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AN ATTEMPT

S. H. 1830

TO

ELUCIDATE THE PROPHECIES

CONCERNING

ANTICHRIST.

BY S. R. MAITLAND.

“Quisquis hæc legit, ubi pariter certus est, pergat mecum : ubi pariter
hæsitat quærat mecum : ubi errorem suum cognoscit redeat ad me : ubi
meum revocet me.”

August. de Trin. I. iii.



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AN ATTEMPT,

&c.

THE common doctrine of the Christian Church, grounded on the plain declarations of Scripture, has always been, that at some period or other, an Apostacy should take place, promoted and headed by some person, or power, who is variously described in the Scripture as the **LITTLE HORN**, the **BEAST**, the **MAN OF SIN**, the **SON OF PERDITION**, and the **WICKED ONE**; and who has been commonly known to the Church under the title of **ANTICHRIST**.

Thus far, the early Church and the Protestant Church, in the present day, are agreed; but they differ in three very important particulars. It is perhaps impossible, where so many writers are concerned, to speak quite accurately; but I believe that the opinions which I here attribute to the early Church, were held by all Christian writers until the twelfth century; and that those which I ascribe to the Protestant Church, are, in fact, the sentiments which have been maintained by most Protestant divines, and which are held by most writers on Prophecy in the present day. The three points to which I refer are these—

(1.) As to the *Nature* of the Apostacy.

The early Church conceived of it as an actual departure, not merely from the purity of the Christian faith by professed Christians but, from Christianity itself—a falling away from all profession of Christianity, into open, and blasphemous, and persecuting, infidelity.

The Protestant Church understands by the Apostacy, the impure Christianity of a corrupt part of the Christian Church, or a hypocritical profession of Christianity, by a Church pretending to be Christian.

(2.) As to the *Duration* of the Apostacy.

The early Church did not expect that the Apostacy would take place until a few years before the second Advent of our Lord ; or that the persecution of the saints arising out of it would last more than three years and a half. Protestant writers in general maintain, that the Apostacy took place more than a thousand years ago ; and that it has existed, or will, at its termination, have existed, 1260 years.

(3.) As to the *Leader* or Head of the Apostacy.

The early church expected an individual Antichrist, who should be an infidel blasphemer, giving honour to no God, suffering no religious worship to be paid except to himself, and requiring that worship from all men on pain of death.

Protestant writers suppose a succession of individuals, each in his turn becoming an integral part of an Antichrist, composed of the whole series ; and that the leader or head of this body has been, and is, a Christian bishop, professing to be the vicar of Christ upon earth, and to act for his glory.

It is needless to say that these opinions are widely different; but it is not unimportant to consider which is right. For my own part, without repeating what I have elsewhere said on the absurdity of attempting to apply the predictions concerning Antichrist to the Pope,* I shall at once say, that the doctrine of the Primitive Church on the subject, so far as I have here stated it, appears to me to be correct, and scriptural.

I believe that much of the obscurity which rests upon the predictions of Daniel and St. John, arises from their having been considered as *chronological* prophecies; that is to say, prophecies giving an anticipatory history of the events which should take place in the Christian Church, from the time when they were delivered, until the consummation of all things. On the contrary, I believe that their chief object is to reveal things which are still future; and their chief subject the HISTORY OF ANTICHRIST—his rise, progress, and destruction. It will be obvious therefore, that I do not find in the Scripture anything about the ten Gothic kingdoms, or the delusions of Mahomet, the overthrow of the French monarchy, or the Turkish empire. I believe that the prophetic Scriptures do not (unless it may be incidentally) throw any light on the state of things, either in the Church or in the world, previous to the breaking out of the Apostacy. The main subject I believe to be, the great and final struggle between the God of this world, and the God of Heaven—between the Destroyer, and the Redeemer of man—between Christ, and Antichrist.

As the Apocalypse is called the "Revelation of Jesus Christ" so the book of Daniel appears to me to be (if I may use the expression) the Revelation of Antichrist. There is, to be sure, much revealed respecting Antichrist

* Second Enquiry into the Grounds on which the Prophetic Period of Daniel and St. John has been supposed to consist of 1260 years. p. 90—136.

in the Apocalypse; and his history, and proceedings, form one great subject (or rather, perhaps, are intimately connected with that which does form the great subject) of that revelation; but the *prediction of Antichrist*, his rise, progress and destruction, appears to be the chief object of the book of Daniel, while the triumph of Messiah is more briefly stated.

