not too close. Frogs are proverbial for their constant and meaningless noise. Fr. Allo aptly quotes St. Augustine : " Rana est loquacissima vanitas " (Ps., lxxvii, 45). The mouth, the organ of speech, the chief source of human influence, is frequently used in the Apocalypse as an instrument both of good and of evil (cp. i, 16 ; ix, 17 ; xi, 5 ; xii, 15)—Thus are the forces described that gather for the Battle, to be recorded in xvii, 14 ; xix, 19-21, on " the day of God "—a familiar O.T. phrase for the day of wrath, when God will punish His enemies (cp. Is., xliii, 6 ; Ezech., xliii, 5 ; Joel, ii, 11 ; II Thess., i, 10 ; II Tim., i, 12, 18).

The story is now completed by the warning in v, 14 (cp. iii, 3 ; also I Thess., v, 2 ; II Pet., iii, 10), and we are led " to a place, which in Hebrew is called Armageddon," the plain of Esdraelon, the battlefield most familiar to the Galilean, or to the student of Hebrew history (cp. Jud., i, 27 ; II Paralip., xxxv, 22). It was at Armageddon (15 miles S.W. of Nazareth) that Deborah and Barak overthrew Jabin (Jud., v, 19), (cp. 4 Kings, xxiii, 29 ; Zach., xii, 11), while " the event described in II Paralip., xxxv, 22, burnt itself into the memory of the Jewish people, and the mourning for Josias in the valley of Megiddo was long afterwards quoted as an

instance of national grief" (Swete), (cp. Ezech., xxxix, 2-4). It is many miles from the Euphrates to the plain of Esdraelon: but what does that matter? The two names, more perfectly than any others, bring out the lesson and warning intended.

The end is now described in the pouring out of the Vial of the seventh Angel, accompanied by great signs and upheavals, "such as had never been since men were upon the earth." For the form of the phrase cp. Mark, xiii, 19, and Aggaeus ii, 7, with the commentary in Heb., xii, 27. For the division of the city "into three parts" [a difficult phrase, but let us accept Fr. Allo's interpretation that it merely means "completely"—an utter ruin, for "*omne trinum perfectum*"] it is well to compare what is said of Jerusalem in Zach., xiv, 4, 5. (cp. also Jer., xxx, 23, 24).—The figures employed in verses 19 and 20 depict the complete overthrow of the political power of Rome in all its provinces (in "every island"), while the story concludes with a reference to yet one more of the plagues of Egypt—the desolating plague of hail (Exod., ix, 24). (cp. Ezech., xxxviii, 22; Is., xxviii, 2).

CHAPTER XVII

AND there came one of the seven angels, who had the seven vials, and spoke with me, saying: Come, I will shew thee the condemnation of the great harlot, who sitteth upon many waters.

2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication; and they who inhabit the earth, have been made drunk with the wine of her whoredom.

3 And he took me away in spirit into the desert. And I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4 And the woman was clothed round about with purple and scarlet, and gilt with gold, and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of the abomination and filthiness of her fornication.

5 And on her forehead a name was written: A mystery; Babylon the great, the mother of the fornications, and the abominations of the earth.

6 And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And I wondered, when I had seen her, with great admiration.

7 And the angel said to me: Why dost thou wonder? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast which carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

8 The beast, which thou sawest, was, and is not, and shall come up out of the bottomless pit, and go into destruction: and the inhabitants on the earth (whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world) shall wonder, seeing the beast that was, and is not.

9 And here is the understanding that hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, upon which the woman sitteth, and they are seven kings:

10 Five are fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come: and when he is come, he must remain a short time.

11 And the beast which was, and is not : the same also is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into destruction.

12 And the ten horns which thou sawest, are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but shall receive power as kings one hour after the beast.

13 These have one design : and their strength and power they shall deliver to the beast.

14 These shall fight with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, because he is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they that are with him are called, and elect, and faithful.

15 And he said to me : The waters which thou sawest, where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and nations, and tongues.

16 And the ten horns which thou sawest in the beast : these shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her with fire.

17 For God hath given into their hearts to do that which pleaseth him : that they give their kingdom to the beast, till the words of God be fulfilled.

18 And the woman which thou sawest, is the great city, which hath kingdom over the kings of the earth.

WE should quite disregard the almost irritating break in the sacred narrative made here by its division into chapters, for the great dramatic story of the downfall of the Roman Empire, of the second Babylon, of "that great City" on the ruins of which is reared the glorious Basilica of St. Peter, who made its foundations firm and immovable by his blood, is straightway continued, in even greater flow, as though hastening to its conclusion. "Great Babylon has come in remembrance before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the indignation of His wrath," are words in the close of Chapter

xvi that usher in the end of the story. And now "one of the seven Angels" (mentioned in I, i), adds the words : "Come, I will show thee the condemnation of the great harlot, who sitteth upon many waters" (*i.e.*, who ruleth over many "peoples, nations, and tongues," as verse 15 shows (cp. Jer., li, 13). But why a "harlot"? Because, failing to remember her Creator, she has prostituted herself to devils, above all in her Cæsar-worship, as verse 2 declares. This was the special "wine" of Rome's prostitution. —The narrative proceeds with great solemnity : "and he took me away in spirit into the desert," to enable, as it were, the Seer to see more clearly, to understand all most perfectly, uninterrupted by any sound, though some prefer to take "the desert" as standing for "the desert of paganism," "the desolation of a life without God" (cp. Ezech., iii, 14 ; viii, 3 ; xi, 24). And to his eyes there is revealed a vision of "a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast"—the imagery being drawn mainly from the Old Testament, from the description of Tyre in Is., xxiii, 15 *seq.* : and of Nineveh in Nahum, iii, 4 ; to which may be added the words of Jeremias (li, 7) ; "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the hand of the Lord, that hath made all the earth drunk. The nations have drunk of her wine." (Read the whole chapter, so closely allied to this passage.) "The scarlet-coloured beast" may be identified with the Wild Beast from the Sea (xiii, i, 14 ; cp. xix, 20), the World-

Power, the enemy of Our Lord and His Church, ruling the world by brute force. No mention was made of the "colour" of this Beast in xiii, 1-8, but "scarlet" conveys the idea of splendour and distinction, suggestive too of the royal purple, and even, as some take it, of the martyr's blood it caused to flow. And the Beast is "full of names of blasphemy"—again an increase on what we are told in xiii, 1, for here they cover his whole body, and not unnaturally, for "the Roman Empire reeked with the blasphemous worship of the Emperors."—Notice the amazing richness of the woman's apparel described in verse 4; "and on her forehead" (not branded on the flesh, but tied on as a label, as was the custom for Roman harlots), "a name was written: A mystery: (as at i, 20, cp. II Thess., ii, 7): Babylon (the secret name for Rome among the Christians of the first century (cp. I Peter, v, 13), the great, the mother (the leader, the chief patron), of the fornications, and the abominations of the earth"! But more: "She is drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus," for this was written in the time of Nero, when the blood of martyrs was "poured out like water" (Ps., 78, 3), in the streets of Rome. (Cp. xvi, 6; xviii, 24).

