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GABRIEL-WORSHIP IN ITS RELATION TO THE APOCALYPSE.

by

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Being a thesis offered to the Department of Biblical
Greek of the University of Manitoba for the Degree
of Master of Arts.

University of Manitoba,

April, 1922.

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Caesar-worship in its relation to the Apocalypse.

I. The Two Kingdoms.

Whether the authorship of St. John is admitted or not, the fact that the Apocalypse is the product of a Hebrew mind is accepted by all critics. The writer evidently believed in a personal God, creator and sustainer of the universe, and in a personal power of evil. He could hold this belief without being open to the charge of Persian dualism; for if human wills can rebel against the One who created them and by whose power alone they energize, so, surely, could a spiritual being rebel against his creator and sustainer, and tempt mankind to accept his dominion. (1)

It seems reasonable to the writer, that any attempt to interpret the message of the Apocalypse must assume the truth of those ideas which are the ground of the whole work, and so in this thesis the belief in a personal power of evil is accepted.

The seer has clearly in mind two kingdoms, the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of Satan, and in order to understand Caesar-worship in its relation to the Apocalypse we must get a clear realization of the existence of these two Kingdoms, with the inevitable conflict between them - the true Kingdom of God, and the rebel Kingdom of Satan; for Caesar-worship is the culminating and crowning act of rebellion; it is the quintessence of sin. In the Apocalypse the wrath of God is revealed against this monstrous blasphemy.

(a) The Kingdom of Satan.

It is important that we should have a clear idea as to what was in all probability the belief of the writer of the Apocalypse as to the Kingdom of Satan and the Kingdom of God. We have little hesitation in saying that the seer believed that the Prince of Evil inveigled our first parents into disloyalty to their rightful Lord

and thus gained a foothold for his rule on earth. That Kingdom grew and developed to such an extent that Satan having shewn Jesus all the Kingdoms of the world and the glory of them was able to say, 'To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them, for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship before me, it shall be thine'. (1). A glimpse is here given of the majesty of Satan when it could be thought possible that Jesus Christ could even be tempted to worship him. And the author knew full well the Devil's malignant power, for the awful struggle between the two waged with ever increasing fury, cost nothing less than the life of the Son of God, and victory was snatched only from the grave, Satan was 'The Prince of this World'. (2) And that world was united under one supreme, visible head at the very time that Christ came to establish His Kingdom. The Kingdom of evil was not only in the heavenly places, (3) but organized in visible form on earth. 'The coincidence of the establishment of the Roman Empire with the rise of Christianity has always attracted the attention of modern historians' (4)

(b) The Kingdom of God.

We may be sure that St. John also believed that in spite of the apparent universal sway of Satan, God was never left entirely without witness. In the hearts of all there was the dim consciousness that they were citizens of a better country, and subjects of a nobler Lord. The Holy Spirit of God worked ceaselessly preparing the way for the establishment anew of the Kingdom of God upon earth. In the fulness of time Christ came, lived, died, rose again, established His Kingdom upon earth and returned to the Father.

- (1) Lk. 4v6 sq.
- (2) Jn. 12v31; 14v30; 16v11.
- (3) Eph 6v12
- (4) Epistott. Ep. St. John, p. 250.

The message of the Gospel was essentially the proclamation of a Kingdom, 'a Kingdom of Heaven', 'a Kingdom of God', 'a Kingdom of the Son of Man', The expression 'Kingdom' occurs/no less than one hundred and nineteen passages in the New Testament. (1) John the Baptist and our Lord himself preached 'Repent ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'. (2) Christ sent His disciples to preach the Kingdom of God. (3) The majority of His parables dealt with matters pertaining to the Kingdom. He spoke of those who should believe on Him as 'Sons of the Kingdom'. (4) As a King He died. During the forty days before the Ascension He spoke of 'the things pertaining to the Kingdom'. (5) Philip preached in Samaria 'the Gospel of the Kingdom of God'. (6) St. Paul, in Europe, taught that there was another King than Caesar, one Jesus, (7) and in summing up his work in Asia to the Ephesian elders, he claims that he went about among them preaching the Kingdom. (8) The final verse in the Acts reveals him preaching in Rome the 'Kingdom of God'. In the midst of Satan's Empire the Kingdom of God was established and from its inception suffered the onslaught of the powers of evil.

As we have remarked before at that same time that Christ inaugurated His Kingdom the Roman rule was established on an Imperial basis.

'All that was progressive in the old world was united under one supreme head, at the time when the new faith was revealed, which should bind the universe together in a sovereign unity. Peace, won, by arms, ushered in Him who revealed the peace of life in God. So it was that the only two powers which have claimed absolute dominion over mankind appeared together.' (9)

- (1) Edersheim, Vol I.p.270
 (2) Mt. 3v2;4v17.
 (3) Lk. 9v2
 (4) Mt. 13v38
 (5) Acts 1v3

- (6) Acts 8v12
 (7) Acts, 17v7
 (8) Acts 20v25
 (9) Westcott, Ep.St.Jn.p.250

II. The Conflict in History.

(a) Inevitability not at first realized.

In the previous chapter two Kingdoms are in view, which by their very nature must be in perpetual antagonism. The battleground of the opposing forces is the world, and the contestants, human beings organized in definite visible systems. Those who were, or whose immediate successors were, engaged in the struggle did not realize at first that the conflict was inevitable.

It seems certain that our Lord never adopted a hostile attitude towards the Roman rule, (1) and even in St. Paul's day the fact was not realized that two Empires were about to meet in mortal combat; the Kingdom of God, represented by the Church, and the world power represented by Rome. St. Paul writes of the revelation of the lawless one as delayed by some restraining force (2) - this was probably the reigning Roman Emperor. In another epistle he urges his readers to be loyal to the ruling power, (3) and he would have Christians pray for kings and all that are in high places. (4) St. Peter reinforces St. Paul's appeal for loyalty, (5) and St. Luke uses the title Sebastos (6) which he would certainly not have done, if the title had the same significance for him as it had for St. John later.

Nero opened hostilities in A.D. 64 initiating a policy of persecution which was not formally abandoned during the rest of the century. In July of that year a fire broke out on the southern side of the Palatine Hill which lasted for three or four days, and destroyed ten out of the fourteen wards of the city. It has been a common belief that the fire was kindled by the orders of Nero, who intended to rebuild the city with special reference to his own fame.

(1) Mk. 12v17
(2) 2 Thess. 2v3 sq.
(3) Rom. 13v1-7.

(2) 1 Tim. 2v1,2
(5) 1 Pet. 2v13.
(6) Acts, 25v21,25

On the excitement caused by the great disaster he sought to allay suspicion by charging the Christians with the deed. The persecution that followed was terrible in the extreme.

It is evident that Tacitus represents Nero as the real author of the outrage.(1) Suetonius says that the persecution took the form of a police measure but in the first instance it was simply a device for screening the Emperor's own infamy. (2)

In this first persecution Christians were punished ,not because they acknowledged the Name, but because of alleged serious offences connected with the Name. These offences were in the first place incendiarism, and secondly, hostility to civilized society, which implied the practice of magic and tampering with the established customs of society. But by the time of Pliny and Trajan it is assumed that Christianity is a crime in itself deserving of death. (3)

The horrors of the first persecution on the Roman Christians made such a profound impression on the Churches throughout the Empire that the fundamental antagonism between the two systems was not thought of. The persecution seemed to be a wanton, wholly uncalled for, attack upon an innocent community, by a brutal, whimsical tyrant; whereas it was inevitable that the new sect should be persecuted. Any clear-sighted Emperor, no matter how kindly his disposition, would be bound to take measures to suppress Christianity.

Even if matters had not been brought to a head by Nero, that the struggle was unavoidable would ultimately have been realized. The conflict for existence was inevitable.

- (1) Tac. Ann.15.44
- (2) Suet. Nero, 16
- (3) Ramsay, The Church in the Roman Empire
p.242 sq.

(b) Fundamental differences which made the conflict inevitable.

That the statement made in the closing sentence of the previous chapter is amply justified is clearly shewn by Dr. B.F. Westcott in his essay on 'The Two Empires: The Church and the World' .(1) In that essay, from which all the material in this chapter has been taken, he says, that ' Christianity was destined by its very nature not to save, but to destroy the Empire'.(2) Christians proclaimed a Kingdom of which Christ was King. The Romans proclaimed an Empire of which Caesar was the Emperor. Though the two Empires started together in the first century, they had nothing in common except their point of departure and their claim to universality.

'In principle, in mode of action, in sanctions, in scope, in history, they offer an absolute contrast. The Roman Empire was essentially based on positive law; it was maintained by force; it appealed to outward well-doing; it aimed at producing external co-operation or conformity. The Christian Empire was no less essentially based on faith; it was propagated and upheld by conviction; It lifted the thoughts and workings of men to that which was spiritual and eternal; It strove towards the manifold exhibitions of one common life. The history of the Roman Empire is from the first the history of a decline and fall, checked by many noble efforts and many wise counsels, but still inevitable. The history of the Christian Empire is from the first the history of a victorious progress, stayed and saddened by frequent faithlessness and self-seeking, but still certain and assured though never completed.' (3)

The conflict was inevitable because in the first place Christianity is universal. This characteristic places it at once in opposition to every form of polytheism, for that belief is distinctively national.

(1) Westcott, The Ep. of St. John. p. 250 sq.
 (2) ib. p. 250
 (3) ib. p. 253

The religious life of the Roman people could be summed up in the two maxims 'Sacra privata perpetuo manento' and 'Sacra majorum perire nefas'. They always regarded Victory as the gift of the national gods and disaster as the retribution for neglecting them.

'Those who introduce any strange opinion on the subject (of the divine power) visit at once with hatred and chastisement, not only for the sake of the gods-----but because such men by introducing strange divinities in place of the old persuade many men to adopt foreign laws, and from this cause conspiracies and combinations and societies are formed, which are by no means expedient for a monarchy. Do not tolerate then anyone who ~~disbelieves~~ disbelieves in the gods or practices superstitious arts'. (1)

Such views were not peculiar to the Roman people. Celsus writes 'Each nation observes its national rights whatever they may happen to be-----A universal religion is absolutely inconceivable. (2)

A Roman's idea of toleration, then, was the mutual recognition of partial claims. The Pantheon was its symbol and monument. The gods and religious rites of a conquered province were sanctioned for the protection of those who were already devoted to them, but no individual Roman could adopt the tolerated ritual. 'No one shall have gods for himself alone at his own pleasure, and men shall not worship in private new or foreign gods unless they be adopted by the state.' (3)

A definite penalty was attached to the crime of proselytising. 'If any one introduces new rites unknown in use or principle, if he be of a higher station he is banished; if of a lower he is put to death.'

(1) Dion Cass. 52.36.

(2) Celsus app. Orig. d. Cels 5.25.

(3) Cic. de Legg 29.

(4) Jul. Paul Sent. Rec 5.21 pr.2.

Even when under exceptional circumstances the worship of foreign deities was sanctioned by the State, a Roman was not released from his original obligations. It was no more possible for him to change his religion than to change his nationality. If he refused to worship the state deities he was guilty of treason.

While such views were everywhere prevalent, it was manifestly impossible for Christianity to be tolerated, for it claimed to be a universal religion. Christians were not content that Jesus Christ should be given a place in the Pantheon - for was not He Lord of all creation - and so they were necessarily in antagonism with the spirit of the Empire. (1)

Christianity was not only universal, it was also absolute, and so could admit of no compromise. The polytheist did not look upon the offices of worship as a necessary reflection of his own private beliefs. The state demanded the performance of certain religious duties and, if these were performed, was indifferent to the private opinion of the worshippers. A pagan saw 'the popular gods held up to mockery upon the stage, degraded in the works of poets, and ridiculed by philosophers'; he knew that the men who were guilty of these things rendered outward conformity to the State religion, but he was not offended at their inconsistency. Such an attitude of mind was impossible to the Christian, his religion was the expression of his soul.

The magistrates were utterly at a loss when faced with this phenomenon, they were unable to understand why the Christians refused official conformity. They saw no reason why a Christian should not drop a little incense on the fire, call Caesar Lord, and still retain allegiance to Christ. They simply required the performance of the outward act and were quite indifferent as to whether it expressed the inward conviction of the accused or not.

A kindly judge frequently urged Christians arraigned before him to conform: 'Have regard for thy gray hairs' or 'for thy tender youth' were common appeals made by men 'who failed to apprehend that the faith of a Christian like his own being was one.' 'What harm is it to say 'O Lord Caesar' and to sacrifice and be saved was the well-meant expostulation which was addressed to Polycarp on his way to trial. (1)

Such concessions were impossible to a Christian. He could not say he was anything else but, what he was, a Christian.

Christianity as we have seen was both universal and absolute. It was also aggressive. Christians not only refused to admit that they owed any respect to the old faiths but they considered that they were positively pernicious; they were to be attacked, not tolerated.

They believed that idolatry was the result of the malignant influences of evil spirits who strove to thwart the will of God. 'It is not men who persecute us of themselves,' Lactantius wrote, 'for they have no cause for anger against the innocent; but those stained and lost spirits, who know the truth and hate it, introduce themselves into their minds and lead them unwittingly to madness---- seeking either to diminish through suffering the faith of those who believe, or to remove them wholly from the earth. (2) The Christians felt that they were called upon to fight against actual powers of darkness, and it was this conviction which made the conflicts of the martyrs so intensely real.

Thus Pagan temples were to the believers in Jesus Christ the habitation of devils and they often expressed their loathing of them openly. 'A Christian argues,' says Celsus, 'Lo, I stand by the statue of Zeus or Apollo or whatever God it may be, and revile it and smite it and it takes no vengeance on me.' (3)

(1) Euseb. H. E. 4.15, 13. (2) Lactant. Instit. 5.22.
(3) Orig. c. Celsus 8.38.

Though the more moderate Christians condemned such conduct, there were not a few whose zeal outran their discretion and whose actions bitterly incensed their pagan neighbours.