It appears to me, that the several visions recorded in the book of Daniel, which (for brevity's sake) I shall call those of the **IMAGE** (ch. ii.), of the **FOUR BEASTS** (ch. vii.), of the **HE-GOAT** (ch. viii.), and (adopting that title from Mr. Faber and other writers) of the **INFIDEL KING** (ch. xi.), were intended to afford successive developements of the history of Antichrist; and in order to illustrate this opinion (I do not say to prove it—for I propose it as that of which I am not entirely certain) I proceed to make a few remarks on each of these visions.

I. THE VISION OF THE IMAGE.

Daniel, chap. ii. 31—45.

This vision was given to king Nebuchadnezzar, to make known unto him what should be “in the latter days.” Verse 28.

It is explained, that the king himself was symbolized by the head of gold, and that the other parts of the Image prefigured three kingdoms which should arise in succession, after that of which he was the ruler.

It seems, therefore, to admit of no doubt, that the first of these four empires was the Babylonian; but whether the other three were, as is commonly supposed, the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman, empires, may be questioned. The arguments of Lacunza, on this point, I know not how to answer. They may, perhaps, be briefly stated thus—

(1.) The Babylonian empire was not *destroyed* or *essentially altered* when Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian, shook off the yoke of Belshazzar and obtained possession of the capital. Daniel says (ch. v. 30), "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldæans slain, and Darius the Mede took the kingdom." Darius taking the kingdom became king of the Chaldæans, as Belshazzar had been; and so Daniel calls him (ch. ix. 1,) "Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldæans."*

Babylon was not destroyed; on the contrary, Darius, Cyrus, and their successors, continued it as the seat of government. In fact, Nehemiah, who was cup-bearer to the successor in this empire a hundred years after the time of Cyrus, calls him simply the "king of Babylon." The empire remained, therefore, one and the same; and even the subsequent removal of the seat of government from Babylon, to Persia which had been one of the provinces, did not cause the empire to lose its identity.

(2.) If we make the second empire that of Persia, beginning with Cyrus, it did not answer the terms of the prediction, which announced, that the second empire should be "inferior" to the first; for this Persian empire, never was less, but equal to, or greater than, the kingdom of the Chaldæans founded by Nebuchadnezzar.

(3.) If we view these, which have commonly been considered as *two* kingdoms, as forming only *one*, the Grecian empire, founded by Alexander, will come to be

* To illustrate this by a reference to the history of our own country—we might say in language very like that of Daniel—"In that day was James the king of the Britons driven out, and William the Dutchman took the kingdom." Whatever difference of opinion might exist as to his right to the throne, I believe there was never any doubt, that it was the throne of the British empire as much after he was seated upon it as it had been before.

the *second*; and not, as hitherto, the *third*; and, in fact, while it answers the characteristic of the *second* already mentioned, (namely, inferiority to the preceding) it does not answer the characteristic of the *third*, of which, and of which only, it is declared that it shall "bear rule over all the earth." (ch. ii. 29.)

(4.) The characteristic of *universal sovereignty*, which does *not* apply to the Grecian empire, *does* apply, if not exclusively, at least with peculiar propriety, to the Roman empire.

These arguments of Lacunza, as I have already said, I know not how to answer; but I must add another which is to my own mind more convincing than any of them. It is simply this—it seems to be clearly stated that the fourth empire shall exist until "the Ancient of days shall come, and judgment shall be given unto the saints of the Most High; and the time shall come that they shall possess the kingdom" (ch. vii. 22.—see also ver. 26, 27). That time has not yet arrived, and the Roman empire has long ceased to exist. Those who are hard-pressed by the exigency of system, may attempt to make a shew of a nominal empire, and, by long habit, the writers and readers of commentaries on the prophecies, have come to give, and receive, very marvellous interpretations, with great gravity; but surely the Roman empire—the empire founded by Romulus, and ruled by Augustus and Constantine, has passed through a regular decline and fall to absolute extinction.

