

## The symbolical numbers of Scripture.

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THE  
SYMBOLICAL NUMBERS

OF

SCRIPTURE.

BY THE

REV. MALCOLM WHITE, M.A.

EDINBURGH:

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# THE SYMBOLICAL NUMBERS

OF

## SCRIPTURE.

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### INTRODUCTION.

AN impression prevails very generally that the years 1866-1868 are to be distinguished by the fulfilment of a large portion of Old and New Testament prophecy. And certainly the events of the last few years have been sufficiently marvellous. If these be not the concluding years of the world, they are at all events wonderful enough to answer many of the requirements of those who fix down days and dates. Many have rushed forward to interpret Daniel, and as every one makes much of the downfall of Popery, it would be strange if neither the part Napoleon has played, nor Garibaldi with his volunteers, nor the glory of Prussia, nor the humiliation of the House of Hapsburg, should be regarded as fulfilling the prophecies that have been uttered. Still, it would be amusing to compare some of the theories that have been broached with the actual way the world has gone.

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For instance, in one case, it was shown how the Fenians would conquer Britain by aid of the Emperor of the French, and that before the year 66 had closed. Nor is this the only adventurer in the region of prophecy who has painted the Emperor of the French as the Man of Sin. If that dull-eyed Ruler, who, rightly or wrongly, ever since the coup d'etat of 1848, has got the credit of being at the bottom of every possible movement in Europe, saw his likeness as it is drawn on the covers of some of our prophetic journals, he would be no way flattered. Colporteurs are sure to have one of these attractive volumes hidden in their pack; and in many other ways it is manifest that they have their reward, who, by dint of ingenuity have succeeded in establishing that Napoleon bears the number of the beast. Indeed it is said that the name Napoleon is a most ominous one. For, take the N away and you have Apollyon, or something like it,—and so on, through a series of horrid titles that might grace another Pandemonium. Now, every false prediction does harm, and shakes the confidence of men in Scripture. Thus people reason—‘If the Bible in regard to prophecy anent the future, be but a juggler’s book, which turns up different numbers according to the different throws of the dice, then, as regards prophecies of old, said to have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ, what evidence is there that they were a whit more certain, or capable of any definite fulfilment?’ This is the serious aspect of

our subject, that makes us lay all levity aside, and soberly consider whether the year 1866 or the years near it, on to 1868 or later, be entitled to pre-eminent regard.

That the year 1866, on its own merits, will stand the closest investigation, no one will deny. Had any of the numerous writers on prophecy foretold the needle-gun, and the victories it has achieved, the world could not have been more surprised than with the actual progress of events. A fortnight's campaign, ending with the battle of Sadowa, was all that the special reporters of the *Times* were able to record; but what a multum in parvo did the gnadelgewähr of the Prussians prove! We know the result; and for our present purpose it may be stated thus: that the most Popish nation on the Continent has been pushed into a corner by a power which is essentially Protestant. Does it not appear as if the days of Popery were numbered? With the Pope sitting solitarily in Rome, deprived of the bayonets of France, and the beloved white-coats that but the other day held Venice and the Quadrilateral, might it not seem as if we should be preparing to shout—'Babylon the Great is fallen?' It would be enthusiasm thus to seize the trumpet of victory. The Pope has not left Rome; and though he had fled again as once he did before, Popery would not necessarily have been overthrown. Let Cardinal Cullen's forebodings prove true, and let the Pope be a refugee in England, the system of which he is the head might

continue to survive. It is a spiritual system, and mere carnal weapons will never lead to its downfall. Probably the Pope will be comfortable enough in the vatican, with the king, at once of Italy and Rome, hobnobbing over the way; and Italian ladies, tricked out in Garibaldian colours, bending low to get his blessing. Rome is far from being Protestant, though it has suffered long enough under the minions of the Pope. Antichrist commenced ere ever the Franks appeared; and Antichrist may crown the seven hills long after the troops of the Ultramontanes have bidden farewell to the Campagna. The errors of Rome had fatal power, while yet the Archdukes of Austria owned merely the Alpine fastness of Hapsburg; and though Austria were still further shattered and stripped, and Czecks and Magyars, and all the other nationalities had asserted their independence, it might be that Popery would reign notwithstanding, spreading its branches the farther, the more fiercely the storm had raged, and sinking its roots the deeper, the more terribly it had been shaken. It would need a keen eye to read the signs of the times, before it could be predicted that this year or the next would witness the end of the Popedom. Outward events are not the only marks by which we are to anticipate the uprooting of error.

Suppose, for a moment, we shut our ears to the din of wars, and rumours of wars, and take down two books quietly from the shelf, the one Dr Newman's 'Apologia,' the other Dr Pusey's 'Eirenicon,' no one

can rise from their perusal without a consciousness of the spiritual power of Popery,—a power that can make itself felt in the hearts of mighty men, apart from the bayonets of aliens. So long as converts, such as Newman, can be made, so long it would be unsafe to conclude that even though the power of the Pope over his own peculiar territory in Italy were to cease, his power to crush the souls of men, and even to fetter their limbs, would likewise cease. Nay, the bondage—to which, unconsciously, and in the honest simplicity apparently of his heart—the galling bondage to which Dr Newman has sold himself, might convince any one, that to see the fulfilment of prophecy respecting the overthrow of Antichrist, merely in things outward, in the marchings of armies and the diplomacy of states, is apt to prove most fallacious and ensnaring. The same conviction is deepened by reading the ‘Eirenicon’ of Dr Pusey. For, when we find, notwithstanding the most withering exposure on his part, of the nature of the worship of the Virgin, and of the mode in which the fiction of the Immaculate Conception was foisted in upon the Church by its present head; and notwithstanding the revelation in these same pages of Dr Pusey, of how the present Pontiff, mild though he appears, and reforming as at first he seemed to be, has established claims to infallibility such as never were put forth before, and such as better Popes have emphatically disclaimed, and refused in any way to accept;—when we find, despite all this, that the prince of

Oxford divines longs for union with the Popish Church, if only it would return to what it was when Luther raised his voice against its sins, and Ridley and Latimer, in the Church of England, inveighed against its errors, we perceive that there is a witchery, a mystery about Popery, that may outlive many revolutions still to come, and may demand, by way of protest against its claims, the endurance of fires fiercer than those of Smithfield, and of dragonnades more bloody than those of Alva or of Claverhouse.

At all events, there is sufficient power in that most antichristian system to keep us from fixing on this as the year of its overthrow, unless it can be proved conclusively from Scripture, that according to prophetic chronology, these are the actual 'times of the end.' Now, at first glance, it would appear that some truth must attach to the surmises that have been thrown out respecting the present time, from the very number of such surmises. Take up Brown's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' and in his Table of Chronology, opposite 1866, he is found saying, 'About this time we expect the downfall of Antichrist and Mahometanism;' though, in candour, it must be added, that Brown says afterwards, 'Others more learned and judicious place this 150 years later than our calculation.' But learned and judicious men have fixed on almost every imaginable year for the same event. In connection with the Number of the Beast, Martin Luther says, '666 years—so long lasts the worldly Papacy;' whereas

most assign the Papacy a term of at least 1260 years. Nor, when we turn to the pages of Goodwin, the scholarly Puritan, is it any thing else than amusing to find it gravely proved that 1,666 would likely behold the downfall of Antichrist; for this convincing reason, that 666 is the sign of the Beast, and the term of Popery therefore must needs be completed in the year 1,666, seeing we generally leave out the thousands, as when we say, the year 66, instead of the year 1866. But for those dissatisfied with this mode of arriving at the date, it might be sufficient to learn, as Goodwin tells them, that about the year 406 the power of Pagan Rome began to crumble, so that 'that which let was taken out of the way;' and if we add 1,260 (the time so often spoken of in Rev.) to 406, we get 1,666 as the date of the millennium! Of course we can afford to laugh at this, as a story 200 years old. But most of the suppositions respecting 1866 seem to rest on no better foundation.

Instead, however, of attempting in detail, at the present stage, to investigate the authority attaching to any system of apocalyptic numbers, it may be better, in a word, to explain why 1866 should have come to be considered worthy of pre-eminent regard.

In Rev. xi. 3, we read that the two witnesses (generally regarded as witnesses against Popery) shall prophesy a thousand, two hundred and sixty days. If then we suppose that days in the prophetic books invariably mean years, it will appear that



Popery is to have dominion 1260 years. Again, the first beast described in Rev. xiii. is often thought to be Mohammedanism. Supposing this also to be true, we read at the 5th verse, that power was given to him to continue forty and two months, that is, 1260 days, taking the month as consisting of thirty days. Changing once more the days into years, it will appear that the power of Mahomet is to continue 1260 years. Further, the year 606 happens to be that in which Mahomet retired to his cave, where he received the revelations recorded in the Koran; and in the same year 606, the Bishop of Rome, along with other things, took to himself the title of Universal Pastor. If this date then be fixed upon as the beginning of the power, alike of the False Prophet and the Man of Sin, we have merely to add 1260 to 606 in order to arrive at the period of their fall, in this way discovering 1866 to be the commencement of the long anticipated era of glory. Now we would not deny that the present epoch in the history of nations is a most remarkable one, neither would we push aside the thought that another year or two may witness the fulfilment of many of the prophecies; but we have the gravest suspicion that the system upon which these and similar writers proceed, is empirical and untrustworthy, whatever may be the results, and happy hits at times, of their calculations. For no fewer than four different dates have, with the greatest plausibility, been fixed upon as the commencement of the

Papal power: (1.) A.D. 533, when Justinian published an edict, and also addressed a letter to the Pope, in which he styled him the head of the churches: (2.) A.D. 606, when the Emperor Phocas confirmed what Justinian had done, and so gave final sanction to a code of laws based on the Pope's supremacy: (3.) A.D. 752, when Pope Stephen on being appealed to, confirmed Pepin in the kingdom of France, and received from him in return the temporalities that have only of late been wrenched from the Papal grasp: (4.) A.D. 1073, when Gregory VII., the founder, as Gibbon thinks, of the Papal monarchy, was elevated to the Holy See. Adding then the 1260 of Revelation, we get 1793, 1866, 2012, and 2333, as competing dates for the downfall of Rome. It is clear that all cannot be right, and the stern logic of facts has already antiquated a whole host of such anticipations; yet speculation continues rife as ever, and dogmatism as loud-toned as ever, in regard to this enchanted region.

It certainly becomes us to desire that the downfall of Popery, and the overthrow of Mohammedan error, should occur, if it be God's will, this very year. It is with a feeling approaching to sadness that we would say a single word to overthrow such a fair vision. And as we should be ready at all times to hail the cry, 'Behold the Bridegroom cometh,' we would be far from pouring contempt on those who, seeking to act the part of the prophets of old, 'that searched and inquired diligently

what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ that was in them did signify,' may come to the conclusion that they are commissioned to raise the joyful note—'This year the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven.' But we have merely to record, that neither Bengel, with his ingenious system of interpreting Apocalyptic numbers, nor the lesser lights that have cast their several rays along the pathway of the future, have enabled us to venture on the most distant conjecture as to when this world of ours will have an end. We have rather the humiliating task of acknowledging that such study as we have given to the subject, has not led us to the remotest conception as to when Napoleon will die, nor by what process the followers of Islam will be driven out of Turkey. No doubt the revelation of these secrets would be attended with the utmost interest, but we question whether the habit of feeding on such luxuries may not have led to much obloquy being thrown on the entire volume of Truth; and we feel it needful to give such thoughts as we have on the Symbolical Numbers of Scripture, praying so to be guided by the Spirit of all truth, that the results we arrive at may bear the impress of sobriety, and reverence for the sure Word of Prophecy. Perhaps, by taking a conjunct view of the whole series of these numbers, errors may be corrected that are almost incidental to the attempt at deciphering them when viewed in their isolation, one from another.

At once we shall venture into the deepest water, and strike out for something tangible that may be secured from the last verses of Daniel, and sundry intimations in the Apocalypse. Keeping thus a practical aim in view, we hope to be saved from visions of the mere theorist, when, further on, we are led to take a more general survey of the field we propose to traverse.

# CHAPTER I.

## THE TIME OF THE END.

1. The 1290 days.
2. The 1335 days of Daniel.

### 1.

DAN. xii. 8-13.—‘And I heard, but I understood not: Then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be *a thousand two hundred and ninety days*. Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the *thousand three hundred and five and thirty days*. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.’

THIS prophecy is well-known, and it is almost as well-known that nearly all who seek from these verses to arrive at dates, take for granted that the days mean years. For instance, Dr Cumming in his ‘Last Woe,’ when interpreting the above passage, makes out that ‘the Mahometan power, which,’ he says, ‘is the Abomination alluded to, should begin to cease after 1290 years, which, beginning about 532, bring us down to 1822. Now, the first stroke and wasting of the Moslem power began in 1821, and ever since then, in the language of Chateau-

briand, Turkey has been dying for want of Turks.' In like manner, when advancing to the thousand, three hundred and five and thirty days, he says, '1335 prophetic days, or Julian years. 1290 years were to elapse before the Mahometan power was to begin to wane; and here, the prophet adds to that period 45 years, making a total of 1335 years. We have supposed the period of 1260 years to end about 1792; adding to that Daniel's thirty years (to make 1290) brings us down to 1822; and if we add to that the further period of 45 years, it will bring us down to 1867, of which period it is said, "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to it."<sup>1</sup> Without staying to make many inquiries which such a quotation prompts, as for instance concerning the right any one has to confine the abomination spoken of by Daniel the prophet to the Mahometan power, it answers our purpose meanwhile to note, that the days are changed into years, as if the transformation could not suggest a moment's difficulty.

Let us refer to almost the only passage that gives countenance to such a view, as it may be of service in throwing light on the entire prophecy before us: Ezek. iv. 4-6. 'Lie thou also upon thy left side, and lay the iniquity of the house of Israel upon it: according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon it, thou shalt bear their iniquity. For I have laid upon thee the years of their iniquity, according to the number of the days, three hundred

<sup>1</sup> Last Woe, p. 332.

and ninety days: so shalt thou bear the iniquity of the house of Israel,' that is, the Ten Tribes. 'And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah,' that is, the other Two Tribes, 'forty days, I have appointed thee, each day for a year.' It is to be remarked, that the entire period during which Ezekiel is thus to protest against his people, is 390 days and 40 days,—in all, 430 days. This number, 430, was one well known in the history of Israel. It was the period of their oppression in Egypt. It was foretold to Abraham that his children would be oppressed in a strange land 400 years, and it is recorded with the utmost distinctness, Ex. xii. 40, 41, that 'the sojourning of the children of Israel, who dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass, at the end of four hundred and thirty years, even the self same day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt.' So memorable a date could never be forgotten. The 430 years of bondage we might expect to recur in the teachings of the prophets. For the deliverance of Israel from Egypt was symbolical of every deliverance the Lord would grant His people, and even so, the chastisement and training of Israel in Egypt were fitly emblematical of every period during which the Lord would try His people, and afflict them for their sins. We speak indeed under the correction of a Royal Chaplain, who lately told the world that *he* had

never been brought out of Egypt. But he seemed to be ashamed of the words, and afterward withdrew them; so, since he has signed the shell against himself, we need not ostracise him further. Besides, Maurice, in his book on the Commandments, has abundantly vindicated the old view, that the triumph over Pharaoh was a symbol of a mightier triumph over Sin and Satan, and hence the language of the pious still must be, 'The Lord, the Lord God hath brought me out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.' So too, in the experience of God's people, they are often led down into Egypt, and the 430 years of weary servitude appear to be renewed. Ezekiel, therefore, is understood by such an interpreter as Dr Fairbairn, to mean, that as of old for sin, Israel was made to mourn 430 years, so in the time to come, by reason of iniquity, the same terrible dealings would be repeated, and therefore the same terrible symbol, 430, recurs in the vision of the prophet. In like manner, the 40 years of the wilderness, to which Ezekiel also refers, were a familiar emblem of God's method of dealing with His chosen. 'Behold I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope; and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.' Hosea ii. 14-16. 'Now Ezekiel here resumes these earlier announcements of prophecy



(Deut. xxviii. 68. Hos. viii. 13; ix. 3; xi. 5; ii. 14, 15), and with that minuteness of detail and vividness of colouring which so remarkably characterize his prophetic delineations, throws the ideas they embody into a specific and numerical form. The covenant people were now again to suffer for their sins the same sort of hardship and discipline which had of old been laid upon their fathers during the period of their servitude in Egypt; the doleful past was again substantially to repeat itself in the future; the dark season of oppression and exile was again to come back with its sad and sorrowful experiences. . . . But with the house of Judah, notwithstanding their many sins and backslidings, there was redemption. Therefore, if not precisely the Egypt state of bondage in all its vigour, yet that which was most nearly akin to it, what was indeed but a continuation of it in a modified form, and in more hopeful circumstances—the course of trial and discipline in the wilderness: this must now again substantially become the portion for a season of the house of Judah. They needed it, much as their fathers of old, who, even after they were redeemed from the house of bondage, still required the forty years of additional troubles and discipline in the wilderness to prepare them for the inheritance and service of God.<sup>1</sup>

The same principles of interpretation we propose to apply to the problem before us, in Daniel. And

<sup>1</sup> Fairbairn's Ezekiel, p. 56.

it would appear as if this should free us from over-anxiety, even though we should not be able, from the 1290 days, or the 1335 days, to ascertain the precise chronological period intended. The moral may be caught, though the exact number of years may be hidden in the counsels of the Highest. The attempt to fix down years in accordance with the prophecy of Ezekiel, has proved a perfect failure; little marvel that those break down who try, after a similarly false system, to interpret Daniel. Neither the Duke of Manchester, nor any other student of prophecy, has made out that periods occurred in Israel's history, stretching over exactly 390 and 40 years, which at all conform to the conditions of Ezekiel's prophecy. Neither have any, by interpreting Daniel after a similar fashion, discovered to what precise period the 1290 days and the 1335 correspond. Or, at any rate, every one differs from his neighbour, and all cannot be right. It can hardly, indeed, be otherwise, when most base on that passage in Ezekiel the authority they have for treating prophetic days as if they meant definite years. Let the controversy about Ezekiel's meaning first be settled, ere men so glibly metamorphose days into years, and years into we know not what. For our part, we make no pretence at discovering days and dates, but turn to the Bible, in hope of getting simple lessons of truth, that apply to all time, and embody prophecies, not answerable to Britain, and France, and Turkey, and Napoleon,

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and Bismarck, and the Pope, alone, but pertaining to the entire history of humanity. The special interpretation we give of Daniel may be new, but our mode of arriving at the results is the same that we find adopted by the ablest writers on the continent, as the only means by which we can free ourselves from the entanglements arising out of falsely literal interpretations of Scripture prophecy.

Having thus sought to clear away objections to the theory we propose, and to indicate the method of our procedure, we would observe, that the 1290 days of Daniel's prophecy (xii. 11) are exactly three times 430,—the very number with which we have been made familiar by his contemporary, Ezekiel. If, then, the 430 days in the one case, pointed back to Egyptian oppression as a type of future misery, may not the three times 430 days, in the case before us, denote a still longer period of woe, resembling the former period of bondage, and ending in a similarly glad result? We do not mean that the future woes of Israel were to last precisely three times longer than those which were suffered at the hands of the Pharaohs. No one can regard the prophecy of Ezekiel as denoting that 430 years of suffering, and no more, were before Israel. We understand the symbol, and the implied reference to Egypt, without fixing down dates, or maintaining that Israel was actually to be sent down again into Egypt. So here we understand Daniel to mean, that triple sufferings, so to speak, were before the

chosen of God,—sufferings thrice more terrible than those which made them groan four hundred and thirty years in bondage.<sup>1</sup> Whatever else the 1290 days may mean, there does seem to be some connection implied with the years of Egyptian slavery. And notice how natural this was, in a prophecy regarding the future of God's people. Of old, the circle of God's dealings went thus:—First, the promise of Canaan to Abraham, that in him and in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed: Second, instead of the immediate fulfilment of this prediction, a long period of exile, and of cruel persecution: Third, a deliverance gradually wrought out by means of the forty years in the wilderness, and the years of fighting against the inhabitants of the land: and fourth, the sabbatic rest of Canaan at length secured. And now, by means of this prophecy of Daniel, the people were carried forward to the time when the promised seed of Abraham, Christ Jesus, would appear, and when the daily sacrifice would cease, because of Messiah's giving up Himself a sacrifice. Might it not be naturally anticipated that the glory of the Lord would at once break forth, and the heavenly Canaan be instantly secured? But no; as God wrought in the past, He is to work in the future. It is by a way that man esteems circuitous, the Lord will lead His people into rest. First, the seed of Abraham appears, and in Him are all the promises made sure. Second, instead of immediate victory

<sup>1</sup> For the use of the number Three, see succeeding chapter, page 33.

on the part of God's people, long ages are to follow of oppression and of wrong. Third, a painful wilderness course is before the children of God, and a fierce conflict with the powers of darkness, ere they can lay the arms of their warfare aside. Fourth, then, at last, will God be their abiding portion. Here is obviously a similar round to what occurred in the past. And as, when the promise was given to Abraham, it was announced at the same time that 430 years of oppression would be the immediate result ; so when Daniel told of the work of the promised seed of Abraham, he was commissioned to predict similar but fiercer persecutions, to tell of thrice 430 days that must transpire, during which apparent success would attend the machinations of God's enemies, and cruelties and wrongs would lie heavily upon the ransomed of the Lord.

In this way, some meaning can be got out of the 1290 days of Daniel ; and it may be understood how they had a certain degree of significance even to those amongst whom the prophet lived ; whereas, if we are told to take a day for a year, and so forth, we ask by what authority this is done, and get a very unsatisfactory answer. We further ask, What wonderful event occurred 1290 years after the destruction of Jerusalem ? For the words of Jesus give little room for doubt, that when Daniel said, 'From the time that the abomination that maketh desolate shall be set up, there shall be 1290 days,' He had in view the destruction of Jerusalem. Are

not these Christ's words? Matt. xxiv. 15—'When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains,' where the reference is unquestionably to the destruction of Jerusalem. It would need a great deal to convince us that the 1290 days are to be counted from any other event than the dispersion of the Jews; and if so, we ask again, What great event took place 1290 years after the destruction of Jerusalem? Little is to be gained by keeping on this tack. On the other hand, regarding the number as symbolical, we need hardly point to the resemblance between Israel in Egypt, and Israel at present, oppressed among the nations. It is a more lengthened, and, in some respects, more terrible estrangement from their own land which they are now enduring; or rather, there is a sadder alienation from the God of their fathers, than even marked the years of Egyptian servitude. If, then, the number 1290 has anything to do with the state of the Jews from the time of their dispersion after the siege of Jerusalem, we might anticipate that it would involve some reference to the years of their bondage in Egypt. Accordingly, we find that 1290 is three times 430, the number of the years of oppression; and it is natural, therefore, to suppose, that whatever else the number 1290 may mean, it does refer to the period during which the Jews are to be in a condition trebly worse than that of their

ancestors of old, when they were 430 years in bondage. Of course, however, it will be understood, that while there may be a special reference to Israel after the flesh, the same symbol fitly sets forth the condition of the general Israel of God. Did it not seem at first, in the days of the apostles, as if all the promises would be speedily fulfilled, and the world be conquered for Christ? But Canaan was not so speedily to be reached. During long weary years, the Church has been mourning an absent Lord, and a wail, as from the brick fields of Egypt, has been passing down the centuries. But the time of our deliverance has been determined. The 1290 days of prophecy are wearing to an end. Not more surely did God keep His word to Abraham, than, despite the strength of an evil world, He will come forth at the appointed time, conquering and to conquer. But, 'Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.'

## 2.

This view will either be put out of doors, or greatly confirmed, by the number which follows:— Dan. xii. 12, the 'One Thousand, Three Hundred, and Five and Thirty.' To this, therefore, we must needs invite attention for a little.

'Blessed,' it is said, 'is he that waiteth and cometh to the 1335 days.' It will be seen that 45 added to the 1290 completes the 1335, and as, in

order to get the meaning of the 1290, we went back to the bondage in Egypt, so we are prepared to ask if the 45 has any connection with events that followed the deliverance from Egypt. Now, it happens that there is an incident which, with all the interest of a romance, keeps us in remembrance of the number 45, and gives it much importance. It is the well known story of Caleb, Josh. xiv.: 'Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenenite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said unto Moses, the man of God, concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in mine heart. And now behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said, these *forty and five years*, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day: if so be the Lord be with me, then shall I be able to drive them out, as the Lord said. And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance.' Forty-five, therefore, may be looked upon as the period succeeding the bondage in Egypt, during which the land of Canaan was held, so to speak, in suspense. Two years, as every



one knows, intervened before the children of Israel came to Kadesh-barnea; but it was only after their sin at that place that the inheritance of the land was really delayed, or put in apparent jeopardy. We can conceive, then, how the 45 years from Kadesh-barnea should be used as a symbol, rather than the actual 47 years which transpired from the leaving of Egypt. These 45 years formed the period, which, as the result of iniquity, elapsed before the Israelites settled down as occupants of the land of promise. If a similar time of trial and of warfare are to be depicted as transpiring in the future, the use of the 45 as a symbol cannot be considered strange.

May not then the forty-five days of Daniel's prophecy denote the time which will elapse between the great awakening of Israel in the future, and their complete establishment in the blessedness of heaven? If so, they will form the appropriate symbol of the history of the universal church during that period. In this, happily, we are not left altogether alone; for in Goodwin's Works (vol. iii. p. 202), there occurs the query, 'may not those forty-five years after that first call of the Jews, answer unto those forty-five years which they spent after their coming out of Egypt, ere they got possession of their promised land of Canaan? For so long time it was ere they were settled in it, if you take their forty years in the wilderness, with the time wherein Joshua fought his battles, as himself expressly

counts it.' Certain it is that Paul represents a certain interval as elapsing between the salvation of the Jews as a nation, and the final entrance of all the saints upon their heavenly rest. This interval, whatever may be its duration, is naturally represented by the similar interval of 45 years, during which of old the complete possession of Canaan was delayed. In all, therefore, the entire period of the church's history, from the destruction of the Jerusalem that was, to the glorious revelation of the New Jerusalem which is from above, may be set forth by the 1290 and the 45; or, in other words, the 1335 days. Thus, if we take the 1335 days as reaching onward to the perfect glory of the Second Resurrection, when God will be the portion of the Twelve Tribes of the true Israel, we can understand how it should be written, 'Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the one thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.'

We have further to say, anticipatory of an objection that might be raised, that apparently the 1290 are merely used in the prophecy as a stepping stone to the 1335. If the latter number alone had been employed, it would have been totally enigmatical; but by aid of the 1290, we get, as has been seen, a nexus formed with Israel's early history—and by means of the superadded 45, we get hold of a great cycle in God's dealings with His people. The 1335 symbolises, we think, the entire period during which God will keep in probation the New

Testament Church, before leading His saints into the land of their rest. The 430 and the 45 of old, repeat themselves, with all their strange lessons and discipline, in the 3 × 430 and 45, of modern times. Nor let any say that there is too much mysticism in such a mode of conception. Surely, we admit, what is well nigh a truism, that history is a sort of prophecy of the future. Otherwise, why read about the past. The study of history goes on the assumption, that the warp and woof in the web of time continue ever the same. The past is therefore always taken, and inwrought by the prophets into their pictures of the future. And when we consider the moral relations and analogies between one event and another, we can comprehend how language, based upon the facts of one period, may truthfully depict the incidents of another. As God's workings in the past are similar to those He will carry forward in the future; and especially as His dealings with the covenant people Israel were meant to illustrate His thoughts of grace to all mankind, it is natural to find, in depicting the future, that the past is used as a type and a standard of measurement. Not that we are bound to believe in a rigid recurrence of things that have already transpired. Events come round as in a circle, but the circle is ever increasing, and there is always motion forward. It is an enlarging spiral, and not a simple circle, which best illustrates the ways of God with man. Hence it is not the bald 430 which meets us in the

vision of the future; but thrice 430 are taken to denote how the elements and judgments of the past will be reflected in the mightier revolutions of the time to come. Such a meaning we can conceive Daniel himself deriving from the vision he received; and if so, he received a good outline of future history in those pregnant words which bring his book to a close. For God's mode of preparing Israel of old for the enjoyment and service of Canaan, was the best possible type of the mode by which He has been conducting His people ever since the time of the Saviour. It is an Egypt state ours: a wilderness state. But the Pharaohs and Amaleks are being subdued, and Philistines and Jebusites are being overthrown; we shall win the land of our rest. The periods are passing—the state of bondage and warfare alike, and we rejoice to think that the prophecy is being fulfilled, 'From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days.'

It may tend to convince us that there is something in the explanation which has been suggested, when we see how strikingly it brings into harmony with the prophecy about the *days*, the concluding words of the angel, 'But go thy way Daniel till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and *stand in thy lot at the end of the days.*'

If the 1290 be related, as we have supposed, to the 430 years of Israel's bondage, and if the 45, which we find added to the 1290 so as to make 1335, point to the perfect possession of the heavenly Canaan, then we at once perceive how the promise to Daniel should have taken this particular form, 'Thou shalt stand in thy lot at the end of the days.' For immediately after the story of Caleb in Josh. xiv., to which the 45 referred, we find it added, that 'the land had rest from war,' and the different inheritances commence to be given to Judah and the other tribes *by lot*. So we may regard the angel's words as sounding thus in Daniel's ears, 'Go thy way, meanwhile; but when at the end of the 1335 days the heavenly Canaan comes to be inherited, thou shalt not be forgotten. As Caleb, because of his faithfulness, had his portion in Hebron made sure, so wilt thou have a portion assigned thee in the Eden of God. Thou hast not been suffered to return to thy beloved country along with the exiles that went back under Ezra and Nehemiah; the cares of thine exalted post, and the need, for the sake of the few who are struggling to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, that thou shouldst remain in office where thou art in Persia,—these things have combined to prevent thy return meanwhile to Palestine; but soon thou shalt rest, and in the end of all things, when the new heavens and the new earth will have come, and the walls of the better, the new Jerusalem, be reared, thou shalt enter upon thy full reward, and

stand in thy lot at the end of the days. A little longer thou must wait, till the 1290 days of Israel's distress be accomplished, and the 45 days of its returning glory, and of its final contests under the leadership of Jesus be fulfilled, and then thou wilt stand in thy lot along with the tribes of God's redeemed.'