Heathenism was so intertwined with the everyday routine of social and home life, that the believer had to be continually on his guard. Court proceedings, public ceremonies and the ordinary amusements all had idolatrous forms and observances in connection with them. Images of gods, which were to be found everywhere made it necessary for a Christian to be continually on his guard. Many of the common idioms of daily conversation were based on some heathen superstition and could not be used with freedom. Thus it was that in the ordinary conduct of social intercourse, and in the closer relationships of life, collisions between Christian conviction and heathen practice were necessarily more frequent and more perilous. A Christian could not but be brought frequently into direct opposition to the popular faith, however carefully he might avoid positions of danger, and however liberally he might interpret the law of charity.(1)

It can readily be seen from the facts stated that Christianity challenged persecution. It was universal and therefore refused to take a place along with the national religions. It was absolute and therefore positively refused to conform to the state worship. It was aggressive because it regarded other systems as inspired by demons, and therefore it was inevitable that it should clash with the Imperial power. These different characteristics all arise from one fundamental fact that Christianity is spiritual and not temporal. For the Christian the state was not supreme, he owed allegiance to a greater Sovereign than the Emperor. (2)

(1) Westcott ib. 266, 267.

(2) Westcott ib. pg. 267.

The early Christians not only incurred the wild and often unreasoning outbursts of hate, of an ignorant and superstitious rabble, but what was really ^{far} more terrible the settled, calculated, bitter hostility of thoughtful men, who realized that if the Empire was one and had one life, if the many deities of polytheism only exercised local and circumscribed authority, then the Emperor alone could offer to all his subjects a common object of worship. 'In him all that affected their outward well-being was visible gathered up. No member of the popular Pantheon presented a similar point of convergence for hope. If unity could be gained under polytheism it could exist only through an actual, temporal head.'

'In such a view of humanity the Christian found the complete antithesis to that which had been revealed to him. He held indeed most firmly the unity of humanity, but this was assured to him in the Incarnation. Unity resting on that which is outward seemed to him necessarily to be partial and worthless. He reached forward to another order for the resolution of all the discords of life. He could not acknowledge the Emperor the centre of that larger being which he had found in all its fulness in Christ. He could not invoke the Genius - the demon - the spiritual essence of power which stood forth as a rival of that to which he was devoted. He could not admit any of the prerogatives of absolute and irresponsible power in the person of one who represented the principles and authority of the visible order. Thus the opposition of Christianity and Imperialism was complete and irrevocable. The two empires when regarded in their principles, were seen to be utterly irreconcilable.(1)

(1) Westcott pg. 280, 281.

(c) A settled policy of repression.

Though the ultimate conflict between the Roman Empire and the Church was as we have seen inevitable, yet apparently, the first persecution did not arise owing to the fundamental antagonism between the two Empires. This, being the case the nature of the hostility towards Christians shown by Roman governors has often been misunderstood. In this chapter we shall endeavour to show that the persecutions arose from a fixed and settled policy of uncompromising hostility of the state towards the church.

The facts of the persecution of the early Christians are so well known, that we need only touch upon them here.

The persecution by Nero is one of the circumstances in our early history which is attested by the independent evidence of heathen writers. It has been supposed that Christianity had once before attracted the notice of the Imperial government, for it is inferred from a passage in Suetonius that disturbances among the Roman Jews on the subject of Christ had been the occasion of the edict by which Claudius banished them from Rome. (1)

But the persecution under Nero was more distinctly directed against the Christians, on whom the emperor affected to lay the guilt of having set fire to the city. Some were sewn up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to be torn by dogs; some were crucified; others were covered with a dress which had been smeared with pitch and then set on fire, so that the victims served as torches to illuminate the Emperor's gardens. Tacitus, in relating these atrocities, states that although the charge of incendiarism was disbelieved, the Christians were unpopular as followers of an unsocial superstition, but that the infliction of such tortures on them raised a general feeling of pity. (2) (3)

(1) Acts 18.2. Suet. Claud. 25. (2) Tac. Ann. 15.44.

(3) Robertson History of the Christian Church, Vol. 1 p.5.6.

The Neronian persecution was, however, something more than an isolated outbreak against Christians. Among a list of police regulations to ensure good order in Rome Suetonius mentions the punishment of Christians, (1) a class of persons characterized by a novel and mischievous superstition,² and the fair and natural interpretation of his words is, that he considered Nero to have maintained a steady prosecution of a mischievous class of persons, in virtue of his duty to maintain peace and order in the city, and to have intended that this prosecution should be permanent. Such a steady prosecution implies a permanent settled policy; and if the chapter of Suetonius had been the only extant passage of a pagan writer referring to the subject, this view would in all probability have been universally accepted. But this interpretation is also in perfect harmony with the statements of Pliny⁽²⁾

¹ Suetonius gives merely a brief statement of the permanent administrative principle into which Nero's action ultimately resolved itself. Tacitus prefixes to his account of the same result, a description of the origin and gradual development of Nero's action; and the picture which he draws is so impressive, and so powerful as to concentrate attention, and withdraw the mind of the reader from the final stage and the implied result of the Emperor's action!⁽³⁾

² When Nero had once established the principle in Rome, his action served as a precedent in every province. There is no need to suppose a general edict or formal law. The precedent would be quoted in every case where a Christian was accused. Charges such as had been brought against Paul in so many places were certainly brought frequently against others; and the action of the Emperor in Rome would give the tone to the action of the provincial governors.⁽⁴⁾

(1) Suet. Ner. 16.

(2) Ramsay, The Church in the Roman Empire. 230, 231.

(3) Ramsay ib. 232.

(4) Ramsay ib. 245.

'Between 68 and 96 A.D. the attitude of the state towards the Christians was more clearly defined, and the process was changed so that proof of definite crimes committed by the Christians was no longer required, but acknowledgement of the Name alone sufficed for condemnation. Nero treats a great many Christians as criminals, and punishes them for their crimes. Pliny and Trajan treat them as outlaws and brigands, and punish them without reference to crimes,' - though it must in fairness be said, that they often did so very reluctantly. (1)

During the two years that immediately followed the death of Nero, the anarchy and confusion of the struggle for power would naturally prevent any development of the Imperial policy; but it is quite evident that the Flavians once firmly settled in power carried on the policy of their predecessor. Titus regarded both the Jewish and the Christian religions as evils to be extirpated; but whatever measures were taken by Vespasian or Titus did not impress themselves on the memory of Christians as did the relentless persecutions under Domitian.

'Hence Domitian alone was remembered as the persecutor ranking along with Nero; and the execration and condemnation, which were deserved by his personal character and conduct in other respects, have been apportioned to him in the popular memory of Christian times on account of a policy to which he was only the heir. His action was not due to his personal idiosyncrasies, it was, the natural development of the Imperial policy.' (2)

'It may be safely asserted that it is only the date of Domitian's proscription which is hypothetical; its occurrence at some time before the downfall of the Flavian dynasty is certain.

(1) Ramsay lb. 245.

(2) Ramsay lb. 256, 257.

The persecution of Domitian burned itself ineradicably into the memory of the historian; It may be doubted by the critic but not by the historian, who can never feel any doubt as to the general character of Domitian's action towards Christians, and will always see in it the same type of absolute proscription of the Name which was taken by Pliny and Trajan as predetermined. So strong and early tradition as that which constitutes Domitian, the second great persecutor cannot be discredited without wrecking the foundations of early history. (1)

The language of Clement accurately describes the nature of the Domitian persecutions, when he speaks of 'the sudden and repeated calamities and reverses' which had befallen them. (2) And he further speaks of the vast multitude of the elect who endured many indignities and tortures. (3).

Domitian's reign marks the peak of the persecution period, for Trajan revised and toned down the harshness of the previous policy, modifying it in execution without abrogating it in principle. In his reign began a gradual rapprochement between the Church and the Empire. (4).

(1) Ramsey, Church in the Roman Empire,
p. 276, 277.

(2) 1st-2nd-3rd. Clem. Rom. par. 1, ln. 1.

(3) Clem. Rom. par. 6, ln. 2.

(4) Ramsey, Church in the Roman Empire,
p. 302.

iii. Emperor-worship in Asia Minor.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to trace the origin and development of Emperor worship. It will be sufficient for our purpose to say that during the later period of Grecian history can be traced the transition from the adoration of the unseen to that of the seen, from belief in gods to the belief in divine men, whose divinity revealed itself first in real nobility of character and later in mere strength. (1).

This general disbelief in spiritual powers which grew up in the Greek kingdoms of the East after the conquest of Alexander soon spread to the West. The faith of the Romans in the gods of the family - the Lares, the Manes, the Genius - was so firmly rooted in the national life that its results were greatly modified.

The Romans believed that the life of the family, of the clan and of the state was Divine and was connected with an unseen order. 'Roma was worshipped as a goddess and in time assumed the form and attributes of Pallas.' 'If the belief in the ancient divinities was gone, some conception of the Divine still lingered.' In the consecration of the Emperors two distinct elements were combined, the national faith in the Genius and the eastern adoration of power. (2)

The development of the Emperor-worship was gradual in Rome itself, Augustus during his life-time not allowing any temple to be erected to himself alone but only to 'Roma and Augustus', in the provinces, however, and particularly in Asia Minor the Imperial cult was enthusiastically welcomed, homage being given not only to Emperors after their Apotheosis but while still living. In any endeavor to explain the ready acceptance of Emperor-worship by the

(1) Westcott Ep. of St. John, p. 269.

(2) ib. 270, 271.

provincials of Asia Minor, several factors have to be taken into consideration and these are dealt with in the following sections.

(a) The Eastern adoration of power.

So far from there being any unwillingness among the residents of Asia Minor to accept Emperor-worship there was keen competition between the cities for the honor of building temples and organizing priesthoods. Tacitus records that eleven Asiatic cities strove for the honor of building a temple to the reigning Emperor. (1)

The Senate of Rome was besieged by the cities of the Empire for the privilege of styling themselves 'neocori', servants of the Caesar-god, and for the privilege of inserting that title on their coins. It is evident that the honor was highly esteemed. (2)

(b) The Imperial estates.

The Roman Emperors had inherited vast properties which had been owned by the kings of Asia Minor. When these estates were taken over, the organizations and customs of the cultivators were not interfered with; only they acknowledged the Emperor as Lord in place of the former king. The population on the estates were not like ordinary provincials, but were in a specially close relation to the Emperor. They were but little better than slaves having no rights except those allowed them by force of custom and the Imperial pleasure. Being in a position which so closely approximated to slavery, they had the rights of slaves to be considered a part of the household of the Emperor. This accounts for the frequency on the estates of vows and prayers for the salvation of the Emperor and his household. The residents of these estates seem to have hardly thought themselves free to approach the god except through their master, who was to them the embodiment on earth of the divine power.

(1) Tac. Ann. 4.55.

(2) Iverach, Caesarism, N.E.R.E. p.54.

Thus it can be understood how closely the Emperor was connected with the life and conduct of the people in the provinces, not only of the cultivators of the great estates but also of the ordinary provincials who came to imitate more and more the fashion that ruled on the estates. (1)

(c) The expectation of a deliverer.

For a long time the peoples of the East had looked forward to the coming of a deliverer.

There are evidences extant of the wide-spread expectation among the people of the East of a coming Deliverer. This hope appeared to receive its fulfilment in the deification of the Caesars. An inscription referring to the birthday of Augustus is a good illustration of this belief.

'From no other day does the individual or the community receive such benefit as from this natal day, full of blessing to all. The providence which rules over all has filled this man with such gifts for the salvation of the world as designate him the Saviour for us and for the coming generations.-----The birthday of God has brought to the world glad tidings, that are bound up in him. From his birthday a new era begins. (2)

There are other similar inscriptions which show clearly the feeling of the Commons of Asia towards the new cult. There is no doubt that the reading of such inscriptions would greatly stimulate and deepen the loyalty of the people.

(d) Gratitude of the Provinces for peace.

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the utter wretchedness of the provinces in the latter days of the Republic. The Proconsuls, knowing that their time was short, were guilty of brutal extortions.

(1) Rannay, *Hearing Recent His.* p.191 sq.

(2) Rannay, *Letters*, p.436.

The suffering was severe during the struggle between Marius and Sulla, and the wars between Augustus and Antony caused the greatest distress in the places where they were waged.

When Augustus became Emperor wars ceased, the temple of Junus was shut, and the provinces enjoyed just government. The people felt a sense of security which they had not known for years. Caesar was their friend, he defended them from enemies without and from oppression within. Under his benign rule they could work to provide for their needs and accumulate property, without fearing that prosperity would make them the mark of unscrupulous office-holders. Thus the Emperor became an earthly providence. 'Imagination delighted to picture the greatness and goodness of the Imperial power; orators discoursed on it, and philosophers dwelt on the thought of the great community of the universe, in which gods and men had their places and functions. Then the common people gathered into one all that they or their ancestors had conceived of greatness or goodness, and piled that on the head of the Caesar-divine. (1)

(1) Iverach, Caesarism, N.E.R.E. p.54.

IV. The Organization of Emperor-worship.

(a) On the Imperial Estates.

In the previous chapter (1) the position of the 'coloni' or cultivators of the great Imperial estates was dealt with. These cultivators as we have seen were considered as part of the household of the Emperor, and appeared not to have thought themselves free to approach their god except through him who was to them the embodiment on earth of the divine power.

From an inscription, dated A.D.135, on a boundary stone found by Professor Ramsay, it is evident that the 'coloni' were organized as a religious association united in the worship of the Lords Emperors. This association was a body of servants and slaves of the god, who considered themselves to be absolutely the property of their Lord and Master. 'The god is the father of his people according to the Roman fashion with power of life and death over all his children. Hence dedications occur to the Emperor as the Father God. This principle was carried out thoroughly in the institutions for the government of the estate and its cultivators. As the god himself could not be present with his worshippers, he was represented by his procurator, who fulfilled the duty of priest *ex officio*.'

Though apparently Augustus did not insist on the identifications of himself with the god and the Empress with the goddess, as the divinity of the Emperor became more and more explicitly and openly part of the Imperial system it was necessary to identify the Imperial god and goddess with the local deities.

The association was essentially pagan and strictly speaking no one could belong to it who did not worship the God-Emperor but it

was not till the third century that the religious aspect of it was made prominent and then entrance into the association became an act of renunciation of the Christian faith. (1)

(b) In the Cities of Asia Minor.

Though the Roman policy was opposed to political unions yet they seldom interfered with the religions of their subjects provided they neither disturbed the peace nor countenanced barbarities. It was part of their political tradition to win the good-will of other nations by respecting their gods.