I cannot however agree with Lucunza in supposing that Europe, in its present divided state, is the fourth kingdom. It seems a sufficient answer to say, that Europe thus divided, cannot form the fourth kingdom, because it is contrary to common sense to call it "a kingdom" at all. I suspect, however, that the fourth empire is not yet come into existence, not only because it appears to me that the

predictions respecting the fourth empire have not yet been fulfilled ; but, because the prophecies respecting Antichrist seem clearly to declare that he shall attain an universal sovereignty, which (as I think will appear) answers to the predictions respecting the fourth empire.

I proceed however to notice what seems to be distinctly stated in this vision of the *Image*, which I conceive to be a general outline of the matters contained in the subsequent visions already mentioned.

- (1.) It is declared that there should be three other kingdoms after Nebuchadnezzar.
 - (2.) The object being to inform the king as to what should take place in the latter days, the second and third kingdoms are slightly passed over ;—it is merely stated that the second shall be inferior to the first, and that the third shall bear rule over all the earth.
 - (3.) The fourth kingdom being that which has to do with the period of the vision, is more particularly described. It is stated that it shall be, at its beginning, strong as iron, but afterwards “divided”—I presume we are to understand “divided” among kings, for it is said (ver. 44,) “In the days of these kings”; but no kings had been previously mentioned, unless it be thus by implication.
 - (4.) It is added that “they” (I presume these kings) “shall mingle themselves with the seed of men, but they shall not cleave one to another.
 - (5.) That in the days of these kings, the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom, which shall break in pieces and consume all the others, and stand for ever.
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II. THE VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS.

Daniel, chap. viii.

The four Beasts in this vision have been very commonly supposed to correspond with the four parts of the IMAGE which was seen by Nebuchadnezzar. On this point however, I have some doubt, but I suggest it only as a doubt. It is indeed declared that the *fourth Beast* is the *fourth kingdom* upon earth, (v. 23.) and therefore the same that was prefigured by the feet and toes of the Image; but I do not know that it necessarily follows, that the first, second, and third Beasts, must respectively represent the gold, the silver, and the brazen parts of the Image. There seems to be nothing in the language of the prophecy which absolutely requires us to understand that the four empires should succeed each other, though the prophet could only describe the symbols in succession.

The symbols appear to have arisen simultaneously; and though this is no proof that the kingdoms also should arise simultaneously, yet it obviously allows the idea; and that idea is not in this case (as in that of the Image) contradicted by the interpretation of the vision. Perhaps, too, there is a difference between the fate of the three kingdoms symbolized by the upper parts of the Image, and that of those which are prefigured by the first three beasts; the former seem to be involved in one common overthrow, amounting to absolute extinction with the *fourth* empire—"then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, and the wind carried them away that no place was found for them," ch. ii. 35.—the latter, appear to survive the fourth empire, and when the fourth beast is slain, it is added "as concerning the rest of the beasts they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time" (ch. vii. 12.). I do not know that these circumstances warrant our considering the

three first beasts as symbolizing powers different from those which have been before symbolized by the parts of the Image; but I mention them, because all the attempts which I have seen, to explain the description of these three beasts, are so unsatisfactory, as to lead to a suspicion that the symbols are not yet rightly understood; and it does not seem to me impossible, that they may refer to three kingdoms, contemporary with the fourth, which is evidently the great subject of the vision. Here (as in the vision of the Image,) a more full description is given of the fourth kingdom, than of either of the others; of this one only, Daniel enquired particularly (v. 19), and of this one only, he received a detailed account; and this fourth kingdom is evidently the same as the fourth kingdom of the vision of the Image.

The new particulars respecting it given by this vision are as follows—

- (1.) That it should be in some remarkable way “diverse” from the others. v. 7, 19, 23.
- (2.) Whereas, it was before stated, that the fourth empire should be *divided*, and as it would seem among *kings*, it is here expressly stated, that it shall be divided among *ten kings* (v. 24); whom we may suppose to have been prefigured by the toes of the Image.
- (3.) That among these ten kings, an eleventh shall arise, diverse from the rest, and subdue three of them. v. 24.
- (4.) That this eleventh king shall blaspheme God, and so bring on the ruin of the empire. v. 25.
- (5.) That the saints shall be delivered into his hands, and worn out by him, during a time, times, and the dividing of a time. v. 25.
- (6.) That his dominion shall be taken away by the Ancient of Days coming to judgment. v. 9, 10, 11, 21, 22, 26.
- (7.) That on the destruction of the empire, symbolized

by the fourth beast, the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the saints of the Most High. v. 26.