"And I wondered"!—as well he might, for "he had seen wonderful things that day," things very different from what he had expected. Had he not been invited to see "the condemna-

tion of the great harlot" (v, i), and a city of ruin and decay? Instead of this, his eyes beheld some one in glorious array, "every precious stone her covering," all "gilt with gold," and in her hand a cup of gold. Well may he wonder, with a great wondering! He needs an interpreter, and lo! one is at hand (v, 7), to "tell him the mystery of the woman, and of the beast," and this he does in words that need careful explanation.—"The beast which thou sawest was, and is not, and shall come up out of the bottomless pit, and go into destruction"—so he begins. The "beast" is explained first; the "woman" is not clearly defined till verse 18. (Cp. for the whole passage, II Thess., ii, 8-10). St. John here refers once more to the current idea regarding Nero, that he would be killed by the sword, and go into the bottomless pit, and reappear as a conqueror, and finally go into destruction. But "here is the understanding that hath wisdom", here is the real solution. (Cp. xiii, 18). "The seven heads are seven mountains," the seven hills of Rome, upon which "the woman sitteth" in power over the subject races of the Empire. And there are "seven Kings," seven Emperors (cp. I Pet., ii, 13, 17), of whom "five are fallen," not merely dead, but "fallen" from their high estate. Their names are: Julius Cæsar, Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, and Claudius. The "one who is" is Nero. "The other is not yet come" (i.e., Galba), who "when he is come shall

remain but a short time," as in fact proved true, for he reigned only seven months, being murdered in January, A.D. 69. Then at once we are taken back to verse 8—"to the beast which was, and is not"—who now proves to be "the eighth," *i.e.*, Domitian, a second Nero, a Nero *redivivus*, who, like Nero, indulged in hideous vices, and cruelly persecuted the Christians. The resemblance of these two monsters is recognised by the Roman poet, Juvenal (Sat., iv, 37), and as Swete says (and Fr. Allo agrees): "the shadow of Nero hovers over all; and since Domitian was *living* at the time St. John wrote, he cannot refer to him by name: so he calls him (nicknames him, as it were), "Nero" instead. Domitian's end was "to go into destruction" indeed, for on September 18, A.D. 96, he was assassinated, after a terrible struggle with his murderers.

The explanation of "the ten horns" now follows. Their symbolism is taken from Daniel (vii, 24), and already we have seen them at xiii, 1, and xvii, 13. In Daniel, as Fr. Allo points out, the horns are kingdoms; in St. John they stand for individual sovereigns, not yet worthy of being called "heads," but only "horns." They have yet to *grow*, like the horn of Daniel, vii, 20, 24, and become the "kingdoms of the future"—*les royaumes de l'avenir*. And so, as Swete remarks: the ten kings (the number need not be pressed too closely) belong to a period which in St. John's time was still remote; they belong, as

the sequel shows, to the *last* days of the Roman Empire, "and represent the forces which, *arising out of the Empire itself*, like horns from a beast's head, and carrying on many of the worst traditions of the Empire, would turn their arms against Rome, and bring about her downfall." Their power as kings will come "one hour" (cp. Dan., iv, 16; Apoc., xviii, 10, 17, 19), "after the beast"; and, like the beast, they "have but one design," to persecute the Church of God, "to fight with the Lamb," as we are told in v, 14. But "the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings"—such will be the issue of the Battle of Armageddon, to be described in ch. xix.

This chapter ends with a solemn prediction concerning the fate of Rome. The "ten horns," which are ten kings (v, 2), shall strip her of her belongings and "eat her flesh," and "burn her with fire," Thus Alaric, King of the Visigoths, besieged Rome in 409; Attila, King of the Huns, wasted Northern Italy up to the walls of Rome in 452, and so of others. "No reader of the *Decline and Fall* can be at a loss for materials which will at once illustrate and justify the general trend of St. John's prophecy here." And it is not a little remarkable that the most important of the invading kings declared that they were conscious of a divine mission in their work. Alaric, for example, told his people that a voice ever cried to him on the Danube: "Go, and destroy Rome," while Attila claimed

as his official title, "The Scourge of God" (Ratton)—thus fulfilling the words in verse 17: "God hath given into their hearts to do that which pleaseth Him."

CHAPTER XVIII

AND after these things, I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power: and the earth was enlightened with his glory.

2 And he cried out with a strong voice, saying: Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen; and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every unclean spirit, and the hold of every unclean and hateful bird:

3 Because all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication; and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her; and the merchants of the earth have been made rich by the power of her delicacies.

4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying: Go out from her, my people; that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.

5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and the Lord hath remembered her iniquities.

6 Render to her as she also hath rendered to you; and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup wherein she hath mingled, mingle ye double unto her.

7 As much as she hath glorified herself, and lived in delicacies, so much torment and sorrow give ye to her; because she saith in her heart: I sit a queen, and am no widow: and sorrow I shall not see.

8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning, and famine, and she shall be burned with the fire: because God is strong, who shall judge her.

9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication, and lived in delicacies with her, shall weep, and bewail themselves over her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning:

10 Standing afar off for fear of her torments, saying: Alas! alas! that great city Babylon, that mighty city: for in one hour is thy judgment come.

11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep, and mourn over her: for no man shall buy their merchandise any more.

12 Merchandise of gold and silver and precious stones : and of pearls, and fine linen and purple, and silk, and scarlet (and all thyine wood, and all manner of vessels of ivory, and all manner of vessels of precious stone, and of brass, and of iron, and of marble.

13 And cinnamon,) and odours, and ointment, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

14 And the fruits of the desire of thy soul are departed from thee, and all fat and goodly things are perished from thee, and they shall find them no more at all.

15 The merchants of these things, who were made rich, shall stand afar off from her for fear of her torments, weeping and mourning.

16 And saying : Alas ! alas ! that great city, which was clothed with fine linen and purple and scarlet, and was gilt with gold and precious stones and pearls.

17 For in one hour are so great riches come to nought : and every shipmaster, and all that sail into the lake, and mariners, and as many as work in the sea, stood afar off.

18 And cried, seeing the place of her burning, saying : What city is like to this great city ?

19 And they cast dust upon their heads, and cried, weeping and mourning, saying : Alas ! alas ! that great city, wherein all were made rich, that had ships at sea, by reason of her prices : for in one hour she is made desolate.

20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets : for God hath judged your judgment on her.

21 And a mighty Angel took up a stone as it were a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying : With such violence as this shall Babylon that great city be thrown down and shall be found no more at all :

22 And the voice of harpers, and of musicians, and of them that play on the pipe and on the trumpet, shall no more be heard at all in thee : and no craftsmen of any art whatsoever shall be found any more at all in thee : and the sound of the mill shall be heard no more at all in thee :

23 And the light of the lamp shall shine no more at all in thee : and the voice of the bridegroom and the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee : for thy merchants were the great men of the earth, for all nations have been deceived by thy enchantments.

24 And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

IN this chapter we read the conclusion of the story : " Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen " —her empire has come to nought, her trade has departed from her. The announcement is made by a new Angel, with a strong voice, who flings across the earth a belt of light (cp. Ezech., xliii, 2), by which we see the City to be indeed " the hold " of " every unclean spirit, of every unclean and hateful bird "—the evil spirits watching over Rome like harpies awaiting their prey. Then, in verse 4, " another voice " is heard, apparently the voice of Our Lord Himself, for it speaks of : " My people " ; and they are bidden " go out " from the city, as He told the Christians to " go out " from Jerusalem before it fell (cp. Jer., i, 8 ; li, 45). Then follows a full and vivid description of the utter collapse of the vast trade of Rome with Egypt and the East, with which we may well compare the collapse of the trade of Tyre in Ezechiel (xxvi-xxviii), (cp. also Is., xlvi, 15). It begins (in verses 5, 6 and 7), by a strong assertion of the extremity of her guilt (cp. Ps., cxxxvi, 7, 8, 9 ; Jer., i, 29 ; xvi, 18 ; Is., xl, 2), which in turn calls for an extremity of punishment.

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A divine "*lex talionis*" runs through these verses (Exod., xxii, 4, 7), culminating, in verse 8, with the declaration that "all her plagues shall come *in one day*," in one continuous period, thus adding to the sorrow and greatness of her fall. (Cp. Ezech., xxvii, 3; Is., xlvi, 7-15). Then, in verse 9, a series of dirges from kings (9, 10) and merchants (11-17), and the ship-owners of the world begins. Notice the touch of grim humour in the words "standing afar off" (10 and 15)—at a safe distance—content with idle lamentations—thinking only of their own security! Notice, too, the vastness and variety of the trade depicted in verses 12 and 13. From Seleucia, Ephesus, Smyrna, Corinth, Alexandria, Carthage, Marseilles, and Spain, such goods poured into the markets of Rome, and the list closes with the awful words: "Slaves and souls of men"! (Cp. Ezech., xxvii, 13)—emphasising the serious side of the Roman slave-trade (Allo). "*In one hour* are so great riches come to nought" (v. 17), and they that beheld "the city made desolate," shall "cast dust upon their heads," and shall "weep and mourn"! A fresh chord is struck in the opening of verse 20, and amid its strains the chapter comes to its conclusion, with a further picture of the downfall of Babylon, the great city. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven"—so it begins (cp. Is., xliv, 23; Jer., li, 48; Luke, xv, 7, 10). Note the powerful figure of the great splash, as the millstone falls into the

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sea, and sinks quickly to the bottom, reminding us of Our Lord's words on the evil of scandal (Mark, ix, 42; Luke, xvii, 2). The last touches to the picture are given in verses 22 and 23 by the awful *silence* that shall reign in the ruins of the once crowded, noisy city. There shall be no music heard, no song of joy; nay, even the busy hum of the millstones, as they turn upon one another in grinding the corn, shall no more be heard; and darkness shall reign in every home and street.—"All nations have been *deceived* by her enchantments!"