Thus does it seem as if the history of Daniel were meant to end much like the history of Joseph, whom Daniel so closely resembled. As Joseph was raised up a deliverer for Israel in its dark days, so Daniel became its saviour in days still darker; as, by the interpretation of dreams and the spirit of wisdom in him, Joseph became the chiefest statesman in Egypt, so, by the interpretation of dreams, Daniel, under more than one of Judah's conquerors, held the reins of government; and as Joseph's character is one without a speck, so Daniel shines with unstained lustre. Neither are these two divided in their death. The record of Joseph ends with the request that he should not be left in Egypt, but that his bones should be carried to the portion of his father in the land of promise. He died with the words of prophecy gladdening his heart, that 430 years would bring about deliverance; and in fullest confidence that all would be fulfilled, he gave orders concerning his bones. So now, that a further stage in Jewish history has been reached, which will take a longer time to attain its more glorious and spiritual development, Daniel dies, in faith that, though

he seems to be left to rot an exile in Babylon, yet, after three times 430—the 1290 days of the church's oppression by reason of sin, and after the 45 days necessary to complete the settlement of all heavenly things—he would, like Joseph, enter upon the portion of his fathers, in the goodly land of Canaan. He leaves his bones, as it were, in charge of God's spiritual Israel, assured that in the end of the days he would with them enter into the land of his rest. As Joseph, embalmed, and thus in symbol still existing, entered with Israel into Canaan, and stood in his lot there in Shechem, so was Daniel assured, that, not as one embalmed, but as one who was dead and is alive again, and liveth for evermore, he would stand in his lot at the end of the days, entering into the joy of those who, under their leader Jesus, strike down the last of God's foes, and who, spared alive like Caleb to the end, claim the promised land as theirs. It is with Daniel as it is with each child of God, who dies in the same faith, and leaves to the suffering, but soon to be exalted church, a like precious legacy. Their very dust to us is dear, and every particle of their dust adds to our assurance that the years of Israel's deliverance draw nigh, and that heaven is coming near. Into each believer's ears the words seem to be whispered, 'Go thy way till the end be; for thou shall rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.'

Thus was the angel singing the prophet to sleep, by assuring him of a speedy and glorious awaking

from the dead. He speaks not of years, but of days. Though more than 2000 years were to elapse before the appointed time would come, yet the angel merely speaks of 1335 days. *Days*; for in the paradise of blessed spirits, whose rest Daniel was speedily to enjoy, a thousand years would be as one day, and hence there was a fitness in speaking about days, whatever time was actually implied.

By this line of interpretation, we enter our protest against predictions that would, from these numbers, fix the precise times of future glory. As the prophets speak of the Israel and Canaan that were, in order to depict a more spiritual people and land of the future, so does the Spirit within them employ numbers, such as three times four hundred and thirty, and forty-five, which had a literal significance in past Jewish history, in order to express a time, not literally defined, that brings about still grander epochs in the time to come,—epochs of unspeakable importance to the general Israel of God. Hence we are little moved by prophecies regarding the year 1868, or any other year, although it is no vain thing to read the signs of the times. But we are deeply moved by the fact, that he is blessed who waits for the 1335 days, as well as he who actually comes to them. Our prayer would be, if we are neither to behold the accomplishment of the 1290 days, nor the fulfilment of all things at the end of the 1335, that we should fall asleep in Jesus, with the assurance given us, that we shall stand in our lot at the



end of the days, enjoying the blessedness of him who *waits*, if not the joy of those who, with their waking eyes, actually behold the accomplishment of all God's purposes, and are changed in a moment, so as to meet their Lord without ever tasting death.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE TIME AND TIMES AND HALF A TIME.

ANY review of the last three verses of Daniel would be incomplete that failed to take into account the passage immediately before, concerning the 'time and times and half a time.'

DAN. xii. 7. 'And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever, that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished.'

It is plain that there is reference in this to the preceding chapter, which, towards its close, is occupied with the daring and blasphemous exploits of Antiochus the Great. It is said, Dan. xi. 31, 'Arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days. . . . And some of

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them of understanding (משפילים) shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end. . . . And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods. . . . And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that be wise (משפילים) shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.' Now, one of the most remarkable things about these verses is the way they put in juxtaposition the doings of Antiochus and the final judgment. There appears to be no severance, in the way of time, between the overthrow of the Syrian oppressor of Israel and the overthrow of all God's enemies. The language that applies to the days of Antiochus is woven into the descriptions which pertain to the end of all things. For example, Dan. xii. 10; concerning the time of the end it is said, 'Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked

shall understand; but the wise (משכילים) shall understand. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up,' etc. One has only to compare these words with sentences quoted above, to be convinced that somehow or other, the picture of the times of Antiochus, and of the actual times of the end, are blended together.

But more: none can read about the king that magnifieth himself above every god, and speaketh marvellous things against the God of gods, without reflecting on the use Paul makes of these traits, in his picture of Antichrist, 'that man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.' —(2 Thess. ii. 4.) It is plain that behind the figure of Antiochus, Paul discovers the lineaments of a still greater adversary of the Church of God. It will not surprise us, therefore, to find that 'the time and times, and half a time,' that seem at first glance to belong exclusively to the persecutions of Antiochus, may be attributed to a still fiercer time of trouble. Accordingly, when we turn to Dan. vii. 25, that speaks of the horn which had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, it is written, 'He shall speak great words against the Most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of a time.' If anything can be regarded as settled in the region of prophecy, it is what Auberlen and

others have made good, that this passage refers to Antichrist and the time of his oppression. May not the other passage then, in chap. xii., though apparently referring only to Antiochus, have the same great period in view? May not the one time be the miniature of the other? May not the one picture, when viewed without reference to time, dissolve into the other and greater? Nor let it be supposed that we are introducing anything new into our mode of illustrating Scripture. It is the same thing that is meant when it is said that David was a type of Messiah, and that his psalms contain typical elements.

But as we have touched here upon an illustration that may be of service throughout the whole course of our remarks, it may be well to consider more fully how, through the incidents of David's life and the deep inspiration of his psalms, the lineaments of Messiah shine forth. We shall then be better able to conceive how Antiochus may have been related to the Man of Sin, and how the events of his reign may have their counterparts lying still in some measure in the future. The question therefore before us is—What relation had the history of David to that of Christ: In what sense could the course of providence with him block out a character, that only needed the deeper touches of God's hand in the way of inspiration to manifest the likeness of Emmanuel? How could the psalms be the outflow of David's own heart in song, or comport with the

feelings of his fellow-worshippers, while yet the true, that is, the Spiritual King of Israel, was the object of their praise; and the words they uttered were able, in their depth, to come from Jesus' heart alone? The question is perhaps more difficult to state than to answer, for the slightest glance at David's history will show how the lines that composed it needed not to be crossed or obliterated, but rather retouched and deepened and purified, in order to the development of the work and history of the Saviour. As we have seen rough stones left above pillars or doors in an edifice, with merely a rude chiselling that betokens what the sculpture will be, while the hand of a master alone is needed to give beauty and force to those markings, in order that the rude outline may appear in harmony with the perfect design, so it was necessary that the groundwork of the redemption-plan should exist in the history and feelings of the seers of old, while the full significance of the words which they uttered, could only be understood when Christ Himself appeared. It is as when we draw from a model. A solid figure is set before us, which we must trace on the canvas. Several laws must be observed. A full rounded object is to be depicted on a perfectly level surface. How do we proceed? The salient points are first caught in their relations to each other according to perspective, and marked on the board before us; the main lines are then laid down, as they severally converge to the point of view; and the first rough chalkings appear. They

may seem ludicrous and unnatural to the untaught eye; but the filling in of the outline advances, care is taken with the details and more tender features, and at length the first etchings evolve into a thing of life and beauty. So is prophecy related to its fulfilment in Christ. It must not be read as history—for on the uniform dark surface of the past are traced in rude hieroglyphic characters, the grand, living, soul-filling events of Messiah's time. Besides, the perspective in the case of prophecy is awaiting. Save in the rarest instances, the times which are in the hands of the Father, were never revealed to men. The future lay on the canvas of prophecy without any distinctly projected foreground. Saul, therefore, and Ahitophel, while we gaze upon their likenesses, seem to melt away into Judas the traitor, and the Arch-enemy of David's Son and Lord. So too, in Christ's own prophecy in Matth. xxiv., the destruction of Jerusalem, and the final catastrophe which is to enwrap the world in flames, are so dovetailed into each other, that we scarce can tell where the one picture ends, and the other, its complement, begins. It is only when the prophecies are unfolded in history, and the element of time which had been eliminated comes to be introduced, that we can sever the one part of the scene from the other, and draw out the concentric circles into the ever enlarging spiral of God's mighty plan. It is only by getting to the sun as centre, and taking into account the size of their orbits, that we can

understand the motions of the planets; from our stand-point on earth, they run into and cross each other, after the strangest fashion; and so it is only when we perceive the circling of the prophecies round Jesus, and make allowance for their gigantic sweep, that we can keep free from the utmost arbitrariness in our interpretations of what has been revealed. As cycles, and epicycles, and the jargon of the schools were invented in lieu of accepting the sun as the centre of the planetary system, so, empirical double meanings, and quasi-religious, quasi-political, semi-literal, and wholly transcendental references, are apt to be affixed to the prophecies of Scripture, greatly to the detriment of the truth, and the best interests of the Book we revere. We are not to wonder, therefore, if the rude draughts and types of old, appear strange and meaningless, or even ridiculous and abhorrent, when held up by themselves under the criticism of men untaught by the Spirit of God. Look over the shoulder of an architect, as he is busied with his pencil, and you are inclined to sneer at his skill; but if you had studied his art, those figures would have an interest almost as great as the splendid structure, which at length establishes his fame; for they give an insight into the workings of his mind and the conceptions of his genius, and explain the meaning of every part, in a way, that a view of the building as completed, could never have conveyed. It is in this way we come to regard the sorrowing David



as related to the suffering Saviour. It is in this way we look upon David's throne as the reflex, or rather the foreshadowing, of the Redeemer's glory. Nor can we doubt that the Spirit gave such an one as David mysterious sympathy with the depth of Jesus' woe. With the line in his hand, which sounded the waters that flooded his own soul, he was enabled to go down into the abyss of the Saviour's sufferings. Or rather, while the Psalmist touched the chords that swept over the compass of his own spiritual being, the hand of God brought out notes deeper far, and higher. Like as the organist, while continuing to manipulate with the same limited set of keys, can, by touching the pedal or arranging the stops, bring out at once octaves lower and higher, so, from the limited experience of David, the Spirit of Inspiration has evolved such jubilant tones, as 'Lift up your heads,' which the redeemed may prolong till the King of glory enter on His everlasting rest; and, still making a certain use of David's personal history, has sounded forth the wail of Calvary, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' The words are the words of David, but the voice is Jesus' voice. The notes are of the same order with those which, in his ordinary moments, the Psalmist could evoke; they are in harmony with his spiritual nature, and thus far are his; but the wail of sorrow is that of the Son of Man. The crucifixion is anticipated in the psalms, the dread darkness, the wrath of God for sin; deep

calling unto deep, as the voice of the singer sinks into unearthly strains. Thus we come to learn how David's psalms have been so great a treasure to the Church of Christ. They have been a mirror, reflecting the inmost soul of Jesus. They touch chords intensely human, while yet they reveal the heart of One who is Divine. They go with us as far as our experiences go; and we hear the echoes prolonged in the infinite solitudes of the Saviour's agonies. The sacred poet, like every other poet, must attempt to express the unutterable longings and heavings of the soul; and the beatings of his heart, as it quivers beneath the burden of speech, is heard pulsing in unison with the trembling agonizing breast of the Crucified. We are brought by this means into fellowship with Christ's sufferings and death; and so far as taught by the Spirit, grow into mysterious union with the Lamb of God. My experiences may have a most limited range, but according as I am a child of God, so can I appropriate these psalms as mine, and share the language of the Redeemer, grieving in His grief, and rejoicing in His joy. A wondrous universality, however, characterized the experiences of David. Few sank so low, few rose so high; few got brighter views of heaven, few felt so near the flames of hell: and thus was he fitted to be for all time the singer of the songs of Zion, the reader of the heart, and the bearer of its praise up to the throne of God.

Such is the mode which has most readily occurred

to us of showing the connection which subsists between Israel's King of old, and the Christ of New Testament Scripture. May it not be possible, by aid of this illustration, to understand the relation between Israel's Oppressor of old, and the Antichrist of New Testament Scripture? If Typology, as the handmaid of prophecy, can explain the one, it goes far to remove the mystery attaching to the other. It is on the same principle by which we interpret the Messianic psalms, that we comprehend how Antiochus and Antichrist may be mentioned in one breath. Antiochus is a sort of transparency, through which gleams darkly forth a figure far more terrible. The fury of that madman was but a little eddy in a mightier sweep of Antichristian violence, which sometime seems in the Book of God to include every power which has risen up in the world's history against the cause of the Most High, but is more commonly limited to the gradually culminating opposition to Messiah since He appeared, and not unfrequently seems descriptive of the special form of violence and fraud which we find exemplified in Popery. All evil springs from one source—Satan, and is an endless repetition of itself, though it may be in an intenser form of darkness and more fiendish craft. Hence Antiochus and his destruction of the Holy City were repeated in the Romans, and the ever-memorable siege of Jerusalem; while, again, these were but emblems of a more awful Roman Power, and a more insidious and bloody attack on

the vitals of religion under Popery; and apparently we are getting into a vortex mightier than any which have gone before, and may have to meet the rage of Antichristian error in a form more concentrated and disciplined, more bewitching and devilish, than anything which has hitherto deserved the name of the Beast.

Having thus got over the preliminary difficulty which attaches to the apparent confounding of the Time and Times and Half a Time, in the case of Antiochus, with the same period as expressive of the reign of Antichristian error, we come to ask if these are literal years, in either case, or both.

First, we have against this supposition the exceeding indefiniteness of the appellation—Time and Times and the Dividing of Time. It was not so in the case of the 70 years foretold by Jeremiah as the period of Israel's oppression in Babylon. There was no putting of days for years in that prediction; no putting of the indefinite words Time and Times for either days or years. It was simple and literal as any historical statement, Jer. xxv. 11, 'This whole land shall be desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon *seventy years*.' Contrast this with the period assigned to the empire of Antichrist, Dan. vii. 25, 'They shall be given into his hands until a Time and Times and the dividing of Time;' or again, with the prophecy in Dan. xii. 7, that one hardly knows at first sight whether to assign to Antiochus or

Antichrist, 'It shall be for a Time, Times and an Half.' There is, we grant, good reason to believe that the expression is a sort of poetical equivalent, standing for Three Years and a Half; yet the choice of such an indefinite mode of speech, when literal and exact language lay close at hand, and was employed freely within the limits of the same prophecy, is surely not without significance. If meant to hint at what is symbolical, we can readily understand the indefinite nature of the phrase; if otherwise, it is misleading.

Second, we have to adduce a number in Daniel that will no way consort with a literal receiving of the Three Years and a Half as expressive of the period of Antiochus' oppression: Dan. viii. 13. We may take for granted that the 8th chapter details the doings of Antiochus, the 'king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences,' under whose visage Antichrist peers forth. We find then the question put, 'How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?'. And the answer is returned, 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days (2,300); then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.' Now, if all the numbers in Daniel are to be treated as literal, see what confusion is wrought. For, observe the close parallelism between the verse quoted above, and Dan. xii. 11, 'From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a

thousand, two hundred and ninety days (1,290). How, after any literal fashion can these two numbers, 2,300 and 1,290 be harmonized? Further, Dan. xii. 7, comes in, with its statement, that for a Time and Times and Half, '*he*,' that is, Antiochus, if we hold the primary reference to be of any worth, 'shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the Holy People;' and then it is said, 'all these things shall be finished.' Now, if a Time and Times and Half mean literally Three Years and a Half, we have, taking 360 days as in a year, 1,260 days, as a competing number to set over against the other two. How the changes can be rung upon 2,300, 1,290, and 1,260, so as to keep them from clashing, if we proceed on a purely literal system, is more than appears. Well might Calvin say in his commentary in view of these numbers, 'I am no Thaumaturge to undertake their solution.' Those who, neglecting his spirit, have undertaken their solution, usually sever between the three verses in most arbitrary ways, and affix, of their own goodwill, one number to one period and one to another. But no satisfactory solution to the riddle will be found, that does not show how the whole three verses may have the same general reference, while yet the numbers employed are different. The parallelisms found in the three passages forbid any violent severment between them; but this only enhances the difficulty of dealing with the widely dissimilar numbers which they contain. If, however, the sym-

bolical import of two of them can be explained, the literal interpretation of the third will create no difficulty. Is there then any reason to believe that one of the three is to be taken literally? And can the other two be dealt with as symbols? We have already dealt with Dan. xii. 11 after a symbolic fashion; we hope in the next paragraph to make good that Dan. xii. 7 ought also to be treated thus; if so, there remains only Dan. viii. 13; and we think there is no reason to doubt the propriety of considering it as a literal prediction referring to the actual number of days during which Antiochus played the tyrant in connection with the temple-service in Jerusalem. Of course, it is not necessary for our argument that the literal mode of reading this verse be insisted on. For, if 2,300 can be shown to be a symbol, as we have tried to show that 1,290 is, and hope also to prove that 1,260 is, it would only remain to indicate how these three verses need not be torn asunder. But, with present light, we would be more inclined to regard the 2,300 as literal.

(1.) Because of the close and all but exclusive reference in the preceding part of the chapter to Antiochus and his doings. The reference is noway so exclusive in either of the passages in Daniel xii. There the *times of the end* are woven into the fabric of the vision; here, we submit, that element does not so clearly, if at all, intrude itself. (2.) The word used for days in the passage under discussion is different from that which Daniel elsewhere employs.

It is as if he said, 'Antiochus shall tread the sanctuary under foot, unto two thousand three hundred *evenings and mornings* (עָרֵב בֶּקֶר). To this there seems to be a reference in the 26th verse of the chapter, 'The vision of the evening and the morning (הָעֶרֶב וְהַבֶּקֶר).' May not this be an indication that the days are intended to stand for literal days, made up, according to the Hebrew mode, of evening and morning? The point may be of no importance, and dare not be unduly pressed, but it quite accords, at least, with the notion that the days here may be literal, while in the other passages of Daniel the days may be symbolical. (3.) History confirms the literal view in the present instance. Not that we need or intend to go into the point; but we adduce this as confirmatory of the view that the 2,300 days of spoliation on the part of Antiochus were literally fulfilled. There is nothing, however, in this to shut us up to the conclusion that the other periods mentioned are also literal. Neither is there in the fact of their being symbolical, anything that would militate against the treating of this particular passage literally.

Thirdly, it remains to show, that the Time and Times and Half a Time, of Daniel and Revelation, can be legitimately treated as a symbol. Now, the mere collocation of the texts in which this number is involved, should put any controversy on this point to rest. It may require indeed a moment's reflection to recognise the number Three and a Half



as one of the most frequently recurring numbers in Scripture; but, counting as of old the year to be made up of 360 days, and the month of 30 days, it seems that the 42 months, and the 1260 days, which will be recognised at once by every student of prophecy, are the same period of three and a half years, under different forms. Thus do the Time and Times and Half a Time get related to a number of passages. For instance—

Rev. xi. 2, where the Holy City is trodden under foot 42 months;

Rev. xi. 3, where the two witnesses prophesy 1260 days;

Rev. xii. 6, where the woman flees into the wilderness and is fed there 1260 days;

Or, as it is put, Rev. xii. 14, she is nourished for a time and times and half a time (a proof, by the way, that this mode of expression is the same with Three and a Half);

Lastly, Rev. xiii. 5, where the Beast continues 42 months.

Besides, we must not forget that the two witnesses (Rev. xi. 9) are exposed after death Three and a Half Days, and that there seems a reference to the same curious number in Daniel's prophecy concerning Messiah (Dan. ix. 27), 'In the midst of the week,' that is, apparently, at the end of Three and a Half Days, 'He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.' Whosoever will, may regard these numbers as casting up fortuitously, or as

occurring by the mere evolution of ordinary history; yet perhaps it is sufficiently clear that he who makes the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  bear a specific reference to an exact and unbending number, either of years or of days, will have a difficult task. It seems more hopeful, seeing  $3\frac{1}{2}$  is the half of 7, a number which is unquestionably symbolical in Scripture, to look out for some common idea which may underlie all the passages we have brought together. This special aspect of our subject, we leave however to another chapter, and meanwhile propose to treat the Time and Times and Half a Time precisely as in the first chapter we treated the numbers 1,290 and 1,335. There we found a historical basis, on which the numbers originally rested, viz., the 430 years of Israel's bondage in Egypt. What we ask now is, if a historical basis can similarly be found for the 1,260 days or  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years.

For this we have not far to seek. There are Three and a Half Years as clearly marked out in the history of the people of Israel as the 430 years of bondage; to wit, the years of drought in the days of Elijah. That period was literally burnt into the memories of God's people. Our Lord Himself gives its exact duration, Luke iv. 25, 'Many widows were in Israel, in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months.' It was a time of extremest suffering on the part of God's chosen. Yet amidst all, a remnant was preserved, and nourished as it were in the wilderness: 'I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all

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the knees which have not bowed unto Baal.' Hints are not wanting to show the extremities to which God's people were reduced, under the oppression of Ahab and Jezebel, as for instance in the language of Obadiah to Elijah, 'Was it not told my lord what I did, when Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord, how I hid an hundred men of the Lord's prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water?' In truth, there is no lack of evidence that this period in Israel's history was dealt with as if it were one of its great symbolical epochs. Thus only can the address to the church in Thyatira be explained, in which there occur the otherwise mysterious words, Rev. ii. 20, 'I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman (rather, *thy wife*) Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.' No doubt some are ready to say that the angel of the church of Thyatira was its bishop, and that he had a wife actually called Jezebel, who played the part here assigned to her. But we neither read that the angel was a Bishop, nor the Moderator of Presbytery, nor the Minister of the Congregation, but that he was an *angel*, and it would be the destruction of the whole symbolism of the book of Revelation to admit any other view. But even though we granted that the angel was the bishop, it would both be surprising that he should continue in office with such a wife, and such things going on, and also that his

wife should be called Jezebel, and act a part so wonderfully like the part played by her namesake formerly in Israel. A moment's reflection leads to the breakdown of this entire theory. Rather do we reason thus,—As Balaam and his doctrines were made a type in the case of the Church of Pergamos of another and similar system of error,—that of the Nicolaitanes, so amongst the Thyatirans, there were creeping in such perversions of the truth as had betrayed Israel in the days of Jezebel. Jezebel and her sorceries, her adulteries and idolatries, are used as symbols of incipient roots of bitterness that were detected by Him whose eyes were as a flame of fire. Nor is there anything in this to oppose the notion that the angels of the churches were angels and nothing else. We have merely to suppose that they are identified with the churches, with which, for the time being, they are associated. Hence, the *church* of Thyatira is addressed, and it is spoken of as wedded to a system of error that threatened to domineer over it, as Jezebel did over Ahab, and to bring down the same confusion and curse upon it, that the iniquities of Jezebel brought on the people of God. And it hardly would be difficult, were this an exposition of Revelation, to show that Jezebel, in the address to the church of Thyatira, has not a little to do with the portraiture of the Woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, and seated on the Beast. Enough, however, may have been done, to vindicate for the portion of Israel's history we have

in view, in the days of Elijah, the place we claim for it, as forming a natural basis for symbolical language respecting the future. In other words, we venture with some confidence to assert, that like as Israel's time of servitude in Egypt came to be employed as a type of similar chastisements that descended on God's people long after, so the oppressions and misery of Ahab's reign (that culminated in the three and a half year's drought), and the preservation of Elijah and the seven thousand during that time of trial, formed a fitting emblem of similar seasons of trouble through which the elect of the Father are preserved, despite the fury of their adversaries, and the sevenfold heat of the furnace in which their lot may be cast.

How, we ask, do such conclusions consort with Dan. vii. 25, where first occurs any reference to this period of Three and a Half? It is the power of evil which is being spoken of, that springs up after the fourth great world-power has had its sway, and it is written, 'He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High.' How like the conduct of Ahab! There is here a repetition of the past. What then more natural than to find it added? 'They shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of a time.' The fierceness of Israel's former time of trouble would be renewed. But, like as at the end of the time of drought, judgment descended on the priests of Baal, and Elijah stood up for the Lord his

God, so we are informed it shall be in the future. 'The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.' Thus Ahab is seen to have his counterpart in the time to come. The persecutions of the past, well represented by that Sun scorching all the land for three years and a half, will be redoubled in the future. And finally, the reformation of Elijah, imperfect at the best, will be paralleled and outshone by the triumph of the saints in the Days of Regeneration. Such reflections, at least, might naturally have been engendered in the hearts of those whom Daniel addressed, by the use of the Symbol—Three and a half. It is seen by this means to be of moral import, and we are saved from thinking it was a meaningless number for the times then present, or a historical riddle thrown in to test the skill of interpreters, and capable of being affixed to as many prophetic dates as there are days in the Time, and Times, and Half a Time.

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## CHAPTER III.

### THE NUMBER THREE AND A HALF.

IN passing from those passages in the Old Testament where the number Three and a Half occurs, to the fuller discussion of those in the New, in which the same symbol is employed, it will be necessary to consider whether it bears any reference to the well-known number Seven, of which it is the half. We do not conceive that such a line of inquiry is at all in opposition to anything that has been urged. We mean still to indicate that the historical basis from which all the passages proceed, is the Three and a Half Years, drought in the days of Elijah. But the further question remains, May not that period have been fixed by God, in accordance with its relation to the number Seven—a number so sacred in Israel? Without allowing ourselves meanwhile to launch out into the general subject of Symbolical Numbers, it may be enough to go upon the understanding, that, in the Apocalypse at least, the numbers are, many of them, if not all, of a symbolical nature. Who imagines, for example, that there will be exactly 144,000 sealed of all the tribes of the children of Israel,—12,000 of Judah, and 12,000 of Reuben, and so forth? Or who supposes that there will be

precisely 144,000 virgins, who will stand hereafter with the Lamb on Mount Sion? Nay; we seek a symbolical significance for the number Twelve. And this is no way hard to find; for the 12 foundations of the New Jerusalem, with the names of the 12 Apostles engraved thereon, and the 12 pearly gates, bearing the names of the 12 tribes of Israel, and the measure of the city, 12,000 furlongs, and of its wall,  $12 \times 12$  cubits, all convey the idea that 12, for some reason or other, symbolizes the church of the Redeemed. Hence the 12 times 12,000 denote apparently the universal company of the Ransomed.

In the case of the number Seven, it would indeed be a work of supererogation to go over all the places of the Bible where it occurs, in order to make out that it has a deep significance. From the time when the seventh day received the special seal of heaven, down through the ages when the rainbow with its seven hues shone forth as an emblem of grace, and circumcision came to be imperative after seven days, and the sprinklings of water and of blood were seven times performed, and the Passover and the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of the Tabernacles, and the Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee, all were arranged in harmony with the number Seven, there was continual reference to the meaning of the symbol. The Bible begins with a series of seven; it ends in the Apocalypse with the perfect development and flowering of this number,



*e.g.*, the seven churches, the seven angels, the seven spirits, the seven candlesticks and the seven lamps of fire, the seven seals, the seven horns and seven eyes of the Lamb, the seven trumpets and seven thunders, the seven plagues and seven vials, the sevenfold ascription of praise to God (vii. 12), and the sevenfold ascription of glory to the Lamb (v. 12), together with the seven heads of the dragon, and the seven crowns upon these heads, the seven heads of the beast, the seven kings and seven mountains. It may be the subject of some little doubt, what meaning is to be attached to this number. It is frequently taken to denote perfection, but Ten perhaps can lay juster claim to this special significance, and it only needs the careful study of those passages which Archbishop Trench has brought together in his work on the Epistles to the Seven Churches, or Bähr in his Symbolik (Vol. i. p. 187), to convince most that *Seven is the symbol of God's covenant of grace*. It is the sign of mercy, like the sevenfold hues of the rainbow that brighten the darkest cloud. Hence circumcision was performed after seven days. Hence, too, it was pre-eminently the number of sacrifice (2 Chr. xxix. 21. Job xlii. 8. Num. xxiii. 1, 14, 29). So was it the number of purification and consecration, these being the fruits of sacrifice (Lev. iv. 6, 17; viii. 11, 33; xiv. 9, 51; xvi. 14, 19. Num. xix. 12, 19). As to the Feasts springing out of the covenant, we need do nothing more than present the order in which the sacrifices were rendered

at one of them—the Feast of Tabernacles (Num. xxix.).

1st day,	1 kid,	13 bullocks,	2 rams,	14 lambs.
2d	„ 1	„ 12	„ 2	„ 14
3d	„ 1	„ 11	„ 2	„ 14
4th	„ 1	„ 10	„ 2	„ 14
5th	„ 1	„ 9	„ 2	„ 14
6th	„ 1	„ 8	„ 2	„ 14
7th	„ 1	„ 7	„ 2	„ 14
	—	—	—	—
Total,	7	„ 70	„ $2 \times 7$	„ $2 \times 7 \times 7$

Nothing could better show how Seven entered as a constituent element into the whole idea of sacrifice, and of the covenant relationship in which God's people stood to Jehovah. Even the apparently arbitrary arrangement of offering 13 bullocks the first day, and 12 on the second, is seen to have the design of securing that on the *seventh* day *seven* bullocks should be offered, while throughout the entire season 70 should be presented.

In dealing with other nations likewise, God, who is Lord over all, chose to employ the same number. Witness the seven years of plenty and of famine in Egypt, and the seven times which passed over Nebuchadnezzar. But it was as the covenant-Jehovah He put forth His hand in these instances, for the sake of His people. So we understand why the command should have been given to Naaman to

wash *seven* times in Jordan. Perhaps the story connected with the crossing of the Jordan would suggest itself to Naaman; of the encompassing of Jericho seven different days, and seven times upon the seventh day, till at length the walls fell down. Thus had God, in the very beginning of Israelitish history, put a special stamp upon this number. And probably the washing seven times is more enigmatical to us than it was to Naaman. In all likelihood he knew the language of the Hebrews: his own was a kindred dialect. He must have been aware that seven was the sacred number in Israel,—so sacred that the word to swear—to invoke Jehovah's name—meant merely to employ the number seven. The God who put seven colours in that rainbow, which was the sign of His covenant with Noah, made the sevenfold sprinklings in the sanctuary, and the seventh day of rest, as well as the sevenfold washing of Naaman in the Jordan, all testify to His being the covenant-God of Israel. *Wash seven times.* The Syrian would know that this connected his cleansing with Israel's God. Would he, or would he not, own allegiance to Jehovah? Would he suffer the covenant-stamp to be put upon his brow, and, by washing *seven* times, acknowledge the cure to be wholly from the Lord? We know the result in his glad confession: 'Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel.'

