

THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

SUGGESTIONS TOWARDS
THE INTERPRETATION
OF REVELATION XIII

BY

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THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY.

Suggestions towards the Interpretation of

REVELATION XIII.

IT may have been possible, in the days before war began to devastate the earth again, to approach the Apocalypse in a merely curious spirit, or as advocates of some theory of interpretation eager to make debating points and to put to confusion those of different judgement. May we not hope that these sterner times have, by the grace of God, induced in us a new and worthier spirit? Daniel, in his approach to the prophecies of Jeremiah, is the type to which we should endeavour to conform ourselves, if, like him, we would "seek and search diligently . . . what time or what manner of time" the Spirit Who spoke by the Prophets intended in His forecast of the development of human history and the progress of the pur-

4 **The Mystery of Iniquity.**

poses of God. Daniel prayed, he fasted, he confessed as his own the sins of others, he justified God in His judgements, judgements under which he himself was suffering. And it was when the spirit of his mind was thus subdued in the consciousness of the presence of God that "the man Gabriel" instructed him and made him "skilful of understanding."

Nor did his enlightenment impair his humility. He continued in the same spirit until the Vision of the Lord was vouchsafed to him, and with it this assurance, "O Daniel, thou man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee . . . from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard" (chap. 9. 22; 10. 13, 14). So also with the Apostle John. He was in the Spirit, that is, in immediate touch with the Lord, Who draws near only to the humble and the contrite, when this insight into the development of the rebellion of Satan was vouchsafed to him. How, then, shall we understand the words of these men unless we share their spirit? Still is it true, and it has always been easy to forget that it is true, that "the meek will He guide in judgement: and the meek will He teach His way" (Psa. 25. 9).

We may remind ourselves also of some of the dangers that beset the student of the pro-

phetic word. Chief among these is polemic, product of a spirit altogether alien to that of Daniel and of John, which subordinates truth to the supposed interests of a theory of interpretation, and which assumes, and even asserts, that "every intelligent man," or "every honest man," must accept some particular contention. We should, in the fear of God, resolutely put away from us moral and intellectual pride, remembering that only the humble learn.

With what I may call school prejudice, we should also be on guard against racial and national bias. It is not easy, we may confess, to rid the mind of the insidious influences of national history, and of the national outlook upon world politics. Then there is class influence, the effect of which is plainly marked on much that has been put forth by way of interpretation of prophecy. We could not but profit, for example, by the results of the studies of an intelligent working man of our own nation, or of any other. The reading of a Greek Church Christian, resident, say, in one of the Balkan States, might do something to provide a balance to our own, and to enlarge our horizon. Such a one might, perhaps, find a larger place for Mohammedanism and a smaller for Romanism than would some students in this country. However that may be, the least we may say in this connection is that the British Empire is not

6 **The Mystery of Iniquity.**

the centre of God's dealing with men, and that our understanding of the prophetic word will gain in value in proportion as we resist the tendency to view it from a national or social standpoint.

The Purpose of Prophecy.

It may not be superfluous to remind ourselves, too, that the prophetic word is not given to enable us to forecast the future, or to foretell events, or to anticipate the means whereby God will bring about what He has foretold. The purpose of all prophecy is practical. Knowledge of the character of the final conflict between the two seeds, the consummation of the two antagonistic mysteries, illuminates our own warfare and enables us to estimate the forces that are at work around us, and to discern the principles that are to be fully developed before the end. The mystery of iniquity that is to come to full fruition in the Beasts is at work now, as it has been at work through all time. And the mystery of godliness is the mystery of the long-suffering of God. Moreover, the Christian student finds in prophecy light upon the mystery of the iniquity of his own heart, for the like conflict that he observes without goes on within, and learns how to behave himself in the present confusion; learns, too, where to look for present victory over the world, the flesh and the Devil. Whoever

reads this prophecy without discerning the beast in his own heart reads it in vain. Those who are exposed to the fierceness of the conflict in its final and its acutest stage secure their victory "because of the Blood of the Lamb (*i.e.*, the death of Christ), and because of the word of their testimony" (*i.e.*, His resurrection, see Acts 4. 33). To us also victory comes in no other way.

