

The Seventh Vial Chapter III.

Structure of the Apocalypse



Continued from [Chapter II. Apocalyptic symbols.](#)

IN taking a rapid survey of the whole of that grand drama, of which the Seventh Vial is the closing act, we shall make the tenth chapter of the Apocalypse our starting-point. This is a position better adapted than any other for looking around and surveying the whole plan and structure of this wonderful book.

The Apocalypse is, in brief, a history of the Church, written in grand symbolical characters, extending from the year when John saw it, which we take to have been A.D. 96, till the second and glorious return of Christ to Judgment. On the little stage of Patmos, a rehearsal of Providence, so to speak, took place. Those mighty acts which were to fill up the history of ages, and of which the ample territory of the Roman earth was more especially to be the scene, were made to pass in figure before the Apostle John, who was permitted to behold them in the character of the representative of the Church. By the same apostle, under the inspiration of the Spirit, were these things committed to writing, and communicated to the Church, as a help to her faith and patience during the protracted period when both should be so severely tried. The various histories, civil and ecclesiastical, of Europe, since the reign of Domitian, are but developments of the Apocalypse.

In one most important point does the Apocalypse excel them all: it keeps perpetually before the view of the reader, what other histories are but too apt to overlook, the First Cause and the Final End of all affairs. He who would understand the true philosophy of the history of Europe—he who would see the deep order that underlies all its apparent disorder—must study it in this Book.

The Apocalypse opens with a representation of the exaltation of Christ, and His installation on the right hand of God. This is the grand subject of the vision of the fourth and fifth chapters. Having rested a while after the first vision which he saw (that of the first chapter), John again lifted up his eyes, "and, behold, a door was opened in heaven"—denoting the free access now given to John, and to the Church through John, to know the secrets of futurity—the grand events of the new dispensation.

A great voice, which in strength and melody the apostle could compare only to

a trumpet, spake to him, and said, "Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter." No sooner had the voice spoken to him, than John seemed to ascend; and, entering at the open door, a new world burst upon his view. The august vision which he saw he now proceeds to narrate:—In the foreground was a pavement or floor, spacious as the sea, and resplendent as the crystal. This served as a basement to the cloud which encircled the foundations of that throne of glory whereon sat the Divine Majesty. Ever and anon, fiery flashes, loud thunderings, and solemn voices, issued from the cloud; while the Form that occupied the throne that rose out of it was still more fitted to strike the beholder with awe. "He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone"—of a burning red colour.—"Our God is a consuming fire."—Spanning the throne was a glorious arch or rainbow, "like unto an emerald," the soft green of which, mingling with the fiery ray of the sardine, tempered the central glory.

In presence of the throne burned seven lamps of fire, indicating the "baptism with fire" which all must receive who would approach the throne, or worship before it. The heaven of the vision, where the throne stood, is not that heaven which is the abode of the blessed. By this heaven we are to understand the Church; and the scene is intended to represent the majesty and grace with which God there reigns. "And there was a rainbow round about the throne"—the symbol of the covenant of perpetuity which God has established with the Church.

Seven lamps of fire burned before the throne—the symbol of that Spirit which is the blessed source of the Church's light, and of the efficacy of all her ordinances. "And out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices"—the Apocalyptic symbols of the dispensations of Providence, chosen so as strikingly to represent the terror and sublimity which sometimes accompany these acts, and intimating that they all proceed out of the throne of God.

Ministering day and night around that throne are all created agencies. These, in number, are infinite, but here they are grouped into four classes, and are symbolically depicted by the "four living creatures" which are seen "in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne." The ministries which God has called into existence, and by which He carries on His government, are the ANGELIC, the HUMAN, the ANIMAL, and the PHYSICAL. These, with infinite celerity (swiftness of action or motion), convey His messages, and, with unerring precision, execute His behests in every region of the universe. Thus they praise Him.

