

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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NOTES ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Written and Distributed by
William J. Hollister
843 S. W. 13th Avenue, Miami 35, Florida

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Address: As above except May 25 to October 25;
during that period, Route 2, Waynesville, Ohio

I.

FOREWORD

About one-half of these Notes were written around twenty years ago. These earlier notes have been read by some of the brethren, in all probably not more than one hundred. Some of these readers have expressed considerable appreciation, a few making copies for their own use. Needless to say the study of Revelation both then and since has been very enjoyable and profitable, and it is with the hope of stimulating and contributing to the study of this last message from our risen and exalted Master, and like profit therefrom, that they are now published.

In these notes special emphasis is laid upon the comparison and study of all places where the same character, or event, or group, etc., is referred to. This has produced practically a topical study of Revelation. It is the method pursued by Brother Russell in his consideration and writing on the various features of the Divine Program, and recommended by him. In my efforts to understand the more difficult and obscure portions of Revelation I have found this method the most rewarding. However, it requires familiarity with the text, and to gain that frequent reading will be necessary until its main features at least can be easily and accurately recalled. The more familiar we are with the text of Revelation as a whole the more interesting and convincing our study becomes.

Several following paragraphs are from the letter which in 1941 accompanied the original collection of these articles. As the years since have passed the realization has been impressed that many prophecies of the Scriptures are fulfilled progressively, and the “progressive fulfillment of Prophecy” has become a frequently used expression. In many instances the efforts to understand prophecy have been accompanied by a feeling of urgency, which in a sense is appropriate and cannot be avoided in one who is “looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God” – our thoughts and hopes enthusiastically lifted to that grand event. But there is quite a difference between this “hastening unto” and the tendency in which the writer has shared (and may still be somewhat affected) to interpret prophetic details so as to “hasten” the conclusion of a trend which may be clearly seen.

This tendency may result from the fact that we deal with and conceive only of comparative forces and conditions; while the great Master Prophet is dealing with superlatives and absolutes. We are assured that “the Lord is not slack concerning His promises”; “the vision will surely come”; “wait

for it”; “it will not tarry”: the prophecies will be fulfilled, and exactly on time. And the Almighty assures us further, “I the LORD will hasten it in its time”; and, “He will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.” (Isa. 61:22; Nahum 1:9) Hence the great importance for us as students of Prophecy to discern TRENDS, but to refrain from the conclusion as to the exact time when a trend will culminate and the coming events thus indicated be fully accomplished. This rational effort to understand applies with emphasis at the present time (1960) with respect to the three primary lines of prophecy of special interest today, namely: (1) The completion of the Harvest of the Church; (2) the climax of the time of trouble ending the “present evil world,” and (3) the return of Israel to their land and their conversion. “Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry” – is a message and principle we may wisely take to heart and rejoice in.

Quotations follow from the letter referred to. “Brooklyn, N.Y., May 1, 1941 – Dear Brethren: In transmitting this manuscript on Revelation let me say that if any of the expressions give the impression of over-confidence, please do not so interpret them. They represent merely the writer’s convictions and suggestions while continuing earnestly to seek to see ever more clearly the Lord’s counsel in The Revelation, as he may be pleased to reveal it. In the study of this Book it seems evident that to reach a satisfactory understanding we must give attention to the following points:

(1) Not to be satisfied with an interpretation of a symbol or phrase which occurs more than once in Revelation until we have carefully considered its use in all such places. The correct interpretation, it would seem reasonable, will fit equally well in all; and if it does it will give more confidence that the interpretation is what the Lord intended us to understand.

(2) A careful and open-minded consideration of the events transpiring today and in the recent past, thus endeavoring to discern the TREND or direction of world changes now taking place.

(3) Recognition of the great importance of Brother Russell’s writings on this subject, and hence the careful study of them.

“Probably many of the brethren are deterred from making a careful study of Revelation because of a lingering doubt that, in any event, they will be able to gain a satisfactory understanding of the entire book. The thought suggested herein with respect to the first verse of Revelation has been very encouraging to the writer on this point, in that it creates a limited objective; namely, to apprehend and gain for ourselves in this, OUR day, the knowledge which our Lord intended for us concerning the ‘things which must shortly come to pass.’ This appears to have been his purpose – to show to his people living at any time in the Gospel age the events of the near future. And this view is sustained by the several evidently consecutive accounts and the seven letters to ‘the churches.’

“In our endeavor to use the Revelation as a glass to look into the near future we shall be led to consider portions of the book already fulfilled, and to the pages of history for the confirmation thus available of the interpretation of its symbols. Nevertheless, the objective continually before us will be to ascertain the things about to transpire in the near future, and to find the preparation of mind and heart for those events which the Lord himself has provided for us in the Revelation.

“From an examination of Brother Russell’s writings shortly before he left us in 1916 it is evident that he anticipated that the church systems would have a short period of exaltation in close cooperation with the civil powers, each desiring the other’s support in the world troubles he foresaw to ensue after the close of the First World War. He thought probable the truth would be restrained

and those who persisted in proclaiming it would suffer persecution. Shortly after this effort to suppress proclamation of present truth he believed that the populace would become disillusioned with the nominal systems of religion, turn on them and destroy them. And his last expressions on the subject indicate that he felt it quite possible that the final experiences of the true church on this side the veil would take place at the same time – the desperate and inflamed people not recognizing the difference between hypocritical professors and true saints. Following this, the passing of the last members of the true church and the destruction of symbolic Babylon, he believed that all civil governments would likewise be swallowed up in anarchy; the latter being finally restrained by the interposition of the Kingdom of the Lord and his saints in glory. (Foreword to Scripture Studies Vol. 4, dated October 1, 1916; and answer to the second question on page 625 of the volume ‘What Pastor Russell Said: His Answer to Hundreds of Questions’)

“While Brother Russell’s expectations with respect to the exaltation of the nominal systems of religion to power in conjunction with the civil governments, and resulting wide-spread persecution of true saints have not been realized since the First World War, one would be over-bold to say that such developments could not possibly yet take place. On the other hand, we seem to have progressed beyond any period of special cooperation between church and civil power, and in Europe the weakening of the church systems seems to be definitely taking place at the hands of the new and unfriendly but dominant civil powers.

“In one of Brother Russell’s articles addressed to the brethren (R-5633) he calls attention to the rapidity with which Prophecy was being fulfilled, and that this was different from the past when fulfillments of prophecy were farther apart. Because of this, the speed with which History was being made in fulfillment of Prophecy, Brother Russell exhorts the brethren to watch not only their own hearts, thoughts, conduct, but also to be alert and watching to see the fulfillment of prophecy in the events of the day. The suggestions of the enclosed articles are intended by the writer as a practical application of Brother Russell’s counsel.

With much love in the Lord,

Brother W. J. Hollister.”

II.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION – A GENERAL VIEW

The Book of Revelation occupies a unique place in the Scriptures. It is the last written of the books of the New Testament, and the only one that contains a direct message from our Lord to his sacrificing followers after he had passed his own crucial test, had yielded up his life at Calvary and been glorified. The fact that Revelation contains a message from our Lord after he had been seated at the right hand of God in the Father’s Kingdom, would make it of special interest to his followers. Its dedication to his Body members in the flesh undergoing their trial preparatory to exaltation with him, and for the express purpose of enlightening them as to “the things which must shortly come to pass,” has doubtless caused it to be carefully studied by saints throughout the Age in order to locate

themselves on the stream of time, to discern and to be comforted by the Lord's foreknowledge of their experiences, the assurance of his sympathy, encouragement and guidance in their hours of special trial.

It is impossible to conceive of a message which could have more august and awe-inspiring authorship, or that would properly arouse deeper interest and study. It is the Almighty Creator's revelation to his Son after his elevation to share the Father's throne – hence it is “the Word of God.” And it is the “testimony of Jesus Christ” of that message in his revelation to his followers, recorded in the Book of Revelation. These expressions we find in several places; and to “the Word of God, and the testimony of Jesus” – complete devotion and obedience, “keeping it” in the face of persecution and death, are pointed out as the requisite for the “overcomers” who will “sit down with Jesus in his throne.” (See Rev. 1:2, 9; 6:9; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4; 22:9)

Of deep interest to every thoughtful follower of Jesus is the promise of a special blessing to result from the study of this Book, as we read: “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” (Rev. 1:3) To gain the blessings hidden in the Revelation therefore, we are admonished at the outset that we must approach it in the attitude of a reverent student determined to “keep strictly” – at whatever cost – the things which are written therein in meaningful symbols. The study of Revelation in our day has revealed that a large portion of the book relates to the Harvest of the Age. Its illuminating symbols studied by Brother Russell in conjunction with other portions of the Scriptures evidently threw a flood of light on the events and special work of the saints in the end of the Age. This is clearly indicated in his early writings.

It is suggested that the book of Revelation falls into three natural divisions. The first section consists of the first thirteen chapters, and contains several prophetic accounts in consecutive order of the whole or large portions of the Gospel age. These prophetic accounts are given under different groups of symbols and are to some extent parallel. Several traverse the entire period devoted to the development of the Church, some only a portion of the period; and one carries the reader on beyond the Millennial Kingdom to the perfected earth, with its inhabitants restored to perfection, united in loyalty and devotion to God and to their Redeemer.

These consecutive prophetic views include the messages to the seven churches in chapters two and three. We understand these seven churches represent seven periods of the universal church extending through the Gospel age; but the seven messages are also designed for the warning, encouragement, instruction of all the churches throughout the entire period. Chapters four and five seem to record in bold strokes the work of restoring the human family to harmony with their Creator as the work of Jesus, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah,” executing the plan of God after he had gained the authority to do so by laying down his human life a willing sacrifice. Another consecutive account is found in chapter six, which pictures God's plan recorded in a scroll, and the progress of the plan accomplished through loosing of the seven seals with which it was bound. The events following the loosing of the first six seals seem to cover the Gospel age.

Chapter seven presents the work of sealing the hundred-and-forty-four-thousand who later stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb. (Chapter 14) This seal is said to be “the seal of the living God,” and its meaning is “to make sure.” The same word is used by St. Paul in writing to the Ephesian brethren:

“In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” (Eph. 1:13, 14) Chapters eight, nine and ten contain an account of the Gospel age under the symbol of the seven trumpets, the last of which we understand to be now sounding.

In chapters 11, 12, and 13, respectively, are three more prophecies of the Gospel age, all of which emphasize the long period in which the spurious kingdom of Christ gained prominence and exercised great power in the world. The first of these portrays the testimony of God’s Two Witnesses, the Old and New Testaments, being given in “sackcloth” of dead, or unused, languages. The second presents the conflict in the ecclesiastical heaven between Pagan Rome (the “dragon”) and the worldly-minded, ambitious nominal Christian hierarchy; the triumph of the latter (the “man-child”) and its exaltation during the same period in which the Two Witnesses were giving their testimony in sackcloth. As a result of the development of the Papal power the true church is pictured as being borne out into the “wilderness” and there nourished for the same period of time in which the Two Witnesses were giving their testimony clothed in sackcloth. (R-306)

In chapter 13 this same period is given as the time in which the Papal “beast” is given “power to act”; and the context indicates the nature of those actions to be “blaspheming” (misrepresenting) God and his true people, making war with the saints and overcoming them. As Brother Russell has pointed out, each of these three accounts indicates the same length of symbolic time – 1260 days. This period has been demonstrated to be 1260 years, ending about 1799; and as we should expect, the “Two Witnesses” have since been freed from their sackcloth of dead languages and circulated broadcast all over the world in the languages and dialects of the common people; the power to persecute has been taken from Papacy, and the true Church has been relieved correspondingly. (R-318-323)

The Second Division of the Book of Revelation includes chapters 14 to 19. In this section the work of the Harvest in the end of the Gospel Age is depicted. These chapters contain several general accounts of the period and also detailed pictures of its important events. They portray the gathering of the wheat; the reaping of the vine of the earth; the great outpouring of light on God’s Word and on every subject; the judgments of God upon the false systems of Christianity and their final destruction; the resurrection of the saints and their marriage to the Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus. The Third Division of Revelation comprises chapters 20 to 22. In it are portrayed the binding of Satan for the thousand years of Christ’s Mediatorial Kingdom; the resurrection and restoration of mankind to human perfection under the supervision of the Christ; the testing of their loyalty to God at the end of the Millennial Kingdom; and finally, the destruction of Satan and all who, under that final test, are revealed to be not in complete heart-harmony with their Creator.

III.

NARRATIVE OF THE HARVEST

With this brief survey of the Revelation, we turn to the prophecies pertaining to the Harvest of the Age recorded in chapter 14. It is apparent from a careful study of Brother Russell’s early writings

that he gained great inspiration from the visions and messages of this chapter, and it seems not too much to say that it and the chapters following in this section became to him a veritable chart of the stupendous events which the saints living in the end of the age were to witness, and in which they were to have an important part. (R-474-475) What sublime scenes are described in this chapter! It opens with a vision of Mount Zion, the hill in Jerusalem upon which the Temple was built. On Mount Zion St. John sees the Lamb standing, and with Him the “hundred-and-forty-four-thousand.” This company sing a song in the presence of God which no one but the hundred-and-forty-four-thousand are able to sing – those having been redeemed (bought) from the earth. What glorious characters are here delineated; only the saints could be thus described. They are a first-fruit unto God of His creatures; virgins; not defiled with women (worldly church systems); they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; in their mouth is no falsehood; they are blameless! They made a full consecration of their all to God, and they have faithfully paid their vows.

The recognition of two classes of saved ones on two planes of being, the spirit nature for the church, and restitution to human perfection for the world of mankind, has been one of the most prominent features of Harvest truth. While the 144,000, the Bride of Christ, was not complete when the vision was understood early in the Harvest period, the Lord’s people during this time have “seen,” or understood, that such a faithful, devoted company were being gathered unto their Lord, “to meet Him in the air,” and to share with Him in the glory and power of the Kingdom symbolized by their standing together on Mount Zion.