We have dealt thus with the number Seven because of its radical importance, and may now be

suffered to go on to the further question, for the sake of which we entered into this inquiry,—Can Three and a Half, seeing it is the half of Seven, be shown to have any special significance? No doubt it is far from being so symmetrical in appearance as twelve or four, but may not its very brokenness be suggestive? May it not tell of its complementary Three and a Half, which, together with it, makes up Seven? As the five foolish virgins stand over against the five wise, and form with them the perfect number Ten; as in the tabernacle structure the tens were similarly divided (Ex. xxvi. 3, 5, 9); and as six is sometimes found similarly to stand in its relation to twelve (Ex. xxviii. 10. Num. vii. 3), so, may not Three and a Half be meant to be seen in its bearing toward Seven, the number of the covenant? As a mark of time, may it not denote a period when God's covenant of mercy is partly concealed? Do not such periods of darkness and of trouble oftentimes occur in the experience of God's people? Judging by the things of sense, the afflictions He suffers to befall His children seem rather to imply a breach of the covenant than to display the glories of His grace. Their state oftentimes could not be symbolized by Seven, the full-orbed sign of peace and assurance, but would rather take Three and a Half as its type, the broken number, whose meaning can only be known when we think of the Three and a Half beyond,—the glory that is in store. Unless there were constant reference to the side of God's

covenant, which lies out of view, it might appear, from the persecutions to which God's people are exposed, and the way they are cut off at times by martyrdom, that their proper emblem was a broken pillar,—the broken number  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , instead of the full glory of the covenant that shines out in the number Seven. But it is only because the heavenly side is concealed. The sufferings are here, the glory there; the cross below, the crown above. And as  $3\frac{1}{2}$  always suggests its complement, so the trials and troubles of earth point to the rest that remaineth for the people of God, and are therefore to be recognised as parts of God's covenant. Hence we look to the mystic number, 1260, which has given rise to so many conflicting and fruitless attempts at assigning days and dates with calmer interest, and we seem to comprehend how the sufferings and reproach of Christ's people should be represented as extending over  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, or  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days, as the case may be, in order that the exaltation which is to follow may be seen to be connected with their labour and pain.

There seems evidence from John's Gospel that Christ's ministry extended in all probability over Three and a Half years. The question would be determined, if we knew whether the feast, mentioned in chap. v. 1, were the passover; for then four Passovers would be mentioned by John (ii. 13; v. 1; vi. 4; xiii. 1), and the public life of Jesus would be seen to stretch over more than three years. This is in such harmony with the prophecy (Dan. ix. 27),

that in the midst of the week, *i.e.* at the end of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, Christ would cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, by giving Himself up an offering to God, that it would require stronger proof than is usually brought forward, to shake our confidence in the view which assigns to our Lord's public ministry Three years and a Half. The controversy which exists on the point is sufficient to forbid our impressing this fact into our service, else it would at once appear how fitting it was, that the time of the Church's trials upon earth should be represented by the same number with the sufferings of her Lord. Christ and His people are one. The history of the Church, in the Book of Revelation, is very much a repetition of the sufferings and trials of her Lord; and nothing could be more appropriate than that as Christ bore all the malice of the devil for three years and a half, so the Bride, the Lamb's wife, should be represented as suffering at the hands of the great Dragon for a time, and times, and half a time. But, at all events, as the sufferings of Israel in the days of Elijah extended over that period, we are prepared to find that the afflictions of the general church of Christ are similarly indicated. Hence the Holy City is regarded as trodden under foot 42 months, the Two Witnesses testify 1260 days, and their dead bodies are left unburied  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days. Throughout, the mystic number! giving less an indication of precise epochs, than pointing forward and upward to the complement of this state of persecution, even to the

glorious half of the covenant concealed meanwhile in heaven, but of which a few bright glimpses are imparted sufficient to cheer us on our way. Certainly the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  can never occur as a symbol, without the attentive reader of Scripture being forced to think upon God's holy covenant. They are God's covenant people who suffer during the period set forth by this number; and, whatever may seem likely to flesh and blood, that covenant will not be broken. The broken number Three and a Half is like the half ring which used to be the lover's pledge. The sorrows and woes which it indicates, all form part of God's circle of mercies. There is a bright side to the dark cloud; there is a glorious hereafter.

Thus, in our interpretation of the symbol, we would not attempt to set up as prophets—but, what may be of as much consequence, we would place our feet on great broad principles, and learn lessons of truth fit for every age and circumstance. In this way, we would gather from the recurrence of  $3\frac{1}{2}$ , the union of the church to Christ throughout all its struggles, and therefore the assurance of speedy and complete deliverance. As He apparently was three years and a half bearing the woes of public trial and contempt, so His church must accomplish her weary 1260 days. Or, at any rate, we have the example of God's faithfulness in the past, in times of unparalleled sufferings—Elijah and the seven thousand all preserved, by the brook and in the widow's house, or in the cave of Obadiah, under

the covert of Him whose name is Love. We have also the sure promise of the everlasting covenant, that the 1260 days will pass. Yes! the days run on to months, and the 42 months of trial will also soon flow by. Like the 42 stages of Israel in the wilderness (Num. xxxiii.), the stages in the church's course, marked by so much strife and sin, are coming to an end. It is but a time and times and half a time after all, and then comes millennial, yea, more than millennial, joy. Happily the number of the years of trial is shortened. It is a broken number Three and a Half, and it seems all the shorter because it points to glory. It tells of the time and times, and endless times, in which we shall enjoy the bliss of heaven, death being swallowed up of life, 'Glory, glory dwelling in Emmanuel's land.' And, as it is with the church universal, so is it with each individual member of the church. Salvation is nearer now than when we believed. Whatever be the date of the Advent, Christ's coming to you is near. The time, and times, and half a time, appointed by the Lord are drawing near a close. Your warfare will soon be over, your trials done. Watch: for you know not when the Lord appeareth.

We are now prepared for examining more critically the leading passage where the symbol Three and a Half is employed in the Book of Revelation; and, for simplicity's sake, we have chosen to throw a few remarks on it, into the shape of a running commentary.



Rev. xi. 'And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.'

The temple of God is so often spoken of in New Testament Scripture as the Elect in whose hearts He dwells, that it does not seem difficult to understand the opening of this vision. 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.'<sup>1</sup> God's people are the tabernacle of which Christ is the minister. The altar to be measured seems to be the incense altar that stood in the holy place, and from which arose the prayers and praises of the saints. An inventory, then, if we may so speak, is to be taken of the number, and fervour, and purity of God's true worshippers.

'But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.'

The Gentiles, throughout this book, are taken to denote God's enemies. But in the present case, these enemies have a certain footing within God's sanctuary. They have entered in by the outer gate of ordinances, and a profession has been made of attachment to the worship of the Lord. It is the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

false church which here appears—treading God's courts, but only for the object of treading everything holy under foot. Those that belong to it are vile as those whom Jesus cast forth from the Temple courts with a scourge of cords; but it is under a profession of godliness that they pollute the sanctuary, and render it a den of thieves. Hence, in reality, the spirit of Antiochus, Israel's great oppressor, is in them; and to manifest their relation to him, it is said, 'They shall tread the holy city under foot 42 months.' It is the period this of Three Years and a Half which we have been already considering, and refers to the time during which deceit will prosper.

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

Who these two witnesses are must be gathered from the description of them which follows. But, meanwhile, their dress is that of mourners, for they bewail the state of the Israel of God. It is like the raiment of Elijah, and the time they prophesy corresponds with the three and a half years when he was a swift witness against Ahab and his house. As long as the Holy City is violated, so long does their mournful testimony last; but 1260 days are given, and not 42 months, for otherwise we might forget that the numbers were symbolic, and not meant to be taken as literal dates.

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‘These are the two olive trees and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the whole earth.’

If we looked at the last expression alone, ‘These are the two candlesticks,’ we could hardly fail to come to the conclusion that these witnesses represented the entire body of God’s churches and His people. The seven candlesticks were associated, at the beginning of this book, with the seven representative churches of Asia, and we are at no liberty violently to change the symbolism. Here, no doubt, are only two witnesses. But two was so connected with witness-bearing, being the number required by the law of Moses to substantiate a charge, and the number we see reflected in the two tables of testimony, and the twos and twos by which the disciples and the seventy were sent forth, that we can hardly but regard them as symbolizing all God’s witnesses and martyrs throughout the world. Hence we could understand their being called *the two candlesticks* that stand before God.

But what is to be made of the expression, ‘These are the two Olive trees?’ This refers us back to Zech. iv., where we find the vision of the Temple-lamp and its seven branches, with two olive trees beside it. These continually feed the bowl with oil, from which seven golden pipes lead the stream of liquid gold down to each several lamp. The prophet asks the question, ‘What are these two olive

trees? and what be those two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?' The answer comes back, as if it were virtually a reply to both questions, 'These are the two anointed ones that *stand by the Lord* of the whole earth.' Hengstenberg seems to have established, that the immediate reference under the name of the Two Anointed ones, must be to Joshua the High Priest, who, in virtue of his office, was anointed, and who is mentioned in chap. iii. as *standing before the Lord*, along with Zerubbabel the representative for the time of regal dignity, who also, in virtue of his office was an anointed one, and to whom this vision was specially directed—(Zech. iv. 6). The king and priest were the great supports of true religion in Israel at the time. They were nursing fathers to every thing that was good. They were like the olive trees that nourished the temple-lamps with golden oil. They were the channels through which the Spirit was pouring forth His grace.

In our vision then in Revelation, we have the two witnesses compared with the godly king and high priest of old in Israel. 'These are the two olive trees,' it is said, '*standing before the God of the earth*,' the reference in this last clause to the passage in Zechariah being unmistakable. Why not rest content with this, and hold that the offices represented by Joshua and Zerubbabel have to do with the two witnesses?—The Church and the State, in

other words, regarded as conspiring together to foster the interests of truth and righteousness? Obviously this is the simplest generalisation by which we can stretch from the vision in Zechariah to the vision in the Apocalypse. And unless some fatal objection can be brought to this view from the immediate context, there seems to be a great deal in it that is consistent with what occurs afterwards in the further revelations given to John.

For example, in chap. xiii., a vision is granted of the powers that conspire against God and His Christ. We hope to make out that these represent the *false Church* and the *perverted State*, leagued together under the inspiration of Satan. What more natural than to find the *ideal Church* and *State* symbolized by the two witnesses? If, at least, the view for a moment be admitted, we can readily understand how they should be regarded as one with the entire body of believers, so that we read, 'These are the two olive trees,' and at the same time, 'The two candlesticks.' The true Church and State are in one sense synonymous with the entire company of believers, whether looked on in respect to their numbers or their power. The ruling powers, in the church and in the world, so far as these powers have at any time been in conformity with the will of God, must, we think, be regarded as the Two Witnesses.

But let us advance, for this may be confirmed, or else it may be overthrown by what follows.

‘ If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven that it reign not in the days of their prophecy.’

Thus far the history of Elijah serves as a basis for the prophetic vision. There comes up to our mind the destruction of the companies of fifty by fire at the word of the Tishbite. The shutting up of heaven for three years and a half, is an integral part in the picture of these two witnesses, who testify throughout their 1260 days. But another Bible character now rises up to view.

‘ They have power over waters, to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.’

Moses is joined to Elijah as representing those who testify for God’s truth in the world. It is fitting that it should be so. These are the representatives of God’s redeemed, on more occasions than one. They appear in the dark back-ground of history along with Jesus, while He is tempted in the wilderness. Had not Moses been forty years in the wilderness during the time of Israel’s temptation? And had not Elijah been sent forty days into the wilderness, likewise to be tempted? But if this be thought too recondite, it will be more readily conceded, that Moses and Elijah do afterwards come forth as the representatives of the just made perfect, on the Mount of Transfiguration. They

certainly are knit together in that wondrous mission from heaven to earth, when they speak of the de-  
cease about to be accomplished in Jerusalem. The  
Law-giver, the Law-reformer, and the Law-fulfiller,  
are bound together in mysterious sympathy. But  
do Moses and Elijah speak for themselves alone,  
about that death which was to be the world's life?  
We like rather to think of Moses as the representa-  
tive of the blessed spirits, and Elijah, with his body  
already glorified, speaking forth the sentiments of  
that cloud of witnesses who were bending down to  
behold the issue of the mighty struggle in Geth-  
semane and on Calvary. Nothing, at all events,  
could be more in keeping with the rest of Scripture,  
than that the history of Moses and Elijah should  
form the united ground-work of any picture re-  
lating to the general company of God's witness-  
bearers.

But does not this militate against the attempt  
at inweaving into the same picture the figures of  
Joshua and Zerubbabel, the king and priest, the  
representatives of church and state? We think  
not. Did not Moses act the part of king in Jes-  
hurun, when he gave Israel the law? And was  
not Elijah, when he offered, in lieu of the priesthood,  
the sacrifice on Carmel, the very embodiment of the  
witness-bearing power of God's Church? We can  
see nothing incongruous in associating Moses and  
Elijah, even as we associated Joshua and Zerub-  
babel, with all that is holy in a Christianized govern-

ment, and with all that is pure and good in the professing Church of the Redeemer. The two witnesses for God in the world have opposed to them in *fact* what we find opposed to them in Revelation, the two beasts that rise out of the pit,—a wicked *world power*, and a false *church*, that enters into alliance with it, for the subversion of the truth.

‘And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.’

This represents, in one grand catastrophe, what has more or less been transpiring ever since the days of our Lord. Even now we are in the midst of the unequal strife between light and darkness, and to the eye of sense the doom of God’s witnesses is sealed.

‘And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.’

It is by means of the city, New Jerusalem, that the glorious company of God’s saints is set forth in this book. It is by means of the great city, Babylon, that the hellish counterpart of all that is good is set forth. Hence, *in* this city, the Lord is represented as having been crucified. Everything that is evil in Revelation is attributed and consigned to Babylon; even as everything that is good is throughout the Bible regarded as transpiring



within the walls of the New Jerusalem. 'She is the mother of us all.'

' And it of Zion shall be said,  
This man and that man, there  
Was born.'

That is, the new birth of every one is registered as taking place in Zion.

' When God the people writes, He'll count,  
That this man born was there.'

So, nothing evil transpires without its being affixed in Revelation to Babylon. Sodom and Egypt are taken as its types; in them were seen the shadows of Antichristian misrule and hatred. Hence it is said, 'The great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.' And there, God's witnesses to the end will suffer. They are to be associated with their Lord in suffering, even as they are associated with Him in their witness-bearing. And, like as His ministry extended over three years and a half, can we not understand how the two witnesses should also testify three years and a half? But the witness-bearing, and the suffering of the witnesses, are meant to be clearly seen in their relation to each other. Hence, it is added,

'And they of the people, and kindred, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 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 dwell on the earth.'

The three days and a half of their shameful suffering—if we can regard the dead as suffering—and here certainly they are regarded as suffering outrageous violation—these three days and a half of suffering are meant to be indissolubly joined with their three years and a half of testifying. Witnessing for God, and suffering for His cause, are to be conjoined as long as the world stands. The character so meek, and merciful, and peace-making, described by Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount, draws down on the head all manner of hate and persecution. What is the octave of the blessings sounded forth by the Saviour? 'Blessed are they which are *persecuted* for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

But the last notes of this strain are caught up also by our passage in Revelation.

'And after three days and an half, the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet.'

Ezekiel's vision has been often repeated in the history of the church. The Vaudois seemed buried, but they have had their resurrection. Everywhere the blood of the martyrs has proved the seed of the church. God never forgets His covenant: the three and a half are suggestive of seven.

‘And great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.’

We behold God’s servants acknowledged as was their Master. Suffering with Jesus, they are glorified together with Him. Whether there will be at some time in the future an actual rising of God’s children from the dead, and a departure into glory in the presence of their enemies, it would be rash from this passage alone to affirm, but it would be hard to deny. The revival of truth oftentimes in the past, the appearance of Elias in the person of John, may point forward to a great antitype in the future, when the witnesses against Antichrist, so much spoken of in Revelation, may be actually raised from the dead in token of God’s approval. But of this anon. Meanwhile we read—

‘And the same hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell’ (as we shall afterwards see, this signifies that the whole city was threatened with destruction, and that the whole was considered doomed), ‘and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand’ (seven thousand as connected with the anger of the covenant-avenging Jehovah), ‘and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.’

It would have been vain, in the midst of our exposition, to have shown where at any point there

was an agreement with commentators, and where a divergence from their views. This passage is indeed 'a *cruce interpretum*, as Alford calls it, and we prefer, instead of a learned array of opinions, to leave the above as the record of what we have tried to distil for ourselves from out this page of truth. It may be to some extent new, but we conceive it to be consistent with itself, and consistent with the line of symbolical interpretation on which we are proceeding, and it may serve to indicate how other passages could be treated, in conformity with the same general principles. One thing only we have to add, that no attempt at explaining the three days and a half after a literal fashion has met with general acceptance, and we cannot but think that Alford has truth on his side when he ridicules Elliott's calculation, which triumphantly makes out the  $3\frac{1}{2}$  days to be the period that elapsed between the ninth session of the Lateran Council and the posting up of the theses by Luther at Wittenberg! As little successful do we think those writers have been who have taken the 1260 days as years, and tried to crush historical periods into a fantastic uniformity therewith. If, on the other hand, without any attempt at profundity as regards historical lore, but mainly depending on the comparison of Scripture with Scripture, we have been able to get an intelligible meaning out of the chapter we have discussed, the fact goes far to establish the view respecting the symbolical numbers of Scripture which we are seeking to support.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST.

THUS far we have proceeded on our task without coming upon a single number that a careful exegesis would force us to regard as fixing the date of millennial bliss. We have come upon numbers bearing a moral signification, and in that way forming part and parcel of prophecies respecting the future. But only one thoroughly wedded to literalism would on that account force from them an utterance respecting the times hidden in the counsels of the Father. There remains, however, a number, which, in despair of any other solution, has been supposed to signify a definite number of years,

666.

It is not without trepidation that we venture into an arena, where many a lance has been broken.

REV. xiii. 18. 'Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six Hundred Three Score and Six.'

Such is the challenge thrown out to men in connection with the number of the beast, and not a few have been ready to take it up. From early times speculation has been rife regarding what the Spirit could mean by it. One of the Fathers, Irenaeus,

has indicated three different modes by which the number was accounted for in his day, and there has not been much further light thrown on the subject since. One party took the number to set forth a period of years. So also did Luther; and very probably there are some who saw in the year 1866, or 3 times 6 and 66, a curious resemblance to the number of the beast, the more especially since, that year, the troops of France were withdrawn from Rome.

Another party from of old have looked upon the number as setting forth the name of Antichrist. It is almost wearisome to repeat that the letters of the alphabet have been used in different languages instead of figures, and that almost every name which could make up, by means of the letters of which it was composed, the mystic number 666, has been fixed upon as that of the beast. It happens that the word *Lateinos* is in this category,

$$\lambda = 30, a = 1, \tau = 300, \epsilon = 5, \iota = 10, \nu = 50, o = 70, \\ \varsigma = 200, \lambda\alpha\tau\epsilon\iota\nu\omicron\varsigma = 666,$$

and as the Latin church is the church of Rome, this has been the favourite Protestant solution of the difficulty. But Papists have not been without their revenge; for, if we mistake not, they make the name of Calvin, and certainly the name of Luther, answer the same purpose. It was long ago attempted to fasten on Nero Cæsar, who put Paul to death, the mark of the beast, by the same means; and in our day ingenious people have seen in the name Napoleon, both a connection with Apollyon, and with this

number 666. In truth, a long catalogue of names can be lugged into this service, insomuch that one does not wonder at Dean Alford having had misgivings, as he put his half sort of imprimatur on the word Lateinos. It is however without doubt the best solution of this kind that has been ever attempted. It was one of the first hypotheses broached in the region of unfulfilled prophecy; but more it might not be advisable to say.

Another conceit belonging to this school of interpreters is that 666 is represented by three letters in Greek

$$\chi = 600, \xi = 60, \varsigma = 6; \chi\xi\varsigma = 666,$$

of which the first and the last may be taken for the initial letters of Christ the Saviour, while the middle letter,  $\xi$ , is like a serpent. Hence it is sapiently divined that like as the Serpent broke in of old upon the work of Christ, so the number of the beast, by the very shape of its letters, is meant to symbolize Antichrist!

It must be obvious that much of this is learned trifling. Nay, it is worse than trifling, for it converts the Bible into an Abracadabra, and sets the study of prophecy alongside of the profitless research into the Cabbalistic Alchymy, or Astrology of the ancients.

The last attempt, however, at a solution leads us to a third class of interpreters who have thought of the number of the beast as having something to do with his nature; and Irenaeus, to whom we have

already referred, has suggested that there may be a connection traceable between the beast in Revelation and the image of Nebuchadnezzar in Dan. iii. At first sight this may appear as arbitrary as the plan which Hengstenberg takes, who turns to his Concordance and finds that, according to Ezra ii. 3, the number of the children of Adonikam who returned with Zerubbabel were in number six hundred, sixty and six. Let any other contrive to worm out a connection between this simple fact and the beast in Revelation, and we shall be inclined to give him the palm for ingenuity that has hitherto been borne by the Berlin Professor.

But may not the hint thrown out by Irenaeus be worth something after all? True, it has been greatly overlooked by reason of the more showy and brilliant guesses to which we have referred, but a little reflection will show that it is deserving of our serious consideration. Certain it is that we read, Dan. iii. 1, of Nebuchadnezzar's making an image of gold, whose height was *threescore* cubits, and the breadth thereof *six* cubits; and in Rev. xiii. we have to do with another image bearing the mystic and somewhat similar number—*six hundred, threescore, and six*. Further, Babylon has to do with the one image, and the mystic Babylon has to do with the other. We are persuaded that it is in this direction a solution must be sought of the mystery of the beast, and its image, and its mark. At least, it is intended in the next few pages to follow out the suggestion



which has been made: and in this we are encouraged by the fact, that we are only following the course which we have hitherto pursued in the case of all the Bible numbers which have been discussed. It will be remembered that we went back to historical events,—to the bondage in Egypt and the drought in the days of Elijah, for the basis of the prophetic numbers 1290 and 1260, and in the present case we mean to go back to one of the most striking scenes in the history of ancient Babylon, for the foundation of one of the most sublime, but intricate, prophecies respecting the Babylon of Revelation. We invite, then, a more rigid comparison between Rev. xiii. and Dan. iii., than, so far as our reading has gone, has generally been attempted.

And first we have to ask, What end the king of Babylon had in view by rearing his image of gold? What was it designed to represent? There can be little doubt that Nebuchadnezzar meant to deify his own power, and the power of Babylon, by means of this image. The vision had been granted him, chap. ii., of the image with the head of gold, and breast of silver, and body of brass and limbs of iron, as well as of the stone hewn without hands out of the mountain which smote and destroyed the whole. Daniel had made known to him the interpretation; and no doubt the king must have been gratified with the vision, in so far as the power of Babylon was set forth by the head of gold. But then, there was the breast of silver, representing an empire that

would overthrow his. How little was there in this to gratify his ambition? Besides, there was the certainty that the stone hewn without hands would destroy the entire round of world-powers that should try to inherit the earth. How different this from the thoughts of universal and eternal monarchy which Nebuchadnezzar would have gladly entertained! Quickly does he seem to have forgotten the lesson God would teach, by the composite nature of the image in his dream. Suffering his mind, therefore, to dwell only on the gold vision of power which he was ever seeking to realize, he reared on the plain of Dura his heaven-defying image, and called on all the people, the nations and the languages, to fall down and worship it.

But how, we ask, in the second place, did the fourfold image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream appear in the visions of Daniel? Under the form of four hideous beasts. Like as Nebuchadnezzar himself was reduced to the form of a beast, and got the heart of a beast, so in Dan. vii. we find the head of gold transformed into a lion with eagle's wings, the breast and arms of gold are changed into a ravenous bear raising up itself on one side, the body of brass becomes the quick flying Leopard of Greece, and the limbs of iron, with the toes of iron and clay, pass into the dreadful and terrible beast of Rome, with its ten horns, and among them another little horn with eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth

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speaking great things. The fourfold image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is therefore an image of the beasts, and the image reared on Dura could not be more aptly designated than by the name—the image of the beast. If it was to glorify the king of Babylon, as none can doubt, then we seem to have special reason for calling it the image of the beast. At least it is of importance that we should keep in mind two passages which are related to each other—Dan. v. 20, 21, where speaking of Nebuchadnezzar it is said, 'When his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made *like the beasts*;' and Dan. vii. 2–4, 'I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, *and a man's heart was given to it*.' This is a picture of Babylon, and of its great head Nebuchadnezzar. How curious, then, the relation which we find expressed between the human and the brutal! The man is made like a beast; the beast in the vision is seen to be connected with what is human,—with human feelings and human government.

This may prepare us for considering Rev. xiii.

And first, we find the symbolism of Daniel's vision revived, 'I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea.' From amongst the heaving, seething masses of men, this world power springs up. It is seen also to embody the different characteristics of the beasts with which we have been made familiar. 'The beast which I saw was like a *leopard*, and his feet were as the feet of a *bear*, and his mouth as the mouth of a *lion*.' Like as the gold and silver, and brass and iron, were moulded into one single image, so the beasts of Daniel seem fused into this *one* of Revelation. For the power of the world, whether seen in Babylon, Persia, Greece, or Rome, is essentially the same; and may be regarded, whether in the past or present, as one. The universal world-power is therefore before us, and is portrayed, in consequence, with seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. The true origin of the power that we find in the states of the world as opposed to Christ is also depicted: 'The dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.' Further, it is said, 'I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed.' Here is a perfectly new trait: what can it mean? May it not refer to the event which had to do with the crushing of the serpent's—the dragon's head? The dragon and the beast have much to do with each other. Perverted State power, is but the reflection of what comes from

beneath. How, in the language of figure could Satan, as he is at present, be better described, than as a dragon whose head was, as it were, wounded to death; but whose deadly wound was healed? Nothing could better set forth the paradox, that the Serpent's head was crushed by Jesus on the cross, and yet that Satan lives, that the prince of this world is judged, and yet that as a roaring lion he goes about seeking whom he may devour. In like manner, the power of this world, exemplified in Rome at the time when Christ was crucified, might be regarded by the very fact of Jesus' death, as fatally wounded. 'I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death.' Did not Christ's sacrifice, in a good and true sense, finish transgression and make an end of sin? Yet, as Satan is still suffered notwithstanding to live, so we have it recorded in the vision, that the deadly wound of the beast was healed. We cannot therefore marvel that all the world is said to have wondered after the beast, and worshipped alike the dragon and the beast. Neither do we marvel at the period of the duration of the world-power in Daniel coming up again here: 'Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months'—that is, three and a half years.

Lest, however, it should be thought that we have too cavalierly disposed of the passage respecting the wounding of the beast's head to death, we have to refer in self-vindication to the other locus classicus on the subject, Rev. xvii. 8: 'The beast

that thou sawest was, and is not ; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition : and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder (whose names were not written in the book of life), when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.' This enigma seems able to be read, if we attempt to bind up in one and the same sentence the two truths, that Christ's death was the death of deaths, and victory over sin, while yet, sin remains upon the earth and the devil exerts his power. As respects the eternal plans and purposes of God, everything was *finished* on the cross. Atonement was made ; sin was for ever washed away ; the accuser of the brethren was silenced eternally. Justification was then complete. In a good and true sense, the devil who was, *is not*, from the moment Jesus gives Himself a ransom for many. Logically speaking, we might say he *is not* at the present moment, so far as God's people are concerned. Some, we know, are carried off their feet into Plymouthism on this very score. They say, 'My sins were all forgiven on Calvary ; then what have I more to do with sin, or the confession of sin ? Perfect righteousness was secured for me by Jesus ; then what have I to do with law, or the reign of law ?' It will be observed that they maim the passage before us. They hold that Satan was and *is not*—*is not*, from the moment they believe. The Apocalypse says, he was, and *is not*, and yet *is*. If men would *redd the marches*, as King James advised,

*between justification and sanctification*, there would be less error abroad, and less difficulty in understanding how Satan *is not*, and yet *is*; how His head was as it were wounded to death, and yet his deadly wound was healed. The atonement price was rendered on the cross; but the work of redemption is being carried forward still. The conflict was decided which laid Satan low; but mystery of mysteries! he is living still, and all save those whose names are written in the Book of Life, are wondering after him. Apply this language to the Beast, who is the impersonation of Satan on the earth, and you arrive at the descriptions in these much contested passages of Revelation.

So far, we would be inclined to agree with Hengstenberg, though we think his mode of illustration may fail to carry conviction. Auberlen, with whom Fairbairn agrees, while adopting the same kind of symbolical interpretation, yet mixes up historical elements in a somewhat confusing fashion. The wounding of the head is by them regarded thus—

‘In one of the forms of its manifestation the beast was not, indeed, to be actually and properly killed, but to appear *as if it were wounded to death*: *i.e.* to drop for a season its wonted hostility to the cause and kingdom of God—to cease for a time to act as a beast; which it could only do by assuming either a truly religious, or a professedly religious character. Now something that precisely answers

to this change did take place about the period when the Empire began to totter to its fall. It seemed then as if the beast had received a deadly wound; for in the formative epoch of the new states, the beast apparently passed into the woman, through the formal reception of Christianity by the ruling powers.'—*Fairbairn on Prophecy*, p. 330.

Without however pausing to deal critically with this view, or to illustrate in opposition the one we prefer, we have, in proceeding to the consideration of the second beast, to differ wholly from the interpretation which the above quotation seems meant to subserve, and which, being maintained by Hofmann and Hengstenberg, and Fairbairn and Auberlen, may be regarded as the favourite one of the modern school of prophecy. It is, that the second beast of Revelation depicts modern atheistic tendencies, and antisciptural scientific speculations and assumptions. If the old view, which made the first beast the Pope, and the second beast or false prophet the Turk or Mahomet, went too far in one direction, this is surely going too far in the other. Where else in Scripture do we find the distinction so sharply drawn between the world, and the world's science, as to justify the representation of the two, as two distinct beasts? Nay, the world and the materialistic tendencies of such an age as ours, are bound up together. But we do find in the Bible, over and over again, two powers that are sharply distinguished from each other, and which yet often



coalesce and work into each other's hands,—to wit, the Church and the World. If the true Church and the true State be represented by the two heavenly witnesses of chap. xi., may not the wicked world-power and the false church be set forth by the two beasts in chap. xiii.? The two witnesses and the two beasts are opposites; and it is interesting to observe how the opposition is marked by the careful language of Scripture. While the two witnesses *prophesy*, the second beast is expressly called (xvi. 13) the *false* prophet. While Elijah, the representative of the true and reforming spirit in the church, in the one case, calls down fire from heaven; in the other case, the false prophet simulates his wondrous works, 'so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men.' If we have determined truly who the two witnesses are, we have evidently got the clue to the interpretation of the Beasts. Guided in this way, we propose to consider the second beast that rises from the earth after the first, as the type of Antichristian power, seen in the false churches that have sprung up in New Testament times, and especially, the Church of Rome.

First it is a Beast, and comes up out of the earth. For whatever pretension it makes, the false church is bestial as the world itself, and is of the earth earthy. Quite in keeping with its first appearance, we find it has two horns like a lamb; it makes a show of having connection with the Lamb of God.

But it speaks as a dragon; for the old Dragon the Devil is the source of its inspiration. 'And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causing the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.'