When the Imperial cult was organized the general plan was that there should be one 'concilium' for each province. There were exceptions to this rule, for in Gaul there was only one 'concilium' for three provinces and in some instances there was more than one 'concilium' in a province. (2)

By the end of Augustus' principate most of the provinces had concilia and all the appurtenances of the Imperial religion. There are clear proofs of the existence of such organisations in the Three Gauls, Thessaly, Achaia, Asia, Bithynia, Galatia and Syria in A.D. 14. (3)

When Asia Minor became a Roman province there were at least six political associations each with its own religious observances. These associations were probably the models on which the 'Commune of Asia' was formed. (4)

The Commune organised the State religion of the Emperors. The Imperial regulation, that all loyal subject must conform to the State religion, was carried out according to the regulations framed by the Commune, which arranged the ritual, superintended and directed its performance, ordered the building of temples, and

- (1) Ramsay, Bearing of Recent Discovery, p.193 sq.
- (2) Guiraud, Assemblées provinciales 48.45, 51, 60.
- (3) Tac. Ann. 1.75; Hist. Claud. 2; Dio Cass. 54.32, 51, 20.
Romsen 42. Prov. R. Imp. 94, 264; Guiraud, ib. 56-59.
- (4) Guiraud, ib. 63.

the erection of statues, and fixed the holidays and festivals. (1)
The concilium also appointed the priests of the temples which were under its control.

The concilium consisted of deputies from the cities of the province. These deputies were chosen either by the city councillors or by the citizen assemblies. It is probable the communities were represented in proportion to their population, for some cities sent more than one deputy. (2)

The legates from the cities who formed the *Comune* either elected a president directly, or drew up a list of 'papabili' from which the final choice was made by the *proconsul*. The name submitted might be taken from the *burgens-roll* of any city from which deputies were sent to the concilium. The President thus chosen, became the priest of the provincial altar or temple of Rome and was known as High-priest. The 'high-priests of Asia' whose names have been preserved, came from thirty different cities of the province.

As the high-priest was for the time being the chief personage among the provincials, elections, where decided by popular vote, were apt to be tumultuous affairs. So important was the office that the provincial high-priest was an eponymous official, by reference to whom events were dated. (3)

The office was an onerous as well as an honorable one, for the high-priest of the Imperial gods was called upon to bear the expenses of the games which were celebrated at the time of the assembly of the legates under his presidency. There were chariot races, wrestling matches, foot-races and contests of musicians and orators. Both Polyxarp and Theola suffered martyrdom during provincial games. (4)

(1) Iverach, p.55,56.

(2) Guiraud, p.64,65.

(3) Hardy, *Studies in Roman History*, p.257,258.

(4) *Ins.H.E.*4.15; Ramsay, *Ch.Rom.Emp.*400,401.

The spectacles at Rome were notoriously expensive and they were probably no less so in the provinces. This requirement of wealth for the highpriesthood tended to make the office hereditary.

The Commune of Asia met annually at the end of the winter or the beginning of spring. At first it was convened at the temple of the Emperor of Rome at Pergamum but afterwards when other cities of the province obtained authority to erect Augustus it met at other centres as well. In the course of the first century it was permissible to hold the concilium at Ephesus, Sardis, Smyrna, Laodicea, Philadelphia and Cyzicus in addition to Pergamum. Of the seven cities of the Apocalypse, Thyatira is the only one which did not enjoy the privilege. This multiplication of assembly places was permitted by the Emperors in order to appease the rivalries of the Asian municipalities. (1)

The chief of the temple inaugurated at Pergamum in 19 B.C. was at first the ^{only} 'high-priest' of Asia, (2) but he was not the only Asiarch, though he was doubtless the Asiarch par excellence.

Though at first the title Asiarch only denoted one who was a provincial magnate it is probable that in course of time the title became so closely associated with that of high-priest that only those who had passed the chair of high-priest were allowed to call themselves Asiarchs. (3)

The relation of the high-priest of the temples in Pergamum to the 'high-priest of Asia' is obscure. The 'highpriesthood of Asia' may have become detached from the exclusive connection with the temple and altar of Pergamum, being expanded into a general supervision of temples, altars, priests, rites and all the apparatus of

- (1) Ramsay, Letters, 289, 290.
- (2) Strabo, Geog. 14, 1, 42.
- (3) Guiraud pg. 106.

the Imperial cult in the province - in other words he was an Asian pontificatus maximus or summus pontifex.

The Comunes had no legal status or administrative authority. It could not punish those who refused to take part in the rites of the cult but could only refer their cases to the secular arm. Thus the persecution of the Christians depended on the attitude of the concilium and the governor, and before persecution could be severe it required the active hostility of both. (1)

(1) Luckworth, The Roman Provincial System, p.171, sq.

V. The Trinity of Evil.

In the previous chapters we have dealt with the Supreme Ruler of the Kingdom of evil, with his representative on earth Caesar, the head of the Roman Empire, and with the High-priest of Asia, president of the Caesar cult.

Turning to the Apocalypse, we find this same Trinity of Evil opposing the Son of God, the Lamb. In this chapter we shall examine these three powers of evil in turn, keeping in mind the fact that the Roman Emperor is often regarded as summing up in his own person the Empire over which he ruled and the High-Priest of Asia is often regarded as representing the organization over which he presided.

(a) The Dragon.

In the vision described in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse the seer speaks of a great red Dragon.

It is not within the province of this thesis to discuss the origin and development of the Dragon myth. It will be sufficient to say that in the Apocalypse the Dragon typifies the personal power of evil - the Prince of this world - the supreme ruler of the Kingdom of Evil. The Dragon is directly identified with that Old Serpent, the Devil and Satan which deceiveth the whole world.(1)

The Dragon works through his agents on earth the Beast and the False Prophet. It is the dragon who gave the Beast his power, and his seat, and great authority. (2)

(1) Rev. 12 v 9, 20 v 2.

(2) Rev. 12 vs 3,4,7,9,13,16,17. 13 vs. 2,4,11.
16 v 13. 20 v 2.
Whitehouse, Satan, Dictionary of the Bible, p. 407 sq.
Bouassat, Antichrist, H.E.A.E. p.578.sq.
Charles, Vol.2, 76 sq.
Swete, p. 149.

(b) The Beast.

The second person in the Trinity of Evil is the Beast. This Beast, which in the seer's vision came up out of the sea is fully described by the writer. (1) He combines features from all four beasts of the Daniel vision. (2) We have here the representation of the fourth kingdom in Daniel though the monster depicted here is more terrible than that of the earlier vision.

Though in Daniel the fourth beast represents the Greek Empire of Alexander and his successors, from Pompey's time onward, the Roman Commonwealth came in certain circles in Palestine to be identified with the fourth kingdom and in St. Luke (3) we have the first indication in Christian writings of the identification of the Roman Empire with the fourth kingdom in Daniel. The phrase of Daniel 'the abomination of desolation' which refers there to the profanation of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes is used in St. Luke of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. 'From 30 A.D. onwards Jewish exegesis universally and Christian exegesis generally took the Roman Empire to be the fourth beast.' (4)

The monster has seven heads and ten horns. The interpretation of these symbols is given in a later chapter. (5) The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth. 'The city of the seven hills' was a familiar expression for Rome in classical writers. (6)

- (1) Rev. 13 vs 1-10, 17 v s, 17, vs 9-18.
- (2) Dan. 7 vs 2-7.
- (3) Luke 21 v 10.
- (4) Charles Vol. 1 pg. 345 sq.
- (5) Rev. 17 vs 9-13.
- (6) Horace, Carm. Sec. 7; Virg. Aen. 6, 782; Georg. 2, 534. Martial, 4. 64; Cicero, ad Att. 6. 5. Charles Vol. 1 p. 346.

'And the seven horns are seven kings; the five are fallen, the one is, the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a little while. And the beast that was and is not is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven and he goeth into perdition.' (1)

Many interpretations have been given of this passage, but the one which seems to have most to commend it is that the Emperors should be numbered from Augustus (as Julius Caesar was a Dictator rather than an Imperator in the later sense,) and that Galba, Otho and Vitellius should be excluded; for it is not likely that a writer at the time of the Flavians would reckon them among the Augusti. Eusebius describes their reigns as 'rebellio trium principum'. (2) The first five Emperors, then, are Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. The Emperor who 'is' is Vespasian and the one who 'is not yet come' Titus who did but continue a little while, 'imperiis felix brevitate'. (3) The eighth in the series is Domitian and he is spoken of as 'one of the seven' because of the reputation that another one of the seven had gained, which even in the closing years of the century made his name a terror. Here was the very impersonation of the Beast. (4)

The difficulties which are involved in this theory are in connection with the date of the Apocalypse are dealt with by Swete, (5) and as they involve matters which are beyond the range of this thesis they will not be dealt with here.

(1) Rev. 17 vs 10, 11.

(2) Veusp. 1.

(3) Eusebius De ord. 12. 100. 11.

(4) Swete p. 221, Charles Vol. 2. 69. Simon, Cambridge Bible. Introd. p. 39.

(5) Swete p. 221.

Here's father was Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarus (Brazen Beard). The Domitii had been notorious for ferocity and treachery for several generations, and their wickedness seemed to culminate in this man who added meanness and vulgarity to the brutal manners of his race. His loose morals were shocking even in that loose age. It was a current anecdote of this man, who was 'detestable through every period of his life' that when, nine years after his marriage, the birth of his son Nero was announced to him, he answered the congratulations of his friends with the remark, that from himself and Agrippina nothing could have been born but what was hateful, and for the public ruin. (1) Agrippina herself after a life of crime so abnormal and so detestable that it throws into the shade even the monstrous crimes of many of her contemporaries, murdered her husband, and was murdered by the orders of the son for whose sake she had waded through seas of blood. (2)

Born of such parents is it any wonder that it has been said that 'all the vice, all the splendour, all the degradation of Pagan Rome seemed to be gathered up in the person of the Emperor who first placed himself in a relation of direct antagonism against Christianity. (3)

The concentration of the old prerogatives of many offices in the person of one who was at once Consul, Censor, Tribune, Pontifex Maximus, and perpetual Emperor, fortified their power with of the Emperor with the semblance of legality, and that power was rendered terrible by the sword of the Praetorians, and the deadly whisper of the informers. No wonder that Christians saw the true type of the Antichrist in that omnipotence of evil, that apotheosis

(1) Farrer 'The Early Days of Christianity,'
Vol. 1 p.25.

(2) ib. p.223

(3) ib. p.17.

of self, that disdain of humanity, that hatred against all mankind besides, that gigantic aspiration after the impossible, that frantic blasphemy and unlimited indulgence, which marked the depotism of ~~---Nero~~. (1)

After a career of incredible wickedness Nero with the aid of a freedman committed suicide. The Roman world however could not believe that the heir of the deified Julian race could be cut off thus suddenly and obscurely, and vanish like foam upon the water. (2) Tacitus says that there were many who pretended and believed that he was still alive (3) and Suetonius declares that edicts were issued in his name as though he were still alive and would return to destroy his enemies. As early as 69 A.D. an impostor appeared under his name and headed a rebellion against Rome. (4) A second pseudo-Nero appeared in 80 A.D. and finally a third pretender in 88 A.D. all but succeeded in hurling Parthia against Rome. (5)

From that date the belief in-Nero-redivivus-took that Nero was still living gradually declined and the belief in Nero redivivus took its place. Nero was gone for the time but he would return as an eighth, a reincarnation of the beast. (6), (7).

It can be seen readily, how Domitian would be regarded as Nero redivivus. The horrors of the first onslaught on the Roman Christians must have made a lasting impression on the Churches throughout the Empire. Nero had exhausted every form of cruelty

- (1) Farrer, The Early Days of Christianity, p.17 sq.
- (2) ib. p.77.
- (3) Tac.Hist. 2.8.
- (4) Tac.Hist. 2.89.
- (5) ib.1.2; Suet.Nero 57. Charles Vol.2. p.76 sq.
- (6) Suet. 221; Charles Vol.1, Introd. p.95-97; Vol.2 p.76, Sq. Simcox, C.E. Introd. 39.
- (7) The Antichrist, Chapter 7.

in his sudden attack upon an innocent community and had revelled in the agonies of his victims; he had become among Christians everywhere the symbol of brute force triumphing over righteousness and truth, of the Worldpower standing in direct antithesis to the Kingdom of God. (1) When persecution broke out again under Domitian, a persecution marked by its capricious and reiterated attacks and the feline stealthiness and rapidity with which they were delivered; (2) and when further it is noted that Domitian went beyond Nero in asserting his own divinity Christians would naturally regard Domitian as the re-incarnation of Nero. Even pagan writers recognized the resemblance between the two. (3) The beast, then, is Domitian regarded as summing up in his person the Empire over which he ruled.

(c) The False Prophet.

While many interpretations have been given of the False Prophet the writer has no hesitation in accepting that adopted by Swete, Charles and Iverach and others who identify the False Prophet with the Beast from the land, (4) and regard him as the symbol of the heathen priesthood of the Imperial cult provided over by the Asiaroh. (5)

The history and organization of the system typified by the Second Wild Beast has been dealt with in a previous chapter; (6) in this section the hostility of the Imperial priesthood towards the Christian Church is more particularly dealt with.

It seems highly probable that the Asiaroh, who was Provincial high-priest, was not only head of the Imperial cult but also had control over religion in general. (7) His position was one that was greatly

(1) Swete. Introd. p. 83.

(2) Lightfoot St. Clement p. 184.

(3) Swete p. 221.

(4) Rev. 13 v 11.

(5) Swete. Introd. 91, p. 169, 206; Charles, Vol. 1. p. 333, 357.
Iverach Cassarian, N.E.B. p. 50-56.

(6) Chapter 4.

(7) Iverach, p. 56.

prized both on account of the privileges attached to it and its outward splendour. 'The festal entrance into the town, in purple dress and with chaplet on the head, preceded by a procession of boys swinging their vessels of incense, was in the horizon of the Greeks of Asia Minor what the olive-branch of Olympia was among the Hellenes. (1)

It can hardly be seen that the priests of the Imperial cult and the Asiarch in particular were by their traditions, official duties, and social position, far more called upon and inclined to animadvert on neglect of the recognized worship than were the Imperial magistrates.