- (8.) That the head of this new empire shall be the Son of Man. v. 13, 14.
- (9.) That while this fourth beast is slain, the other three shall be prolonged in existence, without dominion, for a season and a time. v. 12.

III. THE VISION OF THE RAM AND HE-GOAT.

Daniel, chap. viii.

In this vision only, two beasts were seen; and it is distinctly stated, that they symbolized the kings of Media and Persia, and the king of Grecia. From amidst the four horns of the goat, there arose a little horn, whom I believe to have prefigured the same person as that symbolized by the little horn in the vision of the four beasts:—

- (1.) Because the *period* of the little horn seems to be the same as that of the former. It is particularly stated, that the events predicted in this vision shall be at the “time of the end” (v. 17); or, as it is expressed (v. 23), “when the transgressors are come to the full;” or, as (v. 19) at the “last end of the indignation.” Such expressions can hardly relate, I think, to any period prior to the transgressions of the little horn of the preceding vision, or the “indignation” which destroys him.
- (2.) The same blasphemous conduct, and persecution of the saints, is ascribed to him, as to the little horn of the fourth beast.

Horn of Fourth Beast.

a. vii. 25.—He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High.

—21.—Made war with the saints and prevailed.

Horn of He-Goat.

c. viii. 11.—He magnified himself even to the Prince of the Host; and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down, &c.

—24.—Shall prosper and practice, and destroy the mighty and the holy people.

- (3.) Whereas, it was predicted, that the dominion of the fourth empire should be taken away, by the coming of the Ancient of Days to judgment, it is here predicted, that this little horn shall “stand up against the Prince of Princes, and be broken without hand.”
v. 25.

On these grounds, I suppose that the little horn of this vision, is the same person as had been prefigured by the little horn of the fourth beast; or, in other words, I suppose this vision to be a farther developement of Antichrist, and to contain the following particulars, which were not before revealed:—

- (1.) That this person, or power, shall arise out of one of the four kingdoms, into which the empire of Alexander should be divided. v. 9—the transition to the time of the end (v. 19) being made at v. 23.
- (2.) He is more particularly described “a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences;” and, as one whose “power shall be mighty, but not by his own power,” and who shall cause craft to prosper in his hand, through his policy,” and “destroy many by peace.” v. 22, 23.

- (3.) It is declared, that he shall take away the daily sacrifice. v. 12.
- (4.) That the duration of the period prefigured by the vision, as measured from the taking away of the daily sacrifice to the cleansing of the sanctuary, shall be two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings. v. 13.

IV. THE VISION CONCERNING THE INFIDEL KING.

Daniel, chap. x. xi. xii.

This vision of an Angel, who came to shew to Daniel that which was noted in the Scripture of truth, was not attended with symbolical representation. It is prophetic history; and, if I mistake not, it consists principally of the history of the same person who was symbolized by the little horn in the preceding visions. This will, perhaps, appear most clearly, if we compare some of the accounts which are given of them, respectively, in the vii. viii. and xi. chapters.

<i>Little Horn of Fourth Beast.</i>	<i>Little Horn of He- Goat.</i>	<i>Infidel King.</i>
		In the latter days, for yet the vision is for many days. x. 14.
Prevailed until the Ancient of Days came. vii. 21, 22.	At the time of the end shall be the vision. viii. 17.	Even to the time of the end. xi. 35. At the time of the the end. 40.
	To make known what shall be the last end of the indignation. v. 19.	He shall prosper until the indignation be accomplished. v. 36.

*Little Horn of Fourth
Beast.*

A little horn. v. 8.

Shall think to change
times and laws. v.
25.

He shall speak great
words against the
Most High. v. 25.

*Little Horn of He-
Goat.*

A little horn. v. 9.

Through his policy he
shall cause craft to
prosper in his hand.
v. 25.

By peace shall he de-
stroy many. v. 25.

He magnified himself
even to the Prince
of the Host, 11—
shall stand up a-
gainst the Prince of
princes. v. 11.

By him the daily sa-
crifice was taken
away, and the place
of his sanctuary was
cast down, and a
host was given him
against the daily sa-
crifice. v. 11.