Again, the Lord Himself defines the use of prophecy in the words He spoke to the disciples in prospect of His Death and Resurrection: "I have told you beforehand, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe," and "these things have I spoken unto you, that when their hour is come, ye may remember them, how that I told you" (John 14. 29; 16. 4). A further principle is thus suggested, namely, that when the event takes place it is not possible to mistake the relationship between it and the relevant prophecy. This principle is illustrated by every fulfilment recorded in the Scriptures. It would be superfluous, on the present occasion, to adduce instances. It seems a sound deduction, then, that every post-Biblical fulfilment will, as evidently, correspond with the prophecy. On the other hand, the appeal to history cannot be disallowed, for if the prophetic word has been fulfilled, in whole or in part, then history is the sole witness, and is a competent witness. But the Biblical test

8 **The Mystery of Iniquity.**

must be rigorously applied, and only where the correspondence is so plain, so evident, as to be altogether beyond dispute, can the claim for any event to be accounted the fulfilment of a prophecy be accepted.

The Point of View

of this paper is that the purpose of the Apocalypse is to describe the final scenes in the history of the age; these prophecies reveal how the interests of the Lord are hindered and advanced. These final scenes, however, are not unrelated to those that precede them. They are links in a chain, the consequences of a train of events stretching back to Eden, and, indeed, to ages earlier still. These events produce each other, grow out of each other; there is in them a process of evolution; the relation between them is not accidental, it is vital; each is in turn root and fruit. History is the record of the inevitable. History repeats itself; which is to say that the same forces are ever at work upon the same material and must necessarily produce results similar in character, however modified by circumstances. Moreover, the warfare between the two seeds, between light and darkness, between good and evil, between God and Satan, does not merely work up to ultimate and definite defeat and victory. There are also the immediate fluctuations of reaction and deflection, with consequent

confusion of the issues. And when at last the final conflict is staged it is not a new struggle, but the development of the age-long conflict, which is the shadow of that epochal event "toward which the whole creation moves." In the partial struggles of the ages the issues have usually been more or less obscured, for all the good and all the evil have rarely, if ever, been arrayed in opposite camps. Therefore the final conflict is described that the principles underlying it may be recognised in the warfare we ourselves are to accomplish. Hence it is that in the history of men in past ages, as it is partially known to us, the lineaments of the chief actors in the vision recorded here are discernible, playing their parts in acts and scenes anticipatory of the ultimate drama. These persons, acts, and scenes become themselves prophetic; but it would be a mistake to confine fulfilment of the prophetic word to any one of them. These are the necessary preparation for that; the preliminaries of the inevitable tragedy which must at last be enacted on the world's stage before it is cleared for the eternal Kingdom of God and Christ.

The Apocalypse.

The Apocalypse is largely a book of symbols; in it the mind of God is conveyed to His servants, for the most part in signs, as

its opening words declare. That is to say, there is not an actual lamb to be seen in the midst of the Throne of Heaven, but who it is that sits thereon is readily recognised under that symbol. Nor shall literal beasts be seen upon the earth; these also are symbols. The advantage of the use of symbols is that not merely the person is presented to be identified by his name or by some accidental circumstance; the symbol reveals his character, what manner of person he is.

The Book may be roughly analysed as follows:—

Chapter 1—Personal.

- „ 2 and 3—Prologue: Practical.
- „ 4—Concerning God and the Throne of God.
- „ 5—A Synopsis of the Issue of the Exaltation of Christ: Blessing.
- „ 6—A Synopsis of the Issue of the Exaltation of Christ: Judgment.
- „ 7-11—The Wrath of God and of the Lamb: Panoramic, Consecutive.
- „ 12-19—Enlargements of Certain Scenes from that Panorama: Episodic.
- „ 20-22. 7—Consummatory.
- „ 22. 8-16—Epilogue: Practical.
- „ 22. 17-21—Personal.