The record continues: “And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” (Verses 6, 7) St. John describes a messenger (or message) flying in “the midst of heaven.” Evidently this “heaven” is not the same as that described in chapter 4, which seems to be the majestic presence of God. Brother Russell interpreted this angel to represent a message which became due to be proclaimed to Christians (in the ecclesiastical heaven) early in the Harvest period, and which has been preached far and wide, namely, that the hour of judgment has come; and that God is to be worshiped and not the false systems described in previous chapters which claimed and received the worship of those who “dwell on the earth,” and exercised power “over all kindreds and tongues and nations.” (Chapter 13:7, 8) The expression “those who dwell on the earth” is several times used in Revelation, and seems to refer to nominal Christians, those on a higher plane and with greater responsibility than mankind in general. (See chapter 6:10; 11:10; 13:14; 17:8; also R-321)

The announcement that the great day of God’s judgment is at hand has been a marked feature of the Harvest message; that the long reign of evil is about to end; that these judgments begin with the religious systems which have so long and so grievously misrepresented God’s character and purposes in their creeds and practices; that they are to extend later to the nations or civil powers; and finally to every member of Adam’s race; and that in that time – “When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” (Isaiah 26:9) Needless to say if his judgments mean what was generally believed and taught previous to the Harvest there would be no reason to use the imminence of “the judgment-day” as a reason for reverencing and giving glory to God. But with the clear light of truth on this subject, the character, purpose, and result of God’s judgments are seen to be strong reasons indeed for worshipping him.

Let us now consider the four things of which God is stated by the angel to be the maker. First, of course, we recognize that God is the author of the marvelous works of creation – the heavens, the earth, the sea, and the fountains of water. Keeping in mind, however, that Revelation is a book of symbols; that its author, Jesus, sent his angel to “sign-ify” its messages to St. John and through him to his church (Rev. 1:1), we are prepared to look for the significance of these terms not only in the physical realm but also in the spiritual, or intangible. The heaven and earth are the first two of the four things mentioned by the angel. These terms are used in many texts with evident reference to the spiritual or higher powers, and to human society, respectively. And so the heaven and earth of which God is the creator are not only the physical earth, the firmament and heavenly bodies, but also he is the author of the entire idea or plan of a human society governed and controlled and protected by a higher, spiritual power. Additionally, we are told that he is about to establish a “new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness”; and through the Prophet Isaiah we are exhorted to rejoice in this new heavens and new earth which he is to create and which will mean such transcendent blessings for all men. – Isaiah 65:17, 18.

The sea is frequently used in the prophetic writings, apparently as a symbol of restless, unstable humanity, not under Godly restraint. The fountains of water evidently refer symbolically to the truth which, in its purity, is so refreshing. It is interesting to notice that in the accounts of the false religious systems in previous chapters all of these symbols are used. For instance, the Papal beast is said to rise up out of the sea. This institution so thoroughly deceived men that we are told in chapter 13 that “the whole world wondered after the (Papal) beast and they worshiped the dragon which gave his power unto the beast; and they worshiped the beast.” We are also told in the same chapter that this Papal beast opened his mouth in blasphemy, or misrepresentation against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven. The corrupting influence of this false religious system also seems to be referred to in the eighth chapter of Revelation, where it is said that a great star, called Wormwood, fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of water; and that, as a result, many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

The force of the message represented by the first angel in chapter 14, calling attention to the fact that God is the Creator of these elements – “heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” – which have been so grievously misused and misrepresented by the false religious systems, is closely related to his previous statement that “the hour of God’s judgment” has now come. The implication is that the One who is responsible as the Creator of these elements, is now about to take control and to judge the evil institutions which have so misused the power which he, in his wisdom, permitted them to exercise in the previous centuries.

The Prophet Jeremiah, speaking to Israel, says that they have forsaken God, the fountain of living waters, and have hewed out for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. (Jer. 2:12, 13.) Here God compares himself to the fountain of water, or truth; and this corresponds closely with the statement of the angel, that he “made” the fountains of water. A river as a symbol of a channel of truth is familiar to us. The Prophet in Psalm 46, speaking for the Church says, we have “a river, the streams whereof shall make glad” the people of God – even in the midst of present world distress. And in the near future we understand that the “river of water of life” will flow for the instruction, refreshment and restoration of all mankind, as pictured in Revelation chapter 22.

This angel also says that God is the Creator or maker of “the sea” – the people represented by the sea. The poor, restless mass of humanity has often been grievously mistreated in the past by

God's mis-representatives. Under the ministrations of the Kingdom shortly to be established the sea will be no more; that is, restless mankind now not under religious restraint, will come into accord with God and thus, as the sea, be no more. (Rev. 21:1) In another picture, the Prophet Ezekiel speaks of the sweetening of the waters of the sea as a result of the river of water which will flow forth from the temple of God. (Ezek. 47:1-12) Both of these prophecies seem to convey the same blessed assurance that restless humanity is to be converted and restored to harmony with their Creator through the Mediatorial Kingdom of Christ. Certainly the understanding of God's plan with respect to the symbolic heavens and earth, the sea, and the rivers and fountains of waters, which has been made plain to us through the Harvest message, is abundant reason to worship God; and especially with the additional declaration that the hour of his judgment has come in which the long reign of evil is to be brought to an end.

The next feature in our study is another message proclaimed "in the midst of heaven" – the ecclesiastical heaven, or nominal Christianity. This is also a message which we have often heard during the Harvest period, one of its most prominent features, and its correct understanding is peculiar to our day. The passage reads (verse 8): "And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." This message is repeated in slightly different form in chapter 18:2-4, and there coupled with a solemn exhortation to God's people to withdraw from Babylon, lest they share her sins and receive of her plagues. Much space is given in chapters 15 to 19 to these judgments upon the misleading religious systems that have developed during the Gospel Age. Some sections of "Babylon" have been exceedingly gross in their false claims and misrepresentations of God, and some have been less so; but the spirit of Babylon, the reverence of man instead of God, is characteristic of all, and is utterly subversive of the development of mature Christlike character and the service of God.

In verses 9-12 a third angel (message) follows, giving a message which we will consider a little later. Following this third angel's message is another message peculiar to the Harvest of the age, the time in which we have been living for the past eighty-five years. It is a glorious message – the resurrection of the sleeping saints; and that now as the faithful finish their course, they merely rest from their "labors" and their "works" (business), service of God and His holy purposes, continue in the glory of the First Resurrection beyond the veil, in the new bodies "like unto His glorious body." (1 Thess. 4:16, 17) The remainder of the chapter presents two phases of the Harvest work. One, we understand, is accomplished by the Lord in part through the very truths made known during the Harvest period and recorded in this chapter. These truths of God's glorious character and plan – the time of His judgment at hand, the fallen condition of nominal Christendom and its rejection, and the call to the saints to come out of Babylon and into fellowship with their Head and with one another – these great truths have been a powerful, separating and ripening influence among the saints. It is the truth which sanctifies – when received into a good and honest heart – and we recognize the value of these Harvest truths in preparing the remaining saints for their change. The last three verses of chapter 14 picture the great trouble upon the world in the end of the Age; when the vine of the earth – the spurious church of Christ, and also spurious "Christendom" (Christ's Kingdom) which she has sponsored and directed – its fruitage of error, pride and selfishness fully ripe, is cast into the winepress of God's wrath. In this phase of the work of Harvest the saints also have a share which is described in chapters 15 and 16. (R-497-499)

Reverting now to verses 9-12, we notice that the message of the third angel (verse 9) conveys a warning similar to that given in Revelation 18:4. The substance of this warning is that inasmuch

as the time has come for the judgments upon Babylon, any who are closely associated with her will share in those judgments. In chapter 13, we have the history of the great falling away, beginning about the middle of the sixth century. There a persecuting wild-beast is seen, and this has been recognized by Bible students as representing the Papal power, the false church dominating the civilized world. In chapter 13:8 it is indicated that all the religiously inclined, except the saints, did homage to this false system. Later in chapter 13 is recorded the organization of another religious system – less gross – an “image of the beast.” (verse 14) It is recorded (v. 15) that after this image received “life” it also exacted homage or worship, and “caused that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.” Brother Russell, commenting on this symbolic death decreed by the image of the beast, interpreted it to mean that, in the nominal Christian world, those who would not join some denomination recognized as orthodox would have their influence destroyed among nominal Christians; and they were “killed” in that sense. (R-64) Many of us experienced that kind of death – the loss of influence among our old associates when we came into the truth and refused longer to reverence nominal Christianity’s claims. (For further consideration see No. XIII.)

Careful consideration of verses 15-17 in chapter 13 will be found helpful in the study of the section of chapter 14 now under consideration. Rev. 13:16, 17 records that the image of the beast also caused “all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their forehead: 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.” Let us note carefully that only those who had (1) the mark of the image of the beast in hand or forehead, or (2) the name of the beast, or (3) the number (value) of his name – were permitted to “buy or sell.” Brother Russell’s interpretation of this verse is confirmed by our own experience and observation, namely, that only such as were aligned with and bearing the outward mark of some of the “orthodox” denominations, Catholic or Protestant, either by mental harmony, (mark in the forehead) or by service (mark in the hand), were permitted to deal in or teach in the recognized markets of truth – the churches. (R-64-65; S.S. Vol.2, page 259) And have we not found that to be our experience during the Harvest? Seldom have we known of a church being available for the teaching or preaching of the Harvest message. On the contrary, the usual place where “present truth” has been proclaimed was a lodge hall, a theatre or other public auditorium. We will not now take time to further consider the visions of chapter 13, but continue our consideration of chapter 14.

In verses 9-11 it is indicated that, since the hour of God’s judgment has arrived (vs. 7, 8), all those who worship (give homage to) the false systems of Christianity, and also receive the mark in head or hand, will share in the impending judgments of God to result in the destruction of those systems. It is worthy of special note that those who share the plagues upon Babylon not only worship or do homage, but also receive Babylon’s mark. In these days of judgment upon the false systems it is not uncommon to learn of former votaries being alienated from Babylon, and especially true in Europe, the geographical setting of these prophecies. In Catholic countries of Europe great numbers have relaxed their allegiance to the church when political or social interests were found to be in competition. But these who are thus losing interest in Babylon are apparently those who merely gave “homage” (worship) to the systems – the “children” which Babylon was to lose. (Isaiah 47:9; Rev. 18:8) On the other hand, those who not only “worship” these systems but also are in mental accord (marked in the forehead), or are actively supporting them (marked in their right hand), are in great distress as they witness the declining influence and the loss of much of their former power and wealth in the countries of Europe.

Verse 12 seems to refer – in contrast – to the great advantage of the saints at this time – the reward for “the patience of the saints” – to them who “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” Their advantage is, in part, that they are free from the “torments” coming upon those who are in harmony with and serving Babylon. How true that is of the Lord’s people in the Harvest period! And how wonderful it is to see in verse 12 a prophecy of the exact reversal of that condition which existed before “the hour of His judgment” arrived. In the period of the success and prosperity of the beast and his image those who refused to take the mark in the forehead or hand suffered. But today those who do take the mark in hand or forehead, those who not only reverence but also receive the mark of special harmony and co-operation, they are the ones who are suffering torment because these systems are in process of destruction; and because their hopes and, in many instances their livelihood, are identified with them. (R-475)



IV.

WHY EMPHASIS ON CHAPTERS 14-19?

It may be asked why we have begun our detail consideration of Revelation at the fourteenth chapter. In reply, it is evident that definite changes in setting and in the general situation and work of the Lord’s people are introduced in this chapter. It presents the very messages and ministry with which we have become familiar in our own lifetime. The Lord, in the very first verse of Revelation, states the object of the book to be, “To show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass” – or as the *Diaglott* expresses it, “the things which must be done speedily.” From this introduction it seems reasonable for us to consider the Revelation somewhat like a low-power glass; not a telescope which one might expect to use in the early part or down through the Gospel age to discern the details of the Church’s experiences far into the future; but a collection of messages from the Head of the Church which would illuminate the present situation and work of His members in each stage of the Church, and permit the faithful student to see into the near future and discern “the things which must shortly come to pass.”

In looking back into the early writings of Brother Russell, the special servant to this (the last) stage of the Church, we find that he was enabled to use the Revelation for just that purpose – to see the outline of the work of the Harvest, the appropriate messages to be delivered to the professing Christian church, and in general outline, the closing scenes of the Gospel age and opening scenes of the Millennial age. Too, he was permitted to see the meaning of the symbols of the book, and thus to leave with us the key thoughts which unlock the messages and visions yet to be fulfilled, and to understand developments which have taken place since he finished his course and left us.

What is the Prophetic value, then, which we may expect from study of Revelation at the present time? We answer that, in accordance with the general object of the Book as stated by the Lord, we should expect that it would enable us to see into the near future, to understand the trend of events, and be prepared for the changes about to take place. We recall that Brother Russell left us before the close of the First World War; that when he was here in the flesh the Czar was still on his throne and the head of the Russian church; that the Kaiser still reigned and was a loyal supporter of the established (Lutheran) church; that Catholic countries in Europe were free to support the Papacy; that Russian Communism was then unknown, and likewise Fascism and Nazism – systems that have

since gained great power which has been used to circumscribe and greatly weaken the influence, wealth and power of the Catholic and Protestant churches. It is related of Brother Russell that on board a ship in 1916 a brother was asking him about future developments and his understanding of prophecies relating to them. They were nearing port, and there were some billboards along the shore. Brother Russell called attention to them, saying that he could see the boards and could make out some of the illustrations on them, but only indistinctly. He used this as an illustration of his own position; saying that he could see some of the events in the future only indistinctly, but that just as he would be able to see more clearly the messages on the billboards when he got nearer to them, so he expected to see these details of prophecy more distinctly when he got further along, nearer to the events they describe.

V.

**“THEY THAT DWELL ON THE EARTH”
 – THEIR ASTONISHMENT AT
 “THE BEAST THAT WAS, AND IS NOT, AND YET IS.”
 (Chapter 17)**

The Revelator says of certain details in the judgments upon the false systems of Christianity and the means that God would use for their overthrow, that “they that dwell on the earth shall wonder (be astonished) whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.” (Rev. 17:8) It is indeed interesting to note that in the immediate present we see developing again the Pagan (non-Christian) outlook and ethic in Europe, where, many centuries ago, Papacy displaced Paganism and succeeded to its “power, and seat, and great authority.” (Rev. 13:2) St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonian church, tells them there would be a great falling away, resulting in the development of the “Man of Sin.” He speaks of an influence which at that time hindered the development of that false system, and says, “And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time... He who now letteth (hindereth) will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked (One) be revealed...” (2 Thess. 2:6-8).