Now we come to part of the prediction that well illustrates how language pertaining to the future is borrowed from the past, and how also the present vision is brought into relation with that of the witnesses going before: 'And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles, which he had power to do in the sight of the beast.' Much in this would be endlessly enigmatical, did we not remember that Moses was taken as the historical type of one of the witnesses, in chap. xi., along with Elijah. And now the scene suggests itself, in which Moses stands before Pharaoh, one of the grandest representatives of the world-power; and over against Moses stand the magicians of Egypt. We know how, by means of their miracles, which they had power to do in the sight of Pharaoh, his heart was hardened. Here, in Revelation, the old thing comes round again. The prophets of the world, and the rulers of the world, combine against the Lord. The false church supports the false state. 'It deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the miracles it does *in the presence of the beast.*' It is ever

on the side of despotism, and resuscitates the evil that might otherwise sleep and die. Hence, in connection with the false miracles it works, we find it is represented as 'saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.' Further, we find it represented as giving 'life to the image of the beast, so that it should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.' Here, as every one knows, even the most sober interpreters fly off to particular historical incidents, and saddle them with the literal fulfilment of these predictions. Alford, for once, gets harnessed, contentedly, in the same team with Elliott. Speaking of the image of the beast, and of the image causing that as many as would not worship it should be slain, he says: 'The seer is now describing facts which history substantiates to us in their literal fulfilment. The image of Cæsar was everywhere that which men were made to worship: it was before this that the Christian martyrs were brought to the test, and put to death if they refused the act of adoration.' But he ingeniously adds, 'It is not so easy to assign a meaning to the giving life and speech to the image of the beast.' Verily it is not easy, but rather impossible, if we proceed literally, and read our prophecy as if it were merely a little bit of history written before the time. The winking images and weeping Madonnas, at which Alford is ready to grasp, will

hardly serve his turn; for if we commence with literalities we must stick to them throughout: and when had images the breath of life breathed into them? When did they—the images (for thus alone can we read the passage: it is not the false prophet, as we might suppose from our translation, but the images, that do the deed)—when did they cause that those who did not worship them should be killed?

To read the whole as a prophecy, and therefore couched in symbolical language, and probably based upon some scriptural incident, will probably bring order out of confusion. Does not the very expression, —The Image of the Beast,—suggest a means of getting out of this labyrinth? Was it not the case, that of old, on the plains of Dura, an Image of the Beast was reared, and all who refused to worship it were put to death? Any better type of Antichrist than Nebuchadnezzar exhibited, it would be hard to find. And since Babylon, in the Book of Revelation, is the name of the mystic kingdom of Antichrist, we are prepared to understand what is said, when the seer tells of an image that was once again to be worshipped. It will be an image of which Nebuchadnezzar's was the type, and in connection with which the children of God, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, will be cast once more into a furnace of fire. Who does not feel that the prophecy, thus interpreted by the past, becomes a most striking picture of the future? Now, all those special fulfillments of the prophecy, amongst which interpreters

are apt to wander, are seen in their relation to the great principles that undergird all history, and bind the past and future into one. The false church always rears an image of the beast,—that is, sets up worldliness as what must be adored. It always inspires that image with life, and makes it breathe forth cruelty. It always tends to make the arm of power, in the state and in the world, subservient to its behests, so as to screen itself from odium under the palladium of civil rule. Bishops never burnt a heretic. They condemned him, and gave him over to the civil magistrate, to carry out the will of heaven. It is always the image of the beast which causes that those which do not worship it should be killed. But it is the tool of designing priestcraft. The false prophet is making the image of the beast his puppet. The perverted church is moving the arm of the state, and causing all, 'both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads; and that no man might buy or sell save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.' The cry has ever been, 'The Christian to the lions!' And not alone in Rome Pagan or Rome Papal. The prophecy is one for all time, or at least for the time, and a times, and a half time, during which Antichrist will have sway.

It does not fall, however, within our province at present, to show the wide sweeping nature of the prophecy, or to point out its manifold and ample

fulfilments. We have been forced to take up the chapter in detail, for sake of the words that now follow, 'Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man, and his number is Six Hundred Three Score and Six.' First, here, we have got to do with the phrase—'The number of a man.' Holding rigidly by the principle with which we started, of interpreting the future by aid of the past, we are bound to recall attention to Dan. vii. 4. We cannot but think this passage in Revelation refers to that. There we were meant to be taught, that while the prophetic language was of beasts, the words pertained to kingdoms and to men. More particularly, the man Nebuchadnezzar was pointed out, in his relation to all that was brutal and carnal. In like manner, we think that here the intention of the Spirit is to raise our mind from the thought of the Beasts *as beasts*, to the conception of the bearing of the prophecy on the destinies of men. More particularly, the Spirit would point to Antichrist,—the *man* Antichrist, as we may safely call him. For even though Antichrist denote a system, yet it will be always a system with a head,—which human head will always peculiarly merit the appellation of the beast. The number, in this way, is the number of a man.

Lastly, we revert to the mysterious 666. Is it possible to follow the course we have been pursuing, with respect to it? Obviously it is; when

the numbers which had to do with Nebuchadnezzar's image were 60 and 6. For it is around this image, that our chapter with all its imagery, has been proved to revolve. There is suggested, therefore, by the larger but related number 666, that the future is to be very much a repetition of the past—the past developed into more gigantic proportions. The same great elements are to prevail. They are to be inwrought into the web of future history, and he that hath understanding will be able, more or less, to recognise the number of the beast as it comes up again. In short, as is so common with him, we find here that John has recourse, in order to get a vocabulary pertaining to the future, to the incidents and illustrations of the past, and he does not fail, therefore, to notice the minute particular, that the number of the beast was 666; like as the measurements of the image of old were 60 cubits and 6. In the God-defiant world-power of Nebuchadnezzar, we are to view the shadow of more concentrated and universal wickedness in the future. In the image and worship on the plain of Dura, we are to behold the type of more fearful and rampant impiety in the time to come. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the Beast; for it will be harder far to resist the blandishments of the false prophet, who will constrain us to worship the image, than it was for the three Hebrew children to refuse to bow their heads. It is no juggler's trick that will settle when Antichrist is suing for

our homage. If, by casting up a few numbers, we could prove to a demonstration that Popery was the only and veritable Antichrist, then we Protestants might congratulate ourselves on our salvation. For it is certain, that all who have not the mark of the Beast, will be in heaven. The feature which all the redeemed have in common is (xv. 2), that they have gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name. If Popery, then, and nothing but Popery, be Antichrist, we need not tremble. But he has little understanding who counts the number thus. It is more than arithmetic which must solve this riddle. The number of the Beast is not so easily made out. He only, who has heavenly wisdom and spiritual understanding, can detect, at times, the cloven hoof. The worship of Antichrist assumes so many forms, and insinuates itself so caressingly into the most upright hearts, that it is hard to count its number. But he who hath understanding will, with the Ithuriel spear of truth, touch the tempter, and make him assume his full proportions as an imp of hell. The Beast is the World, in one or other of its ten thousand forms as the enemy of God, and the man of understanding will count its number. He will take the world's measure, and find it nothing more than the sixty and six of Nebuchadnezzar's image, enlarged, no doubt, to six hundred threescore and six, but not the less fatal on that account. He will weigh its golden pleasures



in the balances of the sanctuary, and find them wanting. For over against the Beast, and his image, and his mark, and his number, the Lord has written with his own hand the words—

MENE, MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN.

Have we, it may properly be asked, by this interpretation, cut loose from all former moorings? Our fathers said roundly that Popery and the Pope were Antichrist. Must we cease from doing this, and look for an Antichrist to arise under the cover of more modern errors? Do infidel or semi-infidel views represent the forms of error that more properly deserve the name of Antichrist? Are we to wait for some man yet to appear, who will be the quintessence of everything devilish, and the anti-type of all minor forms of evil? Is it not written, 'He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son?' How then, say some, can the Pope be Antichrist, seeing he neither denies the Father nor the Son?

This is a question of the same kind with the one Alford puts—'How can the Pope be said to exalt himself above all that is called God, which he needs must do to fulfil the prediction of 2 Thess. ii. 4? Surely he prostrates himself often enough before the pyx and the crucifix; how can he at the same time exalt himself above all that is worshipped?' But may there not be a real exalting of self under a show of humility? Must Satan show himself in his

exact colours, before the men of our day will believe in his existencè? Is there to be no mystery about Antichrist? no pretence of godliness? of anything heavenly or divine? Is Antichrist never again to resemble Herod, who asked to be told about Jesus, that he might *worship* Him? Herod would have worshipped, and strangled Him, at the same moment; and such has been the fatal craft of Popery, Alford himself, in his 'Letters from Italy,' being our authority. Is it Antichrist the less truly because it wears the horns of a lamb? Nay, it is only for some such reason that it merits the title of The Mystery of Iniquity. 'The abject adoration and submission to "what is called God and worshipped," has ever been one of the Pope's most notable peculiarities.'<sup>1</sup> But that *abject adoration* is the very proof on which we stand in accounting the Pope worthy of the name Antichrist. A less wily scheme would not have succeeded so well, and would not have been so worthy of the name Mystery. Prove that all these genuflexions are conducive to the homage of the heart to God; then you will have invalidated the Protestant position. But before you do so you will need to set aside the Second Commandment, and tear the very heart out of the entire Bible. In like manner as regards the person and the work of Christ, whatever the councils and symbolic books of Rome may profess to teach, we have got to do

<sup>1</sup> Alford's Gk. Test., vol. iii. proleg. p. 66.

with the actual place which, among its votaries, the sacrifice of Jesus is designed to occupy. We do not say *the sacrifice of the Mass*, for none deny that *it* was meant to have a high position. No more effectual means, however, could have been taken of annihilating the sacrifice of Jesus, than just by edging into its place the sacrifice of the Mass. Forgiveness by the blood of Jesus would perhaps not be denied by any Popish controversialist; but how could the only true title to our soul's peace be better nullified than by the forgery of purgatory and penance? As to the work of Christ, we hold Popery to be Antichrist, because of its substituting something wonderfully like it in its place, yet essentially antagonistic to it. So again with Christ's divinity; it may not be openly denied in the Church of Rome,—it may be formally taught and vindicated by her theologians,<sup>1</sup> but that will not free the system, as a system, from the charge of placing Mary above Jesus, or at the least, on a level with her Son. We think, speaking according as Dr Pusey inspires us, if anything was needed finally to crown the Pope as Antichrist, it was the act of formally installing Mary in the throne of Deity. It is a denial both of the Father and the Son, when one who is merely human is raised to the level of the Trinity. Yet the answers which have appeared to

<sup>1</sup> We remember seeing, shortly after Renan's book had appeared, on the doors of the Cathedral of Rouen, a handbill written by the Archbishop, containing cogent arguments, with Scripture proofs, in favour of the divinity of Jesus.

Pusey's 'Eirenikon,' show what a mystery of iniquity attaches to this most Antichristian of acts. Profound Popish theologians, who possibly are honest as Newman himself, cannot perceive how the deification of Mary is the dethronement of her Son. Probably Protestant writers have been too eager to make out a literal parallel between the Pope and the traits of Antichrist mentioned in Thessalonians. Seeing the Woman's name in Revelations is Mystery, and that her pretence is to be the true church of Christ, we need never expect that a literal parallelism will be made out. Read according to Rome's own pretensions, she is one thing; read as she appears before the eye of God, and as she can be seen to be in reality, despite the mask she wears, she is something very different. Nor is it till this line of argument be fairly met, that the dictum of modern German theologians can be accepted, about Popery not hearing the name and number of the beast.

The other great objection which Alford brings forward, must be noticed. 'If the Papacy be Antichrist, then has the manifestation been made, and endured now for nearly 1500 years, and yet that day of the Lord is not come, which by the terms of our prophecy such manifestation is immediately to precede.' Now it is hard to make out that Antichrist is *immediately* to precede the coming of our Lord. All who admit, as Alford with every good critic does, the principle of foreshortening in prophetic pictures,—that want of perspective in

regard to time which we have already tried to illustrate, will be cautious in hazarding any opinion as to when, particularly, Antichrist will be made manifest.

Let us see if any light can be thrown on this *crua* of modern interpretation, by keeping on the line we have been trying throughout this chapter to follow.

We have then to ask, if any countenance is given to the view, that a Man, rather than a System, will best bear the name of Antichrist. The fathers all looked for an individual man to be Antichrist; the moderns have fallen back in general upon their positions, and hence a shield is sought to be thrown around Popery, seeing it is not a Man, but a System. Thus, too, a shield is thrown in front of the Pope as well, for a series of men have filled the Papal chair, and it is a Man, not an Office, they tell us, who must be Antichrist. Now, it must be confessed, that the expression we have commented on about the number being the number of A Man, gives some countenance to this view. Whether taken by itself, or in relation to the historical basis we have sought to give it, viz., in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, the inference gains strength that Antichrist must be under some aspect or other a Man. But not a man, we remark, looked at as independent of, and diverse from, a government or system. Nebuchadnezzar was the Beast of old; but not Nebuchadnezzar, viewed abstractly as a unit of the human race,—

Nebuchadnezzar rather, as the head and representative of the entire power of Babylon through all its history. He was the culminating point of a broad pyramid, which included not only the millions whom he swayed, but his successors in the kingdom, who entered upon his policy and power as royal legacies. Babylon was the Beast, as well as Nebuchadnezzar. No doubt, if the prophecy in Dan. vii. were looked at apart from history, it would be the natural thought of any one, that Nebuchadnezzar would prove the last of his dynasty. But this was not the case. He was the representative man of Babylon, and his name is used as synonymous with that of his country; but it would be false to draw any conclusion as to the place in regard to time he was meant to occupy. Even so in regard to Greece. Alexander stands out as the individual in whom the prophecies of Daniel find their chief fulfilment; but Philip of Macedon is not on that account to be excluded. In the case again of the Roman empire, the last of the Cæsars would never be taken as the type of the Iron Power so wondrously portrayed in the page of Scripture. It might not be hard to point to one who was to Rome what Nebuchadnezzar was to Babylon, but he would be found nearer the first than the last of the Roman emperors. Yet, according to the uniform language of Scripture, that representative of Rome, would have been spoken of, as if he had continued to exist as long as the empire endured.

Thus we are prepared to deal with Antichrist.

There may be in the name, and in the number of the name, reference to an individual man who is to be regarded as standing at the apex of the Papal system, but there is nothing binding us to believe that he will be actually living when Christ comes. He may have already appeared. He may have given to Rome its direction and impetus. His spirit may be living in the system still. We would not, of course, argue against the notion that there may be in the womb of the future a more terrible form of Antichrist, and a man more worthy of the name than any who has yet appeared. But we humbly urge that the terms of the prophecy, if judged by corresponding prophecies in the past, do not necessitate our holding this opinion. While admitting the possibility, nay, if we read the signs of the times correctly, holding by the probability, of the future being of a darker type than the past, yet we are bound to oppose the view, that, should Antichrist assume in the time to come more hideous proportions, his organic connection with Popery will be wanting. He will not stand isolated from that system whose roots of evil can be proved to stretch back into all but Apostolic times. Whoever Antichrist be, he falls heir to the Antichristian system, the signs of whose conception were first detected by the apostles. It is not any absolutely new form of error that is to arise, or a Man with different tactics, and a different historical basis, from the system we conceive to have been the leading spirit

of Antichrist throughout nineteen centuries. No casuistry will avail to screen Popery from the marks of resemblance it bears to the Antichrist of Paul and John, and the Beast of Revelation. All that we have maintained is, that you cannot from the mere number of the name fasten down the charge on Popery alone. Error and evil are wider than Rome, though no more concentrated organisation of falsehood is likely ever to arise. At all events, there is no reason why we should wait for avowed infidelity to take the place of Popish superstition before we regard Antichrist as drawing nigh; neither are we warranted to expect the appearance of a Man, Antichrist, independent of the system and government of oppression, against which all history is full of warning, and toward which the finger of prophecy has been unwaveringly directed.

We are the more earnest in maintaining this, because the current has fairly set in which would turn us adrift from all former landmarks. Alford but gives a voice in this country to what Hofmann and Hengstenberg and Auberlen contend for under one form or another. When left to himself he interprets much more naturally. For instance, in 2 Thess. not only have we to deal with Antichrist as a Man and as a System, but we have to deal in a way precisely similar with *ὁ κατέχων*, 'the one who letteth,' and with *ὁ κατέχον*, *the thing which* opposeth Antichrist. Says Alford regarding them, 'As the Fathers took them of the Roman Empire and Emperor, standing



and ruling in their time, repressing the outbreak of sin and enormity, so have we been taught by history to widen this view, and understand them of the *fabric of human polity*, and *those who rule that polity*, by which the great upbursting of godlessness is kept down and hindered.<sup>1</sup> Here then the singular *ὁ κατέχων* is translated into the plural, by reason of the exigencies of history; why should not the *ὁ ἀντικείμενος*, or Antichrist, be capable of a similar translation, into the series of rulers or popes who have withstood Christ, and exalted themselves above all that is called God? But it is vain to show all the contradictions that arise, when men will have it that 'The Apostasy' has not yet taken place.

It may not even be over bold to defend the ordinary view about the Second Beast against a writer, who has done more than most to show the applicability of Paul's prophecies to the Papal system. Few demonstrations can be more conclusive on this point than Dr Fairbairn's, in his work on Prophecy.<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps, therefore, to be the more regretted, that he coincides with the writers whom he otherwise controverts, when he interprets the Antichrist of the Apocalypse. Speaking of the Second Beast, that gives life to the image of the First, he says,<sup>3</sup>—'The name—a beast—proves it to be entirely of a worldly character. Second, it came up out of the earth, and so, like the first beast, was to be entirely terrene in

<sup>1</sup> Alford, Gk. Test., Vol. iii., proleg. p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Fairbairn on Prophecy, p. 350.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 333.

its character. Thirdly, it had horns like a lamb; and, lastly, it spake like a dragon.' From these data he concludes that the power thus described is to be simply a power of this world, not *spiritual* or *ecclesiastical*. But how it should follow, that because the power is essentially of this world it may not be *ecclesiastical*, it is hard to perceive. Though actually, it need not be ostensibly, devilish and worldly. In consequence, it cannot be deemed proved that 'this second lamb-horned beast is a personified representation of the world's *gnosis*.' The arts, and sciences, and literature of the present time, even admitting all their defects and sceptical tendencies, cannot be regarded as answering better the description of the Second Beast than the power of a false church, which is abroad, not merely in Rome, but throughout Christendom. It is part this of an exegesis that would tend to shift from the priesthood of Rome charges which have long and justly been levelled against it. There is no need to make the Nebular and Development Hypotheses figure amongst the principal descriptions of Antichrist. For the view of the First Beast, as the evil power of the state, and of the Second Beast as the embodied craft of the false church, seems to harmonize the prophecies in the Apocalypse with those which occur in St John's first Epistle, and the Epistles of Paul: it shows how Rome continues to bear the marks of the beast; while yet there is no confining of evil to the bosom of that church, but the regarding of it as

bound up, more or less, with all systems of human polity, and all forms of ecclesiastical rule.

It is to the same view of the two allied beasts, as the representatives of the power of evil in the church and in the world, that we are guided by all the analogies which run throughout past history. Take one that could hardly have been absent from John's mind when he penned this chapter—the case of Balaam and Balak. Balaam, in his history and fall, stands clearly out in Scripture as the representative of Antichristian policy. It is he that figures in the address to the church of Pergamos. Satan had his seat there, and *there* were some 'who held the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication.' How like the doings of the False Prophet, as the Second Beast of Revelation is elsewhere called, in giving life to the image of the Beast, and spiring him on to deeds of daring carnality! The figure of Balaam may undoubtedly be detected beneath the lamb-horned beast that speaks as a dragon. The very name, The False Prophet, has a manifest allusion to the false prophet Balaam. The alliance between Balaam and Balak, between the Church and the world, is what occurs over again in the chapter we have been considering. Like Balaam, who sold himself to the wicked powers of Moab and Midian, this Second Beast throws all his power and spiritual might into the scale of the world, and

props up the thrones of wickedness. Like Balaam, he makes use of his divine insight and heaven-scaling energies, to effect results that the world could never have accomplished unaided by the False Church. It is an alliance this, which has continued in the world from Balaam's time, and will continue to the end. But the end draws near. Like as the true prophet Moses stood over against the false prophet Balaam, and as the 12,000 of Israel (Num. xxxi.) returned victorious from the complete overthrow of Midian, so Christ has entered the lists against Antichrist, and it appears no way strange to read in Rev. xiv., immediately after the antitypes of Balak and Balaam—The Beast and the False Prophet have been presented to our view, 'And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with Him 12 × 12,000, having His Father's name written in their foreheads. These are they which were not defiled with women, for they are virgins.'<sup>1</sup>

It only remains to be noted how singularly the number Six, which figures in the Number of the Beast, corresponds with the number Three and a Half, that is of such import in reference to the

<sup>1</sup> How far this latter feature of the picture is to be explained by contrast with the sin of Israel in the matter of Baal Peor, when the women of Midian played their fatal part, need hardly be indicated, for the reference seems too plain to escape the most cursory notice. Yet Alford is willing to concede that in the expression, Virgins, is to be found an argument in favour of *celibacy*! Truly the interpreter of Revelation needs to go for the basis of its symbolisms, back to Old Test. Scripture, quite as much as to the annals, so often falsely applied, of Modern Church History.

time during which Antichrist is to rule. Three and a Half being the half of Seven, is suggestive of the latter number, and so tells of the covenant of grace, which never fails to be preserved by God, despite all the fury of oppressors. So Six, the half of Twelve, is suggestive of the Church; for Twelve is the symbolic number of the Church of God.<sup>1</sup> Six seems to tell of a system that will take the form of a church, and give itself out to be the Mother of the Faithful. Since, in other cases, six is suggestive of twelve, the shewbread, for instance, being arranged in two rows of six each, and the names of the twelve tribes of Israel being engraven, six on the one shoulder of the high priest, and six on the other, may not the 666 denote that the System to which it refers is to be a Church-System? If  $3\frac{1}{2}$  be suggestive of 7, why should not 6 be suggestive of 12? And 12 is beyond all dispute the symbol of the church. At any rate, it seems to be denoted that the form of evil which has for its number 666, is closely related to, if not one and the same, with the oppressive power which is to lord it over God's heritage for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years. The half of the well known number 7 in the one case, and the half of the number 12, equally well known, in the other, cannot escape the most casual observation, and surely at least may indicate some connection between them. He that hath wisdom will count the number of the Beast. He will not discover the perfect number

<sup>1</sup> Page 55. See also succeeding chap. on the number Twelve.

twelve, which betokens the joys of the New Jerusalem, but only six, and six, and still six. The church which is of the world and not from above, never reaches what God designs as the portion of His people, but invariably falls short and ends in confusion.

That we are justified in seeing a symbol in the six, as contrasted with the twelve, seems plain from the very way in which the number 666 is followed in Revelation by a reference to the  $12 \times 12,000$  of the redeemed. Immediately after recording the number of the Beast, John adds, 'I looked, and lo! *the Lamb* stood on Mount Sion, and with Him 144,000, having His name and His Father's name written in their foreheads.' Every point here seems meant for contrast. The true Lamb of God stands opposed to the beast having two horns like a lamb. The name of the Father written on the foreheads of Christ's people; how different from the mark of the Beast impressed on the world's devotees! The name of the Father and the Son; in opposition to the characteristic of Antichrist (1 John ii. 22), which is the denial of the Father and the Son. Again, all the  $12 \times 12,000$  are virgins, in whose mouth is no guile, while those on whom is the number of the Beast are represented as drunk with the blood of fornication. Of a piece with this whole description, the number of the Beast is 666, a number which bears a certain relation to 12, but which, notwithstanding, is far removed from it. It is a false church we have here,

pretending to be the true; devil-worship wearing the garb of piety; a wolf in sheep's clothing; a prophet, but a false one; a worker of miracles, but these untrue; wise, but having nothing more than worldly wisdom; possessed of godlike power, yet rising from, and descending to, the pit of nethermost perdition. In other words, we take the number of the Beast to be related to the rest of the description of its character. It is not the true church whose symbol is 12, but it aims at being the universal church; its symbol is 666; it has nothing however but half truths, and these become whole lies. It is the Mystery of Iniquity.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE NUMBER TEN, AND THE MILLENNIUM.

It is a curious instance of the perverting sway of the study of numbers, that in order to make Ten appear to be compounded of Three and Seven, the very commandments of God have been tampered with. It is well known that Ten is regarded as the number of *perfection*, and it would seem that on this account the Moral Law was thrown into the form of Ten Commandments. But it is not so generally known that the Roman Catholic and Lutheran mode of dividing the commandments originated very much from the desire of getting the Ten divided into Three pertaining to God, and Seven pertaining to our fellow-men. In order to secure this, the first four commandments were crushed into three, by the omission of the inconvenient Second, and then the seven were manufactured by the meaningless division of the Tenth Commandment into two; or, as in the case of Luther's Catechism, by throwing the preface to the end, as if it formed a distinct precept. With this warning before our view, we would tread cautiously over the ground which lies before us. And first it is to be remarked, that no clear instances can be produced from Scripture of Ten being regarded in its relation to Three and Seven. Ten seems rather to



be treated as an independent and distinct symbol. True, there is Job's family, made up of seven sons and three daughters, and there are ten generations of Antediluvians, with Enoch standing in the seventh place, and whosoever would build up a theory on such a foundation, may. But we rather maintain, that we must look for the symbolical meaning of Ten to what we find running throughout all languages. There seems no use made of this number in the Bible but what can be accounted for by the commonest usages amongst men.

A decimal system of numeration everywhere prevails. After the first nine digits come the *teens*, then twenty, thirty, forty, to the hundreds; then thousands, myriads, and millions. The very word *digit*, implies the theory on the subject that is probably correct. Meaning a *finger*, it tells of the original mode of calculation seen every day still behind the desks of a schoolroom. The fishwife's fingers stand her in good stead, and the philosopher, when he speaks learnedly of digits, refers us back to the same primitive form of calculus. The five fingers have much to do with the profoundest mathematical studies, as well as with the most ordinary modes of reckoning. From the earliest times there are traces of this. The pleading of Abraham will suggest itself,—first for fifty, then for fifty lacking five, then forty, thirty, twenty, and ten. In the measurements of the ark, and the divisions of time connected with the flood, we discover the same familiar

decimal system. The length of the ark was three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and height thirty—the best proportions still, as practical men inform us, for a three-decker. For forty days and nights the rain descended, and after a hundred and fifty days, the waters had abated. We may expect therefore the same laws to hold in regard to the scriptural use of Ten, that obtain in ordinary language. As a round number it will be employed; and to express indefinite magnitude some power of ten, a thousand or a myriad, will be used. Who, for instance, would treat otherwise Jacob's indignant remonstrance?—'Your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages *ten* times.' Or again, God's word to Israel?—'All those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these *ten* times, and have not hearkened to my voice' (Num. xiv. 22). It is in the same way we must regard such numbers as are ascribed to the angels, 'Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;' or passages such as that which says, 'One shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight.'

But this leads naturally to the use of ten and its compounds, as denoting perfection. Thus, in the Second Commandment, when it is written, that though God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those that hate him yet He shows mercy unto

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*thousands* of generations of those that love Him and keep His commandments, the meaning is, that to *all* generations His mercy would be shown; as David says in his Psalm, 1 Chron. xvi. 15–17, ‘Be ye mindful of his covenant; the word which he commanded to a *thousand* generations; even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac; and hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an *everlasting* covenant.’ Similarly, it is written, Deut. xxiii. 3, ‘An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their *tenth* generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord *for ever* ;’ and lest any other construction of the passage should be considered possible than the one suggested, we find the interpretation given, Nehm. xiii. 1: ‘On that day they read in the book of Moses, and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of the Lord for ever.’ A perpetual ban was laid upon the sons of Lot, the children of incest and the prompters of Balaam.

This may serve to explain a passage that has often been mistaken, Rev. ii. 10: ‘Ye shall have tribulation *ten* days.’ In vain has history been ransacked to discover ten days, or ten years, or ten periods of any kind, that would answer the words of this prophecy regarding Smyrna. The ten persecutions of the Roman Emperors have been thought of; but it is a little hard to trace the connection. Others again have taken the words to mean that

a very short period of trial would be actually endured—ten days and no more. But this, on the face of it, seems unsatisfactory; and if it be considered that these addresses to the churches form an integral part of a book in which the symbol Ten abounds, but never in the sense invented to assist a lame exegesis of the passage before us, people will be driven to seek for some more homogeneous mode of explanation. If, then, in accordance with the rest of Scripture, we read the Ten Days as if they meant ‘To the Very End,’ there is a consistency throughout the entire epistle which otherwise is altogether lacking. ‘These things saith he which was dead and is alive. I know thy tribulation and poverty (but thou art rich). Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days,’—that is, to the very end of thy history. As thy Lord had to humble Himself, and become obedient unto death, so, on to the very last wilt thou be in the furnace. But ‘Be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.’—He will be saved, though, while he continue to live upon earth, he suffer persecution. The power of adversaries and the reign of affliction extend no further than the grave. The Lord is living who was dead. What though His servants suffer *ten* days, even unto death? ‘Fear not those who can destroy the body; thou shalt not be hurt

of the second death. The first death to which the *ten* days of affliction point, and in which they terminate, is not worthy to be named, when the crown of life comes into view. Death is swallowed up of victory.

It is in the same way that the *tithes* in Israel are seen to be significant. Though but a *tenth*, they were given in token of the *whole* being the Lord's. Under this feeling, doubtless, Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedek as the priest of the Most High, and Jacob made his vow at Bethel regarding his giving a tenth to God.

So, too, we understand why *ten* plagues should have descended upon Egypt, in token of the full outpouring of all God's wrath; why *ten* words should have summarized the entire Moral Law; and why the number ten should have been the measure every way of the sanctuary of God; for ten cubits broad, and long, and high, was the Holy of Holies in Israel.

It is somewhat strange, however, to find the same number reflecting itself in the powers of evil. And yet to represent the combination of all hellish forces nothing could be more appropriate. Thus to Abram the promise is made, Gen. xv. 18, 'Unto thy seed I give this land, the Kenites and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites,' Ten tribes in all. Like as Haman, the enemy of Israel, had ten sons, so ten nations usually in Scrip-

ture group themselves round Babylon, and form the crowns of Antichrist. Ten burdens are laid on Isaiah to deliver (xiii.—xxiii.).

- |                           |       |                        |
|---------------------------|-------|------------------------|
| 1. The burden of Babylon, | 6. Of | The Desert of the Sea. |
| 2. „ Palestina,           | 7. „  | Damah.                 |
| 3. „ Moab,                | 8. „  | Arabia.                |
| 4. „ Damascus,            | 9. „  | The Valley of Vision.  |
| 5. „ Egypt,               | 10. „ | Tyre.                  |

When Jeremiah is commissioned to deliver the words of the Lord against the Gentiles, they fall into ten prophecies.

- |                                       |              |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Against the Army of Pharaoh Necho, | 6. Edom.     |
| 2. „ Egypt,                           | 7. Damascus. |
| 3. „ the Philistines,                 | 8. Kedar.    |
| 4. „ Moab,                            | 9. Elam.     |
| 5. „ the Ammonites,                   | 10. Babylon. |

Thus we are prepared to understand the *ten* toes in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, and the *ten* horns of the beast, in Daniel. They represent the combination of all the powers of the modern world against Christ and His cause. There need not therefore be the anxiety which is sometimes felt, to name the precise ten European powers that have sprung from ancient Rome, and carry out its spirit of antagonism against the kingdom of God. The fact that never since the fall of Rome has any one nation stood out as the only historic nation, like as Greece did, and Persia, and Babylon, but that modern times have been distinguished by the aspirations and the strivings of

different nationalities, while yet the kings of the earth and the princes do still combine to plot against the Lord,—these things are sufficient fulfilments of the prophetic intimations, and we need wait for no others. The ten horns and crowns of the Beast in the Apocalypse have been already beheld, and even now are lifting themselves defiantly against the Lamb of God.