They had not however the power to punish offenders, but could only call the attention of the local or Imperial authorities to the offence. In order to force Christians to comply with the demands of the Imperial cult they had to invoke the aid of the secular arm. (2) This fact brings us face to face with the principle of all the persecutions of the Christian Church from the first century down to the time of Niceletian. It was the refusal of the Church to submit to the Imperial cult that led to the declaration that they were outlaws, with no rights, and no legal standing before the rules. The test of their standing was whether they were willing to burn incense and offer worship to Caesar. (3)

With magical arts and pseudo-miracles the pagan priesthood deluded the people, many of whom were sunk in ignorance and the grossest Oriental superstition. (4) Once, however, a man became a Christian it was impossible to impress him with their magical arts, which he treated with contempt, and exposed to ridicule. Nor was

- (1) Mommsen, The Provinces of the Roman Empire, p. 346.
- (2) *ib.* 348.
- (3) Iverach, Caesarism H.E.R.E. p. 56.
- (4) Ramsay, Letters, p. 99 sq.

he content to see the falsity of the popular system for himself, he worked continually to convert others to the truth. It soon was evident that the Imperial cult and the Christian Church could not exist side by side and in consequence 'the Imperial religion became more and more eager, militant, and oppressive. It was filled with the spirit of aggressive persecution. In its militant aspect, as against those who refused to bow the knee to Caesar, it was intolerant, aggressive, and exclusive. 'It maketh the earth and all that dwell therein to worship the beast.' (1),(2).

Those who were accused were required to prove their loyalty by performing an act of religious worship before the statue of the Emperor, which was brought into court in readiness for the test. If they performed the ritual, they were acquitted and dismissed; if they refused to perform it, they were condemned to death. 'No other proof was sought; no other investigation was made; no accusation of any specified crime or misdeed was made..... That short and simple procedure was legal, prescribed by Imperial instructions, and complete.' (3)

Worship Caesar and live, remain loyal to Jesus Christ and die. (4)

(1) Rev. 13 v 12.

(2) Iversen, Caesarism, H.B.R.E. p.56.

(3) Ramsay, Letters, ps. 98,99.

(4) Rev. 13 vs 15.

VI. The Antichrist.

In the chapter just completed, the three powers of evil were examined in turn; in this section they are considered as forming a composite Antichrist.

After carefully examining the material gathered together by Bousset, Charles, Westcott, Swete, and others, the writer suggests a theory which apparently has not yet been put forward, that the seer in the Apocalypse depicts, not an individual personage but a Trinity of Evil as the Antichrist. The Antichrist conception had become so complex that no one figure was adequate to convey the ideas which he wished to set forth. He therefore places in opposition to the Holy Trinity, a Trinity of Evil.

The evidence which led the writer to this conclusion is as follows:-

'It is very likely that Antichrist is originally nothing else than the incarnate devil. (1) This idea is maintained in the Dragon, who directly opposes the forces of good as shown in Chapters twelve and twenty of the Revelation, where the Dragon acts independently of the Beast and the False Prophet.

However, the idea of the battle of God with a human opponent, in which all devilish wickedness would become incarnate arose under the influence of definite historical conditions. ' (2)

This conception can be clearly traced with its several amplifications till it culminates in the Beast of the Revelation.

Charles works this out very fully, (3) showing that the influence that Antiochus Epiphanes, Pompey, and Caligula had on the idea, also the change of view to the Fourth Empire, which became

(1) Bousset, Antichrist, H.E.R.E. p. 578.
 (2) ib. 578.
 (3) Charles Vol 2, p. 76 sq.

identified with the Roman Empire, and the incorporation into it of the Beliar myth and finally its great amplification with the addition of the myth of Nero redivivus.

The writer however cannot agree with Dr. Charles' conclusion that it is not an actual Roman Emperor, but a supernatural monster from the abyss, that is to play the part of the Nero redivivus, (1) for it seems to him that sufferers in St. John's day certainly believed that the ideas had their fulfilment in Domitian. (2)

We have however another conception worked out by Rousset, (3) who shows that 'a strongly marked transformation of the whole Antichrist idea, is indicated in the discussion in the second Epistle to the Thessalonians: (4) where the Antichrist is no longer the God-opposing tyrant, but a seductive agency which works by signs and wonders and seeks to obtain divine worship. (He regards this false Messiah as a prophet who will be accepted by those Jews who rejected the true Messiah.)

Further in the Epistles of St. John the Antichrist is connected directly with false teaching. (5) Certainly the appearance of false teaching is thought of as one of the signs of the last times - as the crowning point of Satan's malice. (6)

Rousset admits that the author of the Apocalypse has paid his tribute to the new conception in the second beast. It seems however to the writer that the seer does far more than pay tribute to the new conception, but boldly incorporates it into his work.

- (1) Charles, Vol. 1. Introd. p. 97.
- (2) Thesis Chapter V.
- (3) Rousset, Antichrist, H.E.H.S. p. 579.
- (4) 2 Thess. 2.
- (5) 1 John, 2 vs. 18-22; 4 v 3; 2 John, 7.
- (6) Westcott Ep. John, p. 70.
- (6) 1 Tim. 4 v 1, 3; 2 Tim. 3 v 1, sq.
- 2 Pet. 3 v 3 sq.

The Dragon, The Beast, and the Second Beast or the False Prophet are all partial fulfillments of the Antichrist conception and it required all three to bring out in its fulness the consummate wickedness, the savage ferocity, and the cunning deception of the Prince of Evil.

As it required the Holy Trinity, as far as we can apprehend it, to reveal to us what God is like; so the seer depicts a Trinity in his effort to portray the supreme power of Evil.

The principle of contrast in the book has been pointed out by Professor Milligan; (1) 'The Kingdom of God being set against the Kingdom of Satan,* Jesus the Saviour against Apollyon the Destroyer, the Bride against the Harlot, the Trinity of Heaven against the Trinity of Hell.* We might add that perhaps Christ, His Ministry and His Church find their parallel in the Beast, the Pagan Priesthood and the worshippers of Caesar.

If the theory put forward is correct it may help to solve the question which has often been discussed whether St. John regarded the Antichrist as personal or impersonal. (2) When contemplating the directing head of this Evil Trinity he would necessarily think of it as personal, when contemplating the Antichrist as a Trinity of Evil, inasmuch as they have no necessary bond of union, he might well conceive of their combined influence as impersonal.

As it is not in the scope of this thesis to deal with the historical development of the Antichrist idea it will be sufficient to say that during the earliest ages of the Church's history, ending with the dissolution of the Western Empire in

(1) Church quarterly Review No.46, Vol.XLII, p.422.
Milligan, Rev. Expositors Bible, p. 286.

(2) Plummer, St. John (2p.) C.C.T. p. 156 sq.

the fifth century, one consistent theory prevailed respecting the Antichrist, viz; that he is an individual destined one day to overthrow the Roman Empire and to establish a rule of consummate wickedness, which would quickly be terminated by the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, coming to effect in the Last Judgement. (1).

(1) Findlay, Ep. Theor. C. C. T. p. 223.

VII. The Seven Cities.

It has been pointed out in the last chapter that all the cities mentioned in the Apocalypse, with the exception of Thyatira, were centres of Emperor worship. In this chapter this question is dealt with in greater detail.

Ephesus.

Ephesus was the centre of the Roman administration in Asia and as the Province of Asia was senatorial the governor was called Pro-consul.

From its devotion to Artemis the city was known as the Temple Warden though later that title was only assumed by cities which had erected temples for the Imperial cult.

Julius Caesar was honoured in his life time in an Ephesian inscription as 'the god descended from Mars and Venus who appeared in human form as the universal saviour of the life of men.' (1)

After the apotheosis of Julius Caesar (B.C. 29) a temple Dea Roma and Divus Julius was erected, (2) but Augustus had no need to wait for an apotheosis, for during his life time a shrine and a great altar of Augustus were placed in the sacred precinct of the goddess Artemis in the earlier years of his reign. This is taken as a type on coins of the Commune, where the two sacred stages mark the close connection between the Imperial and the Ephesian religion even at that early time. This was a purely municipal not a Provincial cult of Augustus; and in the competition among the cities in Asia in A. D. 26 for the

(1) Dittenberger. Sylloge Gr. Inscr. Leipzig 1898. 347
1.6 (Vol. 1, p. 552.)
(2) Dio Cassius 51.26.

honour of building the temple to Tiberius, Ephesus was passed over by the Senate on the ground that it was devoted to the worship of Artemis. But Provincial temples of the Imperial religion were built in Ephesus, one under Claudius or Nero, one under Hadrian, and a third under Severus; and the city boasted that it was Temple-Warden or Neokoros of three Emperors. Sometimes it styles itself 'four times Neokoros;' but the fourth Temple-Wardenship seems to be of Artemis not of a fourth Emperor; though the fact that the title (which ordinarily was restricted to Imperial temples) was allowed in respect of the temple of Artemis shows that a very close relation was formed between the Imperial religion and the worship of Artemis as a goddess of the whole Province. A coin shows the four temples containing the statues of Artemis and three Emperors, and marks the closeness of the connection between the cults. (1)

The blasphemous titles assumed by the heads of the Roman Empire in the first, second and third centuries may be learned from the Imperial letters found by J. T. Wood among the inscriptions of Ephesus. (2) (3)

Bayrna.

As early as the second century B. C. a complementary cult of the genius of Rome or the dea Roma had begun in these provinces, for there was a temple dedicated to the city of Rome at Bayrna in 193 B. C. (4) An altar of Rome occurs in 105 B.C. and a priest of Rome is mentioned in a compact between Sardis and Ephesus about 98 B.C. (5)

{1} Ramsay, Letters, ps. 231, 232.

{2} Hicks Ephesus p. 150.

{3} Charles Vol. I, ps. 47, 48; Swete Introd. 59 sq. ps. 23, 24, 161, 162.

{4} Tac. 4.56.

{5} Tac. 4.56.

In A.D. 26 the Smyrnaeans argued before the senate that the new temple to be dedicated by the Commune of Asia to Tiberius should be built in their city because of their long-standing friendship with Rome, and they were successful in their suite. (1)

The city was accorded a second neocerate by Hadrian (2) and a third by Severus. (3)

Pergamum.

Pergamum was famed for its great religious foundations, the most important of which was the cult of the Roman Emperors. The city had the distinction of building the first Provincial temple of the Imperial cult in Asia, and for some considerable time it was the only temple so dedicated. This shrine was in honour of Rome and Augustus.

Tiberius refers to the founding of a temple by the Provincial Synod to Augustus and Rome. (4) This was probably in B.C. 29. Thus Pergamum became Temple-Warden before Smyrna, which did not obtain the Neocerate till B. C. 26, and also before Ephesus which was not honoured till the reign of Claudius or Nero. A second temple was built in honour of Trajan, and a third in honour of Severus. (5)

The Augustan temple is often represented on Pergamene coins and on those struck by the Commune. As the oldest temple of the Asian cult it is far more frequently mentioned and figured than any other Asian temple. It appears on the coins

- (1) Ramsay, Letters, p. 254.
- (2) Lightfoot, Ignatius, 1.467.
- (3) Charles, Vol. 1, pp. 66, 67; Swete, Introd. 61, p. 30.
- (4) Tac. 4.37.
- (5) Charles Vol. 1 pp. 60, 61.

Of many Emperors down to the time of Trajan, and is generally represented open, to show the Emperor crowned by the Province. (1) Coins have been found bearing the inscriptions God Senate, God Rome, God Augustus. (2)

*The Imperial cult had thus its centre at Pergamum; and as the Imperial cult was the keystone of the Imperial policy, Pergamum summed up in itself the intolerable offence and horror, that such a cult, the observance of which was synonymous with loyalty to the Empire, provoked in the mind of the writer of the Apocalypse.¹

Here was 'The throne of Satan.' (3) Behind the city arose a huge conical hill, a thousand feet high, covered with heathen temples and altars, which in contrast to 'The mountain of God' appeared to the Seer as the throne of Satan, since it was the home of many idolatrous cults, but above all of the Imperial cult, which menaced with annihilation the very existence of the Church. For refusal to take part in the cult constituted high treason to the state. (4)

Thyatira.

Thyatira had no temple founded there in honour of the Emperors.

Sardis.

Sardis was shattered by the great earthquake of A.D. 17 but with the liberal help of Tiberius was rebuilt. It showed its gratitude by its consistent devotion to the Emperor. On a coin struck by the grateful city the veiled genius of Sardis is shown

- (1) Ramsay, Letters, 283, 284.
- (2) Euseb., Introd. 62.
- (3) Rev. 2 v 13.
- (4) Charles, Vol. 1, p. 60, 61.

kneeling on one knee in supplication before the Emperor, who is dressed in the toga, the garb of peace, and graciously stretches forth his hand towards her. The coin bears the name Caesareian Sardis; for the city took the epithet in honour of the Imperial benefactor and retained it on coins for quite a year after his death. The reverse of the same coin shows the Imperial mother, the deified Empress Livia, sitting like a goddess after the fashion of Demeter, holding in her left hand three corn-ears, the gift of the goddess to mankind, and resting her right hand on the sceptre. This type is a good example of the tendency to fuse the Imperial religion with the local worship, and to regard the Imperial gods as manifestations and incarnations on earth of the divine figure worshipped in the district. Livia here appears in the character of Demeter, a Hellenised form of the Anatolian goddess.¹

It was probably owing to the erection of a temple to Tiberius and Livia that the city took the name Caesareia. This shrine was only a Sardian temple, not a Provincial one, and in consequence the city could not assume the title Temple-Garden. (1)

However in 26 A.D., ^{it} contended with Pergamum, Cayrae and Ephesus for the privilege of erecting an Augusteum and though on this occasion it failed it did eventually receive a second, and later a third neocorate. (2)

Philadelphia.

Philadelphia alone of the Seven Cities had abandoned its old name and adopted one derived from the Imperial religion, for Caesareia was a mere epithet used along with the old name of Sardis.

- (1) Ramsay, Letters, p. 365 sq.
Charles, Vol. 1, pp. 77, 78.
(2) Swete, Introd. p. 64.