The Church of the redeemed is represented by the twenty-four elders clothed in white, and having crowns of gold upon their head; and their worship, by that ascription of "glory, honour, and power," which, begun by the four living creatures, is taken up by those that occupy the twenty-four thrones, and being passed on to the outer circles, and swelled by the voices of the whole august assembly, rises in a united peal, melodious as many waters, loud as mighty thunderings around the eternal throne. The vision has admitted us to a symbolic sight of God as Creator, throned upon the glories, and ministered to by the powers of the universe.

The same vision is continued in the fifth chapter, only a new object is produced upon the scene. "Lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain"—the symbol of Christ as mediator; His priestly office being prefigured in His appearing as if He had been slain, and His kingly, in that He stood in the midst of the throne.

John was next shown, in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, a BOOK or roll, sealed with seven seals; and whilst he contemplated this awful book, a mighty angel came forward, and proclaimed in the hearing of all creatures, that it was the will of Him who sat upon the throne that this book should be opened, and the writing it contained made known. He asks with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" A profound silence follows the angel's challenge, for "no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." And John wept much, "because no man was found worthy to open the book." Its seals were likely to remain for ever unbroken, and all within buried in impenetrable and eternal mystery. At this crisis, when heaven and earth were mute with expectation and fear, the Lamb came forward, and, taking the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne, proceeded to open the seals, and unroll the volume.

What is the truth that lies hid under the veil of this symbolical transaction? Plainly this, even the delegation of authority to Christ to carry on the work of Providence, and his assumption of that great task, signified by the act of taking the sealed book from the hand of Him that sat on the throne. "He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body." Similar were His own words to His disciples just before He ascended: Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

This supreme dominion and universal empire—for every "principality" in heaven, and every throne on earth, was put under Him—were conferred on the Son as mediator, and for the purpose of enabling Him to accomplish the great ends of his mediation. It was necessary that He should be able to wield every instrument, and have authority to summon to His help, and engage in His service, every agent, in order that He might break in pieces the kingdom of His great rival, and set up His own in its room. When the task of governing a universe was committed to Him, the resources of a universe were placed at His disposal. It would neither have been *just on the part of the Father to have exacted the duty without conferring the means of fulfilling it, nor wise on the part of the Son to have entered on the work lacking the powers which its successful execution demanded.

As mediator, we say, was this great commission --the administration of Providence—given to the Son; for it was the Lamb that had been slain that received the sealed book. And the special and paramount object for which He undertook this commission, and which He continues to keep in eye in its

execution, is the preservation of the Church meanwhile, and her complete triumph at last.

He that presides over all events, arranging, directing, overruling all, stands not only in the midst of the throne, but in the midst of the living creatures, or of all created agencies, and in the midst of the elders; that is, in the midst of the Church. This act gave unbounded joy to the Church, which hailed with a shout of praise her Saviour's entrance on His difficult but glorious work. She knew that His power and wisdom were adequate to its triumphant execution. Though the end was yet afar off, and though many a gloomy dispensation was to intervene, and though many a hard struggle had to be endured, and many a powerful enemy had to be struck down, yet the Church confidently anticipated, now that she saw the sealed roll in the hands of the Lamb, the advent of victory, because, though distant, it was certain. She knew that the administration of her Head could have only one issue, and that an issue unspeakably glorious and blessed. Accordingly she shouted for joy. And that shout was a prelude of that yet more ecstatic song which shall be heard on that day when Christ's administration shall terminate in the total discomfiture and final overthrow of the Church's foes, and in her complete triumph and everlasting reign with her Lord.

"I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beast, and the elders—and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands—saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and in the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." – Rev. 5:11-14

Having exhibited in symbol Christ's installation on the right hand of God, and His investiture with His high office, the Apocalypse goes on to detail the various acts of His administration, and this it does by making to pass before us a grand series of graphic visions. It is here necessary to call to mind the grand end contemplated in the whole of Christ's administration, namely, the universal establishment of His kingdom, the Church, which was to grow, from small beginnings, to the unity, purity, and splendour of the Millennium. Then only shall we see how each successive act paved the way for the full attainment, in due time, of that glorious object.