CHAPTER XIX

AFTER these things I heard as it were the voice of much people in heaven, saying: Alleluia. Salvation, and glory, and power is to our God.

2 For true and just are his judgments, who hath judged the great harlot which corrupted the earth with her fornication, and hath revenged the blood of his servants, at her hands.

3 And again they said: Alleluia. And her smoke ascendeth for ever and ever.

4 And the four and twenty ancients, and the four living creatures fell down and adored God that sitteth upon the throne, saying: Amen; Alleluia.

5 And a voice came out from the throne, saying: Give praise to our God, all ye his servants: and you that fear him, little and great.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of great thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord our God the Almighty hath reigned.

7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath prepared herself.

8 And it is granted to her that she should clothe herself with fine linen, glittering and white. For the fine linen are the justifications of saints.

9 And he said to me: Write: Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith to me: These words of God are true.

10 And I fell down before his feet, to adore him. And he saith to me: See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren, who have the testimony of Jesus. Adore God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse;

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and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true, and with justice doth he judge and fight.

12 And his eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many diadems, and he had a name written, which no man knoweth but himself.

13 And he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood; and his name is called, THE WORD OF GOD.

14 And the armies that are in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

15 And out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp two edged sword; that with it he may strike the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God the Almighty.

16 And he hath on his garment, and on his thigh written: KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that did fly through the midst of heaven: Come, gather yourselves together to the great supper of God:

18 That you may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of tribunes, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all freemen and bondmen, and of little and of great.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war with him that sat upon the horse, and with his army.

20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet, who wrought signs before him, wherewith he seduced them who received the character of the beast, and who adored his image. These two were cast alive into the pool of fire, burning with brimstone.

21 And the rest were slain by the sword of him that sitteth upon the horse, which proceedeth out of his mouth; and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

EVER since "great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give her the cup of the wine of indignation of His wrath" (xvi, 19.)

the story of her downfall has been emphasised, while the ultimate victory of "the Lamb, because He is Lord of lords, and King of kings," has become more and more vividly portrayed. And now, after the great and awful picture of her doom, given in so much detail in chapter xviii, our eyes are raised definitely to "the Jerusalem which is above, which is our mother, which is free," and for the first time we "hear as it were the voice of much people in heaven, saying: Alleluia: salvation and glory and power is to our God." It is the glad response to the appeal of xviii, 20, made by "the many angels round about the throne, whose number is thousands of thousands" (v. 11, cp. Heb., xii, 22). For the first time in the New Testament we read the word Alleluia, which comes again in verses 3, 4 and 6, but nowhere else in the sacred volume. Notice the force of the great combination, "salvation, glory, and power," containing within itself a very history of God's loving work on behalf of men (cp. xii, 10; vii, 10), while in verse 2 a last reference is made to "the great harlot," which has brought moral ruin upon the earth, and now most fitly lies herself in ruins (cp. Jer., li, 25). Indeed "true and just are the judgments of God!" Verses 2 and 3 are the finishing touch to xviii, 21-24, to which may be added xiv, 8; xvii, 2, 5; xviii, 3. (Cp. Is., xxxiv, 9-16). Once more we are bidden open our ears to the songs of the blessed; the four and twenty ancients, of whom we have

not heard since xiv, 3, are discovered in the act of adoration; again the calm music of Alleluia is heard. All is in order and at peace; we may "be glad and rejoice, and give glory to God," for "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife (His Church, 'purchased for Himself with His own Blood') hath prepared herself." Such is the message of "a great multitude" (verse 6), a second choir, not the same as the choir of verse 1, the innumerable multitude of vii, 9, who rejoice, not so much because Babylon is fallen, but because "the kingdoms of this world are become Our Lord's and His Christ's, and He shall reign for ever and ever. Amen" (xi, 15, 17). (Cp. xii, 10).

"The marriage of the Lamb" is a phrase that calls for attention. It is the note of transition to the final vision of the Book, though "a thousand years" are to pass before its consummation (xx, 2), and the Bride herself shall not be fully revealed till we reach ch. xxi. As far back as Osee (II, 19, 20), and still more in Ezechiel (xvi), and again in Psalm 44, the nuptials of the King are depicted at great length; while in the Gospels, in the parables of the Ten Virgins, and of the Marriage of the King's Son (Mt., xxv, xxii), Our Lord has chosen this figure to reveal His gracious purposes, rejoicing to speak of Himself as the Bridegroom, and of the members of His Church as "the children of the Bridegroom" (Mark, ii, 19). (Cp. Jn., iii, 29; II Cor., xi, 2; Ephes., v, 22-32; also

Canticle, iv, 7-12). The raiment of the Bride, unlike that of the harlot (xvii, 4; xviii, 16), is "of fine linen, glittering and white," for it is "the justifications of saints," of "the chaste generation," of "the clean of heart," whose destiny is "to see God." Thus has she "prepared herself";—a striking phrase, to be read closely with Ephes., v, 25, where we are told that Our Lord has "presented" His Bride to Himself, "all glorious, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish," for co-operation on our part is needed to make effective Our Lord's restoring work on our behalf. We are to be "with Him," never "against Him"; "to gather with Him, never to scatter," and there is no alternative. (Cp. II Cor., vii, 1; I Jn., iii, 3; Jude, 21.)

"And he said to me"—probably it was the Angel of xvii, 1, that now spoke; or of i, 1.—"Write," he said, for what is written endures, and by writing its importance is emphasised (cp. xiv, 13). There was an idea at one time that the Apocalypse came to an end with this gracious invitation (for the wording of which cp. Mt., viii, 11; xxii, 3; Luke, xiv, 17; Apoc., xvii, 14; also Is., xxv, 6), yet it does but usher in the long and glorious close of the story of the Victory of the Cross of Christ, which forms the conclusion of the sacred volume. And of *how* this victory is to be gained, we are reminded at once, in verse 10, by the phrase: "the testimony of Jesus (*i.e.*, the testimony *to* Jesus) is the

spirit of prophecy" (cp. i, 2; vi, 9; xii, 17; xx, 4). "The testimony to Jesus" is the true and full profession of the Catholic faith, a life-long witness to the truth and claims of Our Lord, a life of devoted service corresponding to His "everlasting love" for us, culminating at times, nay, frequently, in martyrdom, the greatest proof of love (Jn., xv, 13). Thus the true "witness" is not only a servant and friend of his Lord, but also a "prophet" who is not ashamed of the Gospel, who does not deny his Lord before men, but who "with his mouth makes confession unto salvation." (Read I Pet., i, 9-12). And having made our own this underlying principle of all true fellowship with Our Lord, *per crucem ad lucem*, we are again bidden raise our eyes to heaven, for its gates are opened, and we are to see the most glorious pageant described in this Book. It is a procession of Victory—the final triumph of Our Lord. Early in the Apocalypse a door was opened in heaven (iv, 1), and more than once the Sanctuary itself has been disclosed to view (xi, 19; xv, 5), while frequently the Angels descend from heaven (x, 1; xiv, 17; xviii, 1); but what we are now to see is on a far larger scale. There is "the white horse," ever the symbol of victory . . . but let the passage speak for itself, without comment; let it be committed to memory; we will add but a few notes in illustration of the sacred text. For the "white horse," cp. vi, 2; "faithful and true"—both epithets are applied