Philadelphia ceased to use its own name and adopted that of Neokaisareia and thereby became consecrated to the service and worship of the Young Caesar - either Tiberius or Germanicus. 'There can be no doubt that a shrine of the Neos Kaiser, with a priest and a regular ritual, was established soon after A.D. 17 and not later than 19. Philadelphia wrote on itself the name of the Imperial god, and called itself the city of its Imperial god present on earth to help it.' (1)

This as in the case of Sardis was only a local shrine and probably fell into a state of dilapidation. It was not till the third century that it acquired the neocorate, when under Caracalla the city was honoured with the title of Temple-Warden of the state religion. A Provincial temple was evidently built there between A.D. 211 and 217 and from that time on the Commune met there occasionally to hold some of its state festivals. (2)

Laodicea.

Laodicea was a centre of the Imperial religion, and received the Temple-wardenship under Commodus A.D. 180-191. (3)

- (1) Ramsay, Letters, pp. 409, 410.
Swete, Introd. p. 64; pp. 52, 53.
- (2) Charles, Vol. I, p. 85.
- (3) Ramsay, Letters, p. 422.

VIII. The Apocalypse. (Passages in the Apocalypse referring to Emperor-Worship)

In previous chapters the Seven Cities and the three great characters of evil in the drama have been dealt with; in this chapter all the passages have been gathered together, which have any bearing whatever on the subject of this thesis. The passages are taken from the Revised Version, in the order in which they occur in the Apocalypse.

The writer is fully aware of the obscurity of the references in many cases, but feels that their mention is justified, because they are subtle indications that the mind of the author of the Apocalypse was pervaded by the struggle between the Church and the Empire.

In this extent of quotations the evidence of the work itself is presented as to the prominence in the Apocalypse of Emperor-worship and all that it involved. It is only by a patient study of such details that anyone can realize how thoroughly the book is permeated with the conflict between the Church and the Empire.

The writer is convinced that it is better to let the book itself present its cumulative evidence, than to elaborate abstract theories regarding the same.

References are made in a number of places to other passages where the matter under discussion is more fully dealt with. In these cases the references are not to the Revised Version, but to the notes in this chapter.

Chapter I.

v.1 The revelation of Jesus Christ.

The book recounts His conflict against the Kingdom of Evil and His ultimate victory.

v.4 which are before his throne.

Chapter I.

The throne of Christ and of God. The Seer constantly refers to 'the throne'. It is to him the supreme place of authority. 'The throne of Satan' was at Pergamum. (1)

The Dragon gave his throne to the beast. (2) The angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast. (3)

In the eyes of the provincials the throne of the Roman Emperors dominated the world and they worshipped him who sat thereon. The Seer knew that the real seat of authority was the throne of Christ and of God and that the One who sat upon it was the only one who could rightfully receive the worship of mankind.

See - 3v21, 3v21, 4v2, 4v3, 4v4, 4v5, 4v5, 4v6, 4v6, 4v9, 4v10, 4v10, 5v1, 5v6, 5v7, 5v11, 5v13, 6v16, 7v9, 7v10, 7v11, 7v15, 7v15, 7v17, 8v3, 12v5, 14v3, 16v17, 19v4, 19v5, 20v11, 20v12, 21v5, 22v1, 22v3,

Also - 2v13, 13v2, 16v10 and 4v4, 11v16, 20v4.

Some of these references are obscured in the Authorized Version where the word 'throne' which is used throughout in the Greek, is translated sometimes 'seat' and sometimes 'throne'.

The persistent occurrence of 'the throne' and the idea that it connotes is most striking.

v.5 Jesus Christ, the faithful witness.

It is surely significant that the first title given to our Lord in the Apocalypse is 'the faithful witness' 'martyr' from whence our word martyr, for the book was written to those who were called by their death to bear witness to the truth.

the first born of the dead and the rulers of the kings of the earth.

In Colossians 1v18 the resurrection is referred to as

- (1) Rev. 2v13
- (2) Rev. 13v2
- (3) Rev. 16v10

Chapter I.

His claim to the Headship of the Church.

Christ is head of the Church by virtue of the resurrection (1) as
 is
 He the head over all creation. (2)

In some passages the sense of being first in time is displaced by the idea of Sovereignty even God Himself being called 'firstborn of the world'. (3) The passage may then be read, 'the sovereign of the dead, the ruler of the living'. (4)

Contrast the Apotheosis of dead Emperors and the claims to supreme power of the living ones.

The resurrection carried with it the potential lordship over all humanity. The Lord won by His death what the Princes of this world had offered Him as the price of His homage. He rose and ascended to receive universal empire. He was 'Imperator regum terrarum'. (5) The linking of Sovereignty with death is significant, throughout the book. The Roman judges prescribed death as a penalty for refusing to worship Caesar, but Christians were to regard it not as a penalty but as the gateway to fuller life and sovereignty. (6)

v.6 and He made us to be a kingdom.

The Apocalypse is largely a protest against the Caesar cult and the attitude of the Empire towards the Church, and at the outset it places the Divine Kingdom in sharp contrast to the imperial power. (7)

to be priests unto His God and Father.

They held a loftier position than the priests of Caesar who oppressed them.

- (1) Col. 1v18
- (2) Col. 1v15
- (3) Lightfoot, Col. 1v15
- (4) Charles, Vol. I, p. 14
- (5) Swete, p. 7
- (6) Swete, p. 8

Chapter I.

v.6 to Him be the glory and the dominion.
to Christ not to Caesar.

v.7 Behold, He cometh.

The word of comfort that was so sorely needed by the Christians in the furnace of affliction. See 22v20.

all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him.

In the eyes of a Roman there was only one man about whom all the tribes of the earth could be concerned - the Emperor. All the terms in this paragraph:- first-born, ruler of the kings of the earth, kingdom, dominion, all the tribes, were a direct challenge to, and contradiction of, the Imperial claims. See 5v10; 20v4; 20v6.

Even so, Amen.

See 22v20.

v.8 I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come. See 21v6; 22v13.
the Almighty.

The All-ruler rather than the Almighty. See also 4v8; 11v17; 15v3; 16v7; 16v14; 19v15; 21v22.

v.9 I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

The writer was himself a sufferer in the great conflict, having been banished, evidently because of his allegiance to the cause of Jesus Christ. Patmos was used as a penal settlement by the Romans (1) and there is little doubt that the Seer would be strained almost beyond endurance, for the treatment of prisoners in the settlements was brutal in the extreme.

(1) Charles, Vol. 1, p.22

Chapter I.

v.9 the kingdom.

Throughout the Apocalypse there runs the principle of contrast. The Kingdom of God is set ever against the Kingdom of Satan, Jesus the Saviour against Apollyon the Destroyer, the Bride against the Harlot, the Holy Trinity of Heaven against the Devil, the Beast and the False Prophet - the Trinity of Hell.

The Lamb as it had been slain is contrasted to the Beast whose deadly wound was healed. The seal of God and the mark of the Beast reveal the same principle. (1)

v.10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.

The first day of each month was called 'Emperor's Day' (Sebaste) in Asia Minor and Egypt before the Christian era. (2) According to two inscriptions, from Ephesus and Kabala, it would appear that Sebaste was a day of the week. If that was so it can be understood how the term 'Lord's Day' arose; for just as the first day of the month, or a certain day of the week was called 'Emperor's Day', so it would be natural for Christians to name the first day of the week 'Lord's Day'. (3)

v.11 What thou seest, write in a book, and send it to the seven churches; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

All these cities were centres of Emperor-worship with the exception of Thyatira. (4)

v.13 one like a son of man.

'Like a Son of Man' in Apocalyptic is the exact equivalent of the Son of Man in the Gospels and Acts 7v56. (5)

- (1) Church Quarterly Review, No. 46, Vol. XXIII, p. 422
- (2) Lightfoot, Apostolic Fathers, 1.2.714
- (3) Charles, Vol. 1, p. 23
- (4) Thesis, Chap. VII
- (5) Charles, Vol. 1, p. 27

Chapter I

Jesus Christ is the supreme representative man, not Caesar.

vs.13-16 The King described. See above.

v.17 When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead.

The glorified Christ is such a one as to compel awe and worship.

v.18 The keys.

Power over the keys belongs to God alone. The association of Jesus Christ with God the Father is marked throughout the Book. See 5v6.

Chapter II

v.2 the church in Ephesus.

See Chapter VII. Thesis.

v.7 to him that overcometh.

The Book is a record of victories won by Christ and His Church and a prophecy of victories to be won. There are seven promises to the conquerors in chapters two and three.

See 2v11,17,26; 3vs5,12,21 and there is an eighth promise in 21v7.

the tree of life.

Death is involved in the struggle. Refusal to worship the Emperor was punishable by death. See Chapter V.(a) Thesis.

v.8 Smyrna.

See Thesis Chapter VII.

v.9 I know thy tribulation.

The need of light and comfort was pressing.

v.10 Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold the devil is about to cast some of you into prison that ye may be tried; and ye shall have

Chapter IX.

tribulation ten days.

The Supreme Being in the Kingdom of Evil attacks the faithful worshippers of Christ through his agents on earth, the Beast, the False Prophet and their followers, but believers need not fear them for the ultimate victory of their Lord was certain.

v.10 Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life.

Death was not defeat but the way to victory.

The writer may have had in mind the garlands worn in the service of pagan temples. (1)

v.11 He that overcometh.

The antagonism between the two kingdoms is constantly referred to. See 2v7.

v.12 Pergamum. See Thesis Chapter VII.

v.13 Satan's throne where Satan dwelleth.

The Imperial cult had its centre at Pergamum; and as the Imperial cult was the keystone of the Imperial policy, Pergamum summed up in itself the intolerable offense and horror of Caesar-worship. See Thesis Chapter VII.

Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you.

Although nothing is known of this martyr or of the persecution in which he suffered, it is altogether likely that his death was the result of his refusal to worship the Emperor for he was killed where Satan dwelleth. See previous note.

(1) Ramsey, Letters, p.256

Chapter II.

- v.17 To him that overcometh. See 2v7.
 v.18 Thyatira. See Thesis Chapter VII.
 v.26 And he that overcometh, and he that keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron.

Those who were faithful unto death were the overcomers—death was the gateway of life and victory. Authority over the nations is wrested from those ruling by force of arms and given to those who appeared to be their helpless victims. See 2v7.

Chapter III.

- v.1 Sardis. See Thesis Chapter VII.
 v.5 He that overcometh. See 2v7.
 v.7 Philadelphia. See Thesis Chapter VII.
 v.10 I also will keep thee from the hour of trial.

The bitter conflict between two opposing powers forms the background of the whole work.

- v.12 He that overcometh. See 2v7.

I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.....
 and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God.....and mine own new name.

It was customary for the provincial priest of the Imperial cult at the close of his year of office to erect his statue in the confines of the temple, inscribing on it his own name and his father's, his place of birth and year of office. Christians who overcame in the great conflict would be priests of God in the heavenly temple. (1)

- v.14 Laodicea. See Thesis Chapter VII.

(1) Charles, Vol.1, p.51

Chapter III.

v.14 the faithful and true witness. See lv3.

v.21 He that overcometh. See 2v7.

I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne,
as I also overcame and sat down with My Father in His
Throne.

Those loyal to Christ will reign with Him. Death will
be to them the road to royal power over men. See lv4.

Chapter IV.

v.2 A throne set in heaven, and one sitting upon the
throne;

Not Caesar but Christ is the supreme ruler of the
universe. See lv4.

v.3 A rainbow round about the throne.

The conception of a nimbus encircling supernatural
beings or deified men was familiar to the ancient world. It
was current among Greeks and Romans. The emperors were often
depicted with an encircling nimbus and other marks of divinity.

(1) See also lv4.

A statue of Nero with radiated head and other emblems of the
sun-god once towered one hundred and twenty feet high on the
pediment, the shattered remains of which are still visible be-
side the ruins of the Flavian Amphitheatre. (2)

vs.4,5,6 the throne. See lv4.

v.6 Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty.
The All-ruler. See lv8; 5v6.

(1) Charles, Vol.1, p.115

(2) Farrer, The Early days of Christianity,
Vol.1, p.18

Chapter IV.

- v.9 Him that sitteth on the throne. See 1v4.
- v.10 the four and twenty elders.....worship Him.....
saying 'Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive
the glory and the honour and the power.'

In contrast to Domitian's blasphemous claim to be called Dominus et Deus noster. (1) See also 1v4.

Chapter V.

- v.1 Him that sat on the throne. See 1v4.
- v.5 The Lion that is of the tribe of Judah.....hath
overcome.

Contrast the hydra-headed beast of Chapter 13.
the root of David.

A King by right of descent. See 22v16.

- v.6 in the midst of the throne. See 1v4.

a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain.

The majestic figure of the Lamb dominates the Book.

He only has the right to demand the worship of men. He it is whom Satan opposes, offering himself instead for the adoration of humanity. He is the conqueror before whom the Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet go down to utter defeat. Victory however was only won after terrific conflict even to death.

The powers of evil parody the powers of good, for Satan's agent is the beast whose death-stroke was healed. See 1v9; Also 5vs8,12,13; 6v1,16; 7vs9,10,14,17; 12v11; 13v8;14v1,4,4,10;15v3;17v14;19vs7,9;21v9,14,22,23,27;22v13.

(1) Suet. Domitian,13

Chapter V.

The Lamb is in closest association with God Almighty. See 7v9.

The Lamb.....having seven horns and seven eyes.

He is the all-powerful warrior and king - his counterpart is the Beast with the seven heads, 13vi.

v.7 him that sat on the throne. See 1v4.

v.8 fell down before the Lamb,

He alone is worthy to be worshipped. See 7v9; 5v6.

v.9 thou wast slain and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation,

Men were under the domination of another power. In the great conflict between Christ and Satan, the prize was the souls of men.

v.10 a kingdom and priests; and they shall reign upon the earth.

Not the Caesars but the persecuted Christians were the true kings of the earth; not the priests of the Caesar cult but those they caused to be put to death were its true priests.

v.11 round about the throne See 1v4.

v.12 Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

All these things were ascribed by the citizens of Rome and the provincials - those of Asia Minor being specially zealous to the Emperor. See 7v9; 5v6.

v.13 Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honour, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever.

See 5v6, 12; 1v4; 7v9.

Chapter V.

- v.14 and the elders fell down and worshipped.
See 5v8; 5v6; 7v9;

Chapter VI.