Concerning Chapter XII.

At the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet, at the end of chapter 11, the triumph of the Anointed of God, the Seed of the Woman, is attained in the establishment of His universal and eternal Kingdom. Chapter 12 (*i.e.*, from chap. 11. 19) returns upon the story to give a more detailed view of certain episodes on the way to this terminus, and in particular to explain the reference to the Beast in chapter 11. 7. John saw a sign in Heaven. Probably the sidereal heavens are intended; there the symbol was portrayed, though what was symbolised transpires, for the most part, upon the earth. Israel appears under the figure of a woman gloriously arrayed. The imagery is too close to that of Joseph's second dream to be accidental (Gen. 37. 9-12). With this picture may be compared the description of the Ancient People as seen by Balaam, and with the language of the Apostle Paul concerning them, "Whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers'" (Num. 23. 24; Rom. 9. 4, 5). Of the woman, after sore travail,* is born the Man-child, Whose destiny it is to

*Israel is unconscious of the purpose of her affliction. Compare the travail of the whole creation in Romans 8. 19-22. The figure is found in Isaiah 26. 17, etc.

"shepherd the nations with a rod of iron;" explained in the prose of Paul, "of whom is (the) Christ as concerning the flesh." The Dragon, identified with "the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan" (chap. 12. 9), attempts to destroy the Man-child, not directly, but, and this is characteristic of his ways, through men who are thus themselves prophetic of the Beast with whom he is so closely associated in chapter 13. Of these men Judas, Herod, and Pilate are prominent examples. God intervened and exalted His Son to His own Throne. The thirty years of the Lord's silence, the three years of His public ministry, and even His Death, are passed without notice. His Birth and His Ascension are put into juxtaposition, after the analogy of such passages as Isaiah 9. 6; 61. 1, 2, where also the time factor is ignored, and events separated by long intervals are immediately connected. Thereupon there is war in Heaven. As the Incarnation provoked diabolic and demonic activity upon earth, so the Ascension provoked it in Heaven. The war results in the expulsion of Satan from heavenly places, whence he falls to the earth to bring new woes to men and to pursue Israel in exile with his unrelenting malice.

Concerning Chapter XIII.

Chapter 13 depicts the development of world-power during the absence of Christ,

and its culmination in the triple caricature. Where he is first mentioned (chap. 11. 7) the Beast is said to have his origin in the Abyss, the place proper to Apollyon, the Destroyer, in whom we may recognise, if not Satan himself, then one of his assessors. Here he is seen to come up out of the sea, further defined by Daniel as the sea lashed by the four winds of Heaven (chap. 8. 2). This is a symbol, used elsewhere in Scripture, of the peoples of the world in times of social and political upheaval (Psa. 65. 7; Isa. 7. 12, 13, etc.). Nimrod, who found the opportunity to make the first attempt to establish a world-empire in the conditions consequent upon the confusion of tongues at Babel, and Napoleon, who found his in the French Revolution, with all those who, in the centuries between them, cherished the same ambition, are more than mere predecessors, they are prophetic figures, of the Beast. He, in his turn, will find his opportunity in conditions produced by some widespread social and political upheaval, such as that which is apparent in the contemporary world. Leaderless masses are always ready to acknowledge supreme ability without question of moral character or purpose.

That the predecessors of the Beast have attained to transient eminence by means of force creates a presumption that the Beast himself will owe his position to his armies.