Infidel King.

A vile person, v. 21.
with a small people,
v. 23.

Shall obtain the king-
dom by flatteries,
v. 21.—shall work
deceitfully, v. 23.—
forecast devices, &c.
v. 24.

He shall come in
peaceably, v. 21.—
and with the arms
of a flood shall they
be overflown from
before him and shall
be broken. v. 22.

He shall exalt himself
and magnify himself
above every god,

and shall speak mar-
vellous things a-
gainst the God of
gods. v. 36.

Arms shall stand on
his part, and they
shall pollute the
sanctuary of strength
and shall take away
the daily sacrifice.

**Little Horn of Fourth
Beast.**

Made war with the
saints, and prevail-
ed against them. v.
21.

Till the Ancient of
Days came. 21, 22.

**Little Horn of He-
Goat.**

It cast down the truth
to the ground. v. 11.
—shall destroy the
mighty and the holy
people. v. 24.

Practised and pros-
pered. v. 11.

He shall be broken
without hand. v. 25.

Shall stand up against
the Prince of princes.

Infidel King.

They that understand
among the people
shall instruct many;
yet they shall fall
by the sword and
by flame; by cap-
tivity and by spoil,
many days. v. 33.

Shall prosper till the
indignation be ac-
complished. v. 36—
to the time of the
end. v. 35.

He shall come to his
end, and none shall
help him.

And at that time shall
Michael stand up,
the great prince
that standeth for
the children of thy
people. xii. 1.

From a comparison of these passages, it seems that the Infidel King is the person who takes away the daily sacrifice; and whose persecution of the saints, and blasphemy against God, are the subjects of the former visions—but we have some farther particulars:—

(1.) If it was uncertain, from the former visions, who were meant by “*the saints*” who should be delivered into the hands of Antichrist, and persecuted by him, that uncertainty seems to be removed by the declaration of the Angel—“Now I am come to make thee understand what

shall befall *thy people* in the latter days." c. x. 14. That is, says Jerome, "Quid futurum sit populo Israel; non in vicino tempore, sed in novissimis diebus, id est in consummatione seculi." It is added, by the Angel, (xii. 1) "at that time *thy people* shall be delivered." The holy people mentioned (c. viii. 24) might indeed, even if we had not the Angel's explanation, have been supposed to be the same as the Holy people. c. xii. 7.

(2.) If I am right in supposing, that the Infidel King is the same person as the little horn, (and so far as I understand this vision, while there are those points of agreement which I have specified, there is nothing inconsistent with that idea) it will be obvious, that we are here furnished with many additional particulars relating to his personal history, his blasphemy and persecution, his enemies and his allies, and the scene and circumstances of his warfare; but of these I do not venture to speak in detail, because I do not sufficiently understand them.

Having, as I think, shewn the identity of the persons symbolized in these three visions, recorded in the book of Daniel, I will endeavour to shew that the same person is prefigured by the ten-horned beast in the Apocalypse; but, in order to avoid repetition, and the necessity of making columns, I will merely transcribe some parts of what is declared respecting him in the Apocalypse, and add, at the side, what appears to be parallel in the specified visions of Daniel.

Points of resemblance, between the Apocalyptic beast, and the person or power predicted in the book of Daniel, seem to be found in 1. their universal sovereignty—2. union with ten kings—3. persecution of the saints—4. blasphemy—5. warfare with Christ—and 6. their destruction.

Apocalyptic Beast.

(1.) Power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations. xiii. 7.

(2.) The ten horns are ten kings—these have one mind, and shall give their power and strength to the beast. xvii. 12.

(3.) Power was given unto him to continue (*margin*, to make war) forty and two months."

To make war with the saints and to overcome them. xiii. 5, 7.

(4.) On his heads, the name of blasphemy.

A mouth speaking great things and blasphemies.

He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. xiii. 1, 5, 6.

(5.) These [the ten kings] make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them. xvii. 4.

I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse (the *King of Kings* and *Lord of Lords*, v. 16) and against his army. xix. 19.

(6.) The beast was taken, and with him the false prophet. xx. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. xix. 20.

Daniel's Visions.

Shall devour the whole earth. vii. 23.

The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise. vii. 24.