to Our Lord in i, 5 ; iii, 7, 14. " He judges and fights " : note the order of the words ; He " judges " first, and then He " fights " ; cp. Is., xi, 3-5. And His judgments are " just " ; cp. Ps., xcv, 13. Our Lord, as St. John Chrysostom says, is at once Soldier and Bridegroom. " His eyes are as a flame of fire ", cp. i, 14 ; ii, 18 ; He has a crown of " many diadems, " for He is King of kings, cp. Zach., vi, 11, 12 ; Phil., ii, 9 ; Apoc., i, 18. He has a Name, " which is above every name " (Phil., ii, 9), which " no man knoweth but Himself "—a primary instance of the meaning ever to be attached in the writings of St. John to the word " know. " To " know " is to " penetrate, " to " fathom to the depth of, " to " estimate rightly, " to " appreciate to the full. " (Allo.) (Cp. Mt., xi, 27). " What I do, you know not now, but you shall know hereafter " (Jn., xiii, 7), for " now we know in part ; hereafter we shall know even as we are known " (I Cor., xiii, 12). And for the raiment of the King, cp. Is., lxiii, 1-5 ; indeed " our beloved is white and ruddy " (Cant., v, 10-16). " And His Name is called, The Word of God "—a phrase, as Fr. Allo says, that furnishes us with one of the most convincing proofs that St. John is the author of the Apocalypse. (Read Jn., i, 1-14 ; Wisdom, xviii, 14-16 ; Heb., i, 1-12).—Notice the spirit of absolute Victory and irresistible Power that runs through the next three verses. The thrice repeated pronoun, " and he " (cp. Is., lxiii, 1-3), is most striking

and emphatic, as the Celestial Warrior, followed by " the armies that are in heaven " (the Angels probably, rather than the Saints, " who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, ") goes forth, conquering, and to conquer, with His sharp two-edged sword, and to shepherd all nations with a rod of iron, by the power of His words, which shall never pass away, though heaven and earth may do so (cp. II Cor., x, 4).

" And an Angel standing in the sun " (perhaps the Angel of the sun, like the other elemental Angels of the waters, etc., cp., xvi, 5), " cries with a loud voice, " for no incident of the great history must escape the notice of " the birds that fly through the midst of heaven "—an image of all men, borrowed from Ezechiel (xxxix, 17), and repeated pointedly by Our Lord, where He speaks of " the eagles being gathered together, wherever the body shall be " (Mt., xxiv, 28).—And again a gracious invitation is given, to " a great supper, " for the house of God must be full, " and yet there is room " ! It is to an evening meal that the summons is issued,—to a meal *after* the victory is won, *after* the burden and heats of the day have been borne. (Cp. Mk., xiv, 17).—The rich and copious food at " the great supper " comprehends *all* the spoil from the great battle of Armageddon (xvi, 16). No part of it goes without mention in verse 18 ; " Kings and tribunes, mighty men that sit on horses, free men, bondmen, little and great "—all are named. And at the last " the beast, "

allied with "the kings of the earth" (cp. xvii, 16), who are "to fight with the Lamb" and be overcome (xvii, 14), is "taken," like a thief and rebel (the Greek word is a favourite one with St. John), "and with him the false prophet" (xvi, 13), who "wrought the signs" described in xiii, 13-15. "These two are cast alive (cp. Dan., vii, 11) into the pool of fire burning with brimstone." (For the phrase cp. xx, 10, 14; xxi, 8; also Mt., v, 22; Mark, ix, 43; James, iii, 6; Ezech., xxxviii, 22; Gen., xix, 24). For "the sword that slew the rest," cp. Ephes., vi, 17; Heb., iv, 12. Such invitations are but the beginnings of the good things which God has prepared for those who love Him to the end.

CHAPTER XX

AND I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand.

2 And he laid hold on the dragon the old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.

3 And he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should no more seduce the nations, till the thousand years be finished. And after that, he must be loosed a little time.

4 And I saw seats; and they sat upon them; and judgment was given unto them; and the souls of them that were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and who had not adored the beast nor his image, nor received his character on their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

5 The rest of the dead lived not, till the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. In these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ; and shall reign with him a thousand years.

7 And when the thousand years shall be finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go forth, and seduce the nations, which are over the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, and shall gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

8 And they came upon the breadth of the earth, and encompassed the camp of the saints, and the beloved city.

9 And there came down fire from God out of heaven, and devoured them; and the devil, who seduced them, was cast into the pool of fire and brimstone, where both the beast

10 And the false prophet shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and one sitting upon

it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them.

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

13 And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them; and they were judged every one according to their works.

14 And hell and death were cast into the pool of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the pool of fire.

THE note of victory, so clearly sounded in ch. xix, 11, 16, (perhaps the most brilliant picture of Our Lord in all Scripture) continues in the opening verses of this chapter, and the scenes, as before, succeed one another in rapid succession. Notice the accumulation of words and phrases indicative of *power* and *authority* in verses 1-3—the Angel comes from heaven: he holds a *key*, and a *great* chain in his hand: he “*lays hold*” of the dragon, who is powerless to resist him: he “*binds*” him for an indefinite period: he “*casts*” him into the bottomless pit, and “*shuts him up*”, and “*sets a seal*” upon him, that he “should no more seduce the nations”—(Cp. Jn., viii, 44; Apoc., xii, 9)—till when? “Till the thousand years be finished”! Assuredly “the fullness of time has come,” “the Kingdom of God has come upon” the world, and the Desired of all nations “with

the finger of God casteth out Devils!” For centuries “a strong man armed kept his court, and the things which he possessed were at peace”—a peace of death, a season of decay, both of truth and charity; “but a Stronger than he has come upon him, and overcome him; One of Whose Kingdom there is no end, and Who has “taken away *all* the armour of the strong one, wherein he trusted, and has distributed his spoils,” while He bids His disciples know that “He has overcome the world.” Yet it is not to some golden period of peace and ease that we are to look forward. “The thousand years” stand for a long, unbroken period, that shall only close when “the Son of man shall be seen coming in the clouds of heaven, to judge the world”. They began on the first Good Friday, or, if you will, on the first Easter Day, or, if you will, at the vision of Constantine, when he came to learn the truth that in the sign of the Cross alone he should conquer (A.D. 304). Our Lord came not to send peace, but the sword; the world will ever hate His disciples, His Church, for His Name’s sake; but He has drunk of the torrent by the way, and His Head, bowed low in death, is now exalted. His Church lives, ever ancient, ever new, conquering every artifice and seduction of her enemy, despised and rejected, yet drawing all men to herself, the spouse in every age of “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever.” Unless Our Lord be betrayed by His friends, Satan is for ever a

prisoner, powerless too, unless the hands of Our Lord be tied. Grace has conquered nature, temptation and death have lost their sting, heaven is open to all believers, for a great price has been paid, and God wills all men to be saved. It is inconceivable, nay, the very idea would be a dishonour to God, to suppose that the victory of Our Lord by the Incarnation over the powers of darkness was anything short of complete and absolute. (Cp. Mt., xii; 28; Jn., xii, 31). Human nature, indeed, is left unchanged, and men have still the free use of their will; but so great are the lights bestowed, so overwhelming is the Example bequeathed to us, so infinite is the love that is lavished upon us, so strong are the means of grace ever at our disposal, that if "we despise (as we are still at liberty to do) the riches of God's goodness, and patience, and long-suffering," if we refuse (as we are still free to do) to allow "the benignity of God to lead us to penance," and instead "treasure up for ourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works," we are "inexcusable," to use St. Paul's striking phrase. (Rom., ii, 1-6.) But such cases, many as they may be in every time, in no way affect the victory of Our Lord, or the very real and brilliant progress of His Cause through "the thousand years," or through His "day", if we please to call it so. It is a period of never-ending strife, indeed; the world

seems ever victorious, even as it is ever vulgar, impure, and self-assertive; but many a victory is gained that is never recorded in the annals of the world, but only in the Books of everlasting life; the Church remains, the pillar and ground of Truth, the faithful witness, the city on a hill that cannot be hid, while "the gentiles rage, and the people devise vain things, against the Lord and His Anointed; but He that dwelleth in heaven shall laugh at them, and the Lord shall deride them." (Ps., ii).