Is it not at least possible, however, that he will owe it rather to force of character than to force of arms, to his genius for leadership and government, to his powers of persuasion, to the attractiveness of his personality, appealing to a war-weary world? The present struggle has discredited war as a means to world-empire. It is significant that the power stronger in arms than any the world has ever known before is in our day seeking victory not on the field of battle, but by means of that wider diplomacy that takes the form of seditious propaganda among its enemies. Let Russia and Italy testify to the possibilities of its success. May it not be that, after all, we are witnessing the last great war? Har-Magedon is not forgotten, but Har-Magedon is a battle, not a war; a strictly localised conflict, from which, apparently, the elements that go to make a great war are absent. Then, too, the order of the Lord's words may be significant, for where "rumours of wars and wars" might have been expected, He spoke of "wars and rumours of wars."

Two other points: the supremacy of the First Beast is maintained, if it is not secured, by the Second Beast. But there is no suggestion that at any time he makes use of force to compass this end. Then the Ten Kings agree to surrender their power and authority to the Beast, and to accept it again from him,

willingly acknowledging his suzerainty. "For God did put in their hearts to do His mind, and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the Beast, until the words of God should be accomplished" (vv. 12, 13, 17). Aspirants after world-power have hitherto proclaimed themselves war-lords, and have appealed to the cupidity of the people on whom they depend for success in the enterprise, promising them victory and loot, or indemnity, the modern extension of loot, in compensation for their share of the danger and the toil. But peace may, probably will, be the dominant ideal in the future. The next bid for world-power may be made in the promise of world-peace. Must it not be expected that Antichrist, to play his part with verisimilitude, will pose as prince of peace? But if so his peace will be secured by the threat of war; for such a peace is the limit of the dreams of men.

The Holy Trinity.

If in the Dragon and the two Beasts there is to be discerned a travesty of the Holy Trinity, it may be well just here to notice very briefly how the relations subsisting between the Three Divine Persons are presented in the New Testament, in order to show how intimately they are associated one with the other. So close is their co-operation, indeed, that distinct personality has even been

denied to them on the basis of the New Testament assertion of their unity. Thus the Lord Jesus declared that He and the Father are one; that the Father was in Him and He in the Father; that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father also; that He spoke not from Himself but as He heard from the Father; that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. He said that the Father abiding in Him did His (the Father's) works; that His miracles were wrought in the power of the Holy Spirit, and that in the same Spirit He taught His disciples and gave them His commandments. And when the Spirit came in Pentecostal power He was not to speak from Himself; He was to take the things that pertain to the Son and to show them to men.

The Spurious Trinity.

There is the same intimacy of association between the three members of the spurious trinity. The Dragon is red; the Beast is scarlet. The Dragon is horned and crowned; so is the Beast. In each case the crowns are diadems. The Dragon is worshipped; so is the Beast. The Dragon persecutes the saints; so does the Beast. The Second Beast has the Dragon's voice. He works his miracles only in the presence of the First Beast, and the intention is to magnify him. He claims nothing for himself, everything for the First

Beast. As Irenaeus discerned, the First Beast is Antichrist, the Man of Sin; the second is his "armour bearer." But he is much more than his armour bearer. This very intimacy of association between them has suggested to some that Paul may intend two separate persons in 2 Thessalonians 2; the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, of verse 3, and the Lawless One of verse 8. In view of the considerations just now advanced this seems an over refinement, and unnecessary to the interpretation of the Apostle's words. The Son, in the Holy Trinity, is the manifestation of the Godhead; to Him the Father testifies and the Spirit. In the travesty the First Beast answers to Christ. The Dragon who furnishes him with power remains invisible. The Second Beast has no interests apart from those of the First. The Dragon, whose offer of the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them was summarily dismissed by the Lord Jesus, the true Christ, offers them again to the false Christ, who accepts the offer. For a brief space he wears the ten diadems of world-power in emulation of Him to Whom alone universal dominion rightfully pertains. The stated objects of worship are three: there is the image of the Beast, the Beast himself, and the Dragon, who expresses himself in the Beast. Plainly these are not really three but one. The Triad counterfeits the Trinity.

The Mark of the Beast.