Brother Russell interpreted the “hindering one” to be the Pagan Roman Empire. (S.S. Vol.2, p. 288) A few centuries later it was “taken out of the way” and went into oblivion (the “bottomless pit”) so far as independent power was concerned. Thereafter it was purely Civil power subordinate to and doing the service of the superior Papal power which occupied the “heaven” – the position of religious or spiritual influence. (See chapter 12) But now it (Pagan civil power) is again becoming an active and successful competitor (and persecutor) of the Papal system and also to some extent of the Protestant church in East European communist-dominated countries. Using these prophecies of Revelation to discern the “things which must shortly come to pass,” we shall not be surprised to see a growing antipathy toward the Papacy in Europe, the continued “eating her flesh” and later the “burning with fire”; and a return to the gross darkness, the coercion, cruelty, and hopelessness which we call Paganism – fallen human nature unrelieved by even an adulterated Christianity. Thank God that we are also assured that this pagan power, after it has accomplished God’s purpose in the destruction of the false Christian system (Ch. 17:16-18), is to be overcome when it “makes war with the Lamb.” (verse 14)

The writer has been unable to find in Brother Russell's writings a complete interpretation of the seventeenth chapter. He did, however, indicate his understanding that the "scarlet beast" of chapter 17 was the same as the "red dragon" of chapter 12. (See R-55 and S.S. Vol.2, 354). Today the differences among the brethren in their understanding of Revelation with respect to the near future seem to center around chapter 17:8. This verse reads: "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 (be amazed), whose names were NOT written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." Note that this is the same class – "they that dwell on the earth whose names were NOT written in the book of life" – which in chapter 13:8 worshipped the leopard (Papal) beast. Their reactions are consistent: "worship" of the leopard beast when it is set up above the dragon (civil power); "wonder" or amazement, when the civil power, represented in the seventeenth chapter by the scarlet beast, repudiates and persecutes the counterpart of the leopard beast – the same Papal system but there represented as a harlot. All of the words used in identification of the "scarlet colored beast" are significant; but now let us consider the statement that it ascended "out of the bottomless pit."

THE BOTTOMLESS PIT

In the Revelation there are only four places where this expression occurs, and only two objects are spoken of as being cast into the bottomless pit. One of these is Satan himself, in the familiar statement that when the Lord is about to establish his mediatorial kingdom in the earth, he lays hold upon "that old serpent, the devil and Satan, and binds him for a thousand years that he should deceive the nations no more – until the thousand years should be finished." The other three texts in chapters 9, 11, and 17 evidently refer to another character or system. Now let us consider for a moment some things about the conflict between Christ and His kingdom and His persistent, unchanging opponent, Satan. As we know, the Lord and the Apostle Paul designate Satan as "the god of this world," and we are told that his rulership is through control of the minds of men – a spiritual influence, representing what is implied in the symbol of "the heavens," superior to "the earth" – organized human society. Thus the "heavens" represent Satanic power now in the "present evil world," and the spiritual power of Christ and His Kingdom in "the world to come." It will only be after Christ has bound Satan and "cast him into the bottomless pit and set a seal on him that he may deceive the nations no longer," that Christ will establish His reign of righteousness and peace. In other words, Christ, after casting Satan into the bottomless pit (oblivion) will take over the spiritual power and authority which Satan previously exercised. We are familiar with the close parallel between the prophetic titles, authority, position and power which will belong to Christ in his kingdom, and the titles, authority, position, and power claimed by the Papacy. Some of these correspondences are pointed out in S.S. Vol.2, page 267. Note also the parallel columns on page 303.

Some additional parallels seem to be suggested in the Revelation. The Lord is pictured in chapter 20 coming down from heaven with a great chain in his hand, laying hold on that old serpent, the devil and Satan, and binding him for a thousand years, setting a seal upon him that he might deceive the nations no more. During the thousand years in which Satan is bound Christ replaces him as the spiritual power ruling in the affairs of mankind in order to accomplish their reconciliation to God. At the end of the thousand years Satan is loosed from his confinement in the "bottomless pit"; he then goes forth to resume his opposition to God, deceiving again some of the human race and inciting them to an effort to overthrow the representatives of the Kingdom – "the camp of the

saints,” “the beloved city.” Satan’s effort to overthrow the Kingdom is unsuccessful; and after he has been permitted to thus test the restored race as to their personal loyalty to God and worthiness of eternal life, both Satan and those proved unworthy of a continuation of life are destroyed in the “lake of fire.” (Rev. 20:1-10)

Now, as to the foregoing in connection with the spurious, counterfeit kingdom of Christ, ruled over by the “Man of Sin”: Papacy is pictured in chapter 12 as a “man-child” which was caught up to “heaven.” While Satan is indeed a spiritual power and as such is described as “the prince of the power of the air,” Papacy’s rule has been in the nominal, ecclesiastical “heaven.” This nominal heaven was occupied before Papacy’s elevation into that realm, by the Pagan Roman religious system – “the great red dragon.” (See No. XIII.) After a conflict the dragon was cast out of “heaven,” and a song of triumph was voiced by the Papacy in characteristic “great swelling words,” which magnified its triumph over Pagan religion in the Roman Empire (or its successor divisions in Europe) to mean the casting down of Satan and the establishment of Christ’s Kingdom at that time. Note the similarity of language in chapters 20:4 and 12:10, 11. We summarize suggested correspondences as follows:

Counterfeit: The predecessor of the Papacy in the nominal “heaven” was Pagan Rome, represented by the “red dragon.” True: The predecessor of Christ and his Church in the heavens is Satan; who has been “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit (being) working in the children of disobedience.” (Eph. 2:2)

Counterfeit: After the “man-child” (Papacy) was “caught up to heaven” there was a conflict between the Papal and Pagan powers, and the latter, represented by the red dragon was cast out and his place was “not found any more in heaven.” (Chapter 12:8, 9) The red dragon became merely a civil power, or in oblivion (“the bottomless pit”) as respects the ecclesiastical “heaven.” True: One of the first activities of the true Kingdom of Christ after its taking control is the “binding” of Satan, casting him from his position of power in the spirit realm, confining him in the “bottomless pit” (oblivion), placing a “seal” upon him that he may deceive the nations no more during the thousand-year reign of the Mediatorial Kingdom.

Counterfeit: Papacy’s blasphemous appraisal of its victory over Paganism as the dominant religious power in the Roman Empire, or its successor divisions, is given in chapter 12:7-11. We note there the claim that their victory over the red dragon was the result of their loyalty to Christ; “They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb”; “they loved not their lives unto the death.” Their claim is that they were martyrs; and that now in their triumph “is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.” The strife between the rising Papal power and the decaying power of Pagan religion probably occupied several centuries from the time when the “man-child” was caught up to heaven to the time when the Papacy was firmly established as the dominant power in Europe – “reigning over the kings of the earth.” (Chapter 17:18) This was probably about the year 800 A. D.; and the pseudo, counterfeit kingdom continued for a thousand years to 1799, which also marks the end of the 1260 years of Papal power to persecute and blaspheme without effective hindrance, as indicated in the account of the “leopard beast” of chapter 13 – another picture of the Papacy. True: The true Kingdom is pictured in the vision following the binding of Satan, where John “saw thrones” and the true saints, the “souls of those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God,” and that “they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” (Chapter 20:4)

THE COUNTERFEIT SYSTEM SYMBOLIZED BY A HARLOT

In chapter 17 we again see the “red dragon,” but there designated “a scarlet-colored beast.” This beast is shown carrying a harlot, which the Revelator identifies as Babylon, the system which “reigneth over the kings of the earth.” The attitude of this beast toward the false Christian system changes in its eighth stage, and from being subservient to the harlot – or in other words supporting the harlot in its claims and in the exercise of power in the higher, religious realm – it again engages in conflict with this system, refuses to be dominated by it, “eats” the harlot’s flesh, and finally burns her with fire – thus, we are informed, executing the judgment of God upon her. Counterfeit: The rising up of non-Christian civil power to contest with the “harlot” system its claims of superior power and divine authority is, we understand, what is meant by the expression that the scarlet-colored beast “ascends out of the bottomless pit.” And that which identifies the present non-Christian civil power – especially in Eastern Europe – as this scarlet-colored beast coming up out of oblivion, is not its dictatorial powers, its ability to subjugate and control nations, its cruelty. All of these have been present in other governments and in other periods of the Gospel age. From the prophetic standpoint its identity is indicated by its disregard of Papal claims to sanctity and divine authority; its determination to subordinate the Church to the State; its utter indifference to all traditional respect for the Church, and its readiness to dispossess it of property, freedom of action, its control of education of the children – wasting it, “eating her flesh.”

True: At the close of the thousand years of Christ’s Mediatorial Kingdom, the devil is loosed from “the bottomless pit” for a little season. The twentieth chapter account indicates that Satan will then endeavor to incite revolution against the Kingdom authority. Here the parallels end, thank God! For, we are told that Satan will be unsuccessful, during his “little season” of freedom from the “bottomless pit” at the end of the thousand years of Christ’s reign, and will be destroyed in “the lake of fire” – the “second death.” While spokesmen for the counterfeit kingdom claim that we are now living in the “little season” of chapter 20:3, and that is the reason Papacy has been suffering reverses; that it will emerge from this condition and regain power and prestige – we understand that its end is near, that the “hour of His judgment” has come; and that after experiencing preliminary “plagues” which can be seen in part today, it “shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God that judgeth her.” (Chapter 18:8) See S.S. Vol.2, page 353. The end of the “scarlet colored beast” is also indicated in the seventeenth chapter. Evidently after destroying the counterfeit system, as God’s instrument of judgment, (Verses 16, 17) it comes into conflict with “the Lamb,” and the Lamb overcomes it – for He is “King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and those who are with him are called, and chosen and faithful.” (Rev. 17:14). Seemingly the destruction of the non-Christian civil power will take place after all the saints – “the called, and chosen and faithful” – are with their Lord in the Kingdom.

VI.

JEZEBEL A TYPE OF THE FALSE CHURCH SYSTEM

Another evidently divinely intended picture of the destruction of the false church, Papacy, is found in the history of Jezebel. In Rev. 2:20 the unfaithful church system, guilty of Spiritual “fornication,” is evidently referred to as “that woman, Jezebel.” Let us briefly review the history of

that notorious character as given us in the Books of Kings. Jezebel was the daughter of a heathen king, the king of Tyre, whom Ahab the king of the ten-tribe Kingdom of Israel married and made his queen. She was a worshipper of Baal, protected the priests of Baal, persecuted Elijah the prophet of God and type of the true church. After the death of Ahab, when Jezebel was a widow, she still lived apparently in queenly state at Jezreel. She was no longer the queen, but was related to both the king of Judah and the king of Israel. The king of Israel was evidently friendly to her and permitted her to live much as she had while Ahab was alive and she was the queen.

In accordance with divine instructions, Jehu was anointed to be king of Israel. He slew both of the kings that were related to Jezebel, succeeded the king of Israel, and went down to Jezreel where Jezebel lived. In anticipation of his coming Jezebel adorned herself, and when Jehu rode into the city she looked out of a window and reminded him of one, Zimri, who had slain his master Elah, an earlier king of Israel, proclaimed himself king, was rejected by the people, and in his despair committed suicide. (1 Kings 16:9-20) Evidently the intent of her remarks was to warn Jehu against doing her any injury. Jehu, however, was unimpressed either by her efforts to make herself attractive to him or her covert threat. He looked up at the window of the palace and asked, Who is on my side? Two or three of the servants looked out, and by Jehu's direction they seized Jezebel and threw her down to her death and Jehu "trod her under foot." (2 Kings 9:30-33).

This record of Jezebel's life and death furnishes a striking picture of the false church – antitypical Jezebel. The similarities, so far as their activities during the period of power are concerned, are apparent. But let us consider particularly the latter part of the life of Jezebel and her death. Papacy was given power to "act" for 1260 years, ending, we believe, about 1799. The 1000-years of Papacy's counterfeit kingdom also ended at that time. The Papacy's condition since then would seem to correspond to the condition of Jezebel from the time she became a widow to the time when a violent change took place in the character and disposition of the civil powers toward her. Let us note again that after Jezebel became a widow she still lived in apparently regal state, and the civil power in the person of the king of Israel, was related and doubtless friendly to her. The change came when Jehu, with divine authority indicated in God's instructions to Elijah to anoint him king of Israel, slew the kings that were friendly to Jezebel, and himself ruled in Israel, where Jezebel lived. Papacy's recent reverses are due to precisely the same kind of a change in the civil rulers of Europe. From 1799 to very recent times, while she had lost much of her power, she was still revered by the ruling authorities of Europe, and they were friendly to her. But in much of Europe such is not the case today; and that is so because friendly civil powers have been forcibly eliminated and their place taken by non-Christian civil powers which care not at all for Papacy's blandishments and fear not her warnings and threats. Note the similarity between the statement of Jehu that his destruction of Jezebel was in fulfillment of God's Word by the prophet Elisha, and the statement in Revelation 17:17: "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfill his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the (scarlet-colored) beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled." – in the destruction of the anti-typical Jezebel.

In closing this discussion of Jezebel, we notice another interesting point. We have called to mind the fact that the false church has been notable for her false, fraudulent claims – "great swelling words" intended to exalt her position and power in the estimation of men. In the eighteenth chapter we are given a picture of her final experiences and destruction. Of her it is written at that time: ...for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Realizing the

consistent falsity of her claims, we are prepared to see that at this juncture she is now a widow and no longer a queen, just as her type Jezebel was a widow and an ex-queen after Ahab’s death. But as Jezebel continued for a time to live as a queen under the friendly civil power (the king of Israel) to which she was related, so the false church system has continued to appear as if she were not a widow but were still “a queen,” even though her status radically changed, and her authority and power have greatly decreased since 1799. Note that it is because the harlot continues to make these false claims of preeminence, queenly power, thus resisting the humbling experiences already received, that her (final) “plagues come in one day.” And these final plagues are not said to be the loss of her husband, but “death, and mourning, and famine.” These experiences, resulting in complete destruction, we are told in chapter 17, will be at the hands of the “scarlet-colored beast” and its ten horns or divisions of power – the new, unfriendly civil powers which have arisen in Europe, with violence eliminated the civil powers friendly to Papacy, and succeeded to their position and authority – just as Jehu seized the throne of Israel, put to death the kings friendly to Jezebel and thereafter destroyed her.

VII.