From the beginning until now the voice of Gamaliel rings clear, though it fall on unheeding ears: "Take heed to yourselves what you intend to do, as touching these men: refrain from them, and let them alone: for if this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it, lest you be found even to fight against God." (Acts, v, 35, 38). Few questions perhaps have been more vigorously discussed than this one of "the thousand years"—the Millenium, as it is called; and only in this one passage in all Scripture is the Kingdom of Christ so described. That it should be taken in the figurative way here set forth, is in accordance with Ps., lxxxix, 4, and II Pet., iii, 8, and was first advocated by St. Augustine. Fr. Allo declares it to be the correct view, even as it is the most simple, and certainly the most encouraging. "This Prophecy of the Millenium," he says, (page 301), which fits in perfectly with the other Prophecies

of this Book, is simply a picture of the spiritual domination of the Church militant, united with the Church triumphant, from the glorification of our Lord to the end of the world"—so let us accept it with all gratitude.

But "after that Satan must be loosed a little time." Notice the emphatic "must"—a mystery of Divine Providence not revealed to us, but pointing perhaps to the severe test of faith in the last days, when "signs and wonders, to deceive if possible even the elect", shall be seen in days which must be "shortened for the sake of the elect, else no flesh should be saved. (Mt., xxiv, 21, 22). Read carefully St. Paul's great passage on this short, mysterious, and awful period in the history of the world, (II Thess., ii, 8-11), and Our Lord's words: "The Son of man, when He cometh, shall He find, think you, faith on earth?" (Lk., xviii, 8). A development of the vision is now recorded in verse 4; it is suggested by Dan., vii, 9, 10, 22, where they who "sat upon the seats" are described as "the Saints of the Most High," (cp. Mt., xix, 28, I Cor., vi, 3). To them is given the right of pronouncing sentence, as St. Paul suggests in I Cor., vi, 2, 3. In ch. vi, 9, we "saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God", and we heard them "cry with a loud voice," for vengeance on their blood. This has now been awarded, (xix, 2), and they appear "living and reigning with Christ", in

the thousand years. (For the phrase "the testimony of Jesus," cp. i, 9; xii, 17; xix, 10; the phrase "to reign with Christ" is peculiar to the Apocalypse, and occurs also in xi, 15; xii, 10; xx, 4, 6). "This is the first resurrection," and "blessed and holy are they that have part in it, for in them the second death has no power." We cannot do better than quote Fr. Gigot's excellent and satisfying comment on this somewhat difficult passage (Apocalypse, Westminster Edition, Vol. IV, Part III, p. 47). "Since the 'second death' spoken of in xx, 6, 14, denotes the damnation or eternal loss of the soul in hell, the 'first resurrection' means such life after death as preserves men from the 'second death'. Hence the *first* resurrection is the spiritual reign of God's saints during the long period of peace and progress (1,000 years) granted to the Church, whereas the *second* resurrection is the *physical* rising of the dead at the close of time. (Cp. Jn., xi, 25, 26). In view of this, "the rest of the dead" is to be understood of those who die in the state of sin, and who cannot be said to enjoy any sort of "resurrection" before the end of "the thousand years".

With these words we pass into a new and final period. "The thousand years are finished;" "Satan is loosed out of his prison," and, as ever, he "goes forth to seduce the nations, which are over the four quarters of the earth." They are led by Gog and Magog, the avowed enemies of

the cause of God. We read of them in Ezech., xxxviii, xxxix. Magog appears first in Gen., x, 2, as the name of a son of Japhet, while Gog appears in Ezechiel (xxxviii, 2), as the name of the King of Magog, and of the neighbouring tribes of Rosh and Thubal, on the south and south-eastern shores of the Black Sea. The two ever stand for the heathen and God-opposing nations of the earth, against whom we are "to set our face", "Projects shall enter into their heart, and they shall conceive a mischievous design"; but God "will break the bow in their left hand, and cause the arrows to fall out of their right hand, and His Holy Name shall be profaned no more, and the nations shall know that He is the Lord, the Holy One of Israel." "They shall bury Gog, and all his multitude; and it shall be called the valley of the multitude of Gog. And I will bring back the captivity of Jacob, and will have mercy on all the house of Israel: and I will be jealous for My Holy Name." It was so of old; and their history describes the end with equal power and truth. The language of St. John at this point is mainly taken from the Old Testament. "The sand of the sea", for example, is ever a picture of a *great* host, (cp. Gen., xii, 17; Jos., xi, 4; Jude, vii, 12; Judith, ii, 20) while for the phrase: "the camp of the saints" cp. Ezech., xxxviii, 15, also Heb., xi, 34. Instead of "they *came*," we should expect "they shall come," but St. John is writing in his usual apocalyptic way, and sees

the future as the past. Notice, too, the beauty of the phrase "the beloved city"—the universal Church, and cp. Heb., xii, 22-24; Rom., ix, 25, 26; I Pet., ii, 10; while in the combination of the two phrases "day and night for ever and ever," we have "as strong an expression for absolute endlessness as Biblical language affords." And with a further vision of "a great white throne," expressive of victory and peace, of calm after the storm, the chapter comes to an end. (Cp. Mt., xxv, 41).

The *name* of the Judge who sits on "the throne" is not given, but there is only one, (cp. Heb., xii, 23; James, iv, 12) and white is the colour of His throne. Throughout this Book, "He that sits upon the throne" is the Eternal Father; (cp. iv, 2, 9; v, 1, 7, 13; vi, 16; vii, 10, 15; xix, 4; xxi, 5); but "the Father doth not judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son, that all men may honour the Son, as they honour the Father" (John, v, 21, 22; and cp. Acts, xvii, 31; II Cor., v, 10; Rom., xiv, 10; II Tim., iv, 1). "The Father and the Son are one, and the Son cannot do anything of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing; for what things soever He doth, these the Son also doth in like manner." (Jn., x, 30). We should notice the strong expression "fled away", the only time it occurs in Scripture, so much stronger than "pass away", (for which cp. Mt., xiii, 31; II Pet., iii, 10), crowned as it is, by the final phrase: "there was

no place found for them ” : (cp. Apoc., xii, 8).
“ The door is shut ” : the close of opportunity
has come : “ I know you not, ” is the short and
final answer from within. (Mt., xxv, 12).

Notice, too, the solemnity of verse 12, and
cp. Lk., xxi, 36. The dead, both “ great and
small ”, (cp. xix, 5, 18—a phrase that points to
“ the nothingness of human distinctions ”)
“ stand, ” aroused, as on their trial, and “ books ”,
(not, “ *the* books ”), are “ opened ”, (cp. Dan.,
vii, 10, 13), and all “ are judged according to
their works. ” (Cp. Mt., xvi, 27 ; Rom., ii,
5, 6 ; II Cor., v, 10). The Resurrection of the
dead is then described in verses 13 and 14, and
by the words “ this is the second death ” the
final doom of the lost is summarised. Between
them and the abode of the blessed there is
“ fixed a great chaos, so that they who would
pass from one to the other cannot do so : the
blessed are comforted, the lost are tormented. ”
(Lk., xvi, 25), (cp. Dan., xii, 1, 2 ; Jn., v, 29).
“ Their portion is appointed with the hypo-
crites, and they shall go into everlasting punish-
ment, ” (Mt., xxiv, 51), but “ the redeemed of
the Lord shall return, and shall come into
Zion with praise, and everlasting joy shall be
upon their heads ; they shall obtain joy and
gladness, and sorrow and mourning shall flee
away ”—(Is., xxxv, 10)—the theme that is
developed in the two closing chapters of this
Book.

CHAPTER XXI

AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For the first
heaven and the first earth was gone, and the sea is now no
more.

2 And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride
adorned for her husband.

3 And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying :
Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and he will dwell
with them. And they shall be his people ; and God
himself with them shall be their God.

4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes :
and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor
sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed
away.

5 And he that sat on the throne, said : Behold, I make all
things new. And he said to me : Write, for these words
are most faithful and true.

6 And he said to me : It is done. I am Alpha and
Omega ; the beginning and the end. To him that thirsteth,
I will give of the fountain of the water of life, freely.