First of all, the stage had to be cleared. When Christ ascended, and sat down on the right hand of God, the ground on which He purposed to plant His Church was occupied by the pagan empire of Rome. A most degrading polytheism, deeply founded in the passions and lusts of men, attired in the garb of a most fascinating poetry, enjoying the venerable prestige of a high antiquity, sanctioned by the laws, and protected and upheld by the military power of the State, was so interwoven with the fabric of the empire, that it was necessary, in order to eradicate this idolatrous system, and strip it of its props and defences, to shake and rend in pieces the framework of that empire with which it was incorporated. This was accomplished in the opening of the seals.

Each seal (see chap. vi.) ushered in a new dispensation to the Roman empire; and by these successive acts of judgment—by the passage across its stage of the red horse, and the black horse, and the pale horse—symbolising respectively war, scarcity, and death, with its four terrible agencies, the sword, famine, pestilence, and the beasts of the earth—that powerful State was so exhausted and broken, that at last, in the opening of the sixth seal—whose terrors typify those of the Seventh Vial—that great revolution was accomplished, in which the powers of the pagan firmament were shaken, and Christianity, in the person of Constantine, was elevated to the throne of the empire.

There is here a stop in the Apocalyptic history. The progression of the symbolical drama now passing before John is arrested. With a professedly Christian emperor on the throne, and with all the helps and facilities naturally springing therefrom for the diffusion of Christianity, we expect to be instantly told of its universal reign. With the winds of persecution and political contention all hushed, with serene skies over the Church, and nothing to impede the labours of the spiritual husbandman, we expect to see him scattering the seed far and wide, and, with zeal worthy of his cause, adding field to field, till at last he had included the whole earth within the vineyard of his Lord. Alas! our anticipations are sadly disappointed. A ranker idolatry springs up than that which had been well-nigh extirpated. A murkier night settles down on the world than any that had ever heretofore darkened its firmament. Fiercer persecutors are seen moving on the scene than any that had defended the cause of Paganism with fire and knife.

We are now but a little way off from the commencement of that noted period—obscurely hinted to Daniel, plainly announced to John—the twelve hundred and sixty prophetic days or years, for which preparations of a very unusual kind, but requisite, doubtless, are made. This period was to form the gloomiest, without exception, in the annals of the world—the period of Satan's highest success, and of the Church's deepest depression; and lest she should become during it utterly extinct, her members, never so few as then, were all specially sealed. Thus secured by a Divine precaution against perishing, whether by craft or by violence, they enter the cloud. The long night passes on, darkening as it advances; but the sealed company are not visible. They disappear from the Apocalyptic stage just as they then disappeared from the observation of the world. That they might escape the dungeons and the fires of their persecutors, they fled away, to hide in the hoary caves of earth, or to inhabit the untrodden regions of the wilderness, or to dwell beneath the shadow of the Alps, or to enjoy fellowship with God, unsuspected and unknown, in the deep seclusion and gloom of some convent.

But at last the clouds break away, and the sealed company, having trod this valley of the shadow of death unhurt, one and all of them come forth—the hundred forty and four thousand sealed ones—in white raiment and carrying palms, not to hunger and to thirst as aforetime, when the bread and water of life were scantily supplied, nor to be scorched by the hot sun of persecution, but to be fed by the Lamb, and to be led to fountains of living waters, and to have all tears wiped away from their eyes—denoting the happy and prosperous state of the Church which shall succeed the twelve hundred and

sixty years, and the exemption she shall then enjoy from all the perils, enemies, and sufferings that have hitherto attended her path.

This is the vision of the seventh chapter. The vision affords us a glimpse of the Church, protected against no ordinary danger by the seal of the angel, just before she entered on the fated twelve hundred and sixty days, and another glimpse of her as she appeared after she had come through the "great tribulation" of those days; but it leaves the events of that disastrous period—the fury with which Antichrist had warred against her, and the noble constancy with which she had withstood his assault—untold, because these were to form the subject of future Apocalyptic narration.

After this vision the symbolic scene again progresses. The eighth chapter takes up the history exactly at the point where the sixth had dropped it. The seventh and last seal is opened, and the seven trumpets begin to be sounded.