It is time, however, we were approaching a number, which the line of inquiry pursued throughout this book, prevents us from despatching with a mere passing notice,

*The Thousand Years, or Millennium.*

In spending so much time on those numbers that are usually taken to fix down the beginning of the Millennium, it was impossible not to be keeping in mind this most remarkable period. It will have been seen too, that our interpretation in more than one instance involved the notion that Christ's second coming is coincident with the final judgment, and is therefore to be looked for after the Thousand Years. This is the place to make these assumptions good.

First we have to ask, What length of time will the Millennium occupy? To this, as heretofore, we have to reply, that nothing definite seems to be made known as to days and dates. The word Millennium might very well, if compared with other uses of a Thousand, be regarded as a synonym for eternity; but we read so clearly of eternity only begin-

ning after the thousand years, that we are constrained to give up at once any such conception. Are they, then, exactly a thousand years? Perhaps so; but, in a book of symbols, it seems arbitrary to take this as the only non-symbolic number. Or are we to go upon the year-day theory, and stretch the Millennium over 360,000 years? The year-day theory has too little ground to stand upon for any supposition to be built on it. What have we left? Simply the indefinite, or the somewhat more symbolic meaning that we have found to attach to the number Ten and its compounds. The Thousand years may mean a long and undefined period. Probably this is what most are satisfied with. But in this there seems to be a want of the general air that breathes throughout the book of Revelation. Mere indefiniteness, one is apt to think, would have been differently expressed. If, however, while not denying that the period is indefinite, we mingle up with this the idea derived from treating the Thousand as a symbol of perfection, it seems as if we reached a meaning more in harmony with the general strain of the Apocalypse. Being precluded, however, by what was said at the outset from taking the Thousand to mean perfection of duration, we are constrained to seek for a clue in some other direction. Perfection, then, as regards the bliss of those who reign with Christ may be conveyed; perfection as regards the overthrow and enchainment of Satan and his hosts; perfection as regards the completion by means of the Millennium



of all the cycles of time, and all the purposes and plans of the Redeemer with respect to a sin-stained world. It would seem that this is about as far as one can go in reference to the time covered by the Millennium.

But when is it to be? and what is it to be? and what is the bearing of the different numbers which have been considered on this much debated topic? The easiest way of answering these queries is by again throwing what is to be said into the form of a running commentary on the 20th chapter of Revelation, where the only reference to the thousand years is found.

‘And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a chain in his hand.’ If there be any attention at all to sequence in time in the Book of Revelation, this must be regarded as occurring after the Beast and the False Prophet have been cast into the lake of fire, Rev. xix. 20. If so, the Antichrist of the rest of Scripture must be overthrown before the Millennium comes. But does not Paul connect the overthrow of Antichrist with the second coming of our Lord? 2 Thess. ii. 8. Then, does not Jesus personally come at the beginning of the Millennium? This depends on what the coming of our Lord may mean. If His personal advent will alone satisfy the terms of Paul’s prediction, the question would be all but settled. This, however, is far from being necessary. The *coming* of Christ and

the *coming* of Antichrist are in that passage so related to each other, that if the personal advent of Christ be pressed, the personal advent of Antichrist immediately before would seem to be as surely predicted. 'Then shall that wicked One be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume by the breath of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming (*παρουσία*); even him whose coming (*παρουσία*) is after the working of Satan.' May not the Parousia in the case of our Lord be like the Parousia in the case of His Enemy, a gradual unfolding of His strength, rather than a personal descent from heaven? Certainly there will be a *coming* of Christ at the overthrow of the Beast and False Prophet, but whether it will be *The Coming* of Christ, in the more restricted sense of the term, can by no means be regarded as determined by Thessalonians, and we are able to read on in Revelation, without feeling that the question about the personal appearing of the Saviour before Millennium is foreclosed.

'And he'—the angel—'laid hold on the dragon; that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled.'

Much of this, every one will admit, is figurative, and it were vain to affect certainty as to the facts that will correspond with these symbols. But as

to Satan deceiving no one during that period, this seems to be plainly predicted, both by means of the figures, and by the very words of the prophecy. This we must maintain, despite Dr Brown's caveat in his work on the Second Coming.<sup>1</sup> Will sin, then, altogether cease? Or will sin, if it be found on the earth in those days, have no relation to Satan? So long as any sin be found in human hearts, Satan, the first tempter, will not be free from the blame connected with it. But surely that admission does not militate against the possibility of Satan's being kept throughout the thousand years from further tempting man, while yet it saves every atom of orthodoxy for which any one would contend. But under the conditions supposed, will there be any sin? We answer in the affirmative. Men come into the world fallen, and the mere withdrawal of further interference by Satan, would not of itself secure perfect holiness. It would greatly lessen the potency of evil in the world, and leave clearer room for the progress of the gospel, but this is all we would dare to affirm. That the liability, at least, to evil, and that of the grossest kind, continues all through the thousand years, appears from the words that follow—

‘And after that Satan must be loosed for a little season.’

The fatal conquest he secures (ver. 7, 8), even after so many blessed years have raised up barriers, as

<sup>1</sup> Page 399.

we would opine, against his approach, is proof conclusive of all that has been asserted. One would be ready to imagine that men so favoured would be able to stand. But no! only let temptation assail them—let Satan be loosed out of his prison, and he manages once more to deceive the nations. The old-world names are revived, Gog and Magog, and all the forms of evil; and the nations, thick as the sands of the sea, are once again ripened for destruction. Will not men have been finally taught by their millennial experience, to cast their crowns at the Redeemer's feet, and to acknowledge that in Him alone their strength is to be found.

‘And I saw thrones.’

Where? we naturally ask; and yet from many sources the answer—*on the earth*. But the Bible does not say so, and without the most cogent arguments we would not be bound to believe so; for the ordinary course of the imagery of this book would rather lead us to infer that the thrones were seen in heaven; and that those who reigned throughout the thousand years had their seats in paradise. Had it been written that they lived and reigned on Earth, the question would have been greatly narrowed. But seeing it is not so, it is a begging of the whole question to proceed to all manner of visions about the probabilities of that time of bliss. As to the reigning in an actual Jerusalem and so forth, we bid a truce to all speculation, seeing everything hinges on our present text; and our text does

not affirm that the reign is a personal kind on the earth at all, but rather hints at the reverse. The reigning saints will continue, we believe, in heaven, till once appear the new heavens and new earth wherein righteousness will dwell. It is hardly less than amazing, how by dint of reiteration, men have been got to accept it as an axiom, that the millennial reign is to be on the earth. No doubt it is said, 'We shall reign on the earth,' and 'the Apostles will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' But that is to be in the days of the 'regeneration' (Matt. xix. 28), 'When the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of his glory.' Now we apprehend that the days of the regeneration do not occur till the first heavens and the first earth are past away, Rev. xxi. 1, and consequently after the millennium.

'And I beheld the souls of them that were beheaded ( $\pi\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\kappa\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$ ) for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and (of those) which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.'

First, it is to be observed, that here there seem to be two classes: those *beheaded* for the witness of Jesus; second, those which had not worshipped the image of the beast. Does not this call to mind the arrangement in the 13th chapter? There the two allied beasts are distinguished from each other.

The first makes war with the Saints, and overcomes them: its doom is written in the words, 'He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.' Are there not elements in this that correspond with the peculiar phrase in our passage about those who are *beheaded* for the word of God? Then the second beast arises, which inspires the image of the first with life, and institutes the mark of Antichrist. Reference is made to this in the succeeding part of the passage before us. May we not best interpret the peculiar expressions of our text, by keeping our eye on the 13th chapter? What then did we find the first beast to mean? The power of this world, and the kingdoms of this world arrayed against Christ. What was the representative of this power at the time John wrote, upon the earth? The dynasty of Rome. Now, beheading, as Dr Brown<sup>1</sup> aptly remarks, 'was a well-known Roman mode of putting to an ignominious death, and is mentioned here to denote the *Roman* authority by which they were slain.' Or, extending the reference further than he does, the members of the first-class mentioned in our passage are those on whom the power of this world has trampled. The members of the second-class are those who have resisted the contamination of the *False Church* under any of its forms, 'Who have not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither has received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands.'

<sup>1</sup> Second Coming.

But are these two classes to be regarded as distinct and isolated from each other? By no means. The two beasts were plainly never meant to be dissociated from each other; neither are their victims. The two classes mentioned above include, therefore, the entire body of the faithful, regarded under the two aspects which their testimony bears, as directed against the False Church and the Wicked World. This seems at any rate to furnish a rational account of the peculiar phrase about the *beheaded ones*, and to knit this passage to others in the book.

Read as it ordinarily is, the whole passage is one of exceeding difficulty. Read literally; that is to say, it is hard to tell who the beheaded ones are, and how they are to be distinguished from those who have not received the mark. Are they the martyrs? Why should it not be said so? Why should a distinction be suggested between the beheaded ones and those who perished at the stake? Again, getting over this preliminary difficulty, why should the martyrs be honoured above all others? Was not John equally worthy with James, though the one perished with the sword, and the other died in peace? Are not Luther and Knox to be accounted in the same band with Ridley and Latimer? But there is no end to the troubles into which we would get by balancing the difficulties of different interpretations. The one which has been suggested involves the supposition, that not a mere section, but the entire company of witnesses for Jesus and

His Word, against the world and Antichrist, reign with Christ throughout the thousand years.

‘ They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.’

This passage is usually compared, for example, by Dr Keith, in his ‘ Harmony of Prophecy,’ with 1 Thess. iv. 15–17, ‘ The dead in Christ shall rise *first*: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds.’ But it is obvious that the connection is merely verbal. Paul is not contrasting a first with a second resurrection, but is dealing with the delusion that those who died before Christ came would suffer special loss : instead of which he assures the Thessalonians that the dead in Christ would rise first, then the living would be changed, and both together would ascend to meet the coming Bridegroom. It is one resurrection that he seems to have in view ; and the only possible controversial use of the passage is to bring it forward in proof that there is a distinction between the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the dead who are Christless. But the Reformation divines seem clearly to have had the best of the argument, when they said that the dead in Christ are the only ones referred to, not because they are



the only ones who will rise, but because they alone are in the Apostle's view. It was concerning the dead in Christ that he was seeking to comfort the Thessalonian converts. The Christless have for the time no place in his thoughts, else he would doubtless speak of them as he does in 2 Cor. v. 10: 'We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.' It is even so with 1 Cor. xv. 23, where it might be made to appear that only they who were Christ's would rise at His coming. The whole argument of the Apostle necessitated his looking merely at the case of believers. Otherwise, how get free from Universalism, in the immediately preceding verse? 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.'

It does not appear, therefore, that this chapter of Revelation admits of comparison with any of the expressions of Paul, when read as if it referred to two literal resurrections. The doctrine of a literal resurrection of the saints before the thousand years, must stand or fall with the right interpretation of the single passage which is now under review. In all fairness, therefore, we are bound to compare with it other expressions in the Revelation of a similar character. And first, there comes to mind the 11th chapter, in which there occurred a detailed account of the resurrection of the Two Witnesses. Was that literal? Especially if we were right in considering them the representatives of all God's saints, is there furnished the closest parallel between that

passage and the present, and the inference is suggested that the enthroning of the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, is not a literal resurrection, but that the whole is a symbol in accordance with the rest of the symbolism of this book. This supposition gathers strength, when in Rev. vi. 9–11, we read about the *souls* of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, that unto them white robes were given. It is obviously the same company that are regarded as having part in the first resurrection, and we are no more bound to believe in their literal rising from their graves, than in their being literally robed with white. If John in the Apocalypse is to be his own interpreter; if the resurrection in the 20th chapter is to be considered as the natural expansion of the resurrection in the 11th, and if both the one and the other be related to the cry of the Martyrs, and the assurance of their final victory in the 6th chapter, the question would seem to be settled in favour of a spiritual rather than a literal resurrection of the saints. Their doctrines are to be triumphant, their faith is to gain the ascendancy, throughout a thousand years.

‘And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the

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breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever.'

There is everything here to oppose the view that Christ will personally reign during the thousand years in Jerusalem. The fact of fire coming down *from God out of heaven* to consume His adversaries, seems to prove that Christ is not to enter into the contest *in person*, as Captain of the Lord's hosts. He is to be in heaven the while, and not till the books are set and judgment decreed, and the new earth prepared, will Jerusalem come down from heaven as a Bride. The Jerusalem that now is, enters in no way into the scriptural view of Millennium, further than that by borrowing the language pertaining to the future from the things of the past, the strength of the saints of God in the great and final struggle with Satan, is regarded as symbolized by the strength of the hills around Jerusalem, and by the security that used to attend the bulwarks of Zion. Hence the hosts of darkness are represented as circling round the camp of the saints, and besieging the beloved city. But we are no more required to believe that the present site of Jerusalem will be the scene of conflict, than that the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel's day will in propriâ personâ revive. The

language of the past reflects itself in the future. Throughout the entire Book of Revelation two cities stand opposed to each other, Jerusalem and Babylon, the Bride and the Whore. But Babylon is not the Babylon that was, but the mother of all evil. Neither is Jerusalem the Jerusalem that was, but a spiritual community—‘the Mount Sion, the city of the living God,’ to which, as Paul informs us, believers are already come.

Having thus indicated the view of the Millennium to which our study of numbers tends, it remains that we should justify our claim to be amongst those who wait and watch for the coming of their Lord. If we have seen reason to throw back Christ’s final coming till after the Millennium, and if that period may be of indefinite length, have we not cut away the foundation from one of the brightest hopes of the church, and one of the surest words of prophecy, ‘Behold, I come quickly?’

The difficulty we have thus to face is one which is common to many of the words of Jesus. Take for illustration the well-known passage in which Christ says to Peter regarding the destiny awaiting John, ‘If I will that he tarry *till I come* what is that to thee?’

Some have considered that here there is no indication given of the future of the Apostle John. They read the words very much as if they were,— ‘Supposing he live to the age of Methuselah, what

is that to thee? If instead of a few years, he should live a thousand, or ten thousand, what is that to thee?' But most will agree that this would be such irony, to use the mildest term, as we cannot conceive Jesus in the circumstances to have suffered to escape from His lips. If He knew that in no true sense would He come again for ages, while John would only live at most a few short years, it would have been an unaccountable mode of expression, 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?' It would have had the surest tendency to mislead.

For observe how 'the brethren' actually construed Christ's words. 'Then went this saying abroad among them, that this disciple should not die.' They understood the words of Jesus to mean that John would tarry on the earth till Christ should *personally* come, and therefore that John would not die. 'If I will that he tarry till I come,' seems a strong enough mode of speech in the lips of Him who never sought to deceive, to bear the weight of the inference, that John was intended to tarry on the earth till once Jesus, in some good and true sense, came. It is noteworthy that John does not seek to do away with this impression. What he objects to is the further inference that he would not die. This he positively corrects: 'Jesus said not unto him, he shall not die, but'—and mark how John merely repeats the words that Jesus uttered, —'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that

to thee?' John seems willing to give full force to the conviction that he was to tarry on the earth till Jesus came, but he denies what many of the brethren thought was fairly deducible from this, viz., that he was not to die. Now Paul says, 1 Thess. iv. 17, speaking of those 'which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord,' that they shall not die, but after the dead in Christ are raised, 'shall be' caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.' Again, in 1 Cor. xv. 51, he says, 'We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed: the dead shall be raised incorruptible and we shall be changed.' Had it then been true that John was to remain on the earth till Christ's final coming, it would also have been true that he would never die. But when Jesus spoke of His coming, many of the brethren seem to have thought of nothing else than His final coming; and hence their error. So too, after the time of the Apostles, many of the early Christians thought that John was still alive. Long after John was buried, men refused to believe the reality of his death.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'For many look again to find that face,  
Beloved John's to whom I ministered,  
Somewhere in life about the world, they err:  
Either mistaking what was darkly spoke  
At ending of his book as he relates,  
Or misconceiving somewhat of this speech  
Scattered about from mouth to mouth, as I suppose.  
Believe ye will not see him any more,  
About the world with his divine regard!  
For all was as I say, and now the man  
Lies as he lay once; breast to breast with God.'

R. BROWNING, *Death in the Desert.*

As after the battle of Flodden, the common people of Scotland continued fondly to dream that their beloved king had not been slain, but was only under hiding for a time, and would emerge in the day of Scotland's need, so, in reference to John, the fiction long obtained, that the beloved apostle was not dead and could not die, until Christ should come in person at the world's end. And if we could not think of Christ's coming under any other aspect than that of His personal advent, it might be difficult to resist the force of such reasoning, and we might be looking for John to appear alive in some out of the way part of the world, to play his part mayhap as another Elias in preparing the way for Jesus. But we know all such imaginations are worse than foolish. John is dead, and the world is not yet at an end. In a ripe old age he was gathered home; and now that nearly 1800 years have gone since then, we almost wonder what the words of Jesus meant when He said, 'If I will that John tarry till I come, what is that to thee?'

First of all we feel inclined to ask, if Jesus Himself really did not know whether He might come before sixty or seventy years. Few will be bold enough to say so. No doubt it is written that of the day and hour when He shall come, knoweth no man, nor the angels, nor even the Son of Man. But yet Jesus knew well that He would be long away. Did He not represent the kingdom of God under the figure of a man travelling into a

far country, and coming to reckon with his servants after a long time had elapsed, when they were in danger of forgetting his existence? It is hard to see how this could comport with His coming finally ere a generation of men had passed away, and before John was ready for the grave. Nay, whatever mystery may lie beneath the words, that Jesus knoweth not, as Man, the time of His appearance, yet it is most plain, even from the Gospels, that He knew full well that ages would transpire before He should return.—Matt. xxiv. 4–14.

Then, secondly, was Jesus willing that His disciples should remain in utter ignorance on this point, so that year after year they would be expecting Heaven to open, and the Sign of the Son of Man to be beheld? Obviously many of *the brethren* were living under this kind of feeling. But it does not say that the inspired apostles were. John was ready, judging from his own words, to combat such a notion. In his book of Revelation, he was divinely commissioned to reveal the ages upon ages that would elapse before the final coming of our Lord. Paul, too, is at utmost pains to warn men against the delusion that Christ would shortly come. ‘Now we beseech you, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling



away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.'<sup>1</sup> Again, in Romans, he details how the conversion of the Jews must lead to the salvation of the Gentiles, before the end of all can come. To place over against such clear revelations of God's will any verse like that which says, '*We* shall not all sleep,' where Paul might easily use the indefinite *We* in name of the general Church of Christ,<sup>2</sup>—to bring forward any such passage to prove that Paul contradicts in one epistle what he says in another, seems a most gratuitous perversion of the obvious import of his writings. We hold, therefore, that Jesus never taught His final coming would be soon, and that the apostles were not living in such expectancy.

For, in the third place, other events besides His personal advent, are called, and rightly called, the coming of our Lord. Especially can we assert, that the destruction of Jerusalem is spoken of by Christ Himself as His coming. Matt. xxiv. 34, 'Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.' How can we read this verse in connection with what goes before, except in the way of contemplating the destruction of Jerusalem as a type of final judgment, and Christ's coming at that time as real and true, though not in the personal mode of His coming hereafter? In this way only is it possible to explain the similar

<sup>1</sup> 2 Thess. ii. 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. vi. 14; xv. 51. 2 Cor. iv. 14. 1 Thess. v. 10.

passage, Matt. xvi. 28, ' Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.' Many will have read Spurgeon's sermon on this verse, in which he tries to prove that the final coming of our Lord is meant. He says, of course, that after death, the soul alone, and not the body, suffers. This is true; and it is also true that things continue so till the last day. But at the last day, body and soul together are hurled into hell, and then, and not before, will the full agony of the lost be experienced. In comparison with this final and eternal suffering of body, soul, and spirit, the previous anguish of the soul is scarcely worthy of the name. Hence Mr Spurgeon makes out the meaning of the passage to be, 'There be some standing here who will hardly have a taste of death till once the judgment come.' When pre-millennialists are driven to such straits in the way of interpretation, it is time we were on our guard. For the natural meaning of the words is, that some would not die, in the ordinary sense of the term, till once Jesus should, after a real and true, though not perhaps after a personal sense, come again; some to whom Jesus spoke would see in their days a beginning made of that coming of our Lord, which will end at last in His personal appearance upon the New Earth. For we do not disserve the final coming of our Lord from those which go before, as, for example, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the

preaching of the Gospel throughout the nations of the earth. Christ Jesus began to come in His kingdom when the Spirit was outpoured; that coming ends, with His kingdom being established in the world. His coming to judge, began visibly with the overthrow of Jerusalem, and ends with the casting out into the abyss, of death and hell and Satan. Hence, taking the first great epoch, when Jerusalem was judged, as a veritable coming of the Lord, we can understand how it should have been said, 'There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.' So, too, we can understand how Jesus should have said about the patriarchal John, 'If I will that he tarry till I come.' If the beginning of all those things I have foretold should occur before John is laid in the grave,—if he should tarry till I be manifestly seen coming in My kingdom,—'What is that to thee?'

We feel entitled, from this somewhat wide induction of passages, to speak freely of the events which usher in Millennium as a real and veritable coming of our Lord. The overthrow of Antichrist, the rising of the saints, and the casting down of Satan, whatever exactly these phrases may import, have a sufficient relationship to the judgment which descended on Jerusalem in the past, and to the final overthrow of Satan in the future, to warrant our speaking of Christ's reappearing before the Millennium; but not of His personal appearing, or His

advent, in the ordinary sense which the term has come to bear.

As to when the Millennium will begin, we have already tried to prove that we know nothing. From the reasonings of this chapter it will be seen that no new light has been thrown on this enigma. Antichrist has not been overthrown; of that we may be certain; and hence Millennium has not yet begun. But as to what hinders that our Lord should appear, according to the sense we have defined, we know not. That the Millennium may begin this year or next, we cannot deny. There seems no plain Scripture awaiting its fulfilment, and in that way barring the advent of the Redeemer in His Millennial glory. As regards the overthrow of Antichrist, the binding of Satan, and the reign of the saints, we can with hope and confidence breathe the prayer, 'Come Lord Jesus, come quickly!' If we had the view that Antichrist has not yet come, we would be justified in saying that Jesus will not come till the Man of Sin be revealed. But, according to the view of Antichrist we have adopted, he is even now gorged with the blood of the saints, and awaits his doom. With redoubled earnestness we then cry, 'Come, Lord Jesus.' But as to His personal advent, we are assured that the thousand years have still to run. This world of ours has a mighty destiny apparently before it, ere the elements be burned up with fervent heat, and the earth be prepared for the advent of the Saints in glory. Geology seems to indicate

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this; Physical Geography would testify to the likelihood of it; and the Bible would offer no opposition. Beyond this point, however, clouds and darkness settle down around us, so far as a theory of the future millennial state is concerned. All we know is, that the Great White Throne is beyond, and that unto them that look for Him shall Christ appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE RELATED NUMBERS.

#### 1. *Seven.*

IT has been already indicated that Seven has a symbolical significance in Scripture. It is a golden thread running throughout the entire volume of Revelation. Neither is it absent from the page of Nature. It might have been supposed that there was something arbitrary and capricious in fixing on the seventh portion of time for Sabbath rest, had not science given hints of a proof that the number seven is curiously inwoven into the whole fabric of man's being. We readily admit that the command to Naaman, 'Wash seven times in Jordan,' may have appeared most arbitrary, and that the sevenfold sprinklings in Israel were ceremonial. But how we are amazed when we look forth on the rainbow, that world-wide sign of God's covenant of grace, to discern there seven colours! and when we listen to the trilling of the human voice, to catch the same strange number seven! More: science tells us it is

no mere chance that there should be seven colours in the sun-light and seven notes in music. It is because of essential relations between light and sound. The very simplicity with which these can be stated is striking. A tenor voice produces 400 vibrations per second; a soprano voice 800. We have merely to multiply by a million million, and we come to numbers that have to be dealt with in the case of light; 400 million million vibrations per second corresponding to red light, 700 million million to violet, and so forth. But this is suggestive of a much wider range of harmonies. For the same prism which breaks up the ray of light into its seven constituent colours performs other wonders as well. Apply a thermometer to one side of the solar spectrum, and carry it along through the different zones of colour till the red be reached, and you will observe that the mercury gradually rises. Continue to carry the thermometer further along, and the mercury still rises. You find, in fact, that you are getting into a scale of heat, similar to the scale of light visible to the eye, and apparently very similar to the scale of music visible to the ear. Once more, let the photographer carry his prepared plate in the exactly opposite direction, and he observes that as he approaches the last lavender tints of the spectrum, the silvery surface of his sheet is being perceptibly darkened. He advances still, and blacker, by degrees, does the sheet become. There is a scale of chemical effects being exhibited, strikingly

like the scale of light, of sound, of heat. Then can it be that there is not merely a diatonic scale in music, but one that sweeps throughout the circle of the sciences? Is the number seven not merely involved in the rays which strike the eye, and in the eye on which they fall,—in the notes which affect the ear, and the ear which is formed to receive them, but is the number seven also mysteriously involved in the modifications of heat, that have such an influence on our frames, and in the ten thousand nerves that transmit these impressions? Is it associated with those chemico-electrical processes that are unceasingly at play within and around us? He would be a bold man, in face of such probabilities, who would maintain, that merely because of a reference to the number seven, there must be something arbitrary about the requisition of a Sabbath Rest. Nor let it be forgotten, that we are only at the beginning of what might be rendered a very wide induction, all tending in the same direction. This thought will get its due weight from any one familiar with the constant recurrence of the same mathematical formulæ and demonstrations, in their application to the various sciences. Nothing strikes a beginner in physics more than this, and a mere beginner is well acquainted with it. At the very threshold, for instance, of his studies, he learns to estimate the effect produced by two differently directed forces, acting upon a body at the same time. He sees illustrations in the leap of the circus-ring ;



in the direction in which a boatman steers ; in almost every operation that he witnesses. He is scarcely astonished to find the same law regulating the course of our earth round the sun ; for the poet has long since sung,—

‘ The very law that moulds a tear,  
And bids it trickle from its source,  
That law preserves the earth a sphere,  
And guides the planets in their course.’

But what can be meant by the recurrence of the same proposition in every department of physics? Why should it obtain, in the most recondite, as well as the most simple departments of inquiry? The student finds that his very first effort has placed in his hands a key that unlocks a thousand different wonders. A unity of plan is seen in every part of the Creator’s works,—typical ideas and regulative numbers, that would appear to have been at the basis of the world’s structure.

All know how Newton, after a life of labour, grasped at the law of gravitation. Well might the pencil drop from the philosopher’s hand as he completed his wonderful analysis. But, as has been indicated, there seems to be something stranger still, inasmuch as his different theorems have a wider application than Newton himself conceived. He left them as a birthright to astronomers ; but new sciences have of late been called into being. Would it not be singular to find the labours of Newton

aiding the electrician? Yet so it is, that many of Newton's problems have their counterparts in this more modern science. Yea, What if every form of action that we behold be connected with a single physical cause? What if gravitation, which, even at present, is the finest instance we know of a universal harmony,—'What,' to adopt the language of Sir William Thomson, 'if the potential energy of gravitation be in reality the ultimate created antecedent of all motion, light and heat, at present existing in the universe!'

Again, we repeat, with such thoughts suggested by modern research, and knowing that the number seven stands out so distinctly in two at least of these related sciences, he would be a bold man, who, because of this number occurring in a commandment concerning the Sabbath rest of man—of man, whose physical being is so strangely attuned to Nature around, and whose physical, intellectual, and spiritual natures are so dove-tailed into each other; he would be bold to say that the command was arbitrary, and must be, from the necessity of things, excluded from the category of those laws which are moral and binding in their character.

Stranger still, however, than the mere fact that seven seems to run throughout the universe, is it to observe that the numbers three and four are found combining in order to its formation. There are three primary colours, red, blue, and yellow, from which the others are formed. In like manner, there

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are three notes in the scale of music that the ear can more readily dwell on than others—the first, third, and fifth. The do, me, sol, as every one knows, are those a precentor invariably chooses to run over. And if analogy can be any guide, the fact of the three and the four being marked out in light and in sound seems to indicate how prevalent may be their existence throughout the whole bounds of nature.

Without, however, seeking to carry out these investigations further, enough has been done to prove that seven as made up of three and four, has a distinct place among the typical numbers of creation. What we have to set forth as parallel with this, is the fact, that seven as made up of three and four, has a distinct place among the typical numbers of Revelation. There have been already adduced some illustrations of the prevalence of the number seven throughout the sacred record.<sup>1</sup> It is quite as easy to show its division into what we may call its symbolical elements—three and four.

Look, for example, to the promises addressed to the seven churches. Observe how they arrange themselves into a group—first of four, that borrow their imagery from the events of the past; then of three, whose references are altogether to the future<sup>2</sup>—

<sup>1</sup> Pages 55–58.

<sup>2</sup> Trench, on the Epistles to the Seven Churches.

- 1. The tree of life.
- 2. Not being hurt of the second death.
- 3. The hidden manna.
- 4. Ruling with a rod of iron (Ps. ii).
- 5. The confessing before His Father.
- 6. The going no more out.
- 7. The sitting on Christ's throne.

Similarly it is to be noticed how in the case of the first three promises, they are preceded by the words, 'He that hath an ear let him hear.' In the case of the last four promises they are succeeded by the words, 'He that hath an ear let him hear.'

It might be thought that in this there was over-refinement; but on turning to the seven seals, the first four are again separated from the last three. The four living creatures say severally when the first four seals are opened, 'Come,' and four riders come forth, one on a white horse, one on a red, the third on a black horse, and the fourth whose name is death. The last three seals are of a different character, and the imagery is altogether changed.

So, when we come to the seven trumpets, the last three are severed from the others, by the eagle flying through the midst of heaven, saying, 'Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels which are yet to sound.' The first four trumpets affect (1) the earth, (2) the sea, (3) the rivers and fountains, (4) the sun. The three woe-

trumpets are of a different character, and effect very different results.

Once more, when we advance to the Vials, (1) the first is poured on the earth; (2) the second on the sea; (3) the third on the rivers and fountains; (4) the fourth on the sun; while the last three, in a manner corresponding to the three woe-trumpets, are poured out on the throne of the Beast, and the river Euphrates, and the air.

Evidently the three and the four, as they combine to form seven, enter into the whole structural arrangement of the Apocalypse.

But it is not in the Revelation alone that the connection between these numbers can be traced. They seem to enter into the structure of the Lord's prayer. Assuming that 'the doxology must on every ground of sound criticism be omitted,'<sup>1</sup> and also that there is a pretty general agreement in regard to there being seven, rather than six petitions in that divine formulary,—'Lead us not into temptation' approving itself to be distinct from the prayer, 'Deliver us from evil,' we find that the first three petitions have reference very specially to God, and the last four to the things of earth.

- 1. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
- 2. Thy kingdom come.
- 3. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

<sup>1</sup> Alford.

- 4. Give us each day our daily bread.
- 5. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
- 6. And lead us not into temptation.
- 7. But deliver us from evil.