“THE BOTTOMLESS PIT” – ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS

We have observed in Note No. V. that the words “bottomless pit” occur in only four passages in Revelation, namely, chapters 9, 11, 17 and 20. Also that there are but two objects which are indicated as cast into the bottomless pit – the devil, as stated in chapter 20; and the “scarlet colored beast” in chapter 17, where it is stated that it ascended “out of the bottomless pit.” The latter we have (in harmony with Brother Russell’s interpretation) identified with the “red dragon” of chapter 12; and, we understand that it went into the bottomless pit (oblivion, so far as activity in the religious realm was concerned) when Papacy took its place in the nominal, ecclesiastical “heaven.” Brother Russell interpreted the red dragon of chapter 12 to be the Pagan Roman Empire, which stood in the way of the development of the Papal power until it was “taken out of the way.” He has also interpreted the term “dragon” to mean the civil power, as used in chapters 13:11 and 16:13. Pagan Rome prior to the introduction of the Christian religion was not only the civil power which ruled Europe and part of Asia, but it also exercised control in the religion of the Empire, the emperor being designated “Pontifex Maximus” – or Chief Priest. A new condition developed in the Empire and its successor states after the development of Papacy: the civil and religious functions were separated; Papacy exercised the superior or “heavenly” power and authority, and the civil power became merely a civil power, its place not “any more in heaven” but on “the earth.” (Chapter 12:8, 13.) Thenceforward until the “red dragon” – “scarlet-colored beast” ascends out of the bottomless pit, it is represented as merely a civil power ruling under the domination of the Papacy – or to use the imagery of chapter 17, supporting and being ruled over by the harlot system.

Now let us briefly consider the other two passages in Revelation where reference is made to the bottomless pit. We will consider chapter 11:7 first. Here is introduced the testimony of God’s Two Witnesses (the Old and New Testaments) given in sackcloth (of dead languages) during Papacy’s long reign, ending about 1799. At the end of that period this passage states that “the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them and kill

them.” It goes on to say that their dead bodies were exposed in the street of the great city, spiritually called Sodom and Egypt; that afterward they were restored to life and ascended into heaven. Brother Russell has explained this peculiar language as describing the attitude toward the Scriptures in France at the time of the French Revolution. See S.S. Vol. 4, page 537; S.S. Vol. 3, pages 52-54. The Papacy had kept these Two Witnesses in the sackcloth of dead languages and as they were about to be released from the control of Papacy, the pagan, agnostic, materialistic teachings of Voltaire and others of that period, in revulsion at the great imposition which had been practiced upon men by the kings and clergy in the name of Christianity for centuries past, sought to end all confidence in the Bible as well as in its false representatives. For a time they were successful, but the devotion of “they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations ... would not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.” Evidently this reference is to faithful believers who at that time persevered in their loyalty to the Scriptures in the face of this new Paganistic, materialistic attitude as they had previously in the face of the proscription of the Bible for the common people by the Papacy. This new opposition to the Two Witnesses – symbolically “killing” them – was, we notice, the first movement of the civil power – “the beast that (later) ascendeth out of the bottomless pit” – back into independent activity with respect to religious matters.

The remaining passage which we are to consider is Revelation 9:1, 2. Notice that here it is said that the angel has “the key of the bottomless pit.” Evidently the time had arrived when the bottomless pit was to be opened – the oblivion was about to end into which the Pagan power was cast when it ceased to be active in the control of religion and turned that function over to the rising Papal power. From other Scriptures which we will not now take time to examine it appears that the beast itself did not fully come up out of the bottomless pit at the time of the French Revolution; but the seal preventing its activity in the heavens was there broken – the “key” of the bottomless pit was given to the angel and the bottomless pit was unlocked. Now let us notice in the following verses that which proceeded from the bottomless pit was the “smoke as of a great furnace.” The smoke was so great that the sun (light) and the air (the light emanating from sources close to the earth) were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. In the third verse we are told that out of this smoke came locusts upon the earth, and that it was given unto them to hurt only those men which had not the seal of God in their foreheads. In the symbols of Revelation we are told of some who are marked in their foreheads with the seal of the living God; and also of another class who carry the mark of the beast and its image. Evidently the power of these symbolic locusts – which proceeded out of the smoke (confusion) that in turn proceeded from the bottomless pit when it was opened by the angel with the key – was directed only against the men which had not the seal of God; and hence, by implication, the ones that did have the mark of the beast or its image. How true it is that the Agnostic writings which began to be widely circulated about the time of the French Revolution have, since that time, caused torment and misery to the exponents of false religion, exposing their hypocrisies and deceptions. We believe that this passage in chapter 9 met its fulfillment about the time of the French Revolution, which was also the end of the time in which the Papacy was permitted to be active in blaspheming and misrepresenting God and the true church. (Chapter 13) It was there that the forces began to operate which ultimately will completely destroy the false Christian systems.

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VIII.

THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

The “Battle of Armageddon,” as a phrase, occurs but once in the Bible (Rev. 16:14, 16), and this only by combining words from these two verses. It represents the conflict in the end of the Gospel age between the false systems, civil and religious, and our Lord, who, as the representative of Jehovah, is engaged in overcoming and destroying all elements which would hinder the incoming Kingdom of Christ and its work of reconciling mankind to God during the 1000 years of His reign. In studying Revelation it becomes apparent that the plan and structure of the book are somewhat similar to those of historical writers, and writers of motion-picture dramas. Some sections of Revelation present a running account of action and events; other sections detailed “close-up” views of principal characters and events. Illustrations of the former are found in the letters to the seven churches, the events narrated under the seven seals, the seven trumpets, the harvest work in chapter 14, etc. – as we have noticed foregoing. Another of these running accounts is given in chapter 16, where the progressive character of the judgments of God upon symbolic Babylon, Christendom, is shown. Illustrations of the detail pictures are found in chapters 11, 12, 13, relating to the events of the Gospel age prior to the harvest; and in chapters 15, 17, 18 and 19 respecting the work of the end-period.

The section of chapter 16 in which the expression “Armageddon” occurs is evidently intended to refer students of the Lord’s Word back to the overthrow of ancient Babylon by the Persian general Darius. (Daniel 5:31) Note Brother Russell’s article on the latter (R-2498) and his reference to chapter 16 of Revelation. In verse 12 we are told that the sixth vial was poured out “upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared” – typical, we understand, of Christ and his church. Looking back to this divinely ordered type, we see that the rulers of Babylon were engaged in an idolatrous feast on the night in which Darius, the general of Cyrus, having turned aside the waters of the Euphrates, entered under the gates over the river bed, took control of the city and killed the king, Belshazzar. In this feast (Daniel, chapter 5) they were using the sacred vessels of the Temple, which had been taken from Jerusalem and brought to Babylon. Probably they were engaged in lewd dancing as well, and, as a result, were without their garments. A portion of a man’s hand appeared and wrote upon the wall of the banquet hall the famous words, “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin.” These words were interpreted by Daniel to mean the immediate doom of Babylon and thereafter that same night the soldiers of Cyrus arrived to execute these judgments. We can readily imagine the dismay and shame of these men and women when the soldiers appeared and saw their condition. We mention this because of the reference to nakedness and shame in connection with the antitype of those who were engaged in this drunken feast. (Rev. 16:15)

Following the pouring out of the contents of the sixth golden vial, the Revelator saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of “the dragon” (civil power), and out of the mouth of “the beast” (the Papacy), and out of the mouth of the false prophet, another church-state system. (See No. XIII.) In verse 14 we are told that these unclean spirits were the spirits (or words, influence, doctrines) of demons working miracles (signs), which go forth unto the kings of the earth to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Quite evidently the thought is that these messages emanating from the three main divisions of “Babylon” are intended to incite the kings of the earth to hold on to and defend their possessions and powers, and to resist the changes which, with the great increase of

light and knowledge on every subject and the resulting discontent, they instinctively realize are about to take place. Brother Russell suggested as the substance of these evil doctrines the claimed “divine right” of the kings and clergy; and, before his passing beyond the veil in 1916, he recognized that the Battle of Armageddon had already begun. The “battle” has merely occupied a longer period of time than Brother Russell originally understood the prophecies to indicate.

Note also the similarity in the statement of verse 15, and Darius’ secret coming into the city of literal Babylon preparatory to the overthrow of its government. In verse 15 it is evidently the Lord who draws attention to this correspondence, saying: “Behold, I (too) come as a thief (just as Darius did).” And then he makes a most significant statement with respect to conditions he would find among his professing people: “Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments” – not engaging in the antitypical idolatrous feast of nominal Christendom, in which false doctrines and hypocritical profession have principal parts; and in which they also have misused and misapplied the “golden vessels” of divine revelation, the Bible and its teachings – “lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” As we have suggested above, those engaged in the feast of the rulers of ancient Babylon probably were without appropriate clothing on that night in which it was taken, and became a type of those who, in the presence of the Lord have lost faith in the Ransom; who are not “in the secret place” (Psa. 91), and have no protection because allied with institutions which have misrepresented him and are now being overthrown. Note a similar use of the term “naked” as the condition of those who were engaged in idol-worship and hence out from under the protection of God, in the case of Israel worshipping the golden calf when Moses was in Mt. Sinai receiving the Law; and also the condition of the Laodicean church. (Exodus 32:25; Rev. 3:17. Also note 2 Chron. 28:19; Isa. 47:3.)

The final gathering to the Battle of Armageddon is accomplished by the present Lord. While rulers of symbolic Babylon have endeavored to stir up opposition to the great changes now due in preparation for the Lord’s Kingdom, as indicated in the preceding verses, we are told in verse 16 that the Lord will, instead, “gather them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.” The meaning of this word is “the mount of destruction,” a most appropriate designation for the complete overthrow of Satan’s Empire with all its deceptions. Thank God for the knowledge that the revolutionary conflicts now in progress in the earth are a part of the necessary preparation for Messiah’s reign; that the fire which is destroying the old “earth (*Kosmos*) and the things therein,” is the “fire of God’s jealousy”; that it is because He desires man to worship only the true God that he is permitting him to come to his final extremity; and that when that point is reached – then he will “turn to the people a pure language,” they will forsake their idols and, thereafter, with one consent worship the true God! (2 Peter 3:10; Nahum 1:9; Zeph. 3:8, 9.)

THE SEVENTH VIAL – THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE

Going now to chapter 16, verses 19 and 20, we suggest a few related thoughts on the Battle of Armageddon. Here it is stated that “the great city was divided into three parts.” The setting is in connection with the great earthquake which occurred after the seventh vial was poured out, and in this “earthquake-period” we understand we are now living – the greatest world-revolution ever known, which precedes the establishment of Christ’s Kingdom. The “great city” we believe represents symbolic Babylon – civil and religious. The division into three parts seems to indicate three phases in the destruction of this “present evil world,” and we believe these three phases are indicated in the latter part of verse 19, and verse 20, as follows:

(1) “The cities (governments) of the nations fell.” The governments of many of the nations of Europe (which appears to be the geographical setting of this prophecy) have fallen since 1914; and today ignore or are unfavorable or opposed to the interests of the Papacy. Let us be careful to note the underlying trend of events since 1914, and especially in recent years. In this period the Papacy has suffered great losses in wealth and prestige and it seems safe to say that today no nation supports it in Europe – with the possible exception of Spain. It is thus already a “widow.”

(2) The second consecutive phase of the destruction of “the great city” is apparently recorded in the words, “And Great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.” Note also chapters 17:5, and 18:1-8. This judgment, to result ultimately in her utter destruction, has already begun, as noted in the preceding paragraph. And we recall no text that seems to indicate that God’s judgments upon Babylon, “her plagues” (Rev. 18:8) once begun, will be interrupted or cease until she has been utterly consumed. There are still heard the “great swelling words” of Papacy but these, we are given reason to anticipate, will continue even after the Judgment is in progress. (Daniel 7:11-26)

Here it may be appropriate to note that the destruction of spurious systems of religion mean the weakening and disappearance of confidence in theories, or ideas, or doctrines which their advocates previously espoused because of ignorance or material advantage. All religious organizations are the result or product of accepted theories or ideas – they are held together by these ideas. And hence the destruction of a spurious religious system simply means that more light – more truth – has become available, accepted and acted upon. Note that the imagery of Revelation and St. Paul and Isaiah all alike emphasize the same destructive effect of truth on systems which are built upon and held together by false ideas. Water is generally recognized as a symbol of truth. Note its use in Isa. 28:17 and in Rev. 16:21. There it is hail – a hard destructive weapon, but still only water! And in the imagery which St. Paul uses in 2 Thess. 2:3-8, the false system of religion resulting from the great “falling away” is “consumed with the spirit of His (Christ’s) mouth” – at his Second Presence. Light – truth – knowledge, is the Lord’s great and effective weapon for the destruction of Satan’s empire; just as darkness and deception are Satan’s trusted weapons and means of maintaining his usurped control in the minds and affairs of men. (2 Cor. 4:4; John 8:44)

(3) The third phase of the great symbolic earthquake seems to be described in verse 20 of chapter 16: “And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.” This seems to describe the ultimate collapse of all civil governments included in Satan’s empire. In this final phase it is no longer merely “the cities of the nations” falling; but now “every island fled away” (Brother Russell interprets this symbol to mean more democratic forms of government), “and the mountains (kingdoms) were not found.” In this final phase of Armageddon all rule and authority of imperfect men must give place to the universal rule of Christ’s Kingdom. It seems that it will be at this juncture that the Lord will speak to a world in confusion and disorder: “Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” (Psa. 46 and 82)

IX.

A SPECIAL MESSENGER IN THE HARVEST PERIOD

In chapters 17:1 to 19:10, and in 21:9 to 22:9 respectively, two exceedingly important subjects are discussed. In chapters 15 and 16 seven angels are seen receiving golden vials filled with the wrath of God, and pouring them out in accordance with instructions they received. Brother Russell

understood that these angels represented the Lord's people in the Harvest period. They have declared ("poured out") the judgments contained in God's Word ("the seven golden vials") on the various elements of Satan's empire. And we are witnesses to this declaration of God's judgments during the Harvest period.

In chapter 17:1 "one (member) of the seven angels (class, or company) which had the seven vials" invited John (evidently representative of the Lord's people) and conducted him into "the wilderness." There, in this symbolic wilderness, in the section from 17:1 to 19:9 this angel gave John two detail-views of the false Christian system and God's judgment upon it, resulting in its complete destruction: one in chapter 17 and the other in chapter 18. John was so impressed with these visions that he was about to "worship" the angel who, we repeat, is one of the company represented by the seven angels having the vials of God's wrath. John was restrained however by the angel himself.