- v.1 the Lamb. See 5v6; 7v9.
v.6 I saw under the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:
The martyrs in the Haronic persecution. (1)
v.11 until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, which should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled. See 2v7,18.
v.15 the kings of the earth, and the princes, and the chief captains, and the rich, and the strong, and every bondsman and free-man, hid themselves.
All men trembled before another Emperor than Caesar.
v.16 Hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.
See 1v4; 5v6; 7v9.

Chapter VII.

- vc.1-8 The sealing.

The Israel of this vision is coextensive with the whole church. (2) The sealing secured the faithful against demonic agencies in the coming reign of the Antichrist. It is the special help that the faithful needed against the coming manifestation of Satanic wickedness linked with seeming supreme power. (3)

- v.9 standing before the throne and before the Lamb,
The Lamb is closely associated with Almighty God.
See 7v10; 14v4; 21v22; 22v1; Also 1v4; 5v6.

(1) Charles Vol.1.174. (2) Svete. p.99.
(3) Charles Vol.1. p.194.

Chapter VII.

v.10 salvation unto our God.

The title 'Saviour was freely given by the cities of Asia to the Emperors. (1)

which sitteth upon the throne. See 1v4;7v10.

and unto the Lamb. See 5v6;7v9.

v.11 round about the throne. See 1v4.

and they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever.

See 1v4;4v10;5v12,13,14;5v6;7v9.

v.14 the great tribulation.

There seems little doubt that the Seer refers to the persecution waged with such savage ferocity by Nero and revived under Domitian. The Martyrs are still arriving from the scene of the conflict. (2)

the Lamb. See 5v6;7v9.

v.15 Therefore are they before the throne of God....and he that sitteth upon the throne. See 1v4.

and they serve him day and night in his temple.

The true worship described.

v.17 The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne.

See 1v4;5v6;7v9.

And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.

See 21v4.

Chapter VIII.

v.3 before the throne. See 1v4.

(1) Ramsay, Bearing of Recent Discovery, Chapter 15.

(2) Charles, Vol I, p.213.

Chapter IX.

v.4 and it was said unto them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth.....but only such men as have not the seal of God on their foreheads.

The wrath of the Lamb will be more awful than the persecutions of the Emperor. See iv9.

v.11 They have over them as king the angel of the abyss: his name is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he hath the name Apollyon.

Abaddon = destruction. Apollyon = the destroyer. (1) See iv9.

v.20 And the rest of mankind.....repented not that they should not worship devils.

In the time of persecution the genius of Rome and the Emperor would seem to be devilish - the Dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. 13v2.

repented not of their murder, nor of their sorceries. Crimes which the Caesar cult were specially guilty of. See 13v15.

Chapter X.

v.3 the two witnesses.

If these are St. Peter and St. Paul (2) it would be further evidence for identifying the beast with Nero, who appeared as Nero redivivus in Domitian.

v.15 The beast that cometh up out of the abyss shall make war: on them.

The Beast anticipates a struggle between the Church and the whole power of the Roman Empire; he foresees that the troubles which began under Nero and Domitian will end in such a

(1) Charles, Vol. I, p. 245, 246.

(2) O. S. S. 35.74, Vol. XVII, Turner, Studies Early C. Hist. see Deane p. 435.

Chapter XI.

conflict as was actually brought about under Decius and in the last persecution under Diocletian. (1)

See liv3 and notes on Chapter 13.

- v.15 The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

The words suggest the vision of a world-empire, once dominated by an usurping power, which has now at length passed into the hands of its true Owner and Imperator. (2)

- v.16 Sit before God on their thrones. See lv4.

- v.17 We give thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, which art and which wast; because thou hast taken thy great power, and didst reign.

See liv15; lv4; lv8.

Chapter XII.

- v.3 a great red dragon.

The impersonation of the Devil, the supreme ruler of the Kingdom of Evil. See Thesis Chapters I, V, VI. The Emperor of the Kingdom of Evil, whom men really worshipped when they rendered divine honours to the beast. See Thesis Chapters I, V, VI.

- v.4 the dragon stood before the woman which was about to be delivered, that when she was delivered, he might devour her child.

The determination of the Devil to destroy if possible the One who was to wrest the kingdom of the world from him.

- v.5 She was delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron;

(1) Swete, p.137.
(2) Swete, p.142.

Chapter XII.

Christ who is the rightful and ultimate ruler of the nations, and he

and her child was caught up unto God, and unto his throne. See 1v4.

v.9

And the great dragon was cast down, the old serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world;

Christians were comforted and supported in their refusal to worship the Emperor by being shown that they were opposed by a beaten foe; that, though the devil was among them in great wrath, his time was short. (1)

v.10

Now is come the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down.

The Old Testament representation of Satan as the accuser of Job (2) suggests that the Dragon similarly attacks the faithful under the New Covenant. There is perhaps a reference to the zeal of the delators who abounded in Domitian's time, and were busy with their diabolical attacks on the Asian Christians. (3)

v.11

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb. See 5v6; 7v9.

v.12

The devil is gone down to you, having great wrath knowing that he hath but a short time. See 12v9.

v.17

And the dragon waxed wrath with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and hold the testimony of Jesus.

(1) Rev. 12v12.

(2) Job 1v9.

(3) Euseb., p.155.

Chapter XII.

The Beor never makes light of the persecution these believers must endure who remain loyal to Christ, and refused to worship Caesar; but he reveals to them the sure reward of victory. See 2v7.

Chapter XIII.

vs.1,2.

I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns names of blasphemy. and the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion;

The Roman Empire with her emperors claiming divine worship. See Thesis Chapters III, V.(b).

and the dragon gave him his power, and his throne and great authority.

See Thesis Chapter V(a) also 12 vs 1-17; 20v2; 1v4.

v.3

And I saw one of his heads as though it had been smitten unto death; and his death-stroke was healed; and the whole world wondered after the beast;

Here redivivus. See Thesis Chapter V.(b). Also 5v6. and 1v9.

v.4

and they worshipped the dragon, because he gave his authority unto the beast; and they worshipped the beast.

It is this supreme sin rather than the war waged against the saints that fills the writer with horror. To be indifferent to God and His cause is bad enough, to favor the cause of His opponents is worse, but to actually worship His rival is the last stage of infamy, the very essence of rebellion - the

Chapter XIII.

supreme sin.

*Domitian went beyond Nero in asserting his divinity. Nero shrank from the title of Divus and the erection of temples in his honour, because they seemed to forebode the approach of death. No such feelings held back Domitian from pressing his claims to Divine honours. He found a gloomy and perhaps a cynical pleasure in the shouts which greeted his arrival at the amphitheatre with Domitia; 'domine et dominus feliciter'. (1)

No doubt the earlier emperor received this idolatrous homage; but his reign marks no such stage in the development of the cult as Domitian's claim to the title 'Our Lord and God.' (2)

v.4 Who is like unto the Beast? and who is able to war with him?

This points to one of the motives which prompted the worship of the Beast. It was not moral greatness but brute force which commanded the homage of the provinces. The invincible power of Rome won Divine honours for the worst and meanest of men. (3)
See Thesis Chapter III, (a).

v.5 and there was given to him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies.

'The Beast's blasphemy was not casual but sustained. The assumption of divine names in public documents and inscriptions was a standing and growing blasphemy. (4)

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

(1) Suet. Domitian. 13. Swete. introd. p. 88.

(2) Ramsay, The Church in the Roman Empire, p. 302.

Westcott, Ep. St. John p. 267 ss.

(3) Swete, p. 165. (4) ib. p. 165.

Chapter XIII.

'Blasphemy against God was coupled with false accusations laid against His saints, the loyal members of the church.(1)

v.7

And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them;

See Thesis Chapter III, (b).

And there was given to him authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation.

That authority was wrested from him by Jesus Christ.

'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.'(2) See 12v9,10.

v.8

And all that dwell on the earth shall worship him.

'Not only did the Roman Empire seem to the provincials a power of world-wide extent, but it acquired a religious significance which rendered it yet more formidable. The Caesars were not merely obeyed, they were worshipped by the whole world. (3)

the Lamb. See 5v6; 7v9.

v.11

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

This second beast is the Imperial priesthood of the provinces with the president the high-priest of Asia. (4)
See Thesis, Chapter V, (a).

v.12

And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and they that dwell therein to worship the first beast whose death-stroke was healed.

(1) Swete p.166.

(2) Luke 10v18.

(3) Swete p.166.

(4) Swete, Introd. p.91. Charles Vol.1, p.357. Peake, p.936.

Chapter XIII.

The imperial priesthood used its delegated authority to enforce the worship of the ~~Emperor~~^{Empire}, which is here identified with Nero redivivus. (1)

v.13 And he doeth great signs.

The priests of the Imperial cult practised magic in connection with the rites of Caesar worship. Asia and Ephesus were particularly notorious for the practice of magical arts. The Church in Asia was hard pressed by these magic-mongers, and it is easy to imagine the effect of their lying wonders on an excitable population already predisposed to the Imperial cult and impatient of Christianity. (2)

An outburst of miracles was expected to mark the advent of the Antichrist. (3) See Ramsay, Letters, p.99.

v.14 And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs which it was given him to do in the sight of the beast;

These signs were wrought in the presence and with the approval of the Imperial officers. The Caesar-worship was a state function at which the Pro-consul and the other magistrates assisted, and the pagan priesthood performed their "Signs" before these representatives of the Empire. The jugglery of the priests addressed itself to persons in authority and not only to the ignorant populace. (4)

Saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image of the beast, who hath the stroke of the sword and lived.

- (1) Charles, Vol. 1, p. 359.
- (2) Swete, Introd. Ps. 89, 90.
- (3) Charles, Vol. 1, p. 359.
- (4) Swete, p. 170.

Chapter XIII.

The chief purpose of the 'signs' wrought by the priests of the Augusti was to popularize the cult by promoting the religious use of the statues of the Emperor.' Though any representation of the reigning Emperor, whether it was merely the Emperor's head upon a coin, or an 'image' painted or wrought upon a standard, or executed in metal or stone might be described as an image, no doubt busts or statues are intended here. Such 'images' had always received the highest honors from loyal subjects of the Empire. (1) But in the present passage the reference is rather to 'images' set up in the Sebasteia or temples of Rome and the Augusti. (2)

v.15

And it was given unto him to give breath to it, even to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should speak.

An allusion to the pretended miracles wrought by the priests, like the later miracles in the Middle Ages, by which a stone image was made to move and act like a living being. (3) The belief in speaking and wonder-working statues was a well established one in the ancient world. Simon Magnus is said to have declared 'I have made statues to move; I have brought the dead to life.' (4)

Besides such wonders as Apollonius of Tyana and Apelles of Assalon at the court of Caligula of the first century, there are remarkable parallels in the second century. Statues were regarded as the natural means by which gods or demons could have intercourse with their worshippers, and were accredited with the power

(1) Suet. Tib. 48, Calig. 14

(2) Swete p. 171.

(3) Peake p. 937.

(4) Charles, Vol. 1, p. 361.

Chapter XIII.

of working miracles and of possessing supernatural energies.

Most oriental cults had recourse to magic and to trickery, and there is no just ground for doubting that the Imperial cult availed itself of their help. The association of Roman officials and sorcerers is attested in Acts 13v6. (1)

v.15 And cause that as many as should not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

When Christians were brought before the Imperial officials, an image of the reigning Emperor was produced by way of testing their Christianity. Refusal to worship carried with it capital punishment. (2)

v.16 And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond that there be given them a mark on their right hand or upon their forehead;

Deissman (3) shows that in Egypt under the Empire official documents were stamped with the name and year of the Emperor, and the stamp was known as the 'Charagma'. Others have thought of the branding of soldiers, slaves and temple devotees, but it is not likely that such a mark was actually imposed on all the provincials who conformed. Ramsay thinks that certificates similar to the 'libelli' of the Decian persecution, which were put into the hands of those who sacrificed are referred to and regards the mark on the forehead as merely 'the apocalyptic description of a universal reputation for conspicuous devotion to the cult of the Emperor. (4)

- (1) Charles, Vol.1 p.361
- (2) Pliny's Letter to Trajan 10.96
- (3) Deissmann, Biblical Studies, p.242
- (4) Ramsay, Letters, p.110

Chapter XIII.

Bwete says 'as the servants of God receive on their forehead (1) the impress of the Divine Seal, so the servants of the Beast are marked with the stamp of the beast' in 'fronte propter professionem, in manu propter operationem'. (2) Also see lv9.

v.17 and that no man should be able to buy or sell, save he that hath the mark, even the name of the beast

'The object of enforcing the wearing of the mark is not the minor one of cutting off the recusants from buying and selling; for the penalty of such recusancy is immediate death. The necessities of life are to be withheld from such as have not the mark of the beast, in order to bring them under the notice of the Imperial authorities, and that thus none should escape. A ruthless economic warfare is here proclaimed with a view to the absolute supremacy of the State.' (3)

v.18 Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding, let him count the number of the beast; for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred and sixty and six.

The problem is to 'find the man, the letters of whose name, when regarded as numerals, sum up to the total 666'. There have been many guesses, but very few of them have any claim upon our attention. The best solution is that he was Nero. The words *Neron Caesar* or *Nero Caesar* when written in Hebrew characters make up the numbers 666 and 616 respectively, and as both readings, viz., 666 and 616, are found in vogue in early times, and the solution does for both, we may regard it as tolerably certain that this is the

- (1) Rev. 7v3
- (2) Bwete, p.173
- (3) Charles, Vol.1, p.363

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key which fits the lock. It has been pointed out that the name of Jesus made 888 in Greek letters.(1) Possibly 666 was an ancient symbol of the beast. The Beor has observed that it also fits a man (not perfectly well, for Heron Caesar in Hebrew would more naturally sum up to 676, but written defectively it gives 666); the ancient beast of apocalyptic tradition is thus incarnate in a man. Hence the sending of the passage, 'Let him count the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man.' The beast is incarnate in Nero. (2)

It was when the active hostility of both beasts was aroused, the civil power represented by the governor and the religious power represented by the 'concilia', presided over by the Asiarch that the Christians were persecuted with bitter virulence.

