

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

ARTICLE III.

THE DESCENT OF THE NEW JERUSALEM.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM E. BARTON.

WE have made needlessly hard work of interpreting the Apocalypse. Its date is more certainly indicated than that of any other New Testament book. If to the Occidental mind some of its minutiae defy accurate analysis, its three or four leading ideas may be read by him who runs, and about these the imagery of the book is draped in such a way, that, if each separate fold and festoon convey to the modern mind no separate and complete meaning, at least the whole is congruous and appropriate. Indeed, when the book is read with these leading ideas in their true perspective, it becomes extremely probable that no effort to understand the book is likely to prove so utterly bewildering as that which concerns itself with microscopic search for the meaning of the details.

Omitting from present consideration the latter part of the closing chapter, which contains the finale, and the first three chapters, which contain the introduction and the messages to certain groups of churches whose messages have no more reason to be considered an epitome of universal history than any of Paul's letters to the churches of the same region, and whose distortion to this end is a conspicuous braving of the curse against those who add to the words that are written in this book, there are four leading thoughts in the work. These are treated somewhat in the order indicated, but merge more or less into each other. The plan of the book is iterative and cumulative. It is a work of art. Among works of art, however, there is a difference. The painter who dec-

orates the stage of a theatre may be as great an artist as another who decorates china, or the third who engraves a steel plate under a lens; but the work must be judged according to different standards. He would be a poor art critic who would examine a drop curtain or the sliding scenery of a stage with the same minuteness that he would give to the inspection of a bit of *cloisonné* or the vignette of a bank note. It must be seen at proper distance, and with a glare of light here and a deep shadow there, to do its artistic qualities justice. Then the very defects, as they appear on close inspection, the incongruities, the gaudy patches of paint, and the daubs of color, will be found to blend harmoniously, and to sustain their due relation to the play. The Apocalypse might be spoken of as a magnificent drama, with marvellous and changing drapery, with chorus and orchestra, with Jerusalem, Rome, Patmos, the ocean, and heaven itself among its scenes, and with kings and angels and the hosts of earth and heaven among its characters. Thunders, lightnings, earthquakes, hail, conflagration, war,—these are among the scenes portrayed. The stage fittings vary with the scenes. The lights are turned down until the horror of a great darkness is felt: then the red light of the torch and of the stake illumine the scene with an unearthly glare; and then there streams a pure radiance from the great white throne. The mistake of the ages, as respects this book, has been that it has been viewed through a microscope instead of an opera glass.

Without attempting careful and exact divisions, but only as introductory to the present theme, we may group the leading ideas of the book thus:—

1. *The Overthrow of Jerusalem.*—The city that was holy has become “Sodom and Egypt,” and if there be a worse thing that can be said of it, it is, that it is “where also the Lord was crucified.” The city and its temple still stand, with obsolete rites mocking the real Sacrifice, but it is already measured for destruction. Forty and two months shall it be

besieged by Gentiles, and trodden under foot. When at last it is destroyed, a main impediment to the universality of Christianity will be accomplished. Then in heaven will the real temple be seen, with the ark of God in full sight of all the blessed, and every man may realize himself a part of the kingdom, and a priest unto God.

2. *The Downfall of Pagan Rome.*—Rome stood for persecution: Nero's throne and the throne of Christ stood in direct antithesis. Nero had just died.¹ The fifth Roman emperor had fallen, and the sixth, Galba, then was. His reign of six months and the brief interregnum following, with Otho and Vitellius struggling for the crown, and the joint reign of Vespasian and his son Titus which followed, afforded "a short space" of freedom from persecution. But after this, persecution would revive. One head was dead, but the beast lived. The popular superstition that the dead Nero would come again from the dead contained, for the Church, a terrible truth. The eighth reign would show again the terrors of persecution. The "short space" of relief was none too long for the Church to prepare for the terrible experiences ahead. But this was the word of inspiration and comfort which John spoke: Rome is not the eternal city. Its power will fall as that of Babylon fell. Christ is to reign, and not Nero or any like-minded successor. Like the fall of a great millstone into the sea shall be the fall of the persecuting power.

3. *The Overthrow of all the Power of Evil.*—The Church will have other foes. There will be a terrible Armageddon, lasting for ages, and exhausting every resource of good and evil. All the ancient enemies of good, Gog and Magog, and the serpent of Eden, will seem revived to share in the mortal combat. Yet the end is certain, and all evil will be overthrown.

¹ The author's view of the number of the kings in Rev. xiii., xvii., may be found in a note, entitled "Nero Redivivus," in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for July, 1890, pp. 507-510.

We are now living in the thick of this battle. All the mighty engines of modern civilization are used as weapons on both sides. The ship with the missionary in its cabin has rum in its hold. The telegraph bears with equal speed the report of a Christian convention and a prize-fight. The daily press prints a sermon and a report of a murder in adjoining columns. Never was there more vital need of the assurance of the seer whose inspired faith was the substance of the good he hoped for.