Another evidence of the aim of the Beast to deceive men by his imitation of the true Messiah is seen in the mark which all who acknowledge him receive in the right hand or in the forehead, which mark is either "the name of the Beast, or the number of his name." But all the servants of God are marked with the Name of Christ (chap. 3. 12; 22. 4). The resemblance is the closer in that the mark is imposed by the Second Beast. for, if Ephesians 1. 13 may be taken as a guide, the seal of Christ upon the believer is the work of the Holy Spirit. Be it remembered that for this travesty the present economy of grace provides the model throughout.

The mark of the Beast is to be a name with a significant *gematria*, or number value. What is that name? A wide variety of possible answers has been provided, and there is no reason to suppose that the possibilities have been exhausted. *Lateinos* is supposed to meet the case; and Nero Caesar; and there are others, equally relevant. Here, once more, the simple canon already adduced is our safe guide. When the Beast appears upon the scene his name and its number, like himself, will be unmistakable to those who fear God. Those who in the past may have borne names with numbers presenting the prescribed feature were themselves pro-

phetic shadows of the Beast, products of the mystery of iniquity that has always been at work; finger-posts along the way the Man of Destiny must travel.

The number 666 is a triplication of the digit that falls short of natural perfection. The Beast, in each element of his being, body, soul, and spirit, will be the flawless flower of humanity, such a flower as the tree has never yet borne; the sum of the potentialities of the fallen race. His government will correspond with his character; in it qualifications for rule will find their highest expression. Every element of value in all the many forms under which men have attempted to govern themselves will have place in this eclectic scheme. The acme of possible perfection is to be reached in every sphere, religious, political, and economic.

The Image of the Beast.

The Second Beast causes an image of the First Beast to be made that all men may worship it. Is this a travesty of a travesty? If the trinity of evil is to impress men and to secure their allegiance, not only must the real Christianity be imitated; it will prove of even greater effect to reproduce the corrupt Christianity with which the mass of nominally Christian people are familiar. The vast majority of these look to the Host as the central symbol of religion. This is not said

to be an image indeed, but to be the very Lord Himself, and hence the true object of worship. Will the wafer-god suggest the image of the Beast? The Pagan tradition is strong in the Empire of Antichrist. In the days when Paganism flourished the image of the Emperor was worshipped. Is this custom to be revived with the same object, namely, to provide a test of the loyalty of the subject? So it was with the Emperor's image; so it has been with the wafer-god, and in many places so it is now.

The First Beast: Political.

We come now to consider the First Beast separately. He is both a king and a kingdom, in accord with the usage of Daniel, see chapter 7, verses 7 and 17, where the terms are used interchangeably. A kingdom may outlast a long line of kings. It may begin and end in the reign of one. Thus Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom lasted for little more than his own lifetime. The Fourth Empire, whole and broken, has lasted for many centuries. The Beast seems to symbolise the final form that Gentile dominion is to assume, and apparently this is to be limited to the reign of one monarch. In the estimation of men an absolute autocracy is a head of gold. In the estimation of God it is a wild beast. The years 1914-17 have justified the judgement of God. And this is equally true of each of

the forms of Gentile Government. The head of gold is personal rule unrestricted; the silver bust is personal power limited by law; the trunk of brass is power centred in a person indeed but shared with others; the legs of iron, least attractive, but strongest of all, is power in the hands of the people.*

The image exists as a whole when the stone strikes it on the feet and all its component parts are broken together. The complexity of Gentile rule is due to the persistence in some form or another of each of its elements. It is Gentile rule in every form that is to be destroyed finally when the Lord appears to establish His Kingdom on the earth.