The same kind of division does not appear less obvious in the parables of Matt. xiii., relating to the kingdom of God. They fall significantly into a group of seven, four of which were spoken in the hearing of the general crowd, and three of which were delivered more privately to His disciples.

Reference might be made to indications of the same kind of division in the Old Testament; as, for instance, Num. xix. 11, 12, where the sprinkling of the ashes of the heifer is appointed for the third day, while on the seventh day the man was rendered clean. Enough, however, may have been done to warrant our considering by themselves the two numbers Three and Four, which evidently go together to make up the sacred number Seven.

### 2. *Three.*

Triads might be made to cover many a page. Land, Air, and Water, in the macrocosm without; Body, Soul, and Spirit, in the world within; the Heaven above, the Earth beneath, and the Water under the earth,—all have been regarded as testifying to the trinity that rules in natural things. The Egyptians had a Trinity composed of Osiris, Isis,

and Orus; the Persians of Oromasdes, Mithras, and Arimanius. The Indian sacred books or Vedas are three in number, their Trimurti are well-known—Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva: ‘they worship in prayer three times in the day; when performing ablutions they immerse their bodies three times in the purifying stream; they wear an amulet composed of three threads, three times twisted together with solemn art.’<sup>1</sup> The Greeks, who probably derived their Theogony from the East, had Zeus, and Pluto, and Poseidon. The Capitoline Triad need hardly be named, Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva. So had the Norsmen, Thor, Odin, and Freya: ‘The Northern Tree of Life—the World-Tree—has three roots; the one reaches to Hell, the other goes to Giant-land, the third is in the middle of Asgard, where the Gods go to judgment, and under it is the holy Spring of Time, where Urda, Verandi, and Sculda, *i.e.*, Past, Present, and Future, dwell.’<sup>2</sup> Among ourselves, ‘the third time is lucky;’ we start our runners with Once, Twice, Thrice; ‘Thrice noble Lord,’ ‘Thrice happy isles,’ ‘Thrice happy men,’ are the expressions of our poets. According to the German proverb, ‘Of all good things there must be three.’ Time would fail to trace such triads as Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral, and point to such facts as that three vowels, a, i, u, and three consonants, b, c, d, are at the basis of all speech. The curious have ample

<sup>1</sup> ‘All Nature a Symbol,’ by Dr T. A. G. Balfour.

<sup>2</sup> Bähr’s Symbolik, i. p. 150.

means of carrying out their researches in these directions almost indefinitely.

It is to be noted, however, that the use of the number Three is hardly less frequent in Scripture. Three sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, were placed at the Trivium of the Old World, where the three ways met that led, as if by a pre-arranged harmony, into Europe, Asia, and Africa. Three animals for sacrifice; the heifer, goat, and lamb, each three years old, were required from Abraham. Three festivals were specially sacred in Israel, the Passover, the Feast of Weeks, and Tabernacles. Daniel prayed three times a-day; Thrice did our Saviour plead, 'Father, if it be possible;' and Thrice did Paul entreat that the thorn in his flesh might be removed.

Do we then leap to the conclusion that in every instance where Three occurs there is a direct reference to the Trinity? Far from it. Robert Browning has well said, in reference to the very point before us,—

‘ And yet, and yet, yet fifty times over,  
Pharaoh received no demonstration  
By his Baker’s dream of Baskets Three,  
Of the doctrine of the Trinity.’<sup>1</sup>

Are we prepared, on the other hand, to accept the dictum of Leyrer in Herzog’s *Encyclopädie*, who is followed by Arnold in *Fairbairn’s Dictionary*, that

<sup>1</sup> Christmas Eve and Easter Day.



‘God, the Infinite, has no number, the Trinity standing above all symbolism?’ By no means. For although the doctrine of the Trinity was not so clearly revealed of old, yet indications of the mystery were not lacking, and they were given undoubtedly in connection with the number Three. Is not the *Angel of the covenant* often spoken of as *Jehovah*, and do we not read of the *Spirit of God* as brooding over the waters? Hence, apparently, Three Angels appeared to Abraham, while the blessing of Jacob assumed a Threefold form,—‘*God*, before whom my fathers did walk, the *God* which fed me all my life long unto this day, the *Angel* which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads;’ and the priestly benediction ran thus—

‘The *Lord* bless thee and keep thee,  
The *Lord* make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious  
unto thee,  
The *Lord* lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee  
peace;’

and the Seraphim cry, ‘*Holy, Holy, Holy* is the Lord of hosts.’

Three is, presumably, the number symbolical of the Godhead. This may go far to explain some of the instances already adduced from Scripture of the use of this symbol, and to account for traces which may here and there occur, not only in the Bible, but in nature, and amongst the tribes of men, of heavenly things reflecting themselves under threefold modes

and aspects ; for 'the glory of the Trinity is refracted no less in creation than in Revelation.'<sup>1</sup> The central idea connected with Three seems to be the Godhead; but to force the number to bear a precise reference to the Trinity every time it occurs, would be worse than folly.

We have only further to remark, that it seems impossible to account for the occurrence of Trinities in the mythologies of so many different nations, apart from the primitive tradition, that must have been handed down by Noah to his children, respecting the mystery of the Godhead. Bähr has laboured hard to prove that there is a mystic power in the number Three itself, which accords with the strivings of the human soul after the idea of God; but we are not prepared to accept any mathematical theory of the universe, and it is hard to make any sober man believe that because 1 and 2 make 3, therefore three is naturally fitted to stand in place of the Creator. Bähr says himself, when speaking of the Jews, 'Never could such a conception of the Trinity in Unity have been so fully involved in Jewish Theology, unless the ground-work of it at least had been found in the Mosaic writings.'<sup>2</sup> Does not the same thing hold good in reference to the adumbrations of the Christian doctrine of the Trinity discoverable amongst the other nations? They would never, from the mere power of numbers, have

<sup>1</sup> Fairbairn's Dict., Art. 'Numbers.'

<sup>2</sup> Bähr's Symbolik, i. p. 155.

arrived at such ideas. A ground-work at least must be found in the measure of truth granted originally to men before the Dispersion.

### 3. *Four.*

Not to speak of the four seasons, there are the four directions, North, South, East, and West, to suggest the adoption of the number Four as the symbol of the Earth. A sciolist might prefer a circle to a square in representing the world; but certainly if any significant number is to be employed, Four would more readily occur than any other. Isaiah speaks of the *circle* of the earth, and yet one feels that there is no contradiction in his speaking of the four corners of the earth, and of the four winds of heaven. Hence John sees four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth.<sup>1</sup> To Ezekiel it is given to prophesy, and to say to the wind, 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain.'<sup>2</sup> And Jesus says that God shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to another.<sup>3</sup> The cosmogony of Job seems to have corresponded with the same idea, for there is a fourfold division of the heavens, 'Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south;'<sup>4</sup> and again—

<sup>1</sup> Rev. vii. 1.    <sup>2</sup> Ezek. xxxvii. 9.    <sup>3</sup> Matt. xxiv. 31.    <sup>4</sup> Job ix. 9.

' Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?  
Or loose the bands of Orion?  
Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?  
Or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?'<sup>1</sup>

It is on the same account that the inhabitants of the world are usually designated by means of a fourfold enumeration. From every *kindred*, and *tongue*, and *people*, and *nation*, the redeemed will come.<sup>2</sup> The innumerable multitude before the throne are of all *nations*, and *kindreds*, and *people*, and *tongues*.<sup>3</sup> It is said to the seer, 'Thou must prophesy again before many *peoples*, and *nations*, and *tongues*, and *kings*,'<sup>4</sup> and the angel flying in the midst of heaven has the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every *nation*, and *kindred*, and *tongue*, and *people*.<sup>5</sup> In fact, throughout the book of Revelation, there is only one apparent exception to this mode of enumerating the people of the earth, Rev. xiii. 7; but the best manuscripts, without exception, have, 'Every *kindred*, and *people*, and *tongue*, and *nation*.'<sup>6</sup>

Nor is the number four confined to the Apocalypse. John had probably in view the tables of generations in Genesis, where,

1. The sons of Japheth are divided into their lands, their tongues, their families, and nations. Gen. x. 5.

2. The sons of Ham are divided into their fami-

<sup>1</sup> Job xxxviii. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. v. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. vii. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. x. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. xiv. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Tischendorf. MSS. A. B. C.

lies, their tongues, their countries, and nations. Gen. x. 20.

3. The sons of Shem are divided into their families, their, tongues, their lands, and nations. Gen. x. 31.

Such is the fourfold category of the sad division of man. Corresponding thereto is John's enumeration of the Redeemed, who shall be gathered from the four corners of the world. May it not have been intentional, when the same evangelist classed together the great multitude that lay around the pool of Bethesda, as 'Impotent folk, blind, halt, and withered?'<sup>1</sup> Do they not appear as representatives of a fallen world of men, longing for the Saviour, and meanwhile circling closely round the *House of Mercy*?

At any rate, we are not to forget the vision which appeared to Peter, in support of the command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,<sup>2</sup>—a vessel, as it had been a great sheet, knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

Hence apparently, the great world-powers in the book of Daniel are four in number, while the Horns of the Gentiles which Zechariah in vision beholds are also four, being the world-forces that oppose the church.<sup>3</sup> So, too, Balaam, in the doom he utters

<sup>1</sup> John v. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Acts x. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Zech. i. 18.

over the heathen nations, adopts a fourfold classification (Numb. xxiv.). Balaam's *fourth* and last prophecy foretells the victorious supremacy of Israel over all its foes, and the destruction of all the powers of the world. This prophecy is divided into four different prophecies, by the fourfold repetition of the words, 'he took up his parable' (vers. 15, 20, 21, and 23). The *first* of these refers to the two nations that were related to Israel, viz., Edom and Moab (vers. 17–19); the *second* to Amalek, the arch-enemy of Israel (ver. 20); the *third* of the Kenites, who were allied to Israel (vers. 21 and 22); and the *fourth* proclaims the overthrow of the great powers of the world, Ashur and Eber (vers. 23 and 24).<sup>1</sup> And as the fate of each is uttered, we seem to hear the irrevocable doom of the world lying in sin.<sup>2</sup>

But blessings are meant to be diffused abroad, and hence they too have a fourfold character. Like the river of Eden, which parted into four heads so as to embrace the lands of earth (Gen. ii. 10–14), so the Gospel is meant for every creature. Is it a mere coincidence, therefore, that we should possess four Gospels, or rather a fourfold Gospel of Jesus Christ? Is it a mere chance that the disciples of our Lord happen to be arranged in companies of four?

Look at the table which Alford has presented, drawn from the names of the Apostles as they are given by the different evangelists.

<sup>1</sup> Keil and Delitzsch on the Pentateuch, vol. iii. p. 191.

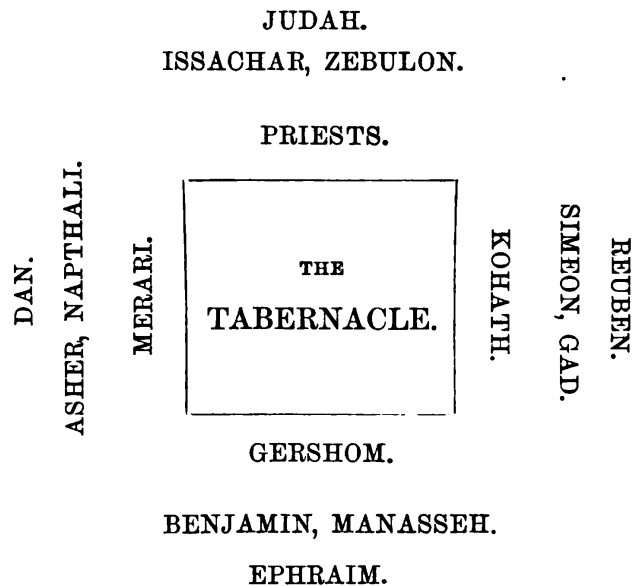
<sup>2</sup> Gk. Test., vol. i. p. 98.

	Matt. x. 2.	Mark iii. 16.	Luke vi. 14.	Acts i. 13.
1	Simon Peter.			
2	Andrew.	James.	Andrew.	John.
3	James.	John.	James.	James.
4	John.	Andrew.	John.	Andrew.
5	Philip.			
6	Bartholomew.			Thomas.
7	Thomas.	Matthew.		Bartholomew.
8	Matthew.	Thomas.		Matthew.
9	James, son of Alphaeus.			
10	Lebbaeus.	Thaddaeus.	Simon Zelotes.	Simon Zelotes.
11	Simon (ὁ κωνανῖος).		Jude, son of James.	
12	Judas Iscariot.			Vacant.

It will be seen that in all the lists Simon Peter stands first, just as Judas Iscariot takes the lowest place, and that they all divide the Apostles into three groups of Four, of which Peter, Philip, and James the Less, severally stand at the head. That it is no mere chance which throws Peter, Philip, and James invariably into the first, fifth, and ninth

places respectively, is plain from the fact, that while Andrew, James, and John intermingle among themselves, they are never found in a lower group. One can fancy a reason for this, but how account for Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew occupying an exactly similar relation to each other in the second group, not one of them being ever found in the lowest group of all? It must be admitted that the twelve disciples are meant to appear before us in groups of four. And may they not have been divided in such a way, that the command should be as it were engraven on their foreheads, 'Go ye into all the world,'—the Four quarters of the Earth,—'and preach the Gospel to every creature?'

The resemblance will at once be recognized between this arrangement of the Apostles and that which marked the tribes of Israel in the wilderness.





God dwelt in the midst of the people, 'The Lord their God was with them, and the shout of a king among them,' and they stretched out toward the four corners of the earth. Israel was meant to represent the whole body of the Redeemed, and as one day, God's kingdom will be co-extensive with the world, it was meet that the tribes of Jacob should spread out toward the four winds of heaven. The type was presented of God's tabernacling amongst *men*, and delighting to have them all gathered around His throne as their blessed centre.

The same order, as might be expected, pertains to Ezekiel's visions, and to the Apocalypse of John.

But we have further to note, that the same principle accounts apparently for the four-cornered arrangement of the Tabernacle, and of many of the vessels connected therewith. The Holy of Holies was a perfect cube; the entire Tabernacle took a quadrilateral shape, three times longer than it was broad, and so forth. What can be the meaning of the constant recurrence of this number four in things pertaining to God's sanctuary? Does it not point to the world as the Lord's? and to the time when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of His Christ? The four sets of gates in the Jerusalem of God are opened to the north and south and east and west, so that all men are invited to enter. The altar has four horns, that all the sons of men may cling thereto for life. The ark, the tabernacle, the tribes of Israel, all fall into a four-

fold form, for they are designed to have relations to all mankind, and to shed blessings abroad to all the sons of men.

It will now be understood how such a number as the thousand and six hundred furlongs of Rev. xiv. 20, may possess a definite import, and be neither the product of mysticism nor caprice.

‘And the angel thrust in his sickle into the *earth*, and gathered the vine of the *earth*, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.’ It is manifestly the judgment of the whole world which is here depicted. ‘And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.’ To try, as some have done, to find out a battle in which the blood flowed over such a space, is obviously vain. To make out that the 1600 furlongs is the length of Palestine, is no less vain. Victorinus is nearer the mark when he speaks of the blood as flowing ‘per omnes mundi quatuor partes.’ We have to regard the 1600 as made up of four times four, multiplied by a hundred, where the four is manifestly the presiding element. That we are warranted in regarding the number as constituted after this fashion will appear more clearly when we come to consider the 144,000 which elsewhere figures in the Revelation, and when we see that it is made up of twelve times twelve multiplied by a thousand, where in

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like manner the twelve is the ruling number.<sup>1</sup> But meanwhile, taking it for granted that we can look upon the 1600 furlongs as being a sort of enlargement of four; how, we ask, could the fact have been better represented, that the wine-press of the Almighty's wrath was to overflow the entire limits of the earth? Judgment is to begin at the house of God; but where is the corner of the earth that will escape? The world lying in wickedness is the scene of wrath, and to its utmost verge does the flood overflow. Throughout four times four times a hundred furlongs does it spread, and it is bridle-deep,—deep as the horses of wrath can wade through, that drag the heavy rollers of the Almighty's fury. Vengeance full and terrible is decreed against all workers of iniquity. Such seems to be the lesson conveyed by the symbolic number in this otherwise most enigmatical passage.

It will be asked, if this mode of contemplating the number Four, helps with the solution of the problem concerning the Four Angels in the river Euphrates, Rev. ix. 13–21. It does. In the first place, the Euphrates seems to be introduced into the Revelation because of its connection with Babylon. From the beginning to the end of the Bible, Babylon is the representative of all the powers which have been leagued against the kingdom of God. Now, it is remarkable enough, that the very first time it is mentioned (Gen. x. 11), it is in combination with

<sup>1</sup> Page 178

four cities that were built in the land of Shinar,— Babel, and Erech, and Accad and Calneh. And if we are to find a historical foundation for the four angels that were bound in the river Euphrates, we would rather look to that circumstance in the past, than to anything connected with the Turks, and their provinces of Iconium, Aleppo, Damascus, and Bagdad. It would end all consistency in reading the Apocalypse, were we to limit the reference of the four angels in the Euphrates, either to the Mahomedan power or any other individual system of error. Babylon represents the entire dominion of Antichrist. As Jerusalem stands in the Revelation for the universal church of the redeemed, so Babylon includes the whole system of evil in the world. The two cities are opposed to each other, like as are the Bride and the Whore, the Lamb and the Dragon. Hence, the four great powers which are *on* the the river Euphrates (ἐπὶ τῷ ποταμῷ), are to be regarded as the representatives of the nations to the north and south and east and west, which league themselves with Antichrist. Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, that stood *on* the Euphrates of old, were the types of the kingdoms in the four quarters of the world that lend themselves to the devices of Antichrist, and rally round his standard. In accordance with the symbolism of the rest of the book, these world-powers are spoken of as if they were four angels of darkness. Like as seven angels represent the seven churches, and are

addressed as if themselves were the churches, so the powers of evil throughout the world that are destined to reveal themselves, in their relation to Antichristian error, are quite naturally spoken of as 'Four Angels which are bound on the great river Euphrates; prepared for the hour, and day, and month, and year.' That is to say, the various phases of evil will manifest themselves according to the set time and purpose of the Almighty. They come forth to scourge the earth, and to perform their part in the second great Woe, in accordance with the very day, and the hour of the day, determined by the Father. As in the visions of the Seals, War, and Famine, and Death were all seen to hasten the coming of Him who rides forth conquering and to conquer; so in these visions of the Trumpets, the letting loose of Satan at the sounding of the Fifth Trumpet, and the letting loose of the forces of Babylon at the sounding of the Sixth, are under the control of the Disposer of all things.

In this way, the strange visions of the 9th chapter can be brought into harmony with those that follow throughout this book. Satan and Antichrist—the Dragon and the Beast, are the chief figures afterwards; so here, to prepare us for what is to follow, the hosts of Satan and of Antichrist are seen in their relation to each other. How correspondent with the horses in the one case, are the horses in the other! The locusts that rise from the bottomless pit are like unto horses prepared unto

battle, and they have tails like scorpions and stings in their tails. The horsemen that are let loose from the Euphrates ride upon horses whose power is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads, and with them they do hurt. Well may men laugh at those who would interpret such graphic images of the league between Antichristian and Satanic malice, by the horse-tails, borne as symbols of authority by the Turkish Pachas. But we venture no farther into this inviting field.

Our treatment, however, of the number Four would be very imperfect, unless a reference more in detail were made to the Four Living Creatures that attract our attention more than once in the page of Scripture. We take it for granted that a pretty general agreement has been come to, as respects the Four Living Creatures of the Apocalypse being the representatives of Redeemed Creation. Were there no reference to Cherubim or Seraphim in other parts of the Bible, probably there would not be a dissentient voice in the entire circle of modern investigators, so far as regards the position which these Living Creatures occupy in the Apocalyptic visions. Their forms are essentially human. They have hands like men; they speak as men; but in one, a lion form is seen,—the king of beasts; in another, the form of the ox appears,—the chief of all tame animals, according to the invariable usage of writers in Palestine; the third has a face as a man; and the fourth is like a flying eagle,—the

king of birds. How Paul's idea of The Creature (or Creation, as it is otherwise translated) in Rom. viii., could be better set forth, it would be hard to tell. But the resemblance to Rom. viii. becomes more apparent as we advance. When the first seal is opened, the voice of one of the living creatures is heard, saying, 'Come.' Unfortunately the Received Text obscures this pregnant phrase, by inserting without the authority of any MSS., the meaningless 'And See.' But the cry here is really that of the whole book, Come! Come Lord Jesus! As the Spirit and the Bride say Come! and as he who heareth is to echo Come! so the living creatures are represented as longing for the Saviour, and crying with a mighty voice, Come! Come, Lord Jesus, Come quickly! 'For the earnest expectation of *the creature* waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For *the creature* was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope, because *the creature itself* also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the *whole creation* groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.' Hence, the cry of the First Creature is Come! and in answer, Christ Jesus is seen riding forth with crown on head and bow in hand, conquering and to conquer. The cry of the Second Creature is also, Come! and War hastens forth on his blood red steed to accomplish God's purposes on earth. The

Third Creature has the same voice, Come! and Famine stalks forth on his black horse,—but also to accomplish the will of the Eternal. For, from the midst of the Living Creatures a voice is heard, ‘A measure of wheat for a penny:’ the poor man is not to be altogether crushed; the daily wage is still to secure a modicum of bread. Lastly, the Fourth Living Creature cries, Come! and Death sweeps over a world in sin; but War, and Famine, and Death alike are in the track of Christ the conqueror, and are mysteriously hastening His advent. The cry of creation is ascending into the ears of the God of Sabaoth, and He is hastening to give creation rest.

How, we ask, under this aspect, could the universality of the call have been more aptly symbolized, than by *Four* Living Creatures? The *whole creation* is thus betokened. From every quarter of the world the wail is heard that springs from the oppression of sin, and the unutterable longing is expressed for the completion of God’s great plan.

It will of course be understood that we do not exclude from the symbolism of the Living Creatures reference to man. As the ‘chief o’er all God’s works below,’ it were impossible to regard the wail of creation as ascending without him. For his sake the ground was cursed. Hence, as has been said, the Living Creatures were mainly human in their form.

But the question remains, as to the identity of these symbolic figures in the Apocalypse with the



seraphim of Isaiah, the living creatures of Ezekiel, and the cherubim above the ark and at the gate of Paradise. Almost the only presumption against the thought of this identity is the fact that over the ark of old there were only two such figures, while on the throne of God, in the visions of Ezekiel and John, there are four. This might indeed be relegated to the class of unessential differences, that can be traced between the parallel representations of even John and Ezekiel themselves, but possibly a more satisfactory answer can be suggested.

Let us then seek to reach the idea conveyed by the cherubs that covered the ark in the Tabernacle. Everything, it will be readily conceded, that was sacred in Israel, was meant to cluster round the law of God, and find in it a basis of power. The Tables of Stone were placed at the centre of Israel and Israel's worship. First the ark rose up round the Law, then the Holy Place, and the Court of the Tabernacle. Next came the tents of the priests, and then lay extended all around, the twelve different tribes. So, too, when the people were on the march, the law still formed the centre of the procession. While the wood work of the Tabernacle and its curtains, were borne by the sons of Gershom and Merari after the first three tribes, the more peculiar vessels and furnishings of the sanctuary were borne by the sons of Kohath under the direction of Eliezar, after six of the tribes, and before the other six. There, with Judah in the van leading the mighty

cavalcade, came borne aloft in the centre of all, the pride of Israel, the Ark and Tables of the Covenant. And, likeas, in actual position, the law was the basis from which Israel was built up, so, in connection with the sacrifices of Israel, this was the point to which they all tended. It was to the Ark of the Testimony that the blood at length was brought on the Day of Atonement. All the sacrifices of Israel were embodied in the special sacrifice of that day, and on that day the High Priest entered, for himself and for the people, in within the vail, and rested not till he had laid the blood by sprinkling over above the tables of the law. There was nothing beneath but them, for there was no other basis needed, and indeed no other basis possible, on which the soul could rest in peace. And now, behold what meets the view of Aaron as he sprinkles the blood on that lid of gold. First, God is there. That is the place of His feet. There is His throne. The glory of the Lord rests over the ark, and the only object of that ark is to contain the law. It is on the law Jehovah stands—the Law of the Ten Commandments. It is because He has His seat of holiness there, that the blood shedding is needful. That law called for death, therefore it is that the sacrifice needed to be slain. But now, the sacrifice has been rendered; through the blood shedding atonement has been made; the memorial of this is therefore spread out before God by means of the sevenfold sprinkling; the soul may now lie in peace on the same founda-

tion on which Jehovah rests, and find its home in the bosom of a reconciled God and Father. But, second, there are human forms,—or forms at least mainly human, which rise up from the same lid of gold. They are beaten out of the same piece of gold with the lid itself. Their feet stand secure therefore on this resting-place. Who or what can they be, if not representatives in some way or other, of those most interested in redeeming blood? They were types, mainly of those who, looking to the blood shedding as their hope, are able to stand on the righteousness and justice of God as their secure foundation. Thus only can they be interpreted, in accordance with the symbolism of the great day of atonement. Aaron saw within the veil the types of those who would dwell for ever in God's presence because of the death of the Lamb, even as Adam saw within the gates of Paradise cherubic types of the ransomed, sprung from his loins, who would reinherit the bliss of Eden, and have a title to the tree of life.

But does the position and the significance of the Two Cherubim above the Ark, correspond with what we would thus assign to the Four Living Creatures seen in the midst of God's throne? Apparently there were *Two* Cherubim, as representing the Redeemed from amongst the children of Israel, the children of the covenant. For two was the number significant of testimony. There were always two witnesses required. The two witnesses

in Revelation will recur to mind. And so the fitness appears of the two tables of stone getting the name of the Tables of Testimony. In token therefore of the relation between the cherubim and the elect souls in Israel, their number was two in the Tabernacle. Hence also Isaiah, as the prophet sent to the Jews, sees only two Seraphim above the throne (Is. vi.), and there is a multifold reference in his account to the same number; with two of their wings they cover their faces—with two they cover their feet—and with two they fly; and this one cries to this (keeping closely to the Hebrew), 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts.' But when we pass to Ezekiel, the prophet of the Lord to the dispersed among the nations, and when it begins to appear that the prophecies of Isaiah respecting the ingathering of the Gentiles will not fail to be accomplished, then we come upon a difference. In Ezekiel's vision of the Living Creatures, the number four runs throughout the whole. They have still the likeness of a man (i. 5), but they have four faces; and four hands, and four wings. Why should there be this change? May there not be a reference to the fourfold division of men into kindreds, and nations, and peoples, and tongues? If so, it would seem as if the different races of men were to occupy the place which was once exclusively assigned to the children of the covenant. The same conclusion is borne in upon us by the use of four in John's vision. There again, we have the four living crea-

tures in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, like as the Cherubim within the Tabernacle rose from the midst of the Mercy-seat—the Throne of Jehovah. The entire company of the saved take the same place with the Redeemed from amongst the tribes of Israel. They look to the same blood shedding as their hope, and their feet rest on the same foundation—even the unchanging law of God. The throne on which He meets with man redeemed is evermore the same, the perfect moral law embodied in the Ten Commandments. As the feet of the cherubim rested firmly on that law, and as their eyes were ever turned toward it, so do all God's children look to the law-fulfilling as their hope. On no other ground of acceptance do they choose to lean, than the perfect one of righteousness. This gives boldness to their access into God's presence, for He is faithful and just to forgive them their sins. Thus is the promise fulfilled in their experience, 'To Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on His throne.'

So far then is the fact of the number of the cherubim being in Israel two; while in the visions of Ezekiel and John they are four; at all opposed to the view concerning the cherubim we have been maintaining, that it greatly strengthens our position. They are the types of redeemed creation, and in consequence, are the types especially of re-

deemed men. They were of old the types of the redeemed in Israel; in the New Testament they represent the whole body of the faithful, and indeed embrace in their symbolism the entire creation that shares in the blessings of the ransomed. But all through, it is the same covenant and the same blood that are kept prominently before us; it is the same throne of righteousness, and the same law. Salvation was of the Jews, but not for Jews alone. 'Christ is the propitiation, not for *our* sins only,' says John, speaking as a Jew to Jews, 'but also for the sins of the *whole world*.' The perfect fulfilling of the Mosaic law by Jesus involved the perfect fulfilling of the entire law of nature. 'God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law' (Gal. iv. 4),—that is, the law of Moses, as appears from the previous course of the Apostle's argument; yet who will forbid the fullest appropriation of the precious word by us Gentiles? 'Christ was made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.' That word *we* seems thrown in for the very purpose of knitting the Gentile together with the Jew into fellowship with the sufferings and the glory of the Redeemer. Now, if it be true that Jesus, by conforming in every jot and tittle to Moses' law,—so becoming a Saviour for the Jews—did by that very fact conform to all that was required of man as man,—so becoming the Saviour of the world, does it not follow that the two lines of requirement laid respec-

tively on Jew and Gentile, must, throughout part of their course at least, absolutely coalesce? that the Jewish code had somehow or other—somewhere or other embedded in it, what may be called the code of nature? that the same moral law essentially, which was binding on man as man, was binding on the Jew as man, in addition to, or in connection with, any other observances which wore more or less a moral aspect from their relation to it? *A priori*, therefore, we would be bound in looking through the code of Moses, to discover, if possible, the clear projection of the unwritten law with which man's being at first was in accord, thrown out upon tables of stone or otherwise, but at all events propounded in such a way, that no reasonable doubt could well be entertained, of these words being the moral law of God—that law which not the Jew alone was bound to respect, but which stood related to all mankind. Agreeably to this anticipation, we do find the Decalogue very clearly occupying a place of pre-eminence, very distinctly moral in its character, and as distinctly applicable in all its great details, to the wants and necessities of every child of man. It wears no doubt a certain Jewish aspect, from the fact of all God's revelations being historical, but, while as to some of the minute details of form there may need to be a natural development into New Testament language, it remains the voice of Scripture and philosophy as well, that the Moral Law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Command-

ments.<sup>1</sup> In exact accordance then, with these well-known deductions of theology, we find that the cherubim within the Tabernacle—types of God's true people in Israel, stood with their feet planted on the Ten Commandments; and the Living Creatures in Ezekiel and John—types of the universal company of the Redeemed—stand on the same throne, and occupy the same position. If the Jew needed to have the Ten Commandments as the basis of his soul's peace, we cannot do with less. If blood needed to be shed for him, because of the breach of that law, blood must also atone for our souls. The sacrifices of Israel pointed to a sacrifice not for them alone, but for men of every name. We must all come, Jew and Gentile, alike, by the same way to the Father. For there is but one—the new and living way, and God changes not His throne; it remains the same throughout all generations.

#### 4. *Twelve.*

The number Twelve is another of those numbers to be met with, alike in Nature and in Revelation.