4. Finally, *through it all God is with his Church*, and above the ruins of all evil, Christ enthroned in the Church reigns and increasingly shall reign. When the consummation is reached, then shall men see that the souls of those who have been beheaded in persecutions ages gone reign with Christ, and live. As to the rest of the dead, they have passed from sight, and for a thousand years, for ages and ages, no trace of their life-work appears; but the eternal life and reign of those who have given their lives for Christ, over whom no second death has power, will appear to men as those who sit on thrones through the long centuries, living and reigning with Christ.

The Jerusalem of the old dispensation was passing away when the apostle wrote in the autumn of 68 A. D., but there was even then visible to the eye of faith a New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, to which would be brought the glory of the nations. It is to this last sublime prediction of the inspired apostle that this article is devoted.

THE NEW JERUSALEM AS RELATED TO INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER.

The New Jerusalem is present and personal. No thought could have been more foreign to that of the apostle than that it is to be local, and dependent upon external conditions. They belong to it, and all of them, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. The hour cometh, and now is,

when the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth; and the New Jerusalem, in which men are permitted acceptably to worship, may as well be on Gerizim as on Moriah. To any who think a certain place or an anticipated physical change necessary, it may still be said, "Ye worship ye know not what." The kingdom of heaven is not heaven: the New Jerusalem is not geographical. It is spiritual, personal, present. Just what Paul meant when he rebuked those who said in Thessalonica that "the day of the Lord is present," may be uncertain, but there is no reason to suppose that he would rebuke any who say so now. The kingdom which in one sense has been present always, as Christ was slain from the foundation of the world, is now present in a sense in which it was not in Paul's day.

Each progressive descent of the holy city begins in an individual call. The call of the Hebrew nation was the call of Abraham. When, after two generations of exile, the captives of Babylon were called to rebuild their city, and establish a new Jerusalem, the call was to the wicked individual to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts. The call of Jesus to the building of the city, or as he called it, the kingdom, was to certain individuals to follow him. The call to the Church to come out of the darkness of the Middle Ages to the glory of the Reformation, which was another descent of the city, was to Luther in Germany, Savonarola in Italy, Huss in Bohemia, Calvin in France, and Wyclif in England. When God would let down the holy city in New England, he "sifted three kingdoms" to find individuals, a bare hundred of whom laid the corner-stone. When the holy city descended to Oberlin, to Marietta, to Berea, to a score of towns and institutions whose foundations were laid in prayer and tears, the call was to Father Shipherd, to Manasseh Cutler, to John G. Fee. There is no sort of wholesale social regeneration worth having that overlooks the necessity for individual consecration. "There shall in no wise en-

ter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or a lie.”

The worthies of the dimly lighted ages sought in their early dawn the city. They confessed that they found none, but they continued seeking and expecting one with foundations. They found only the foundations, but these caused God to become to them like the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land. These all died in faith. They saw but the ground-plan of the city, God having provided some better thing than for them to build it and us to live in it, that they without us should not be perfect. But, all the same, they were citizens of the New Jerusalem. They sought it, but the kingdom was within them, and the holy city was their home.

The time is rife with panaceas for social ills and ferments. No day dies but witnesses a new organization for the regeneration of some body of men *en masse*. But no organization will effect the regeneration of the Indians that does not make the individual Indian something better than a savage, or a pauper, or alternately both. No founding of schools for the freedmen will avail except as they reach and enlighten the individual freedman, and teach him, and his son after him, that he cannot stand before the world secure on the platform of the wrongs inflicted upon his ancestors. No appointment of labor commissions, no reduction of hours, no legislation concerning wages, can serve as a substitute for character and a recognition of law and moral obligation on the part of the individual laboring-man. No associated charities, no endowment of homes for the unemployed, no system of relief for the poor, will solve the problems with which poverty perplexes us, except as it has respect to the character of the individual poor man or woman. The most serious feature of the Indian problem, the negro problem, the labor problem, the charity problem, is the elevation of the character of the individual. This done, external conditions would largely right themselves. It is time to return to the old-fashioned

gospel of individual responsibility.¹ There are no "masses." There are multitudes of individuals, needing nothing external so much as a new sense of individual responsibility, and an assurance of individual regeneration. The New Jerusalem is the home of redeemed individuals. "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here, or, lo there: for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

THE NEW JERUSALEM AS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL.

Partly because we desire to know more than has been revealed to us about heaven, and partly because what God has revealed about the redeemed earth seems too good to be true, we have transferred most of the Bible teachings concerning the coming blessedness of mankind on earth to heaven. The Second Adventists have discovered this fact, but with even greater inconsistency have affirmed that this earth is to be the home of the redeemed *after death*. It was neither heaven nor a *post-mortem* earth that John saw. We are not to go to heaven to find the New Jerusalem. No doubt all that is told us of the glory of the redeemed earth is true of heaven, and more; so that any comfort that we may draw from the closing chapters of Revelation to cheer us on the sick-bed, or comfort us beside the grave, may legitimately be drawn from these chapters. But it is certain, past any need of discussion, that this was not John's primary meaning. The New Jerusalem is but another term for this present earth, with its present tides and seasons, inhabited by people like those who at present live here, but under the sway of the Spirit of Christ. It is more than personal redemption. It is social, industrial, and political.