The first four trumpets include those irruptions of the barbarous nations of the north by which the western Roman empire was completely destroyed, and the let or hindrance to the appearance of the Man of Sin, of which the apostle Paul had spoken, taken out of the way. Thus the stage was left empty for the rise of Antichrist. Rome had ceased to be pagan, and had become Christian; but its Christianity was already radically vitiated (corrupted) by the old idolatry; and its imperial government, still subsisting, obstructed the rise of the Papacy; for how could the Pope become lord of the world, while Caesar continued to be so? It behoved this empire, therefore, though professedly Christian, to give place, that the predestined enemy of Christ might appear.

Accordingly each trumpet announced the descent of a new calamity upon the unhappy empire. First a tempest of hail and fire, mingled with blood, swept across it—the symbol of savage war waged by barbarous arms. The hordes of the North had long been collecting on the frontier of the empire; but at last, on the death of Theodosius, A.D. 395, the "dark cloud," says Gibbon, "which was collected along the coast of the Baltic, burst in thunder upon the banks of the Upper Danube." Alaric, with his Goths, issuing through the now open barriers of that river, invaded Greece, and, encountering but a feeble resistance from its degenerate inhabitants, ravaged its fertile provinces with mingled conflagration and slaughter. Next, crossing the Alps, he ravaged Italy, and reduced part of the Eternal City to ashes. But this did not fulfill the woes of the trumpet. During the intervals of Alaric's ravages, Rhadagaisus, with his mighty host of Vandals, Suevi, and Burgundians, appeared upon the scene, and greatly increased the miseries inflicted by the Goths. This army of confederates, being repulsed with great difficulty in the North of Italy, took a westward course, and fell with incredible fury upon the provinces of Gaul and Spain; where, in the language of Gibbon, "smoking ruins could alone distinguish the solitude of nature from the desolation of man." This trumpet came to an end at the death of Alaric, in A.D. 410.

When the second angel sounded, "a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea"—the symbol of the Vandals under the terrible Genseric—"a name which," remarks Gibbon, "in the destruction of the Roman empire, has deserved an equal rank with the names of Alaric and Attila." He began, A.D. 429, to desolate Africa; and having burned many of its towns, and subjugated its

provinces, he collected to his standard a multitude of Moors and Africans. This host he embarked, and precipitated like a burning mountain upon Italy, ravaging its sea-coast, pillaging Rome, and carrying away the wealth of its citizens in his ships.

On the sounding of the third trumpet, a star shot down from the firmament, burning as a lamp, and, falling upon the rivers and fountains, turned them into wornwood. In this star we behold the scourge of God, Attila, the king of the Huns, who, returning from his eastern wars, in A.D. 450, crossed the Rhine as high as Basle, and, descending its course, made the entire valley through which it rolls a scene of slaughter, burning its towns and massacring the inhabitants. Turning then to the south, he inflicted similar calamities on the towns of Mantua, Milan, Venice, and other cities of Lombardy, many of which he converted into heaps of stones and ashes.

But at the sounding of the fourth trumpet, the empire which these successive and terrible shocks had brought to the verge of ruin, was utterly dissolved. Its dissolution, under this trumpet, is symbolically exhibited, after the manner of Scripture when the fall of empires is the theme, by the darkening of the sun and stars—imagery highly appropriate, and imparting a gloomy grandeur to the subject.

The mandate of Odoacer, chief of the Heruli, in 476, abolished the title and office of Emperor of the West. The anarchy of the barbarians was succeeded by the short reign of Theodoric the Ostrogoth; after which the Senate, and, in short, the entire framework of the Roman Government were removed; and that proud city, which for so many ages had held the rank of mistress of the world, was reduced to the miserable condition of a tributary dukedom. Thus the stage on which Antichrist was to appear was now cleared. The colossal empire which had occupied it so long had been shivered, and its very fragments swept away. There was now no throne at Rome, and the let no longer existed to the appearance of the Man of Sin. John, however, defers entering on the history of the Papacy. He withdraws our attention to the eastern world, and exhibits, under the fifth and sixth trumpets, the infliction of the woes by which the eastern empire was destroyed.