Shall wear out the saints of the Most High and they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of time. vii. 25.

The same horn made war with the Saints and prevailed against them. vii. 21.

A mouth speaking great things. vii. 8.

He shall speak great words against the Most High. vii. 25.

Shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods. xi. 36.

Magnified himself even to the Prince of the host. viii. 11.

He shall stand up against the *Prince of Princes*. viii. 25.

At that time shall Michael stand up the great prince. xii. 1.

The beast was slain and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. vii. 11.

The history of the Apocalyptic beast presents a variety of new matter, which I do not undertake to explain ; but some of the principal points may just be mentioned :

- (1.) Whereas, it had been stated, that " his power should be mighty, but not by his own power." Dan. viii. 25. It is here declared, that " the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." Rev. xiii. 2. He is also called " the beast out of the bottomless pit;" and " the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." xvii. 8.
- (2.) The nature of his blasphemy is more fully stated.
- (3.) We have the history of a second beast, who shall attend upon and co-operate with him.
- (4.) The history of the woman who rides upon him.
- (5.) The history of the witnesses who oppose him.
- (6.) The judgments of God upon his followers.
- (7.) In addition to these, we have fuller details, or new information, on some points, which had been before made known.

There is a passage in St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, which evidently refers to the person who had been symbolized in the vision of Daniel and St. John — " Let no man deceive you by any means ; for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that MAN OF SIN be revealed, the SON OF PERDITION ; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped ; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you I told you these things ? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work ; only he who now letteth will let until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that WICKED be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy

with the brightness of his coming," &c. II. Thess. ii. 3—9.

I do not know that this passage contains any thing concerning the Man of Sin which might not be gathered from the other visions, except the statement that there was at that time some impediment (known to the Christian Church—and therefore probably stated somewhere in the Scripture), which prevented his being revealed; and would continue to do so until it should be removed. There are however two points, which I would notice in connection with the statement of the Apostle, because, though they seem obvious and important, they are generally overlooked.

1. The Apostle seems to assume, that when the apostacy should take place, the Christian Church would know the fact. This, to be sure, is natural enough; but it differs widely from the view which is taken by most modern expositors, who maintain that the apostacy had existed for several centuries before any body suspected it; and that during all that time, the Church of God mistook the Man of Sin, for the Vicar of Christ.

2. The destruction of the Man of Sin by the personal advent of Christ, is here stated in clear and express terms: This is not a symbolical prophecy in which expositors may indulge their imaginations; and the whole tenor of the two Epistles of the Apostle to the Thessalonians, shews that both parties referred to a literal, personal advent of Christ. This being the case, one of these two consequences seems inevitable—either the personal advent of Christ must precede the millennium; or the Man of Sin must live during the millennium.*

* Mr. Faber has noticed this argument in his *Sacred Calendar of Prophecy*, Vol. III. 434, and it is curious to see the shift to which he is driven to evade the force of it. He suggests that the Apostle in his *first* Epistle to the Thessalonians, is speaking of a *personal* advent of Christ, and in his *second* of a figurative coming; and he requires a *demonstra-*

I began this Essay with a statement of the difference of opinion existing between the writers of the Protestant Church in the present day, and the Early Church on the subject of the prophecies concerning Antichrist; and my object in these pages is to lead the reader to enquire from the *Scriptures*, whether that interpretation which has the sanction of antiquity, is not in itself the most simple and natural. While I am surprised that any person should be satisfied with the current exposition of the prophecies which I have adduced, I am most of all astonished that those who believe the doctrine of the Primitive Church respecting the second advent, and the personal reign of Christ on earth, should (as it seems to me, in defiance of their own principles of interpretation), rest contented with the modern exposition of the prophecies concerning Antichrist. These ancient doctrines have been of late years revived; and, I thank God, are spreading; but I believe that they will never be consistently or convincingly maintained, until they who hold them shall have returned to something like the primitive doctrine concerning Antichrist. I do not mean by this to express a belief of all the opinions which have been broached by the early writers respecting Antichrist; or, on the present occasion, to maintain the doctrine of the early church farther than I have here stated it;* but so far, it appears to me to be

tion that the adverts spoken of in the two Epistles are "identical." There is however, in some cases, a higher degree of certainty attainable than any which can be obtained from logical, or even mathematical demonstration—a certainty arising from the conviction of common sense, respecting things which are self-evident; and this certainty (which is in fact the basis of all demonstration) I think the reader will feel, who carefully reads the Epistles to the Thessalonians, and considers their language and their scope.