In chapter 21:10, one of the seven angels (one of the company represented by the seven angels) carries John away "in spirit" to "a great and high mountain" from which he sees the true church – the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, the great City, the holy Jerusalem – the glory of her exalted position with her Bridegroom in the Millennial Kingdom. Moreover, this angel was given a reed – a golden (divine) reed with which he "measured the city" – doubtless indicating his insight into and his ability to describe to John (representative of the church in the Harvest period) the character requirements as well as the glory of the exalted Bride class, and the glorious work of Restitution. Again John was so impressed that he fell down to worship, and again he was restrained by the angel. This messenger, however, acknowledged that he also was one of the John class; a "fellow-servant, of thy brethren the prophets and of them which keep the sayings of this book"; quite evidently one of the saints. He also told his fellow-servants and brethren, represented by John, that he was not the one responsible for these visions, but had received them from the Head of the church; that the "testimony of Jesus is the spirit of this prophecy."

Now let us ask ourselves some questions: In the Harvest period, in which we have lived, who was used of the Lord to clarify these two great divisions of truth for us? – to identify and describe the two churches, the false and the true? – and to bring to our attention the important collateral truths these sections of Revelation contain: the judgments upon Babylon coincident with the presence of our Lord (18:1-6); the glorification of the church and the restitution work; the high standard of character required of overcomers? We believe there is but one "fellow-servant" whom we can recognize as having done the very work described; only one whom the John class has been tempted to appreciate so highly as to give more honor than due. And, as indicated in this prophecy, this one has himself restrained the brethren, claiming to be but a fellow-servant and merely communicating a message of which the Lord was the author. It is well worthy of note, however, that the John class, as pictured in this section of Revelation, do not under-value the message given by this representative; they do not need to be exhorted to proper respect for this "angel." So much to the contrary was John's attitude that he was about to worship the angel had not the angel himself rejected the homage and told him that he was but the Lord's servant in giving the messages that had so thrilled John: the understanding of the false system and its destruction; the glory of the true Church, her association with the Lord in the Kingdom; and the high standard of character which the Bride class must attain. The one whom we feel sure is referred to in this prophecy, with whom we have come in contact in our own lifetime, and through whom we have received the understanding of these messages, consistently declared that he was but a servant; that this great flood of light was from the Lord, and due at this time because we are living in his presence. It seems apparent that this section of Revelation is coincident and harmonious with the well-known passage, Matthew 24:44-47.

Among the writer’s appreciated memories of association and correspondence with one who was friend, teacher, pastor, as well as a famous preacher and writer, and an indefatigable servant of the Lord, the truth and the brethren, is the characteristic formula he used in signing his letters to the brethren. Strangely, shall we say? – No, appropriately it is reminiscent of the angel’s statement to John. His habitual subscription was, “Your brother and fellow-servant, C. T. Russell.”

X.

THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE OF OUR LORD

The central and revolutionary conviction of the Harvest period has been that our Lord had returned as he promised (John 14:3), had called the sleeping members of his Body from the grave, and was himself conducting the end-of-the-Age work of completing the development of the saints remaining in the flesh, effecting their “change in the twinkling of an eye,” one-by-one, as each one’s course is finished. It has been recognized too, that our Lord returned for the purpose of overthrowing Satan’s empire and “on the ruins of these (human, imperfect) kingdoms” establishing his rule in all the earth. (1 Thess. 4:15-17; Dan. 7:9, 13, 14, 27)

One of the most apt and impressive illustrations of this, our Lord’s invisible presence in this dual role, is found in chapter 14:14. Here One “like unto the Son of Man” – a title used by our Lord himself – is seen “seated upon a white cloud.” The illustrations used in Revelation employ items related to human experience – for example, beasts, thrones, kings, etc. And so we find in this illustration: one “seated” upon a cloud must be above it. Incidentally, a cloud viewed from above with the sun shining upon it always appears white. This imagery clearly indicates that upon our Lord’s return his presence could not be discerned by the natural eye – he would be invisible to men. This is well illustrated in our common experience when, on a cloudy day we frequently hear the engines of a plane flying above the low-hanging clouds – very near, present – but invisible.

The dual role of our Master is also illustrated in these verses. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he returns not in a dual role but as King, the divine appointee (Psa. 2:6); and that his first work is the Harvest, gathering the fruit of the Gospel age, the 144,000 who stand with the Lamb on Mt. Zion. (Ch.14:1) This sequence, the harvest of saints as his first work, is indicated by the “sharp sickle” in his hand, and his use of that until the harvest of the earth – all of those “bought from the earth” (v.3) has been accomplished. Thereafter the work proceeds of gathering the fruit of the false “vine” (the spurious church) and casting it into the “great winepress of the wrath of God.” The gathering of the fruit of the false vine is not said to be the work of the One seated upon the white cloud. But later (19:15), in his role as King overcoming his enemies, our Lord is pictured as “treading the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” This sequence is also illustrated in chapter 7:1-4, where we see the 144,000 “sealed” first, and then the “four winds” loosed.

XI.

THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE – TYPICAL AND ANTITYPICAL

The Temple erected by Solomon has been commonly recognized as a picture of the true Temple, the Christ. The stones of which the typical temple was constructed were completely shaped in the quarry so that when assembled they fitted into place without the “sound of hammer.” This has been to the saints an illustration of the fact that their experiences were under divine supervision and would, if heartily submitted to, completely prepare them as “living stones” for the Temple of which Jesus is the great Living Stone, the Cap-stone. One of the most remarkable facts about the building of the typical temple is that it was dedicated one month before completion. This is evident from a comparison of 1 Kings 6:38 with 8:2, and was commented upon by Brother Russell in 1915 as follows: “Strange to say, it was dedicated about a month before it was completely finished. Doubtless this contained some important typical lesson, which we may some day more fully understand.” (R-5713) While Brother Russell did not refer to this matter again before he left us, it seems that following up the suggestion that this is an important detail we can clearly see the parallel in the end-period of the Gospel age; that the events described in the dedication ceremony have been duplicated in the spiritual counterpart of Solomon’s temple during the Harvest period. This may be seen by a comparison of the accounts in 1 Kings chapter 8, and 2 Chronicles chapters 5 and 6 – with Revelation chapter 15.

Note some of the correspondence: The typical temple was being dedicated as a meeting place between the Israelites (including proselytes – 2 Chr. 6:32, 33) and Jehovah. The true Temple is to be a meeting place between God and all who worship him in the Times of Restitution. At the dedication, however, the typical temple was filled with a cloud of smoke representative of Jehovah, so dense that none of the priests could enter and begin the ministrations for which it had been erected. So we are distinctly told in chapter 15:8 is the case with the true Temple. In the latter the explanation is given that the smoke represents a delay in putting the temple to its intended use until the “Seven Vials of God’s wrath” (its final manifestation for the destruction of Satan’s empire) have been “fulfilled.” That is, the Kingdom work of restitution cannot begin until the great time of trouble has completed its work.

Solomon, when he saw that the temple he had come to dedicate was filled with a supernatural smoke, instead of being discouraged because the priests could not enter and begin their ministry, recognized in this phenomenon the evidence that God had accepted the temple; saying, “The LORD hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness ”; and with joy turned and blessed the assembled Israelites. And just so the Lord’s people who are engaged in singing “the song of Moses ... and the Lamb” are not discouraged by the present trouble, nor the assurance that a period of still greater darkness and distress is about to be present in the world as the result of God’s judgments represented in the contents of the seven vials. On the contrary they recognize that this is also an evidence that God has accepted the true Temple, though it cannot begin the work of reconciliation until the time of trouble is completed.

Another thing we notice in the account of the dedication of Solomon’s temple is that the golden pot of Manna which did not corrupt, and Aaron’s staff that “budded” – both placed there during the wilderness journey – were no longer in the Ark: “There was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb ...” (2 Chr. 5:10) The golden pot of manna which did not corrupt

no doubt represented immortality; and the staff of Aaron that “budded” indicated the house of Aaron typical of the authority to be exercised as Kings and Priests. Both of these features of God’s plan will cease with the close of the Gospel age – they are peculiar to the call of the church. The purpose of God represented by the contents of the ark will thenceforth be the development of human sons in whose hearts and minds the law of God, the law of Love, will be engraved during the Messianic reign of Christ and His Church.

Notice how this idea, definitely stated in the account of the placing of the ark in the typical temple, is implied also in Revelation. In chapter 15, verse 5 we read: “And after that I looked and behold the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.” The “sanctuary” or Most Holy is opened, and it is seen to contain the “testimony” – no other items are mentioned. But in Rev. 2:17, we are told that the “overcomers” shall eat of the “hidden” manna – evidently that which was represented by the non-corruptible manna placed in the ark by Moses during the wilderness journey. And as to Aaron’s staff that budded and thus indicated God’s appointment of Moses and Aaron for a dual service – priest and lawgiver – it is stated of the “greater than Moses” and the One of whom Aaron also was a type, and his Bride – “They shall be Kings and Priests, and shall reign with Christ a thousand years.” Inasmuch as the work of the Gospel Age is nearly, but not quite, finished when the Harvest takes place, and will be completely finished when the Harvest is completed, it seems consistent that in Revelation 15, when the “tabernacle of the testimony in heaven” is opened that its contents – representing the purpose of God – should be only the Law, to be made effective by The New Covenant. (Jer. 31:31-34).

It will be seen then, that we are suggesting that the month which intervened between the dedication of Solomon’s temple and its completion corresponds to the Harvest period of the Gospel age. In this period the Lord’s people have seen deeply into God’s purposes; have been “singing” exactly the song recorded in Revelation, chapter 15; and have been “pouring out” the contents of the “seven golden vials.” The “pouring out” of these vials is not to be confused with the vials of God’s wrath being “fulfilled” (verse 8) which would obviously follow, but in which the Lord’s people would have no active part. The difference between these “vials” (golden vials, God’s Word, the Bible prophecies) being “poured out” and being “fulfilled” (Rev. 15:8) is exactly the same, as we understand these expressions, as the work of Jeremiah in declaring the judgments upon Israel; and their later fulfillment for which as active agents God used nations who were the enemies of Israel. Note carefully in Jeremiah, chapter 1, that while the Prophet felt quite unequal to his task, the Lord told him that the words he was to speak against Israel were God’s words and that he had no responsibility for their fulfillment. Then God explained to Jeremiah that He would use other means entirely to execute the judgments Jeremiah was to declare, namely, “I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north ... against all the cities of Judah.” (Jer. 1:15) How well this agrees with other statements of the Lord’s Word: “He spake and it was accomplished”; “the word that I speak shall not return unto me void ... but shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” (Psa. 33:9; Isa. 55:11)

Another point of interest in connection with the dedication of Solomon’s temple is that prior to the dedication ceremony and the filling of the temple with a supernatural smoke indicative of the presence of Jehovah, and acceptance of the temple as the place where he would “place His name,” the Ark was brought up from its previous resting place and installed in the Most Holy of the Temple. While the ark was being carried about in the journeyings of the Israelites, definite instructions had been given that the “staves” by which it was carried by the Levites were never to be “drawn out,” or

removed from the rings affixed to the four corners of the ark. (Ex. 25:12-16) But now when it is placed in the temple – no doubt as an indication of its permanent resting place – the staves are “drawn out.” This would seem to indicate some very important event at the beginning of the Harvest of the Gospel age; and we suggest that it may represent the resurrection of the sleeping saints – the antitypical Ark now in its permanent abode – Christ and His Church in glory of the divine nature and with authority to accomplish all of God’s benevolent designs for the blessing of all the families of the earth. (Col. 1:20) This would be before the Temple class is complete just as in Solomon’s temple the ark was placed in the Most Holy one month before the temple was complete, and before it could begin its services for the blessing of Israel – a type of the world.

Restored Israel is to be the “pilot” nation; an illustration of Restitution processes which will cause the “nations that are round about,” “many nations,” “all nations” – to seek an extension of the Messianic rule to their disturbed, distressed and dying populations. (Ezek. 36:36; Isa. 2:3; Micah 4:2,3; Zech. 8:23) The placing of the ark in the Most Holy of the typical temple also preceded the filling of the temple with smoke. The “smoke” being interpreted in Rev. 15 as coincident with “the seven last plagues,” it follows that the antitype of the ark’s being so placed (which we have suggested may well represent the resurrection of the major portion of the Church at the beginning of the Harvest period) would precede the Great Time of Trouble. The climax of this will, we understand, be delayed until the last of the 144,000 have been sealed, perfected, and entered into the glory of the First Resurrection. (Rev. 7:1-4) This is exactly the order of these events presented in Brother Russell’s works and generally held by Bible Students today. If this understanding be correct, the remaining saints while still in the flesh will not see the development of world events to their crisis; and their main interest meanwhile will be in the completion of the “sealing” in their own and their brethren’s foreheads – coincident with the gradual deterioration of world affairs. This is the thought presented also by St. Peter and evidently particularly applicable to our day. (2 Peter 3:11, 12)

In the dedication of the typical temple, after the ark had been taken into the Most Holy by the priests, they came out into the court and were joined by the Levites who were appointed to serve as singers in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple services. The counterpart of this in the dedication of the true Temple – during the Harvest period if our understanding be correct – is recorded in the first four verses of Revelation 15, and evidently coincident with the pouring out of the contents of the Seven Golden Vials of God’s wrath. Here those who had gotten the victory over the false systems of religion: the beast, the image, the mark and the number of his name, stand by what appears to John to be a “sea of glass mingled with fire.” In the typical dedication as we have noted above the priests and Levites were in the court when they sang their song of praise. In that court was a laver of enormous size, approximately fifteen feet in diameter containing 3000 baths or approximately 27,000 gallons, at which the priests washed, and which was called a “sea.” This “sea” was placed in the southeast section of the court, and when the priests and Levites were singing we are told that they gathered at the “east end of the altar” – evidently in close proximity to the “sea.” This may be the basis for the statement in Revelation that the singers of “the song of Moses and the Lamb” are standing on, or near, the “sea of glass (pure, clear water would be in appearance as glass) mingled with fire.”

The imagery associated with the singing of this song in Revelation 15 represents the “pouring out” of God’s wrath by seven angels who also “came out of the temple.” These “seven angels” Brother Russell thought represented the Lord’s people during the Harvest of the Gospel age, and that the singers of the song of Moses and the Lamb were the same group; merely represented under

different symbols to represent two phases of the Harvest message – praise to God for his beneficent Plan, and declaring the judgments of God upon various elements of Satan’s world-government and organizations.