The lights of the imperial firmament had been obscured, and amid the gloom that prevailed—symbolising the confusion into which all things had been brought by the destruction of established order and government—John heard the voice of an angel flying in mid-heaven. Three times did that awful voice denounce woe against the inhabitants of the earth. After what had already taken place, this is an unexpected as well as awful announcement. One would have thought that the angel of woe had already emptied his worst vial—that nothing more fearful could he inflict than that which he had already inflicted. But no. The calamities that were yet to fall on the world would obliterate the recollection of those that had already overtaken it. Three awful judgments were approaching. The history of the world from the beginning, what is it but a succession of woes? but in the dark retrospect of the past eighteen centuries we can discern three calamities of surpassing magnitude, so fearfully dismal, that others lose their blackness when placed by their side—three woes towering above all others, which during that period have overtaken the miserable race of man.

These were the burden of the angel which John now saw flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe—woe—woe! The first woe was to happen under the fifth trumpet, the second woe under the sixth trumpet, and the third and last under the seventh trumpet, which comprehends the judgment of the seven vials.

Leaving, then, the western world, which Providence, by a series of tremendous dispensations, had made empty and void, in order that a more terrible enemy than the one who had just been struck down might be suffered to lift up himself, to be destroyed in his turn, the scene changes to the east. Immediately the scenery becomes eastern. So long as the west was the stage of the Apocalyptic drama, the scenery was of an occidental character—storms of hail, and burning mountains. But now the symbols become oriental.

The fifth angel sounds. The bottomless pit is opened, and forthwith there issues from it a smoke so dense that, as it rolls its murky folds onward, it darkens the air, and inflicts blight upon the earth—the symbol of that system of imposture which, arising in Arabia, overspread so large a portion of the world. In the Bible, error is darkness, truth is light. Along with the smoke there came locusts from the pit, which, for the space of five months, tormented men with their stings—the Saracens, by whose arms the religion of Mahomet was propagated, and the Saracenic dominion extended from the banks of the Indus to the base of the Pyrenees. Their career of conquest lasted five symbolical months—an hundred and fifty years.

The scene of the sixth trumpet, or second woe trumpet, is the banks of the Euphrates. On its sounding, the four angels which were bound in that river were loosed. The term for which they had been prepared was an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year. Their numbers were almost incredible—two hundred thousand thousand. Their equipments and appearance were of a truly martial order.

“I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone; and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone. Their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.” — Rev. 9:17,19

Their commission was to slay the third part of men. Of the correctness of the interpretation which applies this symbol to the Turks, it is scarce possible to entertain a doubt. Did our space allow, we could show that the event fulfilled the prediction in all its particulars.

At the time referred to in the prophecy, this people, who had come originally from Scythia, were divided into four clans or sultanies, all of whom were located in the neighbourhood of the Euphrates. They were at length let loose, to desolate Asia with their arms, and that part of it particularly which was the seat of the eastern empire. Their troops consisted mainly of cavalry, and their mode of warfare was new, artillery being now for the first time employed; both of which particulars are not obscurely hinted at in the prophecy.

They continued a conquering power for three hundred and ninety-one years, which, putting a day for a year, gives the predicted term of "an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year." Their peculiar vocation or mission was "to slay the third part of men." It was against the corrupt and idolatrous Christians of the eastern empire that the Turks were sent; and they were charged to inflict a fuller measure of vengeance than their predecessors, the Saracens, had done. The latter were sent to inflict chastisement, if so be those on whom it fell would repent; but not repenting, the Turks were commissioned to destroy them.