The Beast of John's vision is analogous to the complete image of Daniel. It is not

*If, as is ordinarily supposed, the Roman Empire answers to the legs of the image, then the iron must be the symbol of democracy, for Rome was an organised democracy when she became mistress of the world. Certainly its form of government was not monarchical until about 40 B.C., and then the imperial power was not hereditary. But Rome had replaced Greece as the world-power at a much earlier period. What, then, does the clay symbolise? Plainly not organised democracy, a tradition without discoverable basis in history. The answer to this question will turn on the answer to these: Who are the "they" of Daniel 2. 43? And who are the "seed of men" of the same verse? Some patient investigation seems called for here. The hereditary principle in autocracy seems to have maintained a footing only among the Teutonic races, at least among Western States, and that only after the decay of Rome. Some have suggested that the clay is the disorganised democracy which is coming to be known as Bolshevism. However, the two questions mentioned call for answer.

named after any of the beasts of the earth. It is composite. It includes the characteristics of its predecessors with a contribution of its own. It seems misleading to speak of a revived Roman Empire. It will contribute to lucidity if we speak rather of Gentile dominion than of any one form that dominion has assumed. "(The) times of (the) Gentiles" is the term used by the Lord. Gentile dominion has not been in abeyance; it continues though not in any one form. Apparently all its forms are to be found somewhere on the earth. The phrase, "The Roman Empire," has been understood to suggest territorial limitations, though as a matter of fact the identity of an Empire is not at all dependent upon its boundaries. The penultimate dominion is a federation aiming to be coterminous with the race, to include all states, from America to Japan.

Democracy and Hereditary Autocracy.

The fourth Empire, Rome, flourished as a democracy, but lost its character when degeneracy set in and autocracy replaced the autonomy of the people. The Latins attempted to imitate the head of gold, as Israel anticipated it when they desired a king under whom they could enter into competition with the nations around them for the hegemony of the race. Now, in 1917, in the face of the attempt of an hereditary autocrat

to establish universal dominion, the peoples are reverting to those democratic forms of government, with which mankind set out, but which had been lost for centuries. Democracy, however, is no more stable now than at any other period in the history of the race, and, as always before, its peculiar weakness furnishes the opportunity for the strong personality who dreams again the old dream and endeavours to realise it by grasping at the sceptre of world-power. In Nimrod the line began; in the Beast it will end. He is the head of the image; but, with the wisdom of Satan and the gathered experience of the ages at the disposal of his unexampled genius, in his government he gathers up and includes every element of efficiency in all the forms of government with which men have experimented during the centuries of their sorrowful search for security. Under the rule of the Beast it may well seem to them that this ideal has been realised at last, for, since they refuse the rightful Lord, God sends "a working of error that they should believe the lie" (2 Thess. 2. 11).

The qualifications of the Beast for universal lordship are figuratively expressed. He has seven heads; he has been invested by the Prince of this World with plenary authority. To him the words of Satan to the Lord Jesus have been fulfilled, "All these things," the kingdoms of the world and the glory of

them, "will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." These are the terms upon which Satan delegates the lordship of the earth. The Beast himself is a worshipper of the Dragon and the leader of the people in their apostasy from God.

The Beast has ten horns. There is power at his disposal adequate to establish his dominion and to maintain his authority; for the horns are kings, *i.e.*, heads of organised states, with the usual resources of kingship at their command. This also is by gift of the Dragon, in close imitation of God and Christ, "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psa. 2. 8). His supremacy is symbolised by the diadems wherewith his horns are crowned; he usurps the insignia of that royalty which belongs alone to the Son of God. As is the true, so will the false make pretence to be.

The First Beast: Religious.

One instigated and sustained by the Devil will not be content to claim the glories of this world only. On his heads are names of blasphemy; titles, that is, expressing qualities and powers for which God alone is adequate and competent. He makes specific claim to Deity, and pours out reviling upon God and upon the people of God among whom He dwells in Heaven (v. 6). Is

this tabernacle of God the already raptured Church? Contemporaneously the Beast makes war upon the saints on earth and overcomes them. Are these the Jews with whom he is to make a covenant? And is this war the result of its breach?