7 He that shall overcome shall possess these things, and
I will be his God ; and he shall be my son.

8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable,
and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and
idolaters, and all liars, they shall have their portion in the
pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second
death.

9 And there came one of the seven angels, who had the
vials full of the seven last plagues, and spoke with me,
saying : Come, and I will shew thee the bride, the wife of
the Lamb.

10 And he took me up in spirit to a great and high
mountain : and he shewed me the holy city Jerusalem
coming down out of heaven from God,

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11 Having the glory of God, and the light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper stone, even as crystal.

12 And it had a wall great and high, having twelve gates, and in the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

13 On the east, three gates : and on the north, three gates : and on the south, three gates : and on the west, three gates.

14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them, the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he that spoke with me, had a measure of a reed of gold, to measure the city and the gates thereof, and the wall.

16 And the city lieth in a foursquare, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth : and he measured the city with the golden reed for twelve thousand furlongs, and the length and the height and the breadth thereof are equal.

17 And he measured the wall thereof an hundred forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, which is of an angel.

18 And the building of the wall thereof was of jasper stone : but the city itself pure gold, like to clear glass.

19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper : the second, sapphire : the third, a chalcedony : the fourth, an emerald :

20 The fifth, sardonyx : the sixth, sardius : the seventh, chrysolite : the eighth, beryl : the ninth, a topaz : the tenth, a chrysoprasus : the eleventh, a jacinth : the twelfth, an amethyst.

21 And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each : and every several gate was of one several pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

22 And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb.

23 And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the

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moon, to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.

24 And the nations shall walk in the light of it : and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour into it.

25 And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day : for there shall be no night there.

26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it.

27 There shall not enter into it any thing defiled, or that worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they that are written in the book of life of the Lamb.

“ **G**LORIOUS things are said of thee, O City of God”, and to these, stated with a fullness and beauty unequalled in all Scripture, we are now free to direct our attention. “The half, indeed, is not told us,” for “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God has prepared for them that love Him”, (I Cor., ii, 9) ; yet, as far as human language is capable of expressing it, we have here a full revelation of the City of God, of “our Father’s house in which there are many mansions.” (Jn., xiv, 2). “Thy Kingdom, O Lord, is a Kingdom of all ages, and Thy dominion endureth throughout all generations”. (Ps., cxliv, 13). The record is confined to two short chapters, which are perhaps best read as forming one great picture of the triumph of the Church purchased by the Precious Blood of Our Lord. Every means is utilised to enable the picture to convey to us its great and encouraging lesson. The wiping away of all tears from our eyes, the abolition of

all sorrow, the end of all partings, the making all things new—these are a few of the quite simple touches that speak to us with an eloquence all their own of perfect peace and union, of joy and unbroken rest, in the Kingdom which it hath pleased our Father to give us, (Lk., xii, 32). “Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me, that they may see My glory which Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the formation of the world”—such was Our Lord’s last prayer and desire for His own; and now St. John, His beloved disciple, is privileged, in the two closing chapters of the Bible, to describe for us the City where our Lord dwells, and he does so by naming its vast dimensions, its walls of precious stones, its streets of gold, its freedom from attack, the pure light which enlightens it, so that there is no night there, nor any need to close its gates, either by day or by night, for all is secure. “Thy sun, O City of God, shall go down no more, and thy moon shall not decrease; for the Lord shall be unto thee for an everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people shall be all just, they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hand, to glorify Me.” (Is., lx, 20, 21).

“And I saw a new heaven, and a new earth” . . . thus majestically does the writer begin his story, using a phrase already familiar from the Old Testament (cp. Is., lxiv, 4; lxv, 17;

lxvi, 22), and to be met with also in the New, (Cp. II Pet., iii, 12, 13; Heb., viii, 13; I Cor., ii, 9). In the phrase, “the sea is now no more”, it is best to trace a reference to the ancient horror of the open sea, as a scene of disasters and death, the abode of storms and tempests, while now all is peace and calm. The sea, too, is a great *divider*, that separates friends from one another; but now all are united, happy in their Father’s home. “And I saw the Holy City”, whose “builder and maker is God”, (Heb., xi, 10), the “lasting city, which is to come, for which we seek”, (Heb., xiii, 14), the ideal Jerusalem, for which men from the beginning ever looked and sighed, (cp. Is., liv, lx; Ezech., xl, xlvi), and to which we now have full access. (Read Heb., xii, 22-24).

The City is “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”—a figure already used in xix, 7, and for the full meaning of which cp. I Pet., iii, 3, 4. Then “a great voice” is heard—not the voice of God, who does not speak till verse 5, but of one of the Angels of the Sacred Presence, as in xvi, 17 and xix, 5. “Behold the Tabernacle of God with men, and He shall dwell with them”, it says. The music and power of the name “Emmanuel” runs through these great words: “God with us”! The word “tabernacle”, here used, should be carefully noted, for though we are speaking of “the *lasting* City of God”, yet it is here spoken of as a “tent”—a singularly flimsy and temporary abode. How

is this? Let us remember that it was in a "tent" that God's sacred Presence was *first* vouchsafed to His chosen people: "I will set my tent in the midst of you, and my soul shall not cast you off", (Lev., xxvi, 11), (cp. Ezech., xxxvii, 24-28), and *never* did this figure suggest to the devout Jewish mind the least idea of God's union with them and dwelling amongst them as being merely temporary. No; "I will be their God, and they shall be My people" was the idea deeply fixed in their minds and hearts by the figure of the "tabernacle", or "tent", in their midst, and such a word from God does not pass away, or return to Him idle. From the beginning, every eye was set on "the true tabernacle, which the Lord would pitch, and not man." (Heb., viii, 2). And let us never forget that when "in the fullness of time, Our Lord came, a High Priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation", (Heb., ix, 11) the fact is announced to us in the words: "and the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled (dwelt) amongst us", (Jn., i, 14)—the old figure being thus retained; it has played its part well from the beginning; it shall abide to the end. "God Himself with them", with all that savours of sorrow and the parting of friends "passed away"—such is the reward of faithful souls! "We are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know, that, when He shall appear, we shall

be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is" (I Jn., iii, 2); (cp. Is., xxv, 8; li, 11; Jer., xxiv, 7; Ezech., xi, 20; Zach., viii, 8). "The old things are passed away; behold *all* things are made new". (II Cor., v, 17).

Verses 6, 7 and 8, form a great conclusion to this section of the chapter, and abound with phrases already familiar from earlier chapters of this Book. "It is done", cp. xvi, 17; "alpha and omega", cp. i, 8; (also cp. Is., xliv, 6; xlviii, 12; Rom., xi, 36); "give freely", cp. vii, 16, 17; (also cp. Is., lv, 1-3; Jn., iv, 14; vii, 38; Mt., x, 8); "he that shall overcome", cp. ii, 7 etc. Every word speaks of the lavish generosity of God's mercies, and all culminates in the phrase: "I will be his God, and he shall be My son", (Cp. Rom., viii, 17; Gal., vi, 7), in the idea of "possession" or rather "inheritance", as the reward of "conquest". For the list of transgressors named in verse 8, we may compare ix, 21; none of these "hath inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God". (Ephes., v, 5).

With verse 9, a fresh section begins, full of the same note of majesty. "And there came one of the seven Angels", the same that revealed to St. John "the condemnation of the great harlot", (xvii, 1), and he is now "to show the bride, the wife of the Lamb", referring back to xix, 7, and resuming the thread of the story then dropped. "The great and high mountain" is not Mount Sion (xiv, 1), but merely a powerful

symbol to denote aloofness from evil, the cleanness of heart necessary for those who would view the "holy City Jerusalem" aright. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." The holy City "has the glory of God", (cp. Is., lx, 1) even as "we all, its citizens, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, shall be transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." (II Cor., iii, 18) (cp. Exod., xl, 32). "God is light", (Jn., i, 4, 8, 9; viii, 12; xii, 46), and by this figure, aided by the brilliance of precious stones, an attempt is now made to describe the loveliness of the holy City, and the source of its beauty. The word translated "light" in verse 11, is an expressive word that denotes "something in which light is concentrated, and thence radiates". Thus the Saints are "lights" in this sense, (cp. Dan., xii, 3; Phil., ii, 16), for "they shine as the brightness of the firmament, and instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity"; but they receive their light from "the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world" (Jn., i, 8).