* The reader who wishes to know the opinions of the early church, on these points, and on some others relating to the period immediately preceding the second advent of our Lord, may find them in a small work entitled "A Treatise of the Three Evils of the Last Times," originally

more worthy of reception than any of those systems which are built upon the idea of a period of 1260 years. These systems it is not my purpose here to oppose in detail; for I write now rather with a view to plain, and (if there be such) unprejudiced readers, than for the writers of those systems who, as far as I can find, are the only persons who can really be said to understand or believe them.

When, however, I doubt whether I shall meet with *unprejudiced* readers, I do not mean to use that epithet in an invidious sense; but I believe the truth is, that most readers of the Scripture are so far prejudiced on the subject, as that they know that there are certain expositions of these prophecies in existence; of which they only farther know that they never fully understood them, or the controversies to which they have given rise. On these grounds they have never once thought of forming an opinion for themselves, but have charitably (perhaps I should say indolently) concluded that expositions so large and laborious, and which their authors propounded so dogmatically, were most likely to be right. While, however, they yield this cold assent, they are not aware of the sacrifice of common sense which it requires them to make on points of which they are very competent judges. They know nothing perhaps about Justinian or Phocas—they are quite bewildered among the Ostrogoths and Wisigoths, the Sueves and Alanes, the Heruli and Turingi, the Huns and Lombards, and are glad to give them their ten kingdoms to get rid of them—with as little reserve they hand over the Turkish Sultanies to Ghelaluddaulas, Sadijduddaulas,

published anonymously in the year 1711. It is said to have been the production of Dr. Hildrop, and to have been published by Dr. Knight and Dr. Grabe; and it has been lately republished at Hatchard's; I am informed by the gentleman by whom I believe it was published, that there is another Edition of the year 1713, under the title of "God's Judgments on the Gentile Apostatized Church against the Modern Hypothesis of some eminent Apocalyptic Writers, in four parts," &c.; but this I have never seen.

cognomine Cutlumusus, Sjarfuddulas, and Tagjuddaulas.* These are to be sure points on which not one reader in a hundred has any knowledge whatever, or of which he would ever have heard at all but for books on the prophecies; but there are, as I have said, others on which any person of plain common sense is competent to form an opinion.

For instance, read Rev. vii. 12. "And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scrawl when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand.'"

Can any unbiassed reader—nay, I will venture to say, any reader who is not devoted to some system of chronological interpretation,—doubt that this passage refers to the day of judgment? If it does not, may we not doubt whether there is any passage in the Scriptures about the day of judgment at all?

Yet Brightman, Henry More, Gill, Lowman, Bishop Newton, Doddridge, Faber, Holmes, Hales, and I know not how many other commentators tell us that this tremendous prediction was fulfilled in the days of Constantine. Does the reader doubt this? and ask how any one came to think of such a thing? Bishop Newton will frankly tell

* Mede's Works, p. 472.

him—"the SERIES of the Prophecy REQUIRES this application."*—Perhaps we may agree with him so far as to admit that his system cannot stand without this application; but it is rather too gross an insult to common sense to add, as he does, that "ALL the phrases and expressions will EASILY admit of such a construction." To be sure, if we may go so far away from the plain letter of scripture, it will *easily* admit of *any* construction; and therefore this language which appeared to all the writers whom I have mentioned, to predict the *setting up of Christianity on the ruins of Paganism under Constantine*, has appeared to Mr. Cuninghame, Mr. Frere, Mr. Irving, and others, to predict the *setting up of Atheism, on the ruins of Christianity, at the French revolution*. The reader may chuse which he pleases,—one may, just as easily as the other, be made out to the "GREAT DAY of the WRATH OF THE LAMB"—but to suppose that the prophecy refers to the Day of Judgment, however the language of Scripture may demand it, will violate chronology, and is out of the question.

Surely if these Prophecies are Holy Scripture, and were "written for our learning," it is high time that the common sense of the Christian Church should be aroused, to seek after some interpretation which may do less violence to the word of God.

* Vol. III. p. 70.

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