Chapter XIV.

v.1 The Lamb. See 5v6; 7v9.

v.3 Before the thrones. See 1v4.

v.4 These.....follow the Lamb. See 5v6; 7v9.

v.4 Firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb. See 7v9; 5v6.

vs.6-11 In this passage is seen the vision of the judgment to be executed on the Roman Empire and its worshippers. Three angels make proclamation. The first proclaimed to all men an eternal gospel, the burden of which was that all men should worship the one God who has created heaven and earth, for that the hour of His judgment had come. (vs.6-7) The second announced, as though already

(1) Siby. Orac. l. p.328

(2) Peake. p.937; Beete. p.175-176; Charles, Vol.1. p.364 sq.

Chapter XIV.

accomplished, the fall of Rome, which had made all nations to drink of the wine of her fornication. (v8) (Her spiritual fornication was her most heinous crime in that she had worshipped and forced others to worship another than God). The third proclaimed that those who submitted to the mandates of Rome would share in the everlasting torment that awaited her. (vs.9-11) (1) This angel denounces the Caesar-worshippers.

This is a counter-proclamation to that which is put into the mouth of the beast; if the supporters of the Caesar-worship threatened recusants with boycotting and even death, the angel seeks to deter them from yielding by the prospect of a worse doom. (2)

The partial punishments inflicted under the trumpets now gives place to a judgment which is final and a sentence without time limits. The denial of Christ by a Christian was a sin for which the Church knew no remedy. It was an eternal sin which brought a corresponding recompense. Those who desert Christ for Caesar will be the victims of a reverse that never dies or sleeps. This passage is quoted by Cyprian (3) in A.D. 252-3 to deter the African Churches from sacrificing. (4)

v.10 In the presence of the Lamb. See 5v6; 7v9.

v.12 Here is the patience of the saints, they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

Here in this struggle with the Empire lay the Church's opportunity of working out her salvation through patient endurance in well-doing. The Caesar-cult supplied the Saints with a test of

- (1) Charles, Vol.2, 11-12; Swete, P.184
- (2) Swete, p.184
- (3) Cyprian, ep. 58.7
- (4) Swete, p.186

Chapter XIV.

loyalty which strengthened and matured those who were worthy of the name. Such were those who kept the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. (1)

v.13 Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord.

The purpose of the revelation was to bring comfort to those who in the persecutions would need strong consolation. (2)

Chapter XV.

v.2 And I saw as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire; and them that come victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the glassy sea having harps of God.

The conquerors are martyrs who suffer in the conflict with the promoters of the Caesar-worship. The all-powerful Beast is compelled after all to let them slip from his grasp; they, not he, gain the day. The genuine acts of the martyrs show them in the light of conquerors up to the moment of death (3) but the Apocalypse follows the victors into the life beyond, and sees them celebrating their victory in the presence of God. (4)

v.3 the song of the Lamb. See 576; 779.

Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages.

There is good authority for the reading King of the nations. The true Sovereign of the nations is not Augustus, but their Creator, the Living God, and He will in the end receive their homage. See 178.

(1) Beete, p.186
(2) ib. p.187

(3) Beete, p.19
(4) Beete, p.194

Chapter XV.

- v.4 All the nations shall come and worship before thee.
 God and not Caesar will be worshipped in that day.

Chapter XVI.

- v.2 And the first (angel) went and poured out his bowl into
 the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon
 the men which had the mark of the beast, and which wor-
 shipped his image.

The Egyptian magicians were attacked by sores. It is
 probable that the Seer has this in mind when he represents the first
 of the Last Plague as breaking out in sores on the Caesar-worshippers,
 who were controlled by the magicians of the temples of Hene and the
 Augusti.

- v.4 they poured out the blood of saints and prophets.

The refusal to pay divine honours to the Emperor was
 usually the ultimate crime for which the Christians were put to death.

- v.7 Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy
 judgments. See 1v8.

- v.10 And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the
 beast and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their
 tongues for pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven
 because of their pains and their sores; and they repented
 not of their works.

Whilst earlier plagues have seized on the subjects of
 the Empire, the very seat of government is now assailed; the Empire
 itself in its heart and centre is covered with a pall of darkness
 which forebodes death. (1) See also 1v4.

Chapter XVI.

'They repented not', seems to indicate again that the worship of the beast is an unpardonable sin, for those who are guilty of it are past repentance. (cf. 14vii).

v.12 And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sunrise.

Kera redivivus was expected to return at the head of the Parthian hosts. (1)

v.13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits as it were frogs; for they are the spirits of devils, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

We have here the Trinity of Evil, the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet, or the second beast. (2) The Great Adversary of God, the Arch-rebel, the deceiver of the world, incarnate in the beast - the brute force of World-power represented by the Roman Empire - assisted by the whole organisation of the Emperor cult - the false spiritual power which made common cause with the temporal power in doing Satan's work. (3)

v.14 the Almighty. See 1v8.

v.17 There came forth a great voice out of the temple from the throne. See 1v4.

- (1) Charles, Vol. II, p. 46
- (2) Thesis, Chap. V (c)
- (3) Swete, p. 206

Chapter XVI.

v.19 And Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, (1) and I will not give my glory to another. (2)

v.21 and men blasphemed God. See 16vii; 14vii.

Chapter XVII.

vs.1-2 The judgment of the great harlot....with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication.

Among the many sins for which she was judged her spiritual fornication was the most heinous. (3)

v.3 I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy.

The Great Harlot appears riding on a monster which is doubtless to be identified with the wild beast from the sea - the world-power regarded as an enemy of Christ and His Church and ruling by brute force. In 13vi the names of blasphemy stand on the Beast's seven heads, there they cover his body. The Empire reeked with the blasphemous worship of the Emperors; not its head only but the whole body politic did this dishonour to the living God. (4)

v.4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls.

The lavish and ostentatious display of the Imperial city did much to impress the provincials, and was a considerable factor in gaining their ready acquiescence in Emperor-worship.

(1) Deut. 5v9
(2) Is. 48vii

(3) Rev. 14v8
(4) Swete, p.215

Chapter XIII.

v.4 Having in her hands a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication.

The abominations included the cults as well as the vices of Roman life.

v.5 Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of the Harlots and of the abominations of the earth.

She was the supreme abomination. Sin, which in its essence is rebellion against God, is vile, the worship of sin is viler; it is the great abomination. The Harlot is the personification of that abomination.

v.6 And I saw the women drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the martyrs of Jesus.

Those who refused to sin with her were put to death. Nor had she sinned in ignorance, for testimony had been borne to Christ by more than one generation of saintly sufferers in the presence of high officials of the Empire. (1)

vs. 7-13 The mystery of the woman and the beast explained.

See notes on Chapter XIII.

v.14 These shall war against the Lamb and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings.

Domitian styled himself Lord and God. (2)

If the Roman Emperor, a Nero or a Domitian, could be styled princeps, imperator, dominus, the Head of the Church was more - princeps regum, rex regum, dominus dominorum; crowned heads were His subjects and would one day be put under His feet. (3)

(1) Swete, p.215

(2) Suet. Dom. 1.13

(3) Swete, p.223

Chapter XVII

It is the Lamb who is Lord of lords and King of Kings. See 3v6;7v9.

Chapter XVIII.

vs.1-24 The judgement of the Great Harlot and an account of the extravagant luxury and the inhuman selfishness of the age of the Caesars.

v.20 Rejoice ever her, thou heaven, and ye saints, and ye apostles, and ye prophets; for God hath judged your judgement on her. The Church is at last avenged of her enemy. The worshippers of Jesus Christ are at last vindicated.

v.21 a strong angel took up a stone as it were a great mill-stone and cast it into the sea,

This action symbolizes the complete submergence, the final disappearance of pagan Imperial Rome. (1)

v.23 for thy merchants were the princes of the earth;

Rome was submerged by her very greatness, for her position had been used to bewitch and mislead the world and not to raise and purify it. Traders who could make Rome their market became merchant princes, while Rome on her part acquired a world wide influence which she used for evil; through their traffic with her all nations had learnt to adopt her false standards of life and worship. (2)

for with thy sorcery were all the nations deceived.

Rome was full of professors of the black art, but the word is probably used in the wider sense of the witchery of gay and luxurious vice and its attendant idolatries by which the world was fascinated and led astray. (3)

(1) Beete, p. 239.
 (2) 14. p. 241.
 (3) 14. p. 241.

Chapter XVIII.

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

The blood shed by Rome was not simply that of gladiators
'Butchered to make a Roman holiday' many of whom probably deserved
their fate,(1) but that also of saints and prophets.

The blood of the saints is sufficiently explained by the massacre
of A.D.64 and the recent troubles under Domitian.(2) Among the
Roman saints on both occasions there were no doubt members of the
prophetic order.(3) But the responsibility of Rome was not limited
to martyrdoms which occurred within the city; the world was under her
rule, and the loss of all the lives sacrificed throughout the Empire
lay at her door.(4)

Chapter XIX.

v.1 I heard a great voice of a great multitude in
heaven, saying, Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and power,
belong to our God.

See 7v10; 12v10. Also 5v6; 7v9.

v.4 worshipped God that sitteth on the throne. See 1v4; 5v6.

v.5 And a voice came forth from the throne. See 1v4.

v.6 Hallelujah; for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth.

It is not the doom of Babylon for which the Church thanks
God, but for its sequel—the setting up of the Kingdom of God.

The world-power has fallen, in order that the spiritual and eternal
may take its place; for the 'deus et dominus noster' of the pagan
provincials St. John substitutes 'the Lord our God' of the Church
throughout the Empire, of the Saints and the Angels on earth and in

heaven. (5)

(1) Dill, Roman Society, p.242.
(2) Clem. Rom. Cor. 1, 5sq.
(3) Rom. 12v6

(4) Swete, p.241
(5) Id. p.245

Chapter XIX.

v.7 the marriage of the Lamb. See 5v6;7v9;17v14.

and his wife hath made herself ready. See 1v9;21v9;22v7.

v.8 the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

'For this clean,glistering,byssus-made fabric represents the righteous acts of the Saints-the two are equivalent as sin and lawlessness are convertible terms' (1)

v.9 the Lamb. See 5v6;7v9;17v14.

v.11 in righteousness he doth judge and make war

'The Christ who comes is both Judge and Warrior,and He judges first,for in the Divine order judgement precedes victory. His judgements are in righteousness,for they are God's. The Seer perhaps mentally contrasts them with the corrupt practices of Eastern courts and the injustice often received at the Praesensule tribunal.(2)

v.12 upon his head are many diadems;

Christ,who refused the diadem when offered to Him by Satan,the Prince of the Kingdom of Evil,was crowned on the merit of His victorious Passion,and now appears wearing not one royal crown, but many.All the provinces of God's universe belong to the Lord's Christ.(3)

v.14 And the armies which are heaven followed him

Caesar seemed supreme as a military dictator,but Jesus Christ was captain of the hosts of heaven,which were at His service even in the days of His flesh.(4)

v.15 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron. See 2v27;12v5.
the wrath of Almighty God. See 1v8.

v.16 King of kings and Lord of lords. See 17v14.

v.19 And I saw the beast,and the kings of the earth,and th/air
armies gathered together to make war against him th/ut
sat upon the horse and against his army.And the beast was

(2) Swete,p.250,251

(1) Swete p.247

(3) Mt. 26v53

(4) Mt. 26v53

(2) Swete,p.251

(1) Swete,p.247

Chapter XX.

taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought the signs in his sight, wherewith he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image; they twain were cast alive into the lake of fire that burneth with brimstone; and the rest were killed with the sword of Him that sat upon the horses.

The overthrow and end of the Beast and the False Prophet- the final break up of the Roman World-power (typified by the reigning Emperors) and its ally the pagan system of priestcraft and superstition, presided over by the High-priest of Asia. The Seer still has in view the magical arts practized by the priests of the Caesar temples. (1) As the two had fought together against Christ they will ultimately fall together. (2)

Chapter XXI.

v.2 And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan and bound him
The one who had given his authority unto the beast was himself seized and bound. See 13v4.

v.4 And I saw thrones. See 1v4.

v.6 And I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished.

The Seer still had in mind the martyrs of his own age, the victims of Nero and Domitian. The triumph of Christ is shared not by the martyrs only, but by all who under the sway of the Beast

Chapter XX.

and the False Prophet suffered reproach, boycotting, imprisonment or loss of goods, though they did not win the martyr's crown. (1)

Those who suffered in the Great Tribulation were specially blessed.

v.4 And they lived and reigned with Christ .

'The Christ' occurs in the Apocalypse only in 11v15; 12v10; 20v4,6; and is probably in each case a reminiscence of Psalm 2v2. The Lord's anointed against whom the kings of the earth conspired, has triumphed over His enemies, and His victory ensures that of those who have fought at His side. (2)

A thousand years.

'Comparing this vision with that of the two witnesses, if the 1260 days symbolize the duration of the triumph of heathenism, the thousand years symbolize the duration of the triumph of Christianity. In both passages we have virtually the same fact symbolized viz. the victory of the principles for which the martyrs died and the confessors endured hardship and loss. How short the age of persecution would be when compared with the duration of a dominant Christianity is shown by the adoption of a term of three and a half years in the one case and of a thousand years in the other.

The question remains at what epoch the great chapter in history represented by the thousand years began, and it would seem that St. John has in view the moment of the overthrow of the Beast and the False Prophet, i.e. the final break up of the Roman world-power and its ally, the pagan system of priestcraft and superstition.

That the age of the martyrs, however long it might last, would be followed by a far longer period of Christian supremacy, during

(1) Swete, p. 262

(2) Swete, p. 262

Chapter XX.

which the faith for which the martyrs died would live and reign, is the essential teaching of the present vision. (1)

v.6 They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him.

Those who refused to obey the priests of Caesar and worship the Emperor, themselves became priests of Jesus Christ and reign with him.

The inclusion of Christ with God in the Object of Divine Service is peculiar to this passage, but it agrees with the passages which refer to the joint worship of God and of the Lamb by heavenly beings, and with the general tendency of the book to regard Christ as the equivalent of God. (2) See 2lv22. Also 5v6; 7v9.

v.10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall all be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The final judgment of the Trinity of Evil. (3)

v.11 I saw a great white throne. See 1v4.

v.12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne.

All the dead whatever their condition on earth may have been—the Proconsul, as that official was often reminded by Christians when they appeared before him, down to the meanest slave. (4)

v.15 If any was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.