It seems quite in order to compare this song in Revelation, chapter 15 with the one mentioned in chapter 14:3, both of which are sung by the Lord’s people in the end-period of the Gospel age. In chapter 15 the singers we understand to be the antitype of the singers who participated in the hymn of praise at the dedication of the typical temple. The latter we have seen included other Levites as well as the priests. But the song of chapter 14, none but the overcomers could learn it! In considering the song in chapter 14 we are told that it was sung in the presence of the four Living Creatures and the 24 Elders. The symbolic “four living creatures” are generally thought to be representative of the four divine attributes – Wisdom, Justice, Love and Power. The “24 Elders” seem to represent the personified testimony of the inspired writers of the Old Testament. These two groups are usually mentioned in company in Revelation, but not always. Usually too, when they are mentioned together they are bowing down either in respectful worship, or in confirmation of the truth or appropriateness of the associated messages or events. An exception is found in the account in chapter five, when the Lamb “recently slain, as it were” is given the scroll by Jehovah – representative of His plan relative to the human race from that time onward. The Lamb now had the ability and authority to unloose the “seven seals” and execute the plan. The first reaction after the Lamb takes the scroll is that the Four Living Creatures and the 24 Elders “fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors (incense), which are the prayers of saints.” The following two verses evidently describe the work of the Gospel Age, the selection of the company who are shown in chapter 14 with the Lamb on Mt. Zion and singing the song which none but the Overcomers, the 144,000, could learn.

The song of the Living Creatures and Elders in chapter five, therefore, seems to be the setting in advance of the “score” for the song which the saints, approximately 2000 years later (chapter 14), sing in the presence of these Living Creatures and Elders. Note the words of the song in chapter five, verses 9 and 10: “And they sung a new song (never anything like it before!), saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God with thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people and nation; and thou didst make them to our God a Royalty and a Priesthood, and they shall reign on the earth.” (*Diaglott*) The description in chapter 14 carries the same thought: they were “bought from the earth”; they are a spiritual class; they are associated with the Lamb on Mt. Zion, symbolic of the spiritual phase of the Kingdom. We may observe that the song of chapter 15 participated in by saints and their associates (Priests and Levites), is a rejoicing in God’s character and plan which is known to many, including the “Great Company” and other antitypical Levites. It is doubtless intended that we take the typical temple singers as a type of these singers; and we observe that the singers in the typical arrangement included representatives of all four families of Levi – the family of Aaron, the priests, but also of the families of Merari, Kohath and Gershom. Brother Russell believed that these other families of Levites were representative of the Great Company, the Ancient Worthies, and the Restitution class. The special song known only by the Overcomers, however, in chapter 14, will have all these elements of rejoicing in the Father’s character and Plan; but also – and known only by them – a personal testimony to the grace of God by which they have triumphed in the tests and disciplines they have experienced and through which has been developed the noble characters described in the context; and which has made of them “the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb,” “without fault before the throne of God”!

Continuing with our consideration of chapter 15, the singers are said to sing “the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just, and true are thy ways, thou King of nations. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; because thy righteous acts were made manifest.” This we recognize to be the substance of the “present truth” with respect to the Divine Plan. Now reverting to the song sung by priests and Levites at the dedication of Solomon’s temple, we read (2 Chr. 5:13) “It came even to pass, as the trumpeters (the priests) and singers as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD, saying For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever ...” This is a snatch of the proclamation of God’s character made by himself on the mount in response to the request of Moses that Jehovah would show him his “glory.” This proclamation – the most wonderful and important in all the annals of history – is happily called by *Rotherham* “the refrain of the Bible”; and he prints in special type in his translation of the Old Testament portions of that proclamation found in the Books of Moses and the other Old Testament writers – some fifty or more places. This may be the thought in Revelation 15, in its description of the song as that “of Moses, the servant of God,” as well as “the song of the Lamb.” The similarity of these two songs, the occasion, the attendant circumstances seem to mark out the one, the dedication of Solomon’s temple, as the over-all type of the Harvest period and the activities of the Lord’s people in the flesh during that period; at the same time, coincident with, the resurrection of the sleeping saints; and the gradual completion of the true temple to be accomplished during the antitype of the final month required to complete Solomon’s temple after it was dedicated.

Two more points of interest in this connection: The “seven angels” who “pour out” the contents of the seven “golden vials” in which are “filled up” (or the final expression of) the wrath of God against the institutions of “this present evil world” – are said to have come “out of the temple.” Brother Russell interpreted the seven angels to represent the Lord’s people during the Harvest period, and at one time thought the temple from which they emerged represented the nominal churches. This is the view contained in the comments in the Bible Students edition of the Bible. But it is of importance to note that evidently Brother Russell later changed his interpretation of this verse, and for 25 years or so before his death in his semi-monthly journal under the caption “To Us the Scriptures Clearly Teach,” he referred this passage to the true temple, saying: “... and the temple shall be filled with his glory, and be the meeting place between God and men throughout the Millennium. – Rev. 15:5-8.” This later interpretation we have adopted and it agrees with the whole conception of this chapter as describing the antitype of the dedication of the typical temple.

Another thought, of great importance to us in the interpretation of many prophecies, is clearly intimated in this chapter and the preceding one. That is, the progressive nature of the fulfillment of prophecy. Here the 144,000 are “seen” on Mt. Zion, and yet the Harvest work is described in the following verses of chapter 14. A reasonable view seems to be that at the very beginning of the Harvest the clear light on God’s plan revealed his purpose respecting the 144,000 as associated with Jesus Christ in the spiritual phase of the Kingdom; and an understanding of the Prophecies and Chronology indicated that this gathering of the elect company was at hand and in progress. The same view of other prophecies relating to the Lord’s presence and the development of various phases of the program he comes to accomplish, dispels confusion regarding their meaning and fulfillment. A point of time in eternity evidently may well be fifty years or more; and would be as brief, comparatively, as a day or month or year in a human life-span.

XII.

THINGS THAT MUST SHORTLY COME TO PASS – CHAPTER 19

In chapters 17 and 18 we have seen that there are two pictures, in two sets of symbols, of the destruction of Babylon, the false system of nominal Christianity that has “reigned over the kings of the earth.” We have elsewhere suggested that the “five months” of Rev. 9:4, 5 represents symbolically 150 years; and that the “torment” began about the time of the French Revolution upon those who were the advocates and supporters of the apostate system (Papacy) – a torment which did not destroy but afflicted that system through promulgation of facts revealing the falsity of its claims to speak for and represent Christ. By the end of that symbolic period of five months the foretold distress had merged into the final experiences of that false system, which are now progressing toward its destruction. This is to be brought about by the “scarlet-colored beast” and its “ten horns” making her (1) “desolate” and (2) “naked”; (3) “eating her flesh” and finally (4) “burning her with fire.” God has decreed her destruction and those instrumentalities are – unknowingly – accomplishing his will. (Rev. 17:17).

Contemporaneous with the development of these forces and the beginning of their destructive work upon Babylon are the final experiences of the saints – the completion of the last members of the Body of Christ. They are a diminishing number in the flesh as the Harvest progresses to its completion. Enough of the foretold preliminary age-end condition and experiences of both the church-nominal and “Christendom” are now visible to confirm the conviction that we are living near the end of “the present evil world,” made up of its symbolic “heavens” and “earth.” We are also seeing the regathering of Israel to Palestine where, after its conversion, it will be the nucleus of Christ’s Mediatorial Kingdom. These developments, recorded day-by-day in newspapers and magazine articles, are encouraging to the remaining brethren of Christ who are holding fast to their hope of spiritual life. They are also encouraging to Bible Students who understand the Divine Plan but who do not share the heavenly hope; who feel that they have not been called to run for the prize of the High Calling, but who, nevertheless, profess that they are consecrated to do God’s will as they apprehend it, believe the Kingdom is near, and are looking forward to a happy and useful part in its earthly phase. Doubtless there are many such today.

Attention has already been called to the introductory words in Rev. 1:1 to the effect that the purpose of the Revelation was (and is) “to show to His (God’s) servants the things which must shortly come to pass.” We have also noted how this purpose has been realized, and its significance to us who have lived in the Harvest or end-period of the Gospel age. We have seen that the appropriate portions of Revelation illuminated the end-period and gave direction and confidence to Brother Russell in the Harvest work in which he and his fellow-servants have been engaged during the past 80 years. In recent years a substantial change in the effects of the Harvest message has been apparent. There are still some who respond by professing consecration and associating themselves with the ecclesias and their studies and other activities. But the proportion of these seems much smaller than in the earlier years of the Harvest period. Notwithstanding this scarcity of deep interest and profession of a spiritual hope there are many thousands who in recent years have been interested to the extent of desiring literature explaining the Bible teaching regarding the Kingdom and the fundamental facts of the Divine Plan. But as the years go by there seems to be less and less personal participation in the spiritual hope of the Church. If, as the foregoing suggests, we are indeed progressing from one phase of the age-end period into another phase would it not be reasonable to expect that we would find in Revelation the same kind of guidance as saints have found in the past

– an intimation as to developments in the near future – possibly the sequence of events to follow the completion and glorification of the last members of the Bride class? If so, would it not be reasonable to expect this forward view in chapter 19? – immediately following the destruction of Babylon portrayed in chapters 17 and 18.

THE VOICE OF MUCH PEOPLE IN HEAVEN

In the first four verses of chapter 19 we hear the song of triumph of a great multitude “in heaven.” Evidently this is a spiritual class. They are rejoicing that the destruction of Babylon has taken place. Many of this large company may have passed through all or part of the troubles which consumed Babylon. When this voice is heard all that is left of Babylon, “the great harlot,” is her memory; “the smoke of her torment” – indicating her complete destruction. It seems clear that the expression “and after these things” (verse 1) is not only a statement that this vision followed that of chapter 18, but also a clear intimation that the song of rejoicing is voiced after that event has been fully accomplished – the destruction of the “harlot” system. This necessarily places the time-setting of the first four verses of chapter 19 some time in the future – how far in the future we do not know. The accounts in chapters 17 and 18 indicate that the destruction of the harlot system will extend over a period of time: “her plagues come in one day” (Rev. 18:7, 8); the beast and its ten horns make her “desolate,” “naked,” “eat her flesh” and, finally “burn her with fire” – which is also the symbol used for her destruction in chapter 18.

Since this “great voice of much people” is heard from their location “in heaven” (Rev. 19:1) we think it is the voice of a spiritual company, but not the Bride, which is mentioned in verse seven. It seems reasonable to believe this is the song of triumph of the “Great Company” developed in this Gospel age who, in chapter 7, are especially related to great tribulation, which has been the necessary discipline to awaken them to the fact that their “robes” had become soiled. We are told in that connection that they were able to cleanse them – to “wash them in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 7:14) and thus be prepared to be the servants of God in his Temple – before his throne. In verse 4 of chapter 19 the “Four Living Creatures” and the “Twenty-four Elders” which we have noted elsewhere (No. XI.), joined in the acclaim, worshipping “God that sat on the throne” because of the final destruction of the great harlot system. The introduction of the symbolic “Four Living Creatures” and the “Twenty-four Elders” and their remarks and actions seem to act as an intended line of separation between this portion of chapter 19 and the verses which follow. This separation is of great importance to an interpretation of the following verses (5 to 8) and seems definitely to place the events symbolized in verses 5 to 8 as subsequent to (1) the destruction of Babylon, and (2) the completion – in the same period of great tribulation – of the “Great Company.”

THE SERVANTS OF GOD – SMALL AND GREAT

Proceeding, this next section (Rev. 19:5-8) opens with the statement that “a voice came out of the throne” – the symbolic throne of God. (Chapter 4:1-5) Doubtless this means that when the time for this portion of God’s plan arrives it will be announced in a wide-spread proclamation – possibly similar and at least as clear and arresting as the proclamation of the Harvest Message during the past 80 years. (Rev. 11:15) These “voices in heaven” during the last 80 years, have announced the Harvest or end-period of the Gospel age and the events peculiar to this time. Comparing chapter 11:18 with chapter 19:5 we note that they both speak of those “servants who fear God,” “the small and the great.” In Rev. 11:18, these servants, “the small and great,” are one of the groups who are

to be rewarded during the sounding of the Seventh Trumpet and are last of the groups mentioned there. In Rev. 19:5 evidently the time for this group to be dealt with has arrived. If we understand the sequence, the fulfillment of this section is some time in the near future – how near we cannot say. But their response in verses 6-8 indicates considerable understanding of the Divine Plan summarized in the brief statement that this group, “servants of God both small and great,” rejoice that (1) the Kingdom has been established – “the Lord God omnipotent reigneth”; and (2) that “the marriage of the Lamb came and His wife prepared herself.” (*Diaglott*) They know too, that the Bride is composed of noble characters – she is “arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright ... the righteous acts (*Diaglott*) of the saints.” (Note S.S. Vol. I, page 86, par. 2)

We note again these two events which have then taken place and are the inspiration of the praise and rejoicing of this great company of servants of God whose voice is as the sound of “many waters” – peoples, nations, etc. (Note Rev. 17:15) Both events indicate that the Millennial Kingdom is established. The first is that “the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.” The second point is that the marriage of the Lamb has taken place. In Rev. 21:9-11 the Lamb’s wife is more fully described as “the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven,” and in subsequent verses is portrayed the glory of that Kingdom of God in the hands of the Lamb and his Bride. How appropriate the rejoicing of the subjects of that Kingdom (or possibly the earthly representatives of it) that the Lord God Almighty reigneth (19:6); and connecting with it the fact that the Bride has made herself ready.” His Bride is then, under her Head, the new government of earth – “the completeness of him who is fulfilling all things” (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18-20) – the helpmate in his great 1000-year task of human restoration to harmony with the Creator.

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB

Continuing our study, in chapter 19, verse 9, the angel who had conducted John through the symbolic destruction of Babylon and other coincident events (beginning this “tour” at chapter 17:1) now remarks, “Blessed are those who have been invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” An Oriental marriage-feast is an occasion subsequent to the wedding. At the wedding the bridesmaids would be present, and also at the marriage-feast. But in addition, a general invitation was issued to many more to share in the marriage feast, which frequently continued for as much as seven or fourteen days. The extent of such hospitality and the large number in attendance is indicated in our Lord’s first miracle – turning the water into wine. There the prepared supply nearing exhaustion, the Lord miraculously supplemented it by providing wine to “fill to the brim” six large pots, each one containing “two or three measures.” (John 2:6 – *Diaglott*) In the *Septuagint* this word “measures” is translated “baths”; and the bath we understand contained about seven, or nine, gallons. If this translation is correct it would mean that additional wine for this wedding feast of an inconspicuous couple in Galilee was provided by our Lord to the extent of about 100 gallons or more. Certainly the guests enjoying this marriage feast must have constituted a very large company for this extensive provision to be made for them.