In verse 12 we pass from the beauty of the City to its vast dimensions. It has "a wall great and high", (cp. Is., xxvi, 1), the exact height of which is stated in verse 17; it has "twelve gates", like the city described in Ezech., xlvi, 31-35; it has "twelve foundations" and "names are written thereon". The

twelve tribes of Israel are here closely coupled with the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, for the Church of the New Law is built on that of the Old. (Cp. Mt., xix, 28; Ephes., ii, 20; also Is., xxviii, 16; I Pet., ii, 6). The gates are to the East, and to the North, and to the South, and to the West, for the Church of God is universal, the Gentiles are its inheritance, the utmost parts of the earth are its possession, and to the whole world the Gospel of the Kingdom is to be preached. "God wills *all* men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth". (Cp. Is., xxxiii, 20, 21; Lk., xiii, 29). And this idea of the universality of God's Kingdom, leads naturally to the measurement of its vast dimensions. We should expect them to be very large, for it contains "many mansions", and here again we should refer to Ezechiel (xl, 3-49), and let us note that while in xi, 1, St. John himself measures "the temple of God and the altar", here the skill of an Angel is needed for the task, while the instrument of measurement is not a reed, plucked from the Jordan's bank, but a rod of gold. And first, "the City lieth in a four-square", *i.e.*, it is a perfect cube, its length, breadth, and height all being equal, as was the new City and Temple of Ezechiel (xli, 21; xliii, 16), as was the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Solomon (3 Kings, vi, 20). This perfect cube is a symbol of permanence and perfection. (Cp. Ephes., iii, 18). As to the actual measurement given,

“twelve thousand furlongs”—a furlong is 606 feet, so that the measurement reaches the sum of 1,500 English miles, making the City 344 miles square. “Such dimensions, of course, defy imagination, and are permissible only in the language of symbolism”. St. John, in fact, gives the New Jerusalem a superficial area of 2,250,000 square miles, greater than that of all Europe! The number Twelve again predominates in the measurement of the wall in verse 17, (cp. vii, 4; xiv, 1). It is not clear, however, whether St. John means to give the *breadth* of the wall, or its *height*, but probably the latter, in which case we cannot but be struck by the great disproportion between its height, (216 feet) and that of the cube (7,000,000 feet). But may it not be that this very disproportion is intentional, for no enemy is to attack and invade the City; “all its children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be their peace;” (Is., liv, 11-14); “justice dwelleth there,” and “terror shall not come nigh.” So that the walls are not for defence, but merely for delimitation, and it matters not whether it be man or angel that takes these measurements, for “the measure of a man is the measure of an angel”, angels being fellow-servants of God with man. (xix, 10; xxii, 9).

And now by the splendour of precious stones of every kind, by pure gold and transparent glass, the glory of the City is portrayed to us in verses 18-22. Our Lord Himself used the

imagery of precious stones and pearls for what was dear to Him, (cp. Mt., xiii, 45, 46), and throughout the Old Testament the figure is one of frequent occurrence. (Cp. especially Is., liv, 11, 12; Tob., xiii, 21-23; Ezech., xxviii, 13), while in Tobias, (xiii, 21-23) we read these prophetic words: “The gates of Jerusalem shall be built of Sapphire, and of Emerald, and all the walls thereof round about of precious stones: all its streets shall be paved with white and clean stones, and Alleluia shall be sung in its streets. Blessed be the Lord, who hath exalted it, and may He reign over it for ever and ever. Amen.” The stones set in the breastplate of the High Priest of old were twelve in number, (Exod., xxviii, 17-21), and eight of these find mention here.

Finally, in verse 22, a great break is made by the words: “And I saw no temple therein”, freeing us at once from all that is material, and bringing us back to the consideration of heaven as the Bride, the wife of the Lamb. (Cp. II Cor., vi, 16-18). For the great imagery of verse 23, cp. Is., lx, 18-22; Apoc., xxii, 5; Ps., xxxv, 10; with verse 24, cp. Is., lx, 1-5; while verse 25 is a repetition of Is., lx, 11. Lastly, for verse 27, we may refer to Ezech., xlv, 9; Dan., xii, 1-3; Tob., ii, 18. “The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace.” (Ps., xxxvi, 11).

CHAPTER XXII

AND he showed me a river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb.

2 In the midst of the street thereof, and on both sides of the river, *was* the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no curse any more ; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him.

4 And they shall see his face : and his name shall be on their foreheads.

5 And night shall be no more : and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

6 And he said to me : These words are most faithful and true. And the Lord God of the spirits of the prophets sent his angel to shew his servants the things which must be done shortly.

7 And, Behold I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book.

8 And I, John, who have heard and seen these things. And after I had heard and seen, I fell down to adore before the feet of the angel, who shewed me these things.

9 And he said to me : See thou do it not : for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them that keep the words of the prophecy of this book. Adore God.

10 And he saith to me : Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book : for the time is at hand.

11 He that hurteth, let him hurt still : and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still : and he that is just, let him be justified still : and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still.

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12 Behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to his works.

13 I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

14 Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb : that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city.

15 Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and unchaste, and murderers, and servers of idols, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie.

16 I, Jesus have sent my angel, to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the root and stock of David, the bright and morning star.

17 And the spirit and the bride say : Come. And he that heareth, let him say : Come. And he that thirsteth, let him come : and he that will, let him take the water of life, freely.

18 For 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 unto him the plagues written in this book.

19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from these things that are written in this book.

20 He that giveth testimony of these things, saith, Surely I come quickly : Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

TH**E**R**E** is here no break in the sacred narrative ; the inspired artist continues to paint his picture, filling in the great outlines he has already drawn with exquisite details. We have noted the immense size of the Holy City, and the peace of all from whose eyes every tear is wiped away, and who for eternity will be

strangers to all mourning, and crying, and sorrow. Our feet have already trodden the great street of the City—and it has but one street—one ample thoroughfare of purest gold, as it were transparent glass, in which all may roam, united in the perfect charity which casteth out fear. And now, in the interior of the City, we are by the banks of “the river of water of life, clear as crystal, and on both sides of the river is the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, yielding its fruits every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” Indeed, “the stream of the river maketh glad the City of God, and the most High has sanctified His own tabernacle” (Ps., xlv, 5). It is a picture of perfect peace, of a garden where all is in order, where flowers and fruits of refreshment and healing abound. The Angel of xxi, 9, reveals these things to us, in a vision that is a combination of Ezechiel xlvi, 1-2, with Genesis ii, 9-15. Both passages should be carefully read, and be it noted how delightful it is in the close of the last Book of the Bible to find ourselves in the opening chapters of its very first Book! The phrase “the water of life” is one of great power and beauty, and occurs frequently throughout all Scripture, cp. Cant., iv, 15; Zach., xiv, 8; Jer., xvii, 13; Ezech., xlvi, 9; and above all in Jn., vii, 38, and iv, 10, 13, 14), while its feature of being “clear as crystal” suggests the mission of the Holy Ghost, ever to lead the Church of Christ

“into all truth”. (Cp. Jn., xiv, 17, 26). And “between the street of the City and the river, on this side and on that”, there is “the tree of life”, (cp. Gen., i, 11; ii, 9; iii, 22; Apoc., ii, 7), with its “twelve fruits”, one for each month of the year, as suggested in Ezech., xlvi, 12, (and cp. Gal., v, 22)—fruits ever in season, and never cloying, fruits that shall refresh *all* men, both Jew and Gentile, for “all are one in Christ Jesus, heirs according to the promise”. (Gal., iii, 28, 29).