The third verse speaks of a mortal wound sustained by the Beast, from which, fatal though it seemed to be, he yet recovered. This is the Devil's travesty of the Resurrection of Christ. The effect of this recovery was so openly manifest, so unmistakable, that "the whole earth wondered after the Beast" (v. 3). And in later mentions of him this remarkable fact is repeated twice (v. 12; chap. 17. 8). It is noteworthy that whereas the death-stroke is said to have been suffered by one of the heads, in verse 12 the words are "the Beast whose death-stroke was healed," and in chapter 17. 8, 11, "the Beast that was and is not." Where in history is there such an evident fulfilment of this prophecy that not only may the instructed believer recognise the complete correspondence between the description and the event, but that the wound and the recovery therefrom were so obvious that contemporary men saw and were affected thereby? Something might, perhaps, be said for the overthrow of Pagan Rome by Constantine, and its immediate recovery, unchanged in essence, and retaining the Pagan things, its gods and forms of wor-

ship, under Christian names. But at most that event can only be an adumbration of something that will happen to the Beast, personally or politically, and that will put the fulfilment of the prophecy beyond question.

Freedom and Intolerance.

The danger of an exclusively futurist interpretation of the Apocalypse, and the same thing is true of the whole prophetic word, is that it may become a matter of mere curiosity and so be robbed of effect as a power intended to act upon life and to promote godliness. On the other hand the historicist impeaches Roman Catholicism and may be tempted to shelter himself behind his Protestantism. The prophetic word thus treated may become a matter of merely antiquarian interest. It is well to remind ourselves that Romanism has had no monopoly as a persecuting power. We may not forget what Rome has done, whether in its Pagan or Christian form (for there is but one Rome, and, strictly speaking, Rome is not Christian at all), but shall we not also remember what the Greek Church has done and what Protestantism has done? Is there a single religious community in the world that can afford to cast a stone? Think of what Anglicanism did in Scotland, and in England too. Think of Cromwellian and of Laudian days and ways, and of the retaliation provoked by them. Think of Calvin and

Servetus. Think, too, of the petty persecutions, the disabilities imposed, on account of religion, by every sect without exception; for intolerance is not the peculiar vice of any form of religion, it is native to the human heart. In no country is dissent from established custom easily condoned. The smallest community finds a way of penalising at least some of those who oppose its popular currents. The lesson that prophecy teaches us is that liberty of conscience is a precious heritage, obtainable only at great cost; and to be retained only as it is shared, and as it is valued, for others as much as for ourselves, above even life itself. Plainly liberty of conscience is inconsistent with the claims of the Beast. The thing that will be is the thing that is. Liberty of thought and act is abhorrent to dominant interests always.

The Second Beast.

All the material concerning the Second Beast is to be found in this chapter; he is not the subject of any other prophecy in either the Old Testament or the New, though he is mentioned again three times under the name of the False Prophet. The intimacy of the relation between the two Beasts has already been noted. If the first is the State personified in the secular arm, the second is the State personified in the religious arm. If that is the State, this is the State Church.

If the one is the Political State in its power, civil and military, the other is the Religious State in its priestcraft, cunning and deceitful. As it was in Pagan days, so is it in modern times. The Pagan cults were the mainstay of the Pagan State; but though they pretended to dominate the State they did not do so in fact. Always the State found in the cults its indispensable instruments. Men wise enough to control the affairs of a nation have been wise enough to perceive what a potent factor in the lives of men is the priest, who is supposed to wield authority, or at least to possess an effective influence, in the dreaded unseen world. And to accomplish the ends of government they have not been slow to use the instrument ready to their hands. As it was before the time of Constantine, so has it been since. Priestcraft is ever the enemy of freedom, the willing and efficient tool of the tyranny of the State.

Under the two Beasts Church and State will work harmoniously with a single end in view. The ideal itself, let it be noted, is according to the mind of God, and will yet be realised. For life is a unit; religion and politics will not be divorced in the perfect State, the City of God (chaps. 21 and 22).

Mohammed.