To the one it was commanded that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; and accordingly the conquests of the Saracens were comparatively bloodless. The fields were as green, the palm-trees as flourishing, behind their army, as in advance of it. But the longer the judgments of God are continued, if they prove ineffectual, they grow the more severe. Accordingly, the commission given to the Euphratean horsemen was, to slay those whom the locusts had power only to sting; and the work assigned them they executed. During their career of conquest, they committed an incredible number of slaughters, and inflicted hitherto unheard of miseries. All the provinces of the eastern empire they subjugated and occupied—Egypt, Greece, Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor. At last they crossed the Hellespont, drew their armies around Constantinople, besieged and took it; and the gleam of the Crescent on those towers where the Cross had aforetime been displayed, told that now the empire of the Caesars had come to an utter end.

We have now come to that point in the Apocalyptic history where we design to begin our fuller exposition. But in order that we may include in one view the whole order and plan of the Apocalypse, we shall continue to its close our brief narrative of its events. A short space will suffice. So far the administration of Christ had been successful. Not in vain had He sat down on the right hand of God. In the exercise of His great power, one enemy had been overthrown after another—Rome pagan in the opening of the seals, and Rome Christian in the sounding of the trumpets. Was the stage then clear? and had the hour now come when the kingdom of Christ, in all its universality and glory, should be set up? The time was not yet.

Another chance, so to speak, was to be given to Satan. All his attempts hitherto had been abortive. He had seen the labours of long ages swept away by the seals and the trumpets: another cycle of centuries was to be given him, that he might do his very utmost to render frustrate the grand design of Christ's mediation. The western world was to be allotted to him as a field of operation, and twelve hundred years were to be allowed him to mature his plans—time enough, and room enough, surely. Accordingly, putting his ingenuity and malignity to the stretch, he now brings forth his masterpiece—even Popery, the most finished system of imposture, the most complete embodiment of Satanic malice and cunning, and the most skilfully organised plan of opposition to the cause of God, which the world has ever seen. This is the grand subject which is now introduced on the Apocalyptic scene.

The progress of the grand symbolic drama is arrested, till, in a subsidiary

vision—the little book—John has a history given him of the rise, the character, and the reign of Antichrist, and the sufferings endured by the Church during the period of his domination. The lesser is marked off from the greater vision by Its symbols, which are of a completely different sort—by its subject, which is not the administrative acts of Christ, but the crimes and successes of His enemy—and by its retrogression in point of time. The great Apocalyptic vision had advanced to the end of the fifteenth century, when, at the sounding of the sixth trumpet, the Greek empire was destroyed; but the vision now exhibited to John recedes to the middle of the sixth century, at which time the Roman empire of the west had been overthrown by the judgment of the fourth trumpet. The events which occurred in the west during this interval—that is, from the middle of the sixth to the beginning of the sixteenth century—form the subject of this vision. The fourth trumpet had taken out of the way the “let” which for so long a time had prevented the rise of “THE MAN OF SIN.” The obstruction being removed, he arose.

He was really risen, as we shall afterwards show, at the middle of the sixth century; but many centuries were required for the full development of his character, and the consolidation of his empire. Accordingly, he did not reach the zenith of his power till about the time that the sixth trumpet had consummated the ruin of the eastern empire. This was the last enemy who was to arise to oppose the erection of Christ’s kingdom, and whom Christ, in the exercise of His great power, was to destroy, as He had done others.

Accordingly, on the passing away of the second woe, the seventh trumpet is sounded, and seven angels, having the seven last plagues, appear upon the scene. Vial after vial is poured out upon the Papacy, and each successive shock helps onward the consummation of its awful doom. The seventh and last is poured out; and every part of the Papal universe is smitten. Its air is convulsed by terrific tempests; its earth is shaken by awful earthquakes; its cities are overthrown; its mountains are removed; its islands are submerged; and “a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done,” announces the complete accomplishment of the grand object of Christ’s administration. The utter and irretrievable ruin of mystic Babylon is brought vividly before us, by the symbol of the company who stand afar off weeping and wailing,

“And saying, Alas! alas! that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off; and cried, when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas! alas! that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea, by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.” – Rev. 18:16-19

The immediate erection of Christ’s kingdom is no less vividly presented to us by the symbol of that other company, who hail with shouts of joy and praise the near advent of some long-expected and thrice-blessed event.

And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of

many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." – Rev. 19:6-7

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