But we are now considering the guests – “they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And what should we anticipate as to the extent of the hospitality at the marriage-feast of the Son of God and his Bride? How great a concourse of “relatives, friends and neighbors” we would naturally expect to share in it! Our suggestion is that the “Marriage Supper of the Lamb” corresponds to the feast prepared for “all nations” (Isa. 25) and which we understand to symbolize the Restitution blessings for all the families of earth. A similar invitation to unlimited hospitality is found in Rev. 22:17

where “the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, ... and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” It will be seen then that if our interpretation of the angel’s words in verse 9 is correct, he is surveying the blessings which will accrue to all the families of the earth who are to be blessed by the Millennial reign of the Lamb and his Bride. And his remark in this verse closes the circle: the other “called out” groups have been previously mentioned; and now the angel declares all the remainder of mankind for whom Christ died are to be offered a share in “the Kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world” for the sheep of the Millennial Age. (Matt. 25:34) And the symbolic feast prepared for “all people” in Isaiah 25 includes the transcendent blessings to be administered by Christ and his Bride for all who will receive them, as described in almost identical language in Rev. 21:1-6.

THE FINAL CONFLICT –

The “tour” which we have noted began at chapter 17:1 is completed at chapter 19:10. The disposition of John (the John class – the church in the Harvest period) to unduly reverence the angel who had showed him such wonderful things, and the angel’s rejection of such reverence (in Vs. 10) is discussed in note No. IX. Verse 11 begins another vision of “The Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty” or “The Battle of Armageddon”; or, probably more accurately, the climax and conclusion of that battle. We have heretofore expressed our conviction that the climax of this final conflict will be delayed until all the members of the Lord’s Body are with him in glory. In verse 14 of chapter 19 they seem to be represented in the “armies in heaven” following their Leader. But as we have seen in the symbol of the seven golden vials of God’s wrath (No. XI), the saints still in the flesh during the Harvest period are represented as seeing and declaring in advance the conflict between our Lord and the false religious systems with their armies, including “the kings of the earth,” and declaring the final defeat and destruction of all opposers of our Lord’s “iron rule.” In chapter 19 too, an advance view before the climax is reached, is indicated. In verse 17 “an angel standing in the sun” proclaims a great carnage and in symbolic language calls to all the carrion birds of heaven to come to a feast which God is preparing.

Evidently when this announcement (similar to “pouring out” of the seven vials of God’s wrath) is made, the destruction of the opposers has not yet taken place; for following it the actual destruction of the false systems, “the beast” and the “false prophet,” in the symbolic “lake of fire” is recorded; and also the “slaying” of all of their followers by the “sword which proceeded out of the mouth” of that great King and Righteous Warrior – our Lord Jesus. The angel standing in the sun (light) seems to be the same or similar imagery to the vision of chapter 12 where the woman representing the early church is seen “clothed with the sun”; and to have a similar connotation of instructed followers of the Lord, enlightened by the glorious Gospel message of divine grace. Our suggestion is that the “cry” of this angel of 19:17, 18 represents a declaration of the meaning of the events at that time, but prior to the final conflict, by those who are enlightened and ready to make the proclamation. For similar symbolic expressions see Ezek. 39:4, 18, 20 and Rev. 17:16. Here we are told in symbolic language that the false systems, the “beast” and the “false prophet,” will be utterly destroyed – cast into the symbolic “lake of fire.” But “the remnant” – the people misled into opposition to the Lamb and those who are “with Him” – are to be “slain with the sword which proceeded out of His mouth.” That is a glorious way to be “slain” – by the Word of God! Evidently the picture in the closing verse of chapter 19 is of the conversion of the people, the “armies” which have (doubtless for the most part ignorantly) “made war” with the Lamb. We are reminded of a similar expression by the Prophet David in Psalm 45:5: “Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the

king’s enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.” Thank God for a victory that will mean, not bondage, but “the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21) – life, peace, joy, harmony with God for those who are thus “slain.”



XIII.

THE “BEASTS” OF REVELATION

In this study we exclude the “four beasts” first mentioned in chapter four. That is a poor translation in our common version and should be rendered “four living ones” (*Diaglott*) or “four living creatures” (*Rotherham*). They evidently symbolize the four primary elements of God’s character – as their actions and testimony indicate in chapter four and where they appear subsequently in the visions of Revelation. The “beasts” we are to study in this article evidently refer to civil and religious governments organized by imperfect human beings deceived by the great Adversary of God, Satan, and of which he is the instigator and architect. They are collectively spoken of as “the wild-beasts of the earth” (Chapter 6:8) and their truly beastly and hateful character is indicated in the context. These “beasts of the earth” in chapter 6:8 correspond to the “secular arm” to which in the Dark Ages the counterfeit church system, the nominal spiritual ruling power, turned over the victims of their inquisitorial torture for execution of the sentence they pronounced.

THE GREAT RED DRAGON

The first of these beasts of Revelation to be particularly mentioned is the “great red dragon” of chapter 12. It has been generally accepted that this represents the civil power of Rome and which was also the religious power for a time. “Pagan” in the early Christian era referred to village dwellers, and had a similar meaning to “heathen” which indicated “a dweller on the heath.” It later acquired a meaning of anti-Christian attitude, because in the spread of Christian teaching the early missionaries frequented and taught first in the cities; and thus a distinction developed between these city dwellers who became Christians and the rural population living in villages (Latin *pagani*), who had not yet been evangelized.

Originally the government represented by the “great red dragon” was both secular and religious as is indicated in chapter 12:8, where it is stated that as the result of its conflict with aspiring and rapidly developing nominal Christianity, represented by the “man-child,” its “place was not found any more in heaven.” It – the “great red dragon” – seems to represent thereafter merely the Civil Power of Rome and the nations of Europe which grew out of the Roman Empire. We understand the “scarlet-colored beast” of chapter 17 to be a similar characterization of Civil power after the Papal “head” or “king,” has been succeeded by the sixth and later by the seventh “head” or “king.” Under the sixth and seventh forms of government, the Papacy, represented by the “harlot,” was still “seated upon” or supported by the civil governments; and the latter measurably influenced or controlled by the “mother of harlots.” (Chapter 17:1-10)

THE LEOPARD BEAST

In chapter 13 we have another symbolic beast representing the Papacy – a beast which is like a leopard in its appearance – spotted. This beast Brother Russell has dealt with quite extensively. It arises from the sea and receives from “the great red dragon” (representing Roman civil power) “his

power, and his seat, and great authority.” Thus the “spotted beast” became the supreme ruler, and the civil power subordinate to it. This is one of the three symbolic illustrations of Papal authority in Europe centering in Rome. One we have just noted in chapter 17 – the “mother of harlots” seated upon the “scarlet-colored beast,” which corresponds to the “great red dragon.” The third we have also noted in this study – the conflict in chapter 12 resulting in the elevation of “the man-child” to the superior position, “heaven,” and the “great red dragon” cast down “unto the earth.” And even in that subordinate position the dragon had “but a short time” until the supremacy of the Papacy was still further riveted upon the civil power in Europe under Pepin and Charlemagne – continuing for 1000 years until the French Revolution. During this 1000-year period the civil power’s subordination to the Papal is represented as the civil power being confined in “the bottomless pit,” or “the abyss” – relative oblivion from which it begins to emerge about 1799. (Rev. 11:7 and 17:8)

As noted elsewhere in these articles this 1000-year period (approximately 800 to 1800 A.D.) seems to be Satan’s counterfeit of the 1000-year reign of Christ, in which the real “Devil and Satan” is to be bound and cast into “the bottomless pit.” In the imagery of chapter 12 note that when the “great dragon” is subordinated to “the man-child” the dragon is “called (by Papacy) the Devil and Satan,” and the claim is made that “Now is come ... the Kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ.” (Rev. 12:9, 10) Here the victory of the counterfeit of Christ’s millennial kingdom is hailed (by the spurious system itself) in language closely and significantly similar to the familiar statements of chapter 20:1-6 with respect to the establishment of the true Kingdom of God in the hands of Christ and his Church. Let us note carefully these two accounts: the one of the counterfeit, the other of the true. In connection with the foregoing note the remarks in Scripture Studies, VOL II, pages 288, last par.; 353, last par.; and 354.

THE TWO-HORNED BEAST – THE FALSE PROPHET – IMAGE OF THE BEAST

In chapter 13:11 another beast is seen coming up “out of the earth.” He appeared comparatively far less dangerous than the terrifying “leopard beast.” “He had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.” Brother Russell’s thought was that the term “dragon” signified civil power. He interpreted the arising of the two-horned beast from the earth as a development in the Reformation period – the establishment of a church-state system in Great Britain. Its subsequent course, recorded in the latter part of chapter 13, seems to confirm this view. The fact that the separation of English religionists from the domination of Papacy was, in its beginning, a revolt of the civil power (represented in King Henry VIII) fits well with the description that “he spake as a dragon.” But merely independence of Rome was not all that this two-horned beast craved. The civil power’s defiance of Papacy “deceived them that dwell on the earth.” This term “them that dwell on the earth” is used in several places and evidently refers to nominally religious persons. And these nominally religious persons in Great Britain were exhorted to form an “image to the beast” – the “leopard beast.” It is worthy of careful note that subsequently the term “the beast” seems invariably to refer to the leopard beast – the Papacy.

In exhorting the nominally religious people of England to “make an image to the beast” this two-horned beast became “the false prophet,” or false teacher. This is confirmed in subsequent references to the false prophet, notably chapter 19:20, where its original defiance of “the beast” is referred to doubtless to enable the student to identify the “false prophet” and connect it with chapter 13:13-18. It is logical to believe that the “two-horned beast” which originally spoke as a civil power, a “dragon,” desired to have the religious people cooperate in the organization of a church-state system which would be like (an “image” of) the Papal system. And this was shortly done in England.

As indicated in chapter 13, the two-horned beast, or the false prophet, gave “life” to this “image” and enabled it as the “Established Church” – of which the British Sovereign is still the head and which is still supported by state taxes – to speak (authoritatively) and to persecute and circumscribe the efforts of other religious persons, who were the “Dissenters” and “Nonconformists” of English history. The “false prophet,” which we have seen is identical with the “two-horned beast,” became so completely the sponsor of “the image of the beast” that evidently the two designations are subsequently used interchangeably. The two terms are never used together, but always either one or the other.

THE NUMBER “666”

We have elsewhere touched on the recorded actions of “the image” in the latter part of chapter 13. We close this study with consideration of the mysterious number “666.” We have identified the “image of the beast – false prophet” with the church-state system of Great Britain; which remains today unimpaired and will only cease to function when it and “the beast” are destroyed in the final conflict with the Lord and his armies which will end this present evil world and prepare for the “new heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” But now let us consider the number “666.” Our understanding is that the number “6” is symbolic of imperfect human views and efforts. No matter how apparently worthy, these all come short of “7” – which is accepted as a symbol of divine views and works. In discussing quite a different subject, Brother Russell expressed the same thought regarding the symbolic use of the number six, as follows: “The number six is a symbol for imperfection and evil conditions, as seven is the symbol for completeness and perfection.” (R-3164) The repetition of the number six (literally “six hundred, three score, six”) we understand is similar to our Lord’s reply to Peter that he should forgive a repentant brother not merely seven times – but “seventy times seven.” This emphasizes in the latter case infinity, completeness; and in the use of “6” in chapter 13:18 it indicates the widely prevalent error of denominations of the Christian religion, large and small, which have patterned their order and organization with reliance upon human wisdom; reliance upon imperfect man (“6”) for direction in doctrine and practice. The latter has become a snare even among nominal Bible Students; and its avoidance is the responsibility of each one of us; we must individually gain the “victory over ... the number (or value) of his name,” which is “666.”

That “the image of the beast,” the “mark” in head and hand, and “the number of his name” were present and tests of the faith and loyalty of the Lord’s people in the Harvest period, is apparent in chapter 14:9. In the history of the origin of this symbolic “image” in chapter 13, it seems clear that these deceitful and presumptuous requirements were established after it had received “life” from the two-horned beast. Hence our conclusion that this was a detail of history – the “image” had already received “life” – before the Harvest period opened. And accordingly in chapter 15:1-4 the ones who are prepared to sing “the Song of Moses and the Lamb” have “gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name.” These only, who have “come out” of Babylon chapter 14:8-10 and 18:4), have the “harps of God” and are enabled to sing this anthem of praise and recount the glory of the Divine Character and Plan. All such have necessarily become free from human head-ship before they could fully appreciate and join in declaring God’s “works” and “ways” of which they have learned in the Divine Plan of the ages.

The use of a separate symbolic beast to represent the most notable anti-Christian system has been of great value in making clear its true character. For even though this system might be interpreted to be one of the “heads” or “horns” or “kings” of other related prophecies, yet these

would give us no details of the origin, development and activities of the Papacy, which are unique and occupy such prominence in the crucial testing of the Lord's people during the Gospel age. Another important detail accomplished in the use of the symbolic "leopard beast" to represent the Papacy is that it makes clear its continued existence and activity even after its period of supremacy ended in the governments of Europe; and that it is still able thereafter to take an active part in the closing scenes of "this present evil world." Note Rev. 16:13 and 19:19. In passing from the subject it may be well to note that there are still present and apparent today, three aspects of the counterfeit system of the true Church. It is represented (1) as "the beast" (the little horn of Daniel 7:11) which still utters "great words"; (2) as the "mother of harlots" still endeavoring, but with diminishing success, to have illicit relations with the civil governments; (3) the "great city" – Babylon – now being gradually impoverished and from which even in these preliminary "plagues" many of her former servants and supporters stand aloof. In all three of these sets of symbols the final end of this false system, Papacy, is represented as being destroyed by "fire." (Chapters 17, 18 and 19:20.) And in the last reference the "false prophet" system suffers the same end. Additional thoughts on this subject will be found in these notes, and also in the following section of this one, to which it is a later addition.

"THE NUMBER OF A MAN ... 666" – ILLUSTRATED AGAIN

The permeating, infiltrating, subtle danger of bowing to or seeking human direction in our religious life instead of entire dependence upon the Lord and His Word, has again in our own day been most astonishingly demonstrated. Against this danger Brother Russell constantly warned, exhorting all to test what he wrote by the Word of God and to accept only that which in their conscientious opinion was fully supported by the Bible. Notwithstanding this sound teaching in a remarkably short time after Brother Russell passed beyond the veil in 1916, a large number of his fellow "Bible Students" submitted to the domination of his successor in control of the corporate business organization which Brother Russell had formed many years before as a convenience and "tool" to assist in the publishing and proclamation of the Divine Plan of the Ages and the providing of other services for the brethren. This domination for a time held a controlling influence over many brethren as the result of the wide-spread claim that the corporation was "the channel" to which to look for leadership and light, on God's Word. From that domination all of the independent "Bible Students" withdrew – either soon after or within a few years.