“And there shall be no curse any more”; “people shall *dwell* in the City, and there shall be no more anathema, but Jerusalem shall sit secure.” (Zach., xiv, 11)—such a complete reversal of Gen., iii, 19,—and the Beatific Vision shall be their reward! (Cp. Apoc., vii, 9, 15; also Job, xix, 26; Ps., xvi, 15; Mt., v, 8; I Jn., iii, 2; I Cor., xiii, 12). “His name, too, shall be on their foreheads”, (cp. iii, 12), “and night shall be no more.” (Verse 5 is a repetition of xxi, 23, 25, with which cp. Is., lx, 19). “And they shall reign for ever and ever”, for “*servire Deo regnare est*”; so shall “the saints of the most high God take the Kingdom, and possess it for ever and ever.” (Dan., vii, 18)—(Cp. Jer., xxxi, 13). “With God is the Fountain of Life, and in His Light we shall see Light, (Ps., xxxv, 10); we shall be filled with joy with His Countenance; (Ps., xv, 11); and great shall be the Peace of His Children.” (Is., liv, 13).

The visions of the Apocalypse are now ended,

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and the remaining verses form an epilogue to all that has gone before, a recapitulation of the teaching of this Book. They are written in a disjointed style, so that it is not always easy to distinguish the speakers, or to trace the connexion of the thought. Indeed, as Fr. Allo remarks, any commentary on these closing verses is almost an irritation, obscuring the beauty of a finish so fair. "These words are *most* faithful and true,"—so it begins. Go back to the commencement, and recall the points insisted upon in this history, for a history it is. The Epistles to the Seven Churches showed the Church of Christ at work in the world of men, speaking of what the Good Shepherd had done on our behalf, and of what He expected in return. The evil of sin, the danger of tepidity and scandals, the necessity of self-denial, the need of vigilance, the beauty of patience, the spirit of endurance, the severity of life's battle, the reward of fidelity to the end—all these and more were then insisted upon, and their places shown in the warfare we have all to wage. The claims of our Lord on the love and obedience of men were shown forth for all to see, with the earnest appeal, repeated again and again: "be zealous and do penance: he that hath an ear, let him hear: to him that *overcometh* I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of my God." Then, in chapter iv, our eyes were lifted to see a door opened in heaven, and "the things which must be done hereafter" were

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portrayed to view. There was a Book, sealed with seven seals, and the Book spoke of full and accurate records of the lives of men, by which, in God's great Day, they shall stand or fall. And He who alone is worthy "to take this Book and open the seals thereof" is our Lord, "because He was slain, and thus redeemed us to God in His Blood"—a great price, freely paid, but not to be paid in vain, for God is not mocked. The great day of wrath is to come, in which only those are able to stand who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Victory shall assuredly attend the cause of our Lord: He knows nothing of defeat or failure: He goes forth conquering, and to conquer. In the fulness of time, a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. The great red dragon already had drawn the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth; and now the war between the Man-Child of the woman and the dragon is declared. There is a great battle, and it shall continue to the consummation; but the victory shall be that of the Cross of Christ, aided by the patience and the faith of the Saints, who keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. The empires of the world shall rise and fall before the advance of the hosts of the Lord. Jerusalem and Babylon shall fall, and the Angels

shall sing : " Thou art just, O Lord, who art, and who wast, the Holy one, because Thou hast judged these things." So is the history of the world described in its great scenes, and we come to the end of all. The City of God is on the horizon, and we see the heavens opened. And " behold a white horse, and He that sat upon him was called faithful and true, and with justice doth He judge and fight. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many diadems, and He had a Name written, which no man knoweth but Himself : He was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood, and His Name is called the Word of God : and He hath on His garment and on His thigh written : King of kings, and Lord of lords." And His invitation goes forth : " Come, gather yourselves together to the great supper of God."—Such is the conclusion of the story of this great Book, summarised in its last sixteen verses. It has been told for us in great part in language from the writings of the Prophets, for they too saw in vision " the things that must be done hereafter." A short description of the City of God now closes the volume, and to it there is added the solemn and unique warning of verses 18 and 19 of this chapter, with which we may compare the words of our Lord, that " it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail." (Lk., xvi, 17 ; cp. Mt., v, 18).

" And he said to me "—so does the epilogue begin. The speaker is no doubt the Angel of

xxi, 9, 15, and xxii, 1. In the phrase " the Lord God of the spirits of the Prophets " (for which cp. I Cor., xiv, 12, 32) we have a good example of how closely St. John ever associates himself and his message with the utterances of the Prophets " who are from the beginning." (Lk., i, 70) And at once we read the words : " Behold I come quickly," repeated in verses 12 and 20 (cp. xvi, 15), which give the tone of the whole passage, and lead to a felicitation from our Lord, who, as Fr. Allo maintains, is now the speaker, already heard in 1, 3, so that the Book begins and ends with the same words of warmest praise.

St. John, writing as ever with beautiful assurance, (Cp. I, 1, 4, 9), now forgets, in his rapture at what he has seen and heard, the warning already received in xix, 10, and once more prostrates himself before the Angel, (cp. Dan., ii, 46 ; 3 Kings, xviii, 7 ; Acts, x, 25, 26) who again rebukes him, with the sharp admonition : " Adore God." (Cp. Deut., x, 20 ; Lk., iv, 8). And at once our Lord (as Fr. Allo holds) takes up the address, in urgent words that show " the time to be at hand ", and the end of all things near. " In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ", the Judge and Master will arise, and the door shall be closed, and those outside shall stand, and knock in vain. (Mt., xxv, 10 ; Lk., xiii, 25). Such is the force of the terrible irony in verse 11, reminding us of our Lord's words to the Eleven at the close of His Agony in the

Garden, when Judas drew nigh: "Sleep ye now and take your rest." (Mk., xiv, 41, 42). Indeed the evening has come, and in verse 12 the Master of the vineyard pays the labourers their hire, after they have borne the burden of the day and the heats. (Mt., xx, 8). The reward is "according to their works",—the principle that is maintained throughout all Scripture; (Cp. Job, xxxiv, 11; Is., lxii, 11; Rom., ii, 5; Apoc., ii, 23). Moreover, "the reward is *with* Him", (cp. Is., lxii, 11), "who knows His sheep, and calleth them by name," (Jn., x, 14), and thus gives "to every man" what is his due, so that "star differeth from star in glory." He is "the alpha and omega", (great words applied to our Lord only here), "the author and finisher of our faith," (Heb., xii, 2), "the beginning and the end" of all human history, while His friends are they "that wash their robes in the Blood of the Lamb." "Without are dogs and sorcerers", (cp. Ps., lviii, 7; Deut., xxiii, 18; Prov., xxvi, 11; Mk., vii, 27), "and everyone that loveth and maketh a lie", (cp. Jer., viii, 10; I Jn., i, 6). Finally, and most beautifully, does our Lord in verse 16 reveal Himself as the speaker, and describes Himself by new phrases, "as the root and stock of David," (cp. v, 5), "the beginning, as the end, of the whole economy associated with the Davidic family", "the bright and morning star", "the Orient from on high", (Lk., i, 78), "the day-star to arise in every

heart", (2 Pet., i, 19), the Star of Dawn, whose coming precedes the sunrise of the Day of God. (Cp. Zach., iii, 8; vi, 12). "Come, Come, Come—come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will refresh you: take the water of life freely,"—such is the earnest summons, full of joy and truth—to which may all make reply: "Come, Lord Jesus."

Thus do "we know that, if the earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, we have a building of God, a House not made with hands, Eternal in Heaven." (I Cor., v, 1). There "thou shalt have no more the sun for thy light by day, neither shall the brightness of the moon enlighten thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee for an Everlasting Light, and thy God for thy glory. Thy sun shall go down no more, and thy moon shall not decrease, for the Lord shall be unto thee for an Everlasting Light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people shall be all just, they shall inherit the Land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hand to glorify Me. The least shall become a thousand, and a little one a most strong nation. I the Lord will suddenly do this thing in its time" (Is., lx, 19-22). So shall we come to Mount Sion, and to the City of the Living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to the Company of many thousands of Angels, and to the Church of the Firstborn who are written in the Heavens, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the Spirits of the Just made perfect,

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and to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of Blood which speaketh better than that of Abel." (Heb., xii, 22-24). So shall be fulfilled the desire of the Sacred Heart on our behalf ; " I go to prepare a Place for you : I will come again, and will take you to Myself, that where I am, you also may be." " Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me, that they may see My Glory which Thou hast given Me, because Thou hast loved Me before the foundation of the world." (Jn., xiv, 2 ; xvii, 24).