It is true that Mohammed claimed to be the Paraclete promised by the Lord Jesus; it is

true also that he arose in a settled time and that he began with a peaceful propaganda, only appealing to the sword at a later period. But there the resemblance between him and the Second Beast seems to cease.

If any significance is to be attached to the fact that the Second Beast arises out of the land, if this is taken to suggest an order of things more settled than that intended under the symbol of the sea, then it may be after the First Beast has secured the foundation of his State, his religious coadjutor will appear on the scene to consolidate his power and to preserve it.* But there is no ostentation of the Second Beast. He is the First Beast's "Hidden Hand!" He brings down fire from Heaven, thus associating himself with Moses and Aaron, with David, with Solomon, and with Elijah, and proclaims the Dragon to be the God that answers by fire (Lev. 9. 24; 1 Chron. 22. 26; 2 Chron. 7. 1; 1 Kings 18. 38). He is lamb-like in some respects; in others he resembles the Dragon. *Suaviter in modo* he is also *fortiter in re*. A very wolf in sheep's clothing, the last and greatest of the line of whom the Lord bade us to beware (Matt. 7. 15). And in these things he secures a certain resemblance to the Holy Spirit, Who, in His gentleness and

*But compare Daniel 7. 3, "up from the sea," with verse 17, "out of the earth." The passages refer to the same Beasts.

power, is symbolically represented under the figure of the dew and the oil, the storm and the fire.

Immediately before, and as a necessary preparation for, Har-Magedon, three unclean spirits come out of the mouths of the Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet. The association of the three in this way seems to identify the False Prophet with the Second Beast, and this identification is confirmed by chapter 19. 20. For the meaning of the frog-like spirits we must wait the fulfilment of the prophecy, according to the canon of interpretation already mentioned. Whatever they are, they hasten the consummation by inducing the kings to send, or to lead, each his contingent to the International Expeditionary Force that is to attack the saints and the City and to perish in the final battle.

Har-Magedon.

The Second Beast is involved in the disaster that overtakes the First. The universal Empire established and flourishing, there is yet a fly in the ointment. The Jews, already in their own land, at least in part, yet still in unbelief of their Messiah, prove recalcitrant. They will not consent to the international confederacy, of which they have already had a bitter experience in the breach of an earlier covenant. Jerusalem becomes the storm centre. The Beast and his

Counsellor apprehend danger to their world Empire from what may become a nucleus of opposition to threaten its existence. Jerusalem is a "cup of reeling unto all the peoples round about; . . . a burdensome stone for all the peoples" (Zech. 12. 2, 3). At this point, perhaps for the first time, the Beast has recourse to the military forces at his disposal. After long rattling of the sabre in the scabbard at last it is drawn. "Peace and safety" is their watchword; they are about to overthrow the sole remaining obstacle to the complete accomplishment of their plan, when "sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise escape" (1 Thess. 5. 3). Whence comes this sudden destruction? From Heaven, when the Seventh Angel sounds his trumpet, "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus . . . with the angels of His power, in flaming fire," when the Beast shall be slain "with the breath of His mouth and brought to nought by the manifestation of His Parousia" (2 Thess 1. 7; 2. 8). Then it is that the universal Empire is established; the kingdom of the world becomes "the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ: and He shall reign for ever and ever" (chap. 11. 15).

The form that destruction takes is further defined in chapter 19. 20: "They twain were cast alive into the Lake of Fire that burneth

with brimstone." And when the Dragon's time comes to be cast into the same place there he finds them after the lapse of full ten hundred years, "and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Men contemplate the future with different feelings, according as they view it from the standpoint of this world, or from the standpoint of Heaven. For the one it is darkened by the counsel of men, and the heart fails for fear of the things that may befall the earth. For the other it is illuminated by the Scriptures, and by the assurance that whoso puts his trust in God shall never be put to shame. Apart from the Scriptures there is apprehension; with them there is hope. Whatever afflictions may await us, we lift up our heads, "for now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed" (Rom. 13. 11).