<sup>1</sup> 'Delivered with every solemnity of which place and time could admit, treasured up with every sanctity which religion could confer within the holiest shrine of the holiest of, the holy places—more sacred than altar of sacrifice, or altar of incense—the Ten Commandments contain almost nothing of local or ceremonial injunction. However sacred the ritual with which they and the other moral laws were surrounded, yet we have the highest authority for distinguishing between what was essential and non-essential in the Mosaic institutions, and for believing that even the whole sacrificial system was as nothing compared with the Decalogue and its enforcements. Jer. vii. 21-23.'—STANLEY'S 'Jewish Church,' p. 175.



Singularly enough also, it is in both constituted by means of Three and Four. The year has twelve months, with its four seasons, consisting of three months each. And, as will have been noticed from the last section, the same division prevails wherever almost twelve is named in Scripture. There is one well known verse that seems to intertwine the number as it occurs in nature, with the number as it is used in connection with the church of God. It is after the New Jerusalem has been described, with its twelve gates and twelve foundations, with its length twelve thousand furlongs, and so forth, that it is said, Rev. xxii. 1, 'He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month.' It is not to be inferred from this that the number Twelve is symbolical in Scripture, because of its significance in nature. We merely mark with interest the fact, that typical numbers run throughout God's two books, and that there is nothing stranger in finding them on the page of the Bible than in finding them engraven on the face of the Universe. It seems rather to tell that the Author of both is one. Necessity, therefore, is laid upon us to give heed to these recurring numbers, and not to regard them as things of chance.

Fortunately, in the present instance, the mean-

ing of the symbol is clear beyond mistake. There were twelve patriarchs at the head of the Old Testament Church, and Twelve Apostles at the head of the New. The number twelve, then, we might at once presume, will be significant of the Church of God. In accordance with this, the Bride appears, 'clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.'<sup>1</sup> The promise is to the apostles: 'In the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'<sup>2</sup> Obviously this cannot mean that their rule was to be restricted to the Sons of Israel according to the flesh. The whole of the tribes of God are included. It is as in Rev. vii., 'And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand, . . . and so on, down to little Benjamin, with his twelve thousand. And as indicative of the numbers here being symbolical, and not rigidly numerical, it is at once added, as if explanatory, 'After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xii. i.<sup>2</sup> Matt xix. 28.

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robes, and palms in their hands.' The  $12 \times 12 \times 1000$  are significant of the universal Church of the First Born, whose names are written in heaven. It is in accordance with the same idea that we must interpret Rev. xiv. 1, 'I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand ( $12 \times 12 \times 1000$ ), having his Father's name written in their foreheads. . . These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. . . . These were redeemed from among men, the first fruits unto God and the Lamb.' It is marvellous that such a plain passage should be capable of the misconstructions it has received. Some see in it the blessedness of Cloister life, as if our Lord had never given the parable of the Ten Virgins. Some puzzle themselves to know who exactly the 144,000 will be! forgetful that the voice of these Virgins sounds as the voice of many nations, 'as the voice of a great thunder.' In short, they are the Redeemed from the Earth, The General Assembly and Church of the First Born, 'who are without fault,'—and therefore called Virgins—'before the throne of God.'

If any hesitate about the multiplication by a thousand, there is analogy to guide them derived from a very significant Old Testament story, which, as we have already indicated, has an intimate connection with the passage we are now considering. It is the last act performed by Moses as the Deliverer of Israel. Num. xxxi., 'The Lord spake unto

Moses, saying, Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterwards shalt thou be gathered unto thy people. So there were delivered, out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.' The victory therefore is to be won by spiritual rather than carnal weapons. The last is to correspond with the first great victory by Moses. Then Israel prevailed, while Moses' hands were held aloft; now, God is to fight for Israel. The occasion was of sufficient importance to call for divine interposition. The Beast and the False Prophet stood over against Israel, in the power of Midian, and the person of Balaam. There was, therefore, a great slaughter. All the males were killed; the five kings of Midian fell; 'Balaam, also, the son of Beor, they slew with the sword;' and *all* their cities were burnt, and *all* their goodly castles, and *all* the spoil and *all* the prey were taken, and *all* their cattle, and *all* their flocks, and *all* their goods. It was a type this of the final and complete overthrow of every form of Antichrist. But the most remarkable thing of all remains to be told. 'And the officers which were over thousands of the host, the captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, came near unto Moses, and they said unto Moses, Thy servants have taken the sum of the men of war which are

under our charge, *and there lacketh not one man of us.*' The 12,000 lost not one from their ranks. Would not this imprint the number upon the minds of the people in Israel? Hence, when we read in Rev. vii. of the Twelve times Twelve Thousands of Israel, with not one man alacking, we cannot but think of them as the warriors of the Lord returning from the sore conflict with the Beast and the False Prophet; but none of those who have been engaged on the Lord's side have fallen in the battle. They all have overcome through the blood of the Lamb.

It perhaps only remains, in this connection, to mention the Four and Twenty Elders that are before the throne. When we read of the names of the twelve Apostles being on the foundations of the New Jerusalem, and of the twelve sons of Israel having their names written on the gates, we can hardly fail to see, in the Four and Twenty ( $2 \times 12$ ) Elders, the representatives of the Old and New Testament church gathered together in one in Christ. Of twain, one new man is made. There is in Christ neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision. There is but one company of Elders in Heaven, though on earth there have been the two churches—the Old and the New—the church of the Patriarchs and the church of the Apostles. In the New Jerusalem they are inwrought into one; the names of the Apostles are on the foundations—the names of the Patriarchs are over the gates.

Having thus illustrated the import of the number twelve, our task would seem to be done. And indeed it would, if we could agree to the dictum of Arnold, in Fairbairn's Dictionary, that 'the attempt is wrong to solve the meaning of this number as being the result of the multiplication of three and four.' But whoever glances over what has been said regarding the number four, will see how uniformly twelve is regarded as related to three and four. This cannot be considered as the result of mere chance. No doubt we lay ourselves open to the dangers of empiricism and fancy when we quit the historical basis which we have throughout this volume invariably sought to obtain; but at times this danger must be faced if we are to reach the whole truth. Now, to say that Twelve represents the church, because there were twelve sons of Israel and twelve disciples, is so far satisfactory. Here is a historical basis which we ought not to forego. But then, may there not be evidence of a pre-arranged harmony in the number of Jacob's family, even as there is evidence of a pre-arranging harmony in the choice our Lord made of Twelve Apostles, and of Seventy Disciples, to correspond with the same numbers in the history of the church of old? May not God have over-ruled the births, in many respects so mysterious, in Jacob's house, so that there could always afterwards be an easy reference to the Three and Four? For it will not do to shut our eyes to the frequency with which these number combine to

form the typical Twelve. Nor is there any incongruity between the notions suggested by three and four, and that pertaining to twelve, to warn us away from this line of inquiry, but rather the reverse. If Three be the symbol of the Deity, and Four of the World, how could the church, which God redeems out of the World, be better represented than by the product of three and four, Twelve? In reflecting upon God's dealings with men, and the result which is produced in the formation of the church, we discover the need of some number—if numbers are to be used in the things of grace at all—to show the part which God and the World have in the kingdom of the Elect. That God is the spring of all grace, and that the invitations of the Gospel are to all the World, may be regarded as symbolized in the many references throughout both Old and New Testament Scriptures to three and four as constituting together Twelve.

It is after a fashion precisely similar that we would propose to deal with the number Seven, in so far as it seems to be related to the numbers three and four. The fact of this relation has been proved at some length, and it is vain to ignore the existence of it, whatever be our opinion of the reason proposed. It is of course patent to all, that seven may be regarded as having a historical basis in the days of Creation and the Sabbath rest. This we would be willing to make of the largest possible account. But what aspect of the Sabbath rest is to be fixed

upon as typical? Some say, the fact of God's work being then perfect, so that seven is caused to do duty as the number of perfection. But this is very arbitrary, and the idea will not hold, or at least does not seem distinctive, in a great variety of instances in which the number is employed. We agree with those who regard seven as the mark of God's Covenant. Evidence in favour of this has already been adduced. Nor is it impossible to see this idea of covenanted grace in the institution of a Sabbath in Eden. But apart from controversy on such a point, it remains for us to ask, if, despite the most rigid cleaving to history, it be impossible to conceive at the same time, of seven being regarded in Scripture as made up of three and four? It is by no means impossible. Given Three as the symbol of the Godhead, and Four of the World, is it impossible to conceive of a number that might answer to God's union with the World in mercy? For there is a bond which God has thrown round Himself and a fallen World. It is the bond of His Covenant. His mercies are over all His works. May not Seven, the sum of Three and Four, fitly symbolize the Covenant of grace? In that case we can understand how it should be the number of sacrifice, of sprinkling and forgiveness,—the number of rest and joy and peace, which it is seen to be throughout all the Bible. This need not be insisted on, as either the true or only derivation of the significance of the number Seven, but there is nothing mythical or un-



scriptural in such a conception, and there is much to favour it. Thus far, at least, Bähr in his *Symbolik* seems to have truth on his side, when he would connect together Twelve and Seven with Three and Four.

Before however passing finally from the number Seven, whose own exceeding interest, and whose relations to other numbers have detained us throughout the present chapter, it may be necessary to remark that there does not seem anything antagonistic to the view which has been presented, in the fact of seven being employed as a characteristic number in the case of Antichrist. We might rather expect to find the caricature and hellish counterpart of all heavenly grace and glory, in the Dragon and the Beast that rise out of the pit. Hence the seven heads and the ten horns, in token of the claim to catholicity and grace, which Antichrist has ever put forth. But we are hardly left in doubt as to what the seven heads are. 'The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.' This, of course, is one of the commonplaces in Protestant books of controversy. The line of Propertius has become threadbare,

'Septem urbs alta jugis, toto quæ præsidet orbi.'

Even Alford thinks that the seven-hilled city, Rome, is pointed out beyond all possibility of doubt, and that the great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth is the Imperial Mistress of Italy. But if

the line of interpretation we have been pursuing is of any worth, it would cast considerable doubt on such a mode of fastening a charge on the Papal system. It may be convenient to find that Rome was built on seven hills; but even though the seven could not be very exactly made out, it would not shake our confidence in the truth of Scripture prophecy. For does the Bible itself encourage our placing much stress on the literal mountains on which Rome or any other city may be founded? So far from this, it interprets (Rev. xvii. 9, 10) the seven mountains, as seven *kings* which have proved the supports of antichristianism throughout the history of the world. The natural way of reading *αἱ ἑπτὰ κεφαλαὶ ἑπτὰ ὄρη εἰσὶν, καὶ βασιλεῖς ἑπτὰ εἰσιν*, is, that The Seven Heads are Seven Mountains, and they are Seven Kings. It is then by a very different means from topographical minutiae respecting the Palatine and the Quirinal, that the lineaments of the Beast and the False Prophet, will be traced in the history of the Papacy. The Great City, doomed in the Apocalypse, is not simply Rome, but the entire power of evil in the world. The seven heads of the Beast are not the mounds whose turf was first turned by the plough of Romulus; but the representatives of those world-powers that have set themselves in opposition to the kingdom of grace. They are spoken of as seven, to keep prominently in view their opposition to God's schemes of mercy; so that instead of regarding the use of this number in rela-

tion to Antichrist, to be opposed to the significance attached to it elsewhere in Scripture, it should rather be considered as confirmatory of the view which has been taken.

Thus have we completed our review of the related numbers Seven and Twelve, and Three and Four. We are the more earnest in urging attention to the relations between these numbers, because certain others appear to depend on them by a similar law. For example, we have already been forced to consider Six as the half of Twelve, and Three and a Half as the half of Seven. Now it appears no way fanciful to regard Six as suggestive of the other half, so as to make up Twelve, or the broken number Three and a Half, as suggestive similarly of Seven. Indeed there is a case in which we are forced, whether we will or not, to reflect upon the meaning of the Half. It is in Rev. viii. 1, where at the opening of the seventh seal it is said, 'There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.' It has been admirably said, 'Semihora, initium quietis aeternae.' The half hour is suggestive of the Eternal rest. Heaven begins with the breaking of the Seventh Seal, and we behold the vista opening out that reaches to the joys of everlasting bliss. We are interrupted, to hear the recital of other visions, and so apparently we read, 'There was silence in heaven for about half a hour.'

In an exactly similar manner, it would seem, we must interpret the *five* months during which those who have not the seal of God are tormented by the emissaries of Satan (Rev. ix. 5). Those who choose may accept the explanation as sufficient, that for five months in the year locusts usually carry on their ravages. It seems much more in harmony with the use of numbers elsewhere throughout the Apocalypse, to regard the number *five* as suggestive of the perfect number Ten; and the torture of men for *five* months, as suggestive of the endless wrath which their present sufferings inaugurate. Such a view will be found perfectly consistent with the rest of the vision. In it, the power of Satan on the earth is set forth; but that power is shown to be limited. It is in hell and not on earth that he reigns. 'He opened the bottomless pit. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months.' A limitation and restriction are here conveyed by the use of five, as surely as unlimitedness and perfection are denoted by Ten. The half is suggestive of its complementary half, that together with it makes up the whole.

At all events, let no discussion as to the signifi-

cance or origin of Bible numbers, lead any to the conclusion that an element exists in the Scriptures of truth that is not discoverable in nature as well. Our whole subject has its counterpart in science. In nature there are recurring numbers, some of which are curiously related to each other, and we may well ask, why not in revelation? But let those speak on this subject who are entitled to authority.

‘Physical science shows that numbers have a significance in every department of nature. Two appears as the typical number in the lowest class of plants. Three is the characteristic number of that class of plants which have parallel varied leaves. Four is a significant number in those beautiful crystals which show that minerals as well as stars have their geometry. Five is the model number of the highest class of plants, is the typical number of the fingers and toes of vertebrate animals, and is of frequent occurrence amongst star fishes. Seven appears as significant only in a single order of plants, Heptandria, but has an importance in the animal kingdom, where it is the number of vertebrae in the neck of mammalia. Without going over any more individual numbers, we find multiple numbers acting an important part in chemical compositions, and in the organs of flowers; for the elements unite in multiple relations, and the stamens are often the multiples of the petals. In the arrangement of the appendages of the plant, we have a strange series, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, which

was supposed to possess virtues of an old date, and before it was discovered in the plant. He must be a bold man who will insist, that should the God who fashioned nature be pleased to give to man a revelation of His will in order to solve great problems started by the existence of sin in the world, He shall not be at liberty to make His dispensations of providence, and His institutions for instruction and worship, bear a certain relation to each other. It is presumptuous, above all things, in any one to condemn as mythic every part of the Bible narrative which contains a recurrent number. This principle would turn the discoveries of the most eminent scientific men in modern times—the discoveries of Kepler, of Newton, of Decandolle and Dalton, into myths.’<sup>1</sup>

It remains, however, that we guard ourselves from being considered amongst those who force themselves to discover the exact significance of every recurring number in the Bible. This Leyrer seems to have attempted to do in Herzog’s Cyclopædie, and it appears to be the rage amongst modern critics. Wherever the number lies imbedded it must be exhumed. Now may not a lesson be learned from the mode in which the other sciences deal with typical numbers, that may be of some avail in this department of Theology?

In nature, typical numbers do not always stand clearly forth in connection with their great design.

<sup>1</sup> M’Cosh and Dickie on Typical Forms, p. 520.

The use of all the bones in the vertebral column of man can be made apparent, but what use they can be in lower forms of creation, where sometimes they seem welded together, it would be hard frequently to tell. The reason for every bone in the skeleton of the human hand can be clearly shown; but why the fin of a whale should have a skeleton so wondrously like the hand of man, while yet it is so covered over as to form a stiff unbending paddle, it would puzzle philosophers to divine. This only they might be able to say, that up and down, through every series of creation, there are typical forms perceived to run, which testify to the common design in the mind of the Creator. At certain points those typical forms attain such development, and present such harmony with the necessities of creature life, that their meaning can be readily caught. But not unfrequently we have to note their existence, and pass on without an answer as to their design, or the immediate uses they subserve. In like manner must the typical numbers of Scripture be dealt with. View them where they flourish out into their full proportions, and seek to grasp their distinctive meanings. But when they are curiously embedded elsewhere in the word of God, do not be too eager in worming out their exact significance. They may be like the whale's fin, which does little more, so far as its skeleton is concerned, than point upward to the human hand. They may be like fossils, which, in their stony outlines, tell how life is coursing

through their congenitors living now on earth. Do they not answer a purpose sufficient to account for their existence, if they indicate the unity of design, which characterizes the whole structure of God's Word? It is from neglecting this simple analogy between the Works and Word of God, that men have fallen into such conceits and fancies, as have brought the subject of symbolical numbers into merited contempt.

We scarcely hesitate to apply this strong language to much that Hengstenberg has introduced into his otherwise most valuable work on the Psalms. Without quarrelling with his theory, that much of the beauty of Hebrew Poetry is based upon the recurrence of particular numbers; as, for instance, in the case of the name Jehovah occurring seven times in the 19th Psalm, and so forth, yet it would not follow that every time we met with a six, or a five, or a four, we must affix to it a significance allied to what it bears elsewhere in distinctly symbolic visions. All that could be said would be this, that certain numbers, having elsewhere a sacred significance to Israel, came to be curiously inwoven into those hymns of praise that were made for Israel's worship. By all means let the beauties of Hebrew poetry be unveiled. But we know how Lowth made the predictions of Isaiah to bend before the laws which, as a critic of Hebrew Poetry, he chose to impose; and not unfrequently a meaning is wrenched by means of Hengstenberg's numbers from the



Psalms of David, and an artificiality thrown around them that are derogatory to our conceptions, alike of the freedom of the poet and the nature of the inspiration by which he was upheld.

After a similar manner we must speak of the attempt to ferret out a meaning from every pin in the tabernacle of old, and every loop and tack by which its curtains were joined. Here the example of Bähr has not been without an influence for evil. With the general principles that ruled the numbers belonging to the arrangements in the wilderness we have already expressed our accord. That the same numbers, 3, 4, 10, 12, and so forth, which are elsewhere significant, occur in the structure of the tabernacle, is obvious to all. We can see the propriety of this, and the harmony which it exhibits between the wilderness life of old, and the state of God's Church as connected with the Bible throughout all ages. But had not the artificial requirements of the structure, in the way of proportion and beauty, and strength and symmetry, to do with certain at least of the numbers and measurements? Besides, we have to consider the enlargement and modification of many of the parts in Solomon's Temple. Are we to think of it as desecration when any pet number is interfered with? No; we have rather to observe that the great leading ideas are preserved, but the details of the building are shown to be of less symbolical significance, by the manipulation that takes place regarding them. It is in the same way we

refuse to dwell at length on the minute measurements and numberings of Ezekiel's Temple. There is enough written for the curious on this subject; but beyond establishing that the numbers with which we are already familiar occur in that vision, either simply or through multiples or aliquot parts of them, little advancement has been made. Perhaps this is the most we were expected to learn; for the numbers were never intended to be such as would enable an architect to lay down a ground-plan of the building, neither possibly were they designed to be each one of distinct and especial importance. Their general relation to the sacred numbers that appeared in the actual tabernacle and temple is clearly conveyed, and thus we gather that the whole was symbolic, and designed to point upward to that temple which is our Father's home.

Lastly, and more generally, there seems reason to object to all modes of accounting for numbers by their relations to each other, unless these are absolutely forced upon our notice by the Bible itself. In the case of the numbers dealt with in this chapter this is the case. There are such indications of the composition of Twelve and Seven by means of Three and Four, as it would be unphilosophical in the extreme to ignore; but the same can hardly be said of any other numbers. To account for six because it is near seven, and such like modes of artificially connecting Scripture numbers together, seems most

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unwarranted. Where necessity is not laid upon us to show how one number springs from another, the attempt should obviously never be made: let Scripture be its own interpreter. Beyond, however, the limited range of numbers discussed in these pages, there are few numbers which will be set up as having any claim to Symbolic importance, and it is satisfactory that in almost every instance which has been adduced, history can be brought in to corroborate and regulate the deductions it would be warrantable to make.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE NUMBER FORTY.

It might be thought that having treated of the number Ten, and having shown the significance of several of its compounds, it would be unnecessary to spend a chapter on a number so obviously made up of Ten and Four. But we have no Scripture evidence of Forty being ever regarded in its relation to these digits. It was different with Seven and Twelve, that were proved to be recognised in the Bible as related to Three and Four. It is different with Seventy, which our Lord Himself relates to Seven when He says, 'Forgive not seven times, but seventy times seven.' We have no title to act with Forty otherwise than we did with Four and Ten, for which we found a basis in nature, or with 1290 and 1335, at the outset of our inquiries, for which we discovered a historical basis. Indeed, we have already come upon 40 (page 15), as a typical number, derived from the forty years of Israel in the wilderness. There can be no doubt in fact, that this great event is at the root of the frequent occurrence of this number in Scripture.

Twice over it is used by Ezekiel, to denote that God's dealings in the future would be like His ways

in the past, when of old he separated Israel to Himself, and by means of the wilderness life, and His Fatherly chastisements and mercies, prepared them for entering upon fuller communion with Him in the land of their Rest. Such is the way we account for Ezek. iv. 6. Nor can the explanation be essentially different of Ezek. xxix., though Egypt be there in the prophet's view. He seems to say, that as Israel bore chastisement, and was scattered abroad in the wilderness of nations, so Egypt would in one way or other, be made to smart equally terribly under the rod. There has not been a literal fulfilment of the prediction, 'No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited *forty* years.' But treating the number as a symbol, and the rest of the passage correspondingly, we can readily understand the whole.

In like manner, as related to the judgment of God for forty years in the wilderness, we can see the reason for the peculiar command, 'If a wicked man be worthy to be beaten, forty stripes may the Judge give him, and not exceed' (Deut. xxv. 3). The measure of God's chastisement was to be a kind of rule to man, even as the mercy associated with God's discipline was never to be forgotten.

Probably, too, we are to account for the forty days' separation and uncleanness of a mother after the birth of a son, on somewhat the same principle. It was a period, by reason of giving birth to a child

of Adam and an heir of sin, like the wilderness state of Israel. The pains of birth were meant to work life in the mother's soul, so that after forty days, she might go up to the house of the Lord, and find through the blood of sacrifice, a means of re-entering into communion with God's saints. The time of uncleanness in connection with the birth of a female child was doubled, obviously to keep up the remembrance of woman's heavy curse, because of her grievous sin. But the doubling does not alter the symbolical reference of the forty days.

As to Moses' life being divided into three periods of 40 years each, it loses at once its mythical aspect, when we remember how he was designed from the womb to be associated with Israel. His personal wanderings for 40 years in the desert were anticipatory, in more ways than one, of the wanderings of Israel afterwards. It prepared him to be their leader. But more, his life must have been to them a constant sermon. Living as a prince in Egypt 40 years, and manifestly one beloved of God, yet he had for 40 years to be content with a life in the desert. And how meekly submissive he had been to God's will! How he had learned obedience by the things he suffered! Must not the people he led have been rebuked a hundred times over when they longed for the fleshpots of Egypt, and murmured at the privations of the wilderness? In Moses' history, the first forty years always stood over against the second forty years by way of con-

trast, and the contrast was meant to be a ceaseless lesson to Israel. He was more princely in the wilderness than ever he had been in the halls of Pharaoh. His truly noble acquiescence in God's will, proved him to be more than ever before, a son of God. This was what Israel needed to learn. Once more, his endurance with those for whom he would gladly have given himself a sacrifice, to the very last month of the 40 years in the wilderness, is exactly the ending we would have expected for that glorious life, especially seeing that by the slip he made, he forfeited the privilege of standing in his lot in the land of promise.

After Israel enters Canaan, the number 40 too often turns up in her history, to be relegated to the action of mere chance. The bondage, as it were, of Egypt is repeated over and over again in the book of Judges; and over and over again a deliverer arises, and a period, like the time of wilderness trial is vouchsafed. Thus Othniel gives them rest for 40 years, Jud. iii. 11, and after the Moabite invasion, the land has rest  $2 \times 40$  years, Jud. iii. 30. In like manner, after Deborah and Barak have overthrown the Canaanites, the land has rest 40 years, Jud. v. 31, and the country is in quietness 40 years in the days of Gideon, Jud. viii. 28. At length God's mode of dealing with His people altogether changes, and He delivers them into the hands of the Philistines 40 years, Jud. xiii. 1; type of many a forty years of bondage that was to succeed.

As we pass from the period of the Judges to that of the Kings, we are still reminded of the 40 years by the length of Eli's judgeship; and then come Saul's reign of 40 years, and David's reign of 40 years, and Solomon's reign of 40 years. Certainly there is something apparently mythical and different from ordinary history in this. If we did not keep in mind God's way of teaching His people, and through them of teaching the world to all time, by means of symbols and symbolic numbers, we could hardly render an answer to those who charged this part of Jewish history with being cropped and pared according to the custom of fictitious chronologists. But in such numbers as we have been considering (to adopt the language of Delitzsch, Gen. p. 565), the might of the idea shows itself above the stuff of which history is made. For the sake of high moral ends, we can understand why after a somewhat supernatural fashion, reference should have been maintained throughout the time of the kings, as throughout the time of the judges, to the period of probation in the wilderness. Alas! the thrice forty years during which God summoned Israel to give heed to His warnings and judgments passed away unimproved, and we know the issue in the foolhardiness of Rehoboam and the division of the tribes.

Nor are we yet done with this number. For 40 days, and again for 40 days was Moses in the mount with God receiving the law—for the breaking of



that law had to do with the forty years in the wilderness; and Elijah, who had so much to do with reviving God's law in Israel, had to go into the wilderness 40 days. We are so far, therefore, prepared to hear Jonah's cry, 'Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed.' The Lord always connected other lands with Israel. If Naaman wash, it must be seven times, to connect him with the covenant of the Lord. If a time of probation is to be given to Nineveh, it is fitting that it should correspond to Israel's time of probation in the wilderness; it is therefore 40 days. So too, if we dare connect our Lord's temptations with the temptation of His people at sundry times and in diverse manners, and surely it is meant we should connect them, it appears divinely fitting that Jesus should be also in the wilderness tempted of the devil forty days.

If, however, it be still further urged, in the interest of a jaundiced Christianity, that the church should by a yearly Lenten fast, go down into the wilderness with her Lord, we answer, No! The Lord has risen, and has changed the 40 days of gloom into 40 days of utmost joy and gladness. For forty days, though free from sin, He stays upon this earth, the scene of all his trials, and wipes out, so to speak from the experience of His people for ever, any gloom connected with the 40 days of temptation. We are meant to enter upon the joy of our risen Redeemer. Ours is no dim religious light; we are children of the day.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE NUMBERS IN THE BOOK OF JOB.

WE have more than once adverted to the interlacing in Scripture of symbolic and historic numbers, but in the book of Job this is of so curious a kind as to demand separate examination. Arguments indeed against the verity of the entire narrative have been drawn from the numbers assigned to the flocks and to the children of the Patriarch, and the studies in which we have engaged would be truly barren if they had no answer to render to the difficulty.

We are free, of course, to admit that the book is a poem, and conforms to some of the laws of poetry. No one is required to believe that Job himself wrote the book; though little can be urged against this view. It may have been written long afterwards. Some sage in the time of David or Solomon,—a man of travel in those days of opening commerce,—a man of wide sympathies, in days when the Jews were almost ready to look on the entire world as theirs,—such a sage, gathering up the floating traditions connected with the patient sufferer, who had lived and struggled long before in patriarchal times, may have added, by the inspiration of the Spirit, to the Psalms of David and the Song of Solomon, and the Words of the Royal Preacher, this most profound of poems. In any case, we have not the exact

words that Eliphaz and Bildad employed ; but yet we have the very spirit of the sentiments they uttered. Everybody knows that the speeches of Queen Catherine in Shakspeare's play of Henry VIII. do not pretend to be the precise words she used, but they convey in a way more impressive than bald history the actual feelings that maintained a conflict within her breast. So, no reader can imagine that such speeches as Job's, in such exquisite poetry, ever dropped from human lips in the course of even the most impassioned conversation. But we have the deep sayings of the friends rendered into poetry, and the spirit of their utterances is thus better preserved than if a ready writer had reported every syllable. The Spirit of God has presided over every portion of this record, and Jesus has put His seal upon its truth. We must proceed therefore to the perusal of the history as real, and to the study of the poetry as containing a heaven-sent message to every human soul.

There is, however, not a little difficulty in accepting the numbers given in the first and last chapters of the book as strictly historical. That there should have been 7,000 sheep, and 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 she-asses,—that Job should have had seven sons and three daughters, making exactly ten in all,—sounds strange, especially when we remember how often in connection with sacrifice these and similar numbers are employed throughout the Scripture. Again, when

at the close of the book we find that Job's possessions were all doubled, but that seven sons and three daughters once more made up the perfect number ten, while he himself lived to enjoy his blessedness for twice seventy years, it does look as if poetry were stealing into the narrative of facts. But a little reflection will suffice to show why God might stamp upon the family of Job and his possessions numbers which came to be significant of truth to Israel. It was not without meaning that God ordered Eliphaz and his two friends to offer up *seven* bullocks and *seven* rams, though they may not have known the reason for the choice of that particular number, even as it was not without meaning that Naaman was told to wash seven times in the Jordan. Neither may it have been mere chance, nor the after-invention of poetry, that Job's family and flocks should have fallen into what may be termed those mystic numbers. They form a link that could not well be lacking between the faith of the Eastern Patriarch and the faith and worship of Israel,—between the blessing that came upon Job, and the blessing which fell on the sons of Abraham. We could not want these slight but pregnant traces of affinity between the religion of the Jews and the religion of the Gentiles. God has ever proved Himself to be the God of the Greek as well as the Saviour of Israel. Job was a Gentile, his friends Gentiles, his land one of the nations of the earth; yet his God was Jehovah, Israel's God, and his

faith was in the God of Abraham. Though God chose to call Himself the God of Israel, yet His sympathies were not limited to that people. It is the most egregious blunder to read the Old Testament as if it meant to convey that none but the Jews were cared for by the Almighty. They were His peculiar, but not His sole, possession. Might not the text of Gladstone's address, as Rector of the Edinburgh University, have been—'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein?' Even when, for special ends, Abraham was separated from his kindred, the separation was not meant to be exclusion or seclusion; it was rather the concentration of the different rays into a focus, in order really to the diffusion of the truth: 'In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' Does that mean that up till the time of Jesus no Gentile family was to be blessed? Nay, for it is said, 'In *thee* shall they be blessed,' where Abraham himself and all the faithful are bound up with Messiah as dispensers of God's grace. If the people of Israel had proved true to their calling, they would not have sought to shut out the Gentiles from an interest in their God, but would have more and more proved a blessing to all mankind. It has been often said that the duty of mission effort is no way recognised in the Old Testament. But this is surely a mistake. The Decalogue itself, with its love to God and love to man, refutes the notion. It could not be fulfilled

without a missionary spirit. It was rather laid upon Israel to diffuse abroad the truth by means of its very conservation. And God brought it about, that, with their will or against it, the Jews were forced to disseminate the knowledge of salvation. Were not Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome all brought into closest contact with the Israelites? Were one wishing to preach a missionary sermon, he could not find an apter subject than the very position of Palestine with reference to the great nations of the world. Placed as it was, right in the centre of the Old World, with all the mighty monarchies clustering around it, and great inland seas stretching out their arms toward it, Canaan could not but prove as a city set on an hill, it seemed designed to be the throbbing heart of all mankind; and as often as the Jews built high walls around them, in order to shut the light in to themselves, so often were the walls broken down again, and with the Conqueror in their own land, or themselves scattered abroad in the nations of their enemies, they were constrained to do mission-work, or, at least, God bore testimony against their frigid isolation, and against their faithlessness, both in regard to the trust committed to their keeping, and the blessings they were meant to diffuse on every side. By many means the connection that ought to have subsisted between the Jews and Gentiles is pressed upon our notice, and in no way is this more delicately or beautifully yet effectively done than by the

mode in which the different Gentiles that cross our path in the sacred record receive *tithes*, or sacrifice *seven* times, or by some other peculiarly Jewish mark or ordinance, are shown to be related to the one family of the faithful. According to this general principle, we might sufficiently well account for any peculiarity in regard to the numbers, divinely pre-arranged, of Job's family and flocks.