If we mentally divorce our personal relationship to it, and view the phenomenon objectively, we can but be astounded at the rapid decline of the high standards of Christian conduct Brother Russell had both taught and consistently practiced; and the acceptance by large numbers of his old associates, including most of the leaders – pilgrims, elders, etc. – of this domination by one imperfect man under the specious claim of "the Lord's organization," "the channel," etc. As we know the organization has continued to deteriorate and is today not unlike the Catholic Church in its rigid rule over its members. And it has also made rapid progress in substituting "new light" – new and human theories – for much of the Divine Plan of the ages revealed in the Bible. In this startling development of a sect which has departed so far from the truths and practices held to less than 44 years ago, is there a lesson which should be drawn and deeply impressed upon the Lord's people today? There can be no doubt that there is. And that lesson is that we as individual followers of our Master must be alert to see the first indication of a regard for human leadership which transcends our own conscientious study of the Lord's Word, and tends to abdicate that personal responsibility with respect either to doctrine, or our relations to our brethren in the ecclesia, or in the church as a whole, those whom God recognizes as his children and who are possessed of his Spirit.

Looking back 44 years we see that the mis-leaders then sought to use Brother Russell’s words to support their claims. Isolated statements, divorced from their context, in Brother Russell’s voluminous writings during a forty-year ministry – or in any person’s writings – can often be misleading and quite contrary to the views really held by the writer. If we believe Brother Russell the special servant of the Lord during the Harvest period we should be so familiar with his writings, and the spirit of them as a whole, that claims of his approval or sponsorship should be carefully tested; and especially where doctrine or our relationships in the church are involved. Only by constant alertness and holding to the Word of God for instruction and the basis of our decisions in our personal life and with respect to our relationship to other brethren, shall we continue to avoid even a faint “mark” of the symbolic “number of a man – 666.”

No doubt there have been other illustrations of this error during the period since Brother Russell left us – some small and affecting only a few. Those of the brethren familiar with the history of the “Bible Students” during the past 44 years will readily recall one other outstanding example. Its leader was also one of the pilgrims in Brother Russell’s time, and shortly after his passing from the earthly scene, put forth a claim of special authority as a teacher and leader of the Lord’s people. His disposition too was that of a dominant, self-confident personality. As in the larger illustration foregoing, so also in this other leader’s course, those who rejected his claims and leadership were subjected to the same treatment – withdrawal of cooperation and hindering (to the extent possible) the free exchange of spiritual services between the independents and those under the dominating influence of their leader. And here it seems we have an up-to-date illustration of the penalties upon a similar class of independent students of God’s Word and loyal to the Word of God, as described in Rev. 13:17. Both of these leaders have passed from the scene in death, but their organizations continue the promulgation of errors they taught and practiced; the one affecting a very large group, and the latter a small one.

Both our Lord and St. Paul warned against this great error. In his last intimate lesson-session with his disciples, Jesus “said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so ...” (Luke 22:24-27) Here he disapproves and warns against two errors: the effort to exercise a dominant influence over the brethren; and also the disposition to welcome such domination and call such “lords over God’s heritage” “benefactors” – or the equivalent in today’s language. The same warning is given by St. Paul in Col. 2:18,19 in language that well describes the erroneous course of both the one who attempts to dominate the Lord’s people, and the one who in “voluntary humility and worshipping the angels” – undue respect for leaders – are misled and brought into sectarian bondage.



XIV.

TABERNACLE TYPES INTERPRETED IN REVELATION

The Golden Altar of Incense
The Brazen Altar of Burnt Offering

Elsewhere we have noted confirmation that the Tabernacle and Temple sacrifices and ritual of ancient Israel were typical; and related to the experiences of “the Israel of God,” the “New Creation,” “the Christ”; of which all saints, “the 144,000” of Revelation, are members – “by one Spirit baptized into one Body.” (1 Cor. 12:12, 13) This correspondence has been especially noted in consideration of the dedication of the typical temple (No. XI) and now we note the same

regarding the two altars with which, and the sacrifices offered thereon we have become familiar in our study of “Tabernacle Shadows.”

THE GOLDEN ALTAR

In the summarized “preview” in Revelation, chapter five, we note in verses 6-10 that there would be provided through the sacrifice of “the Lamb” an imparted “incense” for “the prayers of saints.” In chapter 8:3-5 an angel is shown at “the Golden Altar which was before the throne” (of God) with “much incense that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints” – or, as in the margin, “add it to the prayers” of all the saints. This “angel” of chapter 8:1-3 we recognize as our Lord appearing in the presence of God “for us” and thus making “acceptable through Jesus Christ” the prayers, devotion, praise of his Body members. When this “angel” had thus sanctified or made acceptable in advance the sacrifice and the prayers of his followers during the Gospel age, he took “the censer filled with fire of the altar and cast it into the earth.” What astonishing and arresting imagery is used – the very same censer upon which Jesus had offered incense, sent down to earth! The golden censer was only used in the type for the carrying of fire from the altar of burnt offering in the Court into the Holy. There it was placed in the golden altar; upon the fire incense was sprinkled, and the sweet odor therefrom penetrated into the Most Holy – the typical presence of God. But here in Rev. 8:5 this golden censer, filled again with fire, is cast into the earth! What does it symbolize? Recalling the statements of St. Paul in 2 Cor. 2:15 and Eph. 5:2, we suggest that here is symbolically presented the assurance of the Great Master Interpreter of types that down here on the earth – amid the corruption and sordidness of this evil *kosmos* – the saints may offer – in the same divinely conceived and provided experiences as their Master – their incense, their prayers, devotion, praise; acceptable because of the “much incense” offered by that beloved Master to accompany their offerings. (Note 1 Peter 4:12, 13; 2:5 and John 18:11)

The offering of incense on the Golden Altar was directly related to an accompanying animal sacrifice on the Brazen Altar. And some of the blood (life poured out) of that sacrifice was carried into the Holy and applied to the horns of the Golden Altar. Owing to this close association of offerings on the two altars, we would expect that their relationship would be illustrated in Revelation, and we find this to be the case.

THE BRAZEN ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING

In Rev. 6:9-11 St. John records that when “the Lamb” had opened the fifth seal, “I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God and the testimony which they held.” This evidently refers to saints persecuted unto death prior to that time, and this brief narrative indicates that the judgment of retribution upon the class responsible for the crimes against them would be executed, but would be delayed “until their fellowservants and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” It is evident in this symbolic view that all of the saints are recognized as sacrificial victims. (See also Rev. 20:4) Their “souls,” seen under the altar, correspond to the “blood” of animal sacrifices poured out at the base of the Brazen Altar – both representing human life. (Note Lev. 4:18; 8:15; 9:9; 16:18, etc.) The symbolic cry of the souls under the altar for the judgment of God upon their persecutors is again symbolized and related to the typical altar of incense in Rev. 9:13 where St. John “heard a voice from the four horns of the Golden Altar which is before God” calling upon the angel of the Sixth Trumpet (which is the second “woe” trumpet) to effect the preliminary judgments then due. The final expression of God’s wrath upon this class of

persecutors is reserved until the Seventh Trumpet period, as indicated in Rev. 11:15-18, and the Seven Vials of Rev. 15:7. Note that these “woes” under the Fifth and Sixth Trumpets are directed against “those who dwell on the earth.” (*Diaglott*)

Several important observations are suggested in the foregoing. One is that a class of prosecutors is included in the group described as “those who dwell on the earth.” Saints too are elsewhere included in this group, and it is evidently analogous to the development of “wheat and tares,” growing together in the field (the world) until the Harvest period, “the end of the Age.” (Matt. 13:38-43) See Note V. for further discussion of this group, “they that dwell on the earth.” Another detail we note is that retributive justice is delayed, but in due time will be executed upon the same class living at a later time, thus revealing the principles of the divine government. These principles take into account the greater light of the subsequent generation, when the judgments are executed upon those who have condoned, or complimented the memory of those who committed crimes against the Lord’s saints. Their guilt is the same as members of their class who actually committed the crimes. Note our Lord’s words in Matt. 23:29-35, of the Scribes and Pharisees who at the time were plotting his death. (John 11:47, 53, 57)

Another observation of deep interest is that Jesus in his symbolic interpretation of Old Testament types in Revelation, focuses our attention, not on the minutia, but on the principal lesson, or the prophetic illustration they contain. This, the method of the Master Interpreter of types, seems worthy of our thoughtful consideration. It may suggest an advantageous change in class or personal studies. It may prompt the conclusion that too much time is being spent on small details which are not really further illuminating the substance or main thought, and that wisdom would lead to other departments or portions of the Word of God. Our Lord in Revelation chose the large, comprehensive types to illustrate his messages; and that seems also to have been the method of St. Paul. Illustrative of this in the latter’s writings is his reference to the antitypes of the Day of Atonement sacrifices in Hebrews 13:15, 16. There he quite evidently points to the three aspects of the sacrifices offered on that day, but draws only in general terms the relationship to the type, and emphasizes the practical effects in the lives of saints of their participation in the antitype: (1) “Let us go to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach ...” (2) “Let us offer to Him the sacrifice of praise continually...” (3) “To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

Our Lord’s use of major types may also suggest to us some helpful thoughts on the subject of “doctrines.” All teaching is doctrine. But in our own personal experience all the teachings of the New Testament have not been of equal importance to us. Brother Russell emphasized this distinction in numerous articles; for examples: “Doctrines More or Less Important” (R-5284); “The Epistle of Christ” (R-5967); and his V.D.M. Questions and the article accompanying them. (R-5982) The few fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures are supported by a great many “less important” teachings – types, texts, prophecies, parables, etc. There are so many of these supports for each of the major “planks” in our doctrinal platform, that the misplacement of one will not – by itself – affect the stability of one’s apprehension of the great fundamental truth; and that is the reason Brother Russell classified the teachings of the Scriptures as of more, or less, importance.

In this connection it is worthy of deep thought that St. Paul wrote to the church at Rome (chapter 14) in respect of differences among the brethren regarding the eating of meats and the observance of special days, that uniformity of conviction on these points was of far less importance

than maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace, and mutual respect for one another’s conscientious convictions on these details. “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind,” is St. Paul’s advice. This inspired advice would prompt to a less extreme, a more benevolent attitude than has sometimes been manifest in respect of the “less important” teachings of God’s Word. Let us make sure that mistaken human judgment and policy, or prejudice, do not interfere with free circulation of spiritual service among the brethren by those whom the Lord through his Word and Spirit has qualified and approved for such service. Some such have at times been disparaged not on doctrinal lines but because of their efforts to discourage over-emphasis on these secondary, or supporting doctrines – either pro or con – and to heal the breaches where they exist among consecrated believers in and advocates of the Divine Plan of the Ages.

All of experience in the present truth movement know that the controversies among “Bible Students” have been due to “attack” or “defense” of one or more of these “less important” teachings. The unfortunate result with some of those who reject Brother Russell’s treatment of one or more of these doctrines is that they have at the same time put aside his books and other writings – very much to their loss and disadvantage. This regrettable attitude is like a buyer rejecting a house – which is an outstanding value and just suited to his needs – solely because he thought one or two of the posts in the basement were not in the right places; that they ought to be over on the other side of the house. How unreasonable and short-sighted such a decision would be! And just so – how short-sighted it is to reject, or ignore, and be unfamiliar with the writings of one who in our time has been especially used of the Lord to illuminate for the church all of the major doctrines of the Bible, and also a long and impressive list of the supporting teachings of the Lord’s Word. In all of these matters discussed foregoing, which are of such great importance to saints, let us take the Lord and his teachings, actions and disposition as our pattern; and in them as well as all matters, prayerfully and conscientiously endeavor to “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.”

XV.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS:
WHAT WILL YOUR STUDY OF REVELATION DO FOR YOU?**

We have left for the last the most important consideration in our study of Revelation. That is, what effect will the study of Revelation have on you? – on me? We must never lose sight of the fact that this book contains a message from our Lord and Head especially for and to his members in the flesh; and, if we realize in our own hearts the effect intended by the Lord, doubtless it will be of momentous consequence to us.

If we recognize that we are now witnessing a mortal conflict between the two elements of Satan’s empire; that the Civil power in much of Europe, long subordinate to the Catholic Church, has now risen up and laid its hand upon the church and will brook no interference in the carrying out of the foretold re-establishment of a non-Christian regime; that it is even now “eating the flesh” of the harlot system; that the great hailstorm of chapter 16 is in progress; that truth on every subject (the hail) is uncovering the deceptions and hypocrisies on which the pseudo “Christendom” has been built; that, as a result, confidence of men in their accustomed leadership is being undermined; that

the weakness and selfishness of many in high positions are being discovered and proclaimed world-wide; that all of this is leading on to the collapse of confidence of men in their unregenerate fellowmen, and in the principle of selfishness, self-interest, which is the keystone of fallen human wisdom and conduct: – What effect will this knowledge have upon us?

If our study of Revelation confirms our understanding of the time in which we have lived, the Harvest of the Gospel age, and we see clearly that we are witnessing the closing experiences of the Church of Christ in the flesh; if it confirms the great importance of Brother Russell's work and its divinely ordered place in the instruction of the saints still in the flesh, so that we really become students of his writings; and if it confirms our Lord's invisible return, and shortly the completion of the gathering of his saints – What effect will this have upon us?

Surely God intends it to emphasize, to underscore all that we know and that continuing diligent and prayerful study of His Word will enable us to recognize as His will for the saints. And surely the realization of these things of such transcendent import will inspire his people to devotion and zeal for the Lord, his cause and his people; to ever more careful scrutiny as to the use of their time and talents; to concentration upon all the means of grace by which they are to be sanctified and “made ready” for their change. It will surely prompt them to study ever more earnestly in the brief space remaining, the records of Jesus' devotion, his dependence upon and unquestioning faith in his Father – and our Father; – his words, his disposition, his manner; and to do all of which we are capable to “Make our calling and election sure.” Realizing that the time in which this must be accomplished is short it will surely prompt us to expect and strive to be perfectly conformed in heart and mind, in character, to the Master's glorious likeness, and that in the near future. Such should be the effects of our study of Revelation. The prayer of the writer is that such will be the effect in his own heart and in the hearts of the brethren.