This conception furnished the Christian martyr with a last warning for the Proconsul who threatened him with the stake. (5)

(1) Swete, p. 266
(2) ib. p. 264
(3) Thesis, Chapter V.

(4) Swete, p. 274
(5) ib. p. 274

Chapter XXI

v.2 a bride. See 1v9;21v9;22v17.

v.4 And he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes;and death shall be no more;neither shall there be mourning, nor crying,nor pain,any more.

These words would be of special comfort to those who were the victims of relentless persecution and were constantly threatened with violent death. See 7v17.

v.5 He that sitteth on the throne
Christ not Caesar. See 1v4

v.6 I am Alpha and Omega,the beginning and the end.

Here as in 1v8 the Eternal Father is referred to,while it is equally clear in 22v13 that the reference is to the Incarnate Son. See 5v6.

v.7 He that overcometh shall inherit these things.

This carries us back to the seven promises in Revelation 2 and 3.It completes and in effect embraces the rest.(1) See 2v7.

v.8 But for the fearful,and unbelieving,and abominable, and murderers,and fornicators,and sorcerers,and idolaters,and all liars,their part shall be in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone;which is the second death.

First among the condemned are the 'deici'-members of the Church who like soldiers turning their backs upon the enemy fail under trial;not 'the fearful' as in the A. V. and R.V. but the cowards or craven in Christ's army.

It is not fear or even flight which incurs the penalty but cowardice which in the last resort prefers ease or earthly life to Christ.Many a Christian had to make that choice-'Worship Caesar and live,be loyal to Christ and die'

Chapter XXI.

The 'unbelieving' applies to the Christian who by act or word denies his faith, as well as the pagan who insults or blasphemes it. The reference to 'murderers' is probably chiefly to the violent deaths of Christians whether incurred at the hands of the mob or by the order of the courts. 'Sorcerers' See notes on 13v13-15.(1)

vs.9-27 The glories of the New Jerusalem described in contrast to the transient splendour of Rome. The glory of Jesus Christ is eternal and He will be worshipped throughout all ages. See 1v9.

vs.9,10 One of the ^{seven} angels who had the seven bowls carried me away in the spirit and shewed me the holy city Jerusalem.

It was through the ministry of one of the Seven Angels that the writer saw the vision of the harlot city. The city of the Supreme King is contrasted with the city of His rival. See 1v9.

v.9 I will show thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb
See 1v9; 5v6; 7v9; 21v2.

v.14 The Lamb. See 5v6; 7v9; 17v14.

v.22 The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb.
The Lamb is in the closest association with the All-ruler.
See 20v6; 1v8; 7v9; 14v4; 22v1; 5v6; 7v14.

v.23 the glory of God did lighten it and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. See 5v6; 7v9; 17v14.

v.24 And the nations shall walk amidst the light thereof;
Rome had exerted a world-wide influence, but the light of Rome was to go out in darkness as the Seer foresaw. (2) The Church alone possesses an unfailing source of illumination. (3)

v.26 And the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it.

(1) See note, p. 282
(2) Rev. 18v23
(3) See note, p. 296

Chapter XXI.

In contrast to the kings who wailed over the fate of Rome (1)

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

As Rome in her time attracted the merchandise of the world(2) so in the days to come all that is best in human life will flow into the city of God.

v.27 There shall in no wise enter into it anything that maketh a lie.

Insincerity was one of the deplorable features of the Caesar cult. See 22v13.

they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

See 5v6;7v9;17v14.

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v.1 the throne of God and of the Lamb.

See 20v6;1v4;5v6;7v9;17v14.

v.2 the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Rome had corrupted the nations, but the fruits of the Tree of Life which flourished in the city of God were for their healing.

v.3 The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein.

See 22v1;20v6;1v4;5v6;7v9;17v14.

v.4 His name shall be in their foreheads

In contrast to the mark of the Beast.

See 13v16,17;14v9,11;15v2;16v2;19v20;20v4.

v.5 they shall reign for ever and ever

Those who serve Christ reign with Him. Those who

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worshipped Caesar debased themselves. See 5v10; 20v24, 26.

v.6 the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass.

The view that St. John wrote history beforehand is hardly consistent with the message of this verse. See 22v.7, 10, 12, 20.

v.7 behold, I come quickly. See 22v6.

v.8, 9 I fell down to worship See thou do it not.... worship God.

The Lamb is God and therefore is worthy of the adoration of mankind. See 20v6; 21v22.

v.10 Seal not up the words of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand.

A clear indication that the Seer was writing of events that he believed to be within sight and of great moment to the readers of his work. See 22v6.

v.11 He that is unrighteous.

The wrong-doer, with special reference perhaps to the persecutor; so at least the sufferers in the Vienne troubles understood it. (1)

v.12 Behold I come quickly. See 22v6.

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

'This is the crowning instance in this book of the attributing of Divine prerogatives to the Incarnate Son. (2)
See 21v6; 1v8.

v.15 Sorecerers, fornicators, idolaters.

See 9v21; 18v23; 21v8; 22v5.

(1) Eus.H.E.5.1; Swete, p.305

(2) Swete, p.307

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v.15 every one that loveth a lie.

The lover of a lie proves his affinity to Satan, 'the father of lies', who deceived the whole world. See 12v9.

v.16 I am the root and the offspring of David,

A King by right of descent. See 5v5.

the bright and morning star.

More glorious than any earthly ruler. See 1s.14v12.

v.17 And the Spirit and the bride say ,Come.

See 1v9;21v2;21v9.

If 'the Spirit and the bride' is equivalent to 'the prophets and the saints'(1) we have another indication of the longing of the persecuted Christians for relief.

v.20 He which testifieth these things saith,Yea:I come quickly.

The word of comfort so sorely needed. See 1v7;22v10;22v12.

Yea;Amen.

Here Yea,expresses the Lord's assent to the call of 'Come' and Amen the absolute faith in His word of the Book and those whom he represents,and their content with the prospect of His coming.

(2) See 1v7.

Come,Lord Jesus.

A fitting title with which to close the Book. See 22v21.

v.21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The grace of the Lord Jesus is the only source of the persecuted Christians strength and the guarantee of his triumph.(3)
Saints.

'The men of consecrated lives ,are,in the Apocalypticist's view,the men for whose advantage the whole course of human history

(1) Swete,p.310
(2) ib. p.313
(3) ib. p.313

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is being carried to its end; who are destined as a body to survive in the wreck of cities and empires, and in the end to dominate a new world! (1)

These apparently helpless victims of the tyrant they refused to worship were those who were to reign with the Lord to whom they remained loyal even to death.

(1) Swete, p. 313.

II. Summing up of the principles involved.

The long list of references to Emperor-worship compiled in the previous chapter must impress any reader with the conception of the importance it plays in the work. If even the apparently vague and doubtful references are passed over, the undoubted ones are so numerous, so evenly distributed, and so closely bound up with the message of the book, that a reader finds it increasingly hard to believe that the writer could possibly be projecting his mind into successive ages and describing beforehand outstanding events or characters in the future.

The times were too terrible, the need of exposing the inherent weakness of the persecuting power too imperative, the need of present comfort too urgent, to permit us to imagine that a prophet of God would offer to the hard pressed Christians of his day a series of visions of the future instead of the solid comfort and support which would be supplied by his unveiling the spiritual purposes and forces that underlay the struggle. The impression which the Apocalypse produces when read in the light of its historic setting is in harmony with the truer conception of prophecy. The Seer does not appear to be projecting his vision into the future but rather concentrating it on the dire conflict before him and seeking to get beneath the surface and to penetrate to the essence of events.

When St. John could write that the Devil had come down having great wrath, knowing that his time was short⁽¹⁾, when the emperor Domitian was such a terrible reality, when the whole organization of the Caesar cult was so bent on the destruction of his brethren, it

(1) Rev. 12v12

surely shows a lack of sympathetic insight, a failure of the historic sense, and a misunderstanding of the prophetic function to argue that St. John unrolled before the eyes of the poor victims of a bitter, implacable and blasphemous foe a plan of the ages, and spoke for their comfort of powerful antagonists who should be destroyed in far remote centuries.

The historical origin of the work must determine its permanent value and provide the key to its interpretation. Too often the mistake has been made of seizing upon characters who were engaged in a purely secular conflict between state and state as fulfilling fancied predictions in this work. It cannot be too clearly realized that no conflict between state and state, as such, finds any place in this book. It deals with the conflict between a Kingdom which is not of this world, and the kingdoms which oppose it. It depicts the great conflict between secular power and the unseen forces behind it on the one hand and the Church of God on the other.

While that secular power allowed freedom to the new divine society to govern itself by its own inherent laws, to worship as its creed required, to expand as its universal nature impelled it to, there was no conflict; the Church counselled loyalty even to a Nero. But directly the state set itself to contravene the vital principles of the new society, to hamper its missionary activities, to outrage its sense of the exclusiveness of the worship due to God, the Church resisted—passively resisted if you wish—more exactly resisted with the passion of martyrdom. That is the historic setting of the Apocalypse. If ever and whenever similar circumstances occur the distinctive message of the Apocalypse lives again.

Although in the intervening centuries the secular power and the Divine Society have never again come into such complete and intense antagonism, yet from time to time state authority has outraged the Christian conscience, and in every such crisis the message from Patmos has been found to be one of Divine comfort. The permanent value of the book is not to be sought, then, in its predictions of specific events and personages but rather in providing assurance of the innate weakness of oppressors and the inherent strength of the Church in a struggle which seems likely to be continuous throughout time.

The experience of the past has shown that the material of this book is such as to provoke a certain type of mind to endeavour to make an historic map of the future. Probably the best corrective would be to present to those so tempted a series of these efforts such as have been made from the very early days of the Church, indicating the failure of its guesses in every case, except where the event is yet in the future. Further, our Lord's words 'of that day and that hour knoweth no man' (1) surely indicate that any such endeavours must prove abortive.

Apocalyptic never busied itself with the fixing of future dates or in identifying remote antagonists of the Kingdom of God. Its function was to furnish moral support, in the present, by unveiling the moral weakness of opponents and the divine strength of the Kingdom. When the Roman Empire leagued its immense power with the craft of the pagan priesthood and entered upon that fateful contest with the Church of Christ, Apocalyptic found a supreme opportunity for the highest fulfilment of its function. To turn the Apocalypse into a field for the exercise of mental

agility for the gratifying of mere feeble curiosity is surely to prostitute this supreme embodiment of Apocalyptic principle, the chief end of which is not so much to minister to intellectual illumination as to supply moral strength and a sure hope of the final victory of good and God.

Still, as has been said, there is something in the work which tempts to such endeavours. Probably these provoking causes may be summed up under two heads. First there has often a failure to grasp the true nature of prophecy, by insisting too exclusively on the predictive element in it. Apart from what the author of the Apocalypse had learned from the teaching of our Lord in His Eschatological discourses, the predictive element in the Apocalypse forms a close parallel to that in the Old Testament prophecies. Allowing that there are definite predictions in the O.T. and that these predictions were not the result merely of a supreme gift of insight, it may safely be claimed that both the O.T. prophets and St. John dealt rather with the moral principles of Divine government than with the writing of history beforehand. There is indeed one notable difference between them. The O.T. prophets realized that they were dealing not only with the secular issues affecting Israel and the surrounding nations but with a conflict of principles, 'of Jehovism and idolatry, of truth and falsehood, of good and evil' (1); yet to our Lord the conflict was greatly intensified. They looked for the Messiah who should captain God's cause and dealt with less awful manifestations of the brutality of earthly power; he wrote after the Messiah had come and when the kingdoms of the world were dominated by one supreme and bitterly hostile ruler. His work came out of the fiery

furnace of affliction, when the Church and the world were locked in the deadliest conflict - how deadly none realized as he, for he saw to the heart of things.

In the second place there is a temptation to endeavour to forecast the future arising out of an element in the work itself. Every patient student of the Apocalypse will admit that as he has read there has come over him at times from its pages a vague foreboding that the same dire conflict which took place in St. John's day may in a final and consummate form yet be ~~awaiting~~ the Church of Christ. ~~This~~ foreboding it is true may be due to a deeply implanted sense of the continuous, inevitable and bitter struggle between good and evil. But there are tendencies in the world around us which give countenance to such an apprehension. There are movements in the world secular in origin, selfishly economic in principle, avowedly or secretly hostile to Christianity, which aim more and more overtly at capturing the governments of the nations. Parallel with these secular movements there is a spirit stirring in the sundered Churches of Christendom towards union. The animating principle of this movement is felt to be not only to meet the ordinary conflict with the world but to meet something extraordinary. If such movements as these should ever attain their objectives then once more a conflict similar to that with Emperor-worship would be inevitable. Should such a contingency again arise the message of inspiration and hope contained in the Apocalypse would be treasured by Christians as it must have been in the days of St. John.

While the suggestion of the possibility of such an Armageddon may be put forward arising from the book itself and as accounting in part for the persistent attempts to make a map of the future, it still remains that the Apocalypse has a continuous and permanent

value, for the Church is never without attacks from some quarters on its vital principles. The long continued conflict between the ideas of Church and State, the resistance even of Christian governments at intervals to the most moderate claims of the Church to be a 'Ecclesia Perfecta' are evidence that the conflict between the two Empires is a perpetual one. Hence the lasting value of the Apocalypse. Hence also should we look for the proper key to its interpretation.

Christianity, as has been pointed out earlier in this thesis, is universal, absolute, and aggressive. (1) It cannot be otherwise and so must ever challenge the opposition of those who are not in harmony with its inherent principles. In consequence the conflict between the Church and the world must ever go on with more or less intensity, and the Church must ever need the reassurance of the Apocalyptic message.

It is hardly necessary to add that this message is not only for the Church in her corporate aspect but also for the individuals who comprise it. Though individuals, according as they take an optimistic or a pessimistic view of human society, will naturally differ as to the developments of the future, yet it is beyond controversy that in a thousand ways this age-long conflict is being reproduced in individual lives. Not a day passes in which individuals are not called upon to make decisions which reveal their attitude towards the two opposing kingdoms. Readers of the Apocalypse will always be strengthened in their resolve to refuse homage to Caesar and to be loyal to Jesus Christ.

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