But if we read attentively, we may see that other wise ends were served by his having *seven* sons, and no more. For we are told that the sons went and feasted in each other's houses, *every one his day*. It is generally supposed that these were yearly birth-day feasts; but the simple and natural meaning of the words is, as Delitzch has shown, that, beginning with the eldest, the brothers entertained each other in turn during every day in the week. Being seven in number, the entertainments would exactly cover each week. In short, there was a daily rather than a yearly reunion of this loving family; and if we do not make the gratuitous assumption, that there was revelry or excess in their eating and drinking, it seems no way unnatural that, instead of dining in their several dwellings, they should have enjoyed one meal in the day in common. And so the weeks flew by.

The bearing of this on several parts of the narrative will be readily observed. First, it seems to fix it down that special offerings were celebrated by Job *weekly*. 'It was so, when their days of feasting

were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning and offered burnt-offerings, according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' The father of the family of old was the priest. Even after the Levites were set apart in Israel as the substitutes for the first-born, this office of the father was not wholly set aside. As on the Passover night, each father slew the lamb for his own house, so afterwards, each time the passover came round, he occupied his place as priest in his own family. And here we have the picture of the old patriarch offering up the weekly sacrifice for all his children, in case, amidst the joy of their hearts, they had forgotten God, and bidden farewell to His fear. Nor need we be surprised at finding thus some trace of a weekly Sabbath, and of weekly services, though far away from Israel. The Sabbath was made for man, and not for the Jews alone. Certain it is that the division into weeks was known in the land of Uz, for we read, that when Job's comforters assembled, 'they sat down with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights.'<sup>1</sup> It is hard to account for such traces of the weekly division, unless we acknowledge the existence of a Sabbath from the days of Eden. How comes it that Noah sends forth the dove always at the end of seven days; that Laban, in Ur of the Chaldees, should speak of the *week* of Rachel; that

<sup>1</sup> Job ii. 13.



Joseph should mourn for Jacob seven days ; and here, that in the land of Uz the sevenfold division of days should be known, and the weekly sacrifice be offered by Job, unless some revelation had been given of the earliest week of Creation, with its seventh day of rest? This is the most natural account of the matter assuredly ; and all such instances, as the one we have come upon in Job, tend to confirm us in the old belief.

But, secondly, it does not appear as if the *seventh* day were hallowed by Job, but rather the *eighth*. It was not on the evening after the seventh feast had taken place that he sanctified his children, but rising early on the morning of the next day ; in other words, on the first day of the week he offered sacrifice. The perfect truthfulness of the narrative comes out in this slight trait. Had an Israelitish hand been touching up the story, he would probably have made the patriarch hallow the last of the seven days, for the seventh day was the Jewish Sabbath. But this Gentile Patriarch observes the eighth—that is the first day in each revolving week—as holy to the Lord. There is a striking similarity, therefore, between his weekly solemnity and our Christian Sabbath, just as there is a correspondence between his sacred exercise and that which ought to engage every father of a Christian family, after the labours and the pleasures of the week are past, and the Sabbath morn has dawned.

Perhaps, however, we do wrong in making it

appear that the hallowing of the first day rather than the seventh was a thing unknown in Israel. From the beginning there were foreshadowings of the change of the Jewish Sabbath into the Lord's day. The child was circumcised on the eighth day, and then began symbolically his new and higher life. On the eighth day, after the consecration of Aaron, he entered on his priestly functions.<sup>1</sup> On the eighth day, the leper who was cleansed was suffered to take his place once more as a member of the priestly nation,<sup>2</sup> So with those that had an issue of blood.<sup>3</sup> It was on the 'morrow after the Sabbath,'<sup>4</sup> which occurred in the Passover week, that the first fruits of the harvest were presented to the Lord. And it is to be remembered that it was divinely arranged that our Lord should rise on that very 'morning after the Sabbath,' as the *first fruits* of those who sleep. In like manner it was said, 'Ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the *morrow after the seventh Sabbath* shall ye number fifty days'<sup>5</sup>—not the seven times seventh day, but the day after,—the eighth, as was so uniformly the case; the first, so to speak, of a new octave. Still further, the Jubilee year, in which all the ideas connected with the Sabbath centred, occurred, not on the seven times seventh year, but the year following.

<sup>1</sup> Lev. ix. 1.<sup>2</sup> Lev. xiv. 23.<sup>3</sup> Lev. xv. 14, 29.<sup>4</sup> Lev. xxiii. 11.<sup>5</sup> Lev. xxiii. 15.

There was thus a kind of presentiment throughout the whole period of Israel's history, that the Jubilee proclaimed by Christ's rising from the dead would sound forth on the first day and not the last of the week; and in accordance with this we find the change of the Christian Sabbath. It is peculiarly interesting however to find the same hallowing of the first day of the week shadowed forth in the history of the Gentile Job.

By attending to this weekly offering on the part of the patriarch, light is thrown on another portion of the narrative. The day when destruction came upon his flocks and overthrew his children, was the very day on which his sacrifice had been performed. It was when the different sons were assembled in the house of their eldest brother—and therefore on the first day of the week, that they met their fate. That was the day when confession had been made and forgiveness sought. That morning had beheld the smoke of the ten different sacrifices which were offered as an atonement for the ten different children. May we not believe that as the favour of God had been implored, so the light of His countenance had shone upon them? It was with a special sense of peace that the sons sat down that day around the social board. It was with a spirit sanctified by communion with his God, that Job looked forth on the pastures where browsed in Sabbath quiet his flocks and herds. Of all days in the week it was the blessedest. Apparently it was when Job was

in securest possession of the peace of God that the first messenger entered, and the second followed, and the third, and the *fourth* with the heaviest tidings of all. Does not this open up the problem of the book of Job in all its darkness? Here is a soul at peace with God, then why is he afflicted? Here is a man perfect and upright, fearing God and eschewing evil, then why should fire from heaven destroy his sheep and servants, and the wind of the wilderness strike upon the dwelling where in amity and brotherly concord his children are assembled? Besides, on the very day when calamity befell him, he had been engaged in the worship of his God, seeking to set his house in order, and sanctify his children through sacrifice. If any character or course of conduct could avert affliction, we have them here; but here seven phials of wrath are poured out on the devoted head of God's servant.—*Seven* we say; and in this we come upon what many may regard as part of the fictitious framework of the poem. For besides the group of *four* plagues recorded in the first chapter, there are in the chapter following, *three* harder still to bear,—1. his own personal trouble, 2. his wife's temptation, 3. the whips of scorpions that lay beneath the long silence of his friends. The first four are outward, and come down on him from every side, laying everything belonging to him low. The last three are more inward, and more terrible in many respects to bear. But is not this grouping into seven, and this com-

bination of the seven by means of three and four, rather a thing of poetry than of sober historic fact? Not necessarily, if we entertain the theory of symbolic numbers. In other portions of the Scripture we have become familiar, with a precisely similar grouping. Parts of Christ's own history were intermingled with the same numbers, seven, and three and four. Even though we may fix on no precise significance attaching to the numbers as employed in Job, yet their existence is a proof that the same God is presiding over the history of the Gentile patriarch, that arranged the whole structure of ceremonial symbolism in Israel. If the covenant of God was reflected in the sevenfold sprinklings of the law, not less surely was its action seen in the seven plagues that were allowed to fall on Job for the purging of his soul. He who suffered the seven plagues to fall, is the same who in the Apocalypse gives liberty to the seven angels of vengeance to pour forth the contents of their cups of woe. Thus the history of Job is seen to be related to the entire system of things presented in the Bible.

It may be hardly necessary now to refer to the beautiful close of this Old Testament story. It is quite in accordance with the Old Testament style. Worldly prosperity and length of days are only types of something better; but these are the things which fill up all the picture. The New Testament ending of such a story would have shown us Christian, after he had gone down into the valley of

humiliation, and fought with Apollyon, and after he had struggled with the dark waters, entering into the gates of light. We would have listened and heard all the bells in the New Jerusalem ring again for joy, while it was said to him, 'Enter into the joy of your Lord.' But the triumphal palms, and the golden crowns, and the seats of bliss, were less distinctly known in the past; and in lieu, or rather in symbol, of something better, Job was rejoiced with every earthly delight. The old man seems to renew his youth. He lives twice the span allotted to man—140 years, and sees his sons and his sons' sons, even four generations. So too he has double given him for all he had before, 'for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses.'

We say, he got the double of all he had before, but it is noticeable that he had only the same number of *children*—seven sons, and three daughters. Was it, as some have suggested, because the ten who had gone, were looked upon as still existing—dead, yet living?

All remember Wordsworth's lines—

“But they are dead; those two are dead!  
 Their spirits are in heaven!”  
 'Twas throwing words away: for still  
 The little maid would have her will,  
 And said, “Nay, we are Seven.”’

Was it the same truth we were meant to feel when it was said that the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before, while it appears that the sons and daughters were the same in number? Cattle once dead are gone for ever. But the sons of Job were not dead, 'They were not dead, but gone before,' and they were reckoned, it may be, among Job's possessions, though they lay in one common grave. But there is, perhaps, no need of such refinement in so simple a narrative. Surely we can render a reason for the original number of *seven* sons being carefully preserved. Was not the Sabbath impress to remain on that patriarchal family? Was not sacrifice to continue to sanctify the first day of the week? As to the ten children in all, we think it points, like the beauty of Job's daughters, to the idea of perfect blessedness connected with the household of the man of God. These daughters, too, are mentioned by name, and 'receive an inheritance among their brethren,' different from the Jewish custom that divided the inheritance among the sons, and apparently a kind of anticipation of New Testament times, when woman comes to have her proper place, and in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE NUMBER ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE.

IT may appear strange that the number One Hundred and Fifty-Three should be reckoned amongst those which have a symbolical significance in Scripture. But those who are familiar with recent discussions on the last chapter of John's Gospel, would rather be surprised were this number omitted. When looked at by itself, it does seem a simple enough remark, that 'Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three.' But, when we reflect upon the depth of meaning which the entire chapter reveals, we cannot wonder that many attempts have been made to attach a different from the simple and primary signification, to the record of the number of fish that were caught. 'People have, of course,' says Lange, 'sought to regard the material number as symbolic.'<sup>1</sup> The number 100 has been regarded as standing for the heathen, 50 for the Jews, and 3 to represent the Trinity! Jerome acknowledges the deeper import of the number, and says that there are 153 sorts of fish! so that all kinds of men are to be regarded as enclosed within the gospel net. An ingenious numerator has dealt with this

<sup>1</sup> Bibelwerk, N. T. iv. p. 331.



number much as men have tried to manufacture names out of 666, the name of the Beast; in this way he has endeavoured to establish that Simon, the son of Jona, is the one indicated by the miraculous draught. Finally, Hengstenberg,<sup>1</sup> gladly seizes on the name of Grotius, as giving authority to the view that a reference is had to the only other passage in Holy Writ in which the number 153 is found, viz., 2 Chron. ii. 17. 'And Solomon numbered all the strangers that were in the land of Israel, after the numbering wherewith David his father had numbered them; and they were found an hundred and fifty thousand and three thousand *and six hundred.*' And the discoverer of such *deep* connections thus exults, 'Rev. xiii. 18—the number of the Beast—stands related to Ez. ii. 13' (where it chanced to be said that the children of Adonikam were six hundred sixty and six), 'precisely as John xxi. 11 to 2 Chron. ii. 17. Without the Old Testament key, we know not how even to make a beginning with either of the numbers.'

It is with regret that we have spent so long on these hypotheses, much rather would we have at once endorsed the words of Lange, 'Wir halten nicht die Zahl für symbolisch, wohl aber die Zählung:' but enough has been done to show that there has been general dissatisfaction with the view that the circumstances attending the latest miracle of Christ were historical and nothing more. We *must* read

<sup>1</sup> On Rev., vol. ii. p. 452.

the last chapter of John's Gospel with an eye to hidden meanings, though care is to be taken lest we fall into conceits. The very fact that there seems to be a formal ending of the gospel narrative with the 20th chapter, 'And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name,'—the very fact of this apparent conclusion, forces us to ask what could be the meaning of so strangely tacking on this supplement, if it merely related a further miracle of Jesus. The true view undoubtedly is, that as John begins his gospel with a prologue extending to the 18th verse of the first chapter, so he ends it with an epilogue, which we find in the 21st chapter. As at the beginning of his gospel he shows how the Word wrought in the world previous to the actual coming of Jesus, so, as the conclusion of his gospel, he represents how Christ was to continue working, even after His departure. By means of the miraculous draught. He indicated what would be the final issue of His sending forth these *fishers of men*, and by the words He addressed to Peter, He gave indications both with regard to the future of the Apostles and of the Church which they were to found. Indeed, from the manifest connection between the last miracle of Jesus, and one that He wrought much earlier in His course, we might

safely conclude that neither the one nor the other was a haphazard forthputting of power. We might even hold that every miracle of Jesus is typical; that miracles are parables as well. If Jesus fed the thousands, He set Himself forth as the bread of life. If He healed the sick, it was to the diseases of the soul that He would turn the eyes of men. If He raised the dead, it was to the truer resurrection of the soul from death He pointed. Hence we might be justified in viewing the last miraculous draught as a specific symbol, apart from any reference to other Scriptures. But happily, the incidents are so narrated by John, that we are forced to take Luke, in his fifth chapter, as our guide in seeking to comprehend the story. The resemblances are so stated, and the minute differences between the two occasions so recorded, that the blindest cannot fail to see how the Spirit would have them conjoined. On both occasions there is the night-long toil with no result. In the one case, the net at length breaks, in the other it is particularly noted, that 'For all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.' Now, in Luke, our Lord Himself is the interpreter, and points to the draught of fishes as a symbol of Gospel work, 'Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him.' May we not, therefore expect the latest miracle of Jesus to set forth the future of ministerial labour upon earth? Christ

would have his disciples learn the old lesson about fishing for souls, with a new application, fitted for the times then present, and embracing in its range the completed cycle of the New Dispensation. By the multitude of fishes, exactly numbered, and brought, despite what might have been anticipated, in safety to the shore, our Lord would seem to predict the final and glorious issue of the casting of the Gospel-net out into the Sea of men. But, having thus generally vindicated the reading of this chapter as bearing a symbolic import, it may be well to go over it so far in detail, in order that we may catch the meaning of the numbers used throughout the narrative, and especially of the number one hundred and fifty-three, which forms the subject of the present chapter.

At the very outset, we cannot fail to be struck with the fact that there are seven disciples and no more—‘Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples.’ Every name is here significant: Peter who had denied his Lord; Thomas who had doubted, and in whose ears must still have been ringing the words, ‘Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing;’ Nathaniel also, whose name recalls one of the tenderest scenes in the early ministry of Jesus, and the mention of whose native spot, Cana of Galilee, tends to associate the

last with the first great miracle which our Lord performed. Then come the two sons of Zebedee and another pair of disciples who are not named. The grouping which is thus effected of the seven into four and three, is not unimportant, when taken in connection with previous discussions. It need not be very strenuously contended for, yet it does seem as if John's mode of enumerating the disciples who were present, was meant to direct attention to the symbolic reference that may possibly lie underneath the entire narrative. At least, it cannot well be accounted for otherwise, that the two sons of Zebedee, who always go with Peter, are here named far down in the list, and the remaining two are not mentioned at all by name, though they seem to have been of the twelve. If we regard the Evangelist, who afterward in writing the Apocalypse took such care in the structural arrangement of the whole to exhibit the combination of three and four, as having even at this time regard to the same elements, an explanation suggests itself which frees us at least from the difficulty felt at the first sight of this catalogue, and is in perfect accordance with all we have sought to advance. Certainly the fact that there were seven of the Apostles together presents of itself a beautiful type of the church of the New Covenant, which afterwards had its *seven* early deacons, and was symbolized by the *seven* golden candlesticks. Here were seven of the disciples, so fitly representative, whether as

individuals or as a company, of the general church of God, engaged the night long in fishing. Their Lord is away, but He comes in the morning, and their nets and their joy will be full. So is the Church toiling still, while the Master is not visibly near. But the morning cometh, and with it the Lord. Soon the feast will be prepared on the shores of peace, and the children of God will rejoice together over the innumerable company of the redeemed.

If thus far we have carried the conviction of our readers, it may not be impossible to advance to the second number which occurs in this record: it is said that 'the other disciples came in the little ship; for they were not far from land, but as it were *two hundred* cubits.' To attempt extracting a special meaning out of so simple and natural a reckoning would be manifest folly. To make more of the two hundred cubits than if they had been one hundred and fifty or two hundred and fifty, would seem unpardonable straining. Yet it is different if we inquire whether the proximity of the disciples to the shore may not be in beautiful accordance with the entire story viewed as a picture symbolic of the future. Again, the hint of Lange comes with irresistible force,—'*The ship not far from land: The Church not far from the throne of the Lord and His Advent.*' This can only appear unnatural to those who have accustomed themselves to look on the miracles and doings of our Lord merely in their

outward aspect. But that we may be prepared to acquiesce in a more subtle treatment of such a record as the one before us, it might be well to fix attention on two different pairs of miracles that seem related to each other,—the two different stillings of the tempest, and the two great draughts of fishes.

There is only another instance in which the miracles of Jesus form a pair: twice are thousands fed. But in this there was no needless expenditure of miraculous power. Was it not necessary that by repeating His work of grace, Christ should testify to His willingness at all times to supply the poor with bread and feed the hungry soul? While leaving commands with Peter, as we find in the chapter under consideration,—commands intended for every pastor in the time to come, He said, Feed my Lambs, and though, according to the original, He added Shepherd my Sheep, yet did He return a second time to the great work of Feeding the Flock. Whatever else be done, let the flock of God be fed. Once then, yea twice, is the miracle wrought that sets forth Jesus as the Bread of Life. Similarly could the twice stilling of the storm, and the twice repeated draught of fishes, be freed from the mythical aspect in which some have tried to invest them; for we must read the miracles as parables meant to impress heavenly truth. But we have said further that these two last pairs of miracles are related to each other. The first time the storm was stilled, Jesus was with His disciples in the ship, and the

first draught of fishes took place while Jesus was in the ship with His disciples. In like manner, the second time the storm was stilled, the disciples had been toiling in vain all night, and at early dawn their absent Lord presented Himself and hied to their relief; while, in connection with the second draught of fishes, the disciples had been toiling in vain all night, and at early dawn their absent Lord appeared and all was well. So, too, when we follow out the incidents connected with the second stilling of the storm and the second draught of fishes, there are points of relation between them detected. In the one case, Peter walks on the sea to go to Jesus; in the other, he casts himself into the sea in order to reach his Lord. Finally, in both instances, there seems a perfect extravagance in regard to the expenditure of supernatural might. After the stilling of the storm, instead of allowing the disciples to pull the boat to land, which it would not have been hard to do amidst the calm, and with the new strength lent them by the presence of their Master, we find that Jesus by His own divine power impelled the vessel to the beach; so, on the morning when He appeared to comfort the weary fishers, He did not leave them, after bringing plenty to their nets, to make all other necessary arrangements, though it would have been an easy matter for them to kindle a fire of coals and make ready some of the fish they had caught; but Jesus does this for them, and immediately on their landing says, 'Come and



dine.' We might have supposed, that just as the disciples were left to drag the net to shore, so they would have been left to busy themselves with kindling the fire, and getting a meal prepared. But no! a needless miracle seems to be performed. Perhaps both the facts to which we call attention may admit of natural explanation; but the decided impression conveyed is that of something supernatural. In fact, this impression is so decided, that were it not for difficulties in the way, nothing else than a miracle would have been thought of, when John writes (vi. 21), 'Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.' But is there not a useless waste of miraculous power, in causing the vessel to glide automatically through the waters to its destination? Matthew Henry notes, that while Jesus might have continued walking on the sea till He reached the shore, yet He preferred to go with the disciples in the ship, not choosing to expend in idle display a power only used for the most sacred ends. But if it be so, and certainly it is so, does it not seem strange that Jesus should have made the vessel bound at once to land, instead of waiting, as he might, the leisurely rowing of the ship to shore? This was needed to complete the symbol; the parable would not have been perfect without it. Does it not seem to teach us that when Christ visits the believer in love, immediately the storms cease, and the soul finds itself transported into the haven of

rest. For Christ to enter the 'soul, is for the soul to enter upon the enjoyment of its true repose. Heaven is now begun. Not only are the boisterous winds allayed, but we reach the shore whither we are bound. We find ourselves wafted into heavenly places. Further, the figure holds good in regard to the last great season of darkness and of storm, when Christ draws near. The winds may then be boisterous; we may feel ourselves sinking into the dark waters; the billows of death may pass over the soul; but once let Christ enter the vessel, and not merely will the storms cease, but immediately we shall be on the shores of bliss. 'In like manner may we learn from this incident, what will be the final issue when Christ at length appears, and visits in love the church which He has left like a vessel labouring in the storm. He who walked the sea will be with us in the ship; His presence will carry us as on angels' noiseless wings into the bosom of the Father. There will be no more toil, no more labour at the oars, no more battling against adverse winds; the instant Christ appears, we shall find ourselves on Canaan's shore. Jesus has entered the vessel: enough, ship the oars, prepare to disembark. The crowds are waiting till Christ and His disciples step upon the golden strand. The glad 'Well done:' Listen! it steals upon our ears: 'Enter into the joy of your Lord.'

So do we regard the apparently needless miracle wrought on the shores of Galilee as fraught with im-

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portant lessons. True, it might have been easy for the disciples themselves to have kindled a fire after their landing, and to have made ready a hasty meal, but then we would have lost one of the finest instances of Christ's tender consideration. Cold and dripping, the fishers land; but arrangements have been made for them. A fire has been kindled, fish laid on it, and bread prepared. What unobtrusive goodness thus appears! 'Come and dine,' says the Master, who had divinely prepared for their reception; and then His words seem to imply,—'Bring of your store likewise, lay more on the fire, prepare enough for the feast; but meanwhile warm yourselves and begin.' What could have been done more kindly? How could the last miracle of our Lord have told more aptly of His love? Yet is not this but a picture standing out in relief of what is daily transpiring? Who brings a supply any night to the nets of fishers? Who brings increase to the farmers' barns? Who spreads our daily table and anticipates our wants? Who but the same that prepared a meal for His disciples, and kindled a fire on the shore.

We can go further, however; for while this miracle, as we esteem it, of the fishes already broiled before the draught was secured, might be considered needless in itself, yet, as part of a picture of truth, it was absolutely required. Christ meant to teach us things to come; and this He would have us learn, that when our work on earth is done, we shall have no anxiety more; we shall find the rich

provision of the upper sanctuary spread, and the first word that salutes our ear will be, 'Come, for the marriage-supper of the Lamb is prepared, and all things are now ready.' The Lord, by His latest feast with His disciples, would present a type of the future bliss which awaits His people. The breaking of bread that morning could not fail to recall the sad supper which the Lord and His disciples had partaken on the night of the betrayal; and as then our Lord had connected the feast on earth with the coming time of joy, when He would drink new wine in His Father's kingdom, so now it seems natural to connect this last repast with the feast of fat things which will at length be spread.

Is it then a baseless fancy which would see in Christ's standing on the shore, near to His disciples, though they recognise Him not, a picture also of things spiritual and future? The Lord is unseen, but He is near. Ours is not an absent, but an ever present, ever living, loving Friend. On the previous occasion, when the disciples were left all night alone to battle with the storm, it is said that Jesus had gone up into a mountain apart to pray, and that *He saw the disciples toiling in rowing*, Mark vi. 48. We must knit these two things together: He departed to pray, and He saw them toiling in rowing. The eye of Him who slumbers not, nor sleeps, was on them. Like as, in the chapter we are discussing, when they thought their Lord was far away, He had been noticing them all night fishing and catch-

ing nothing, so, in the parallel instance, the absent Saviour was looking through the night on His disciples, and in the morning came to their relief. As the lark, brushing aside the dew, and rising toward heaven, till lost from sight it seems oblivious to earth, and pours its melody into the ear of heaven, yet all the while, if what they say be true, keeps its eye fixed on the nest, from which it has risen, and forgets not, in its loudest and most rapturous notes, its callow brood; so Jesus, rising on the wings of prayer, into closest communion with His Father and His God, forgets not the loved ones tossed in that little boat, and is ready, when their eyes and hearts begin to fail, to leave His oratory on the lonely mount, and speed to their deliverance. Neither is the risen Redeemer far from any of His people. The night may be long and dark, but they are not far from the shores of peace. *The disciples are not far from land, but as it were, two hundred cubits.* The cry of Sion may be heard, 'The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.' But even then Christ Jesus is nigh. Forsaken thee! Forgotten thee! 'Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.'

Especially will the figure prove true in the future history of the church of Christ. 'Where,' say many, 'is the sign of His appearing? Where are the proofs that millennial joy is near?' We answer, in the words of the Master: 'Say not ye, There are yet four months and then cometh harvest? Behold, I

say unto you, Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are white already to harvest.' The Lord *is* near. He stands on the heavenly shore, but it is not distant more than two hundred cubits. At His word the church lets down the net, and the result is sure. It is on the *right* side the net is cast, as it is on the *right* hand of the Judge that the Redeemed will hereafter stand. Fear not then the issue. 'It is the Lord' who utters the command. But a little, and we shall be with Him. 'Even so, come Lord Jesus,' come quickly.

'The live-long night we've toil'd in vain,  
But at Thy gracious word  
I will let down the net again :—  
Do Thou Thy will, O Lord!'

So day by day, and week by week,  
In sad and weary thought,  
Thy muse, whom God hath set to seek  
The souls His Christ hath bought.

Full many a dreary anxious hour  
We watch our nets alone,  
In drenching spray and driving shower,  
And hear the night-bird's moan.

At morn we look, and nought is there ;  
Sad dawn of cheerless day !  
Who then from pining and despair  
The sickening heart can stay ?

There is a stay, and we are strong ;  
Our Master is at hand,  
To cheer our solitary song,  
And guide us to the strand.'

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Having thus exhibited how, in a certain sense, we may regard even the two hundred cubits of this pregnant narrative as symbolical, it only remains that we bring what has been said to bear upon the number One Hundred and Fifty-three.

It is not what we might have expected, to hear that amidst the excitement of that glad morning, time should have been taken exactly to count the number of fish that had been caught. Did the old habit of carefully tallying the haul that had been taken, overcome Peter's desire of being near the Master? Was it of such consequence for us to know that there were a hundred, fifty and three; no more, no fewer? Was the mere fact of such interest by itself, as to find a place in so sacred a record, that the net was full of *great* fishes? We think that the previous discussion may be able to lend new interest to such slight details. Did it lie within our province to continue our review of the chapter to its close, our conviction would only grow stronger, that even these minute particulars may shadow forth the future issues of Christ's work amongst men. But enough may have been already done, to establish that this miraculous draught was typical of the harvest of souls that the church will finally realize. The entire work of the church to the end of time is imaged forth in the fishers' night-long toil. The grand result of Christ's blessing on their labours, seems therefore to be shadowed forth by the hundred and fifty and three,—all great

fishes. The innumerable company of the redeemed are presented to our view, all precious in God's sight, with none vile or worthless among them. Nor is there one lacking of their number. As time was taken on the shores of Galilee to reckon exactly the number that were caught, so do we read in the Book of Revelation, 'After these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. . . . Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.' What is thus indicated by means, as has been explained before, of the symbol twelve, is represented by the exact enumeration of the fish in connection with Christ's last miracle. We can venture to found nothing on the fact of there being an hundred and fifty-three, in the way of determining the number who shall be saved, or so forth; but we may safely conclude, in accordance with what other passages of the Word fully establish,



that the number will be very great, and that none of the ransomed will be lost. 'For all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.' 'All that the Father giveth me shall come to me.' 'This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me, I should lose nothing.' If it had been a round number, say 150, which had been chosen, there would not have been the same particularity and definiteness attaching to the idea which is conveyed. As it is, the assurance is given that not one of God's chosen will be overlooked. Down to the three which exceed the hundred and fifty, does the reckoning proceed, and so hereafter 'not a hoof shall be left behind.' In this way, and in this way alone, do we hold the number to be symbolic. Yet though not of the same general interest with others that are more strictly symbolic, surely there is enough in its relation to the number of God's redeemed to give it exceeding value. When we think of the immensity of the throng of ransomed souls set forth by it; when we consider that each one of that throng is reckoned up by God as amongst His crown-jewels; and when we remember that they are all of *great* worth in the eyes of God, we may well take up the angels' song, 'Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will to men.'

Here we might end our remarks on this number were it not that one of the parables of Jesus may seem to run counter to some of the results that have

been reached. We refer to the parable of the Drag Net, Matt. xiii. 47-50. But we venture to regard this parable as confirmatory, in a very striking degree, of the mode of interpretation which has been adopted. As the last of Christ's seven parables respecting the Kingdom of God, it bears a remarkable resemblance to the last of Jesus' miracles. Setting forth the final issue of the working of God's church on earth, the parable likens the kingdom of God to a seine net, 'that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.' It is the outward church of Christ which is the subject of discourse, and therefore we read of good and bad being within its pale. But in the case of the miracle, it was the true church of Christ which alone came into view: the Covenant number Seven was impressed on the fishers who were engaged in their calling. It was the perfect result effected by the true church which alone came into consideration: the net was cast on the right side of the ship; nor did the net in any way rend or prove unequal to the work which had to be done. Every part of the narrative would seem designed to fix our attention on the church invisible, and those who will finally become its members. In accordance with this, we find that all the fish are great; that none are bad or worthless among the entire hundred and fifty and three. As a parable, this reads with

the same exquisite exactness which attaches to the other parables of Jesus, and it is perfectly accordant with what we may term the analogous parable of the Drag-Net, which concludes the series respecting the kingdom of heaven. So far from being shaken in a single position, by reason of the parable speaking of good and bad, while the miracle only speaks of fish, good and great, we feel persuaded by the comparison which can be instituted between the last of the great series of parables which Jesus uttered and the last of His miracles, that it was designed we should look at the one in connection with the other, and that the miracle cannot be fully understood unless we look on it somewhat in the aspect of a parable as well. And considered as a parable, we have the conviction that the simple lessons deducible from the number under consideration will be regarded as clinging naturally to it, and forming a sufficient reason why we should give it a concluding place among the symbolical numbers of Scripture.

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