¹ There certainly is need of change in external conditions. See a sermon by the author, on "Cosmic Redemption," in *The Treasury of Religious Thought* for November, 1894. But this is not the prime need.

Men live in many relations. We have begun, and only begun, to know a man when we learn that he is John Doe. He is more than that. To two elderly people he is "our son John." To a certain woman he is "my husband." To a half-dozen people he is "my brother John." To several young people he is "father." To others he is the neighbor across the street. To others he is the senior partner in the firm of Doe, Roe & Co. To others he is Deacon Doe. To others he is The Hon. John Doe, Representative in the Legislature. He is more than all this. These are but a few of his relations. Men do not live solitary lives. God has set the solitary in families, and families in communities, and communities in nations. Under the severest penalties he has kept us in mind of even the remoter of these relations. It cannot be a matter of indifference to one man that his neighbor has diphtheria. It is God's forethought that has so arranged society that "curses, like chickens, come home to roost." To redeem a man is to make scores of social relations redemptive. John Doe cannot be a Christian, and the Hon. John Doe a dishonest politician. If men have attempted to observe a distinction between their private and their professional or business character, the attempt has failed. Men are not the masters of all their environment, but they can modify it. He makes a sad, almost a fatal, mistake, who thinks of one part of his life as sacred, and the other as secular. One man is as much called of God to drive, and another to shoe, the horses of a steam fire-engine, as a third is to preach the gospel. It is a pity if any of them does not know it. The New Jerusalem needs fire-engines, and divinely called men to care for them. A Christian fireman rushing to his post at the sound of the gong, and with no other thought than to do his present duty faithfully, may be as truly worshipping as his brother reverently walking to the house of God in response to the Sabbath call to worship. There is no reason why the fire-alarm should not be made as sacred as the church-bell.

That Christ is to reign in human society means simply that he is to reign in the hearts of its individual members, so that they shall manifest his Spirit in all their manifold relations. With all these relations sanctified, there will arise a new condition of affairs on earth between man and man, and between man and God. Men will build factories in the same spirit in which they ordain foreign missionaries: they will plough their fields in the same spirit in which they pray and worship.

There could be no greater mistake than that God means us to cultivate our religious nature alone, and at the expense of every other part of our being. What we need is not to be taken out of the world, but to be kept from its evil, and to save it from the evil. We shall need to eat and drink in the New Jerusalem; but, through industry and the miracle of commerce, supplemented by Christian charity, there will be no more hunger. Hardly a decade passes that some portion of the world does not afford an illustration of this. Men need not to be free from their bodies and earthly trials, that their spirits may thrive; but, amid the conditions of this present life, to learn faithfully the duty and the glory of their relations to God and man, to their bodies and souls, to the life that now is and that which is to come. Christ's law commands neither worldliness nor other-worldliness, neither egoism nor altruism, but fidelity to all interests, and the sanctification of all human relations. The New Jerusalem is not to descend for the purpose of depriving us of the wholesome necessity of working for our living, or relieving us of uncongenial tasks, but to lift all life and all service into its true position of dignity and glory.

There is no occasion for waiting for the city to descend. Any home may, by unanimous consent of its members, resolve itself into one section of the holy city. Selfishness, fretfulness, disregard for each other's feelings, faultfinding and anger,—all these may be banished any day. This is not all

that is needed, and some requisites, very important, may be at present unobtainable,—fresh air, good drainage, knowledge of the laws of health, and a reasonable income, not only for living expenses, but for those comforts and intellectual and æsthetic surroundings which make life worth living. These will all come, even to the tenement-house district,—if improved means of rapid transit between city and suburbs does not banish (as God grant it may) the tenement-house district altogether, and cause warehouses and wholesale houses to grow up in place of tenement blocks. But here and there, even in tenement houses, the holy city has already descended. It looks little like a gate of pearl—that front door, with its twelve electric buttons to one door-knob, but it leads to an abode where neatness, and simple refinement, and loving service, and unostentatious godliness abide, and through the thin places in its well-worn carpet, the eye of faith sees not the cracks in the rough floor, but the splendor of the golden pavement of the city of God. In like manner may every home, somewhat incompletely as regards comfort, but surely as regards all that is essential to godliness, even now become a part of the holy city. Even now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be, but in proportion as he who is enthroned in the city is revealed to us, we shall become like him, seeing him as he is.

When all homes, or even a number of homes sufficient to hold the balance of power, become thus annexed to the city, they may dictate to society what shall be its rules and customs, its hours and its fashions, the character of its music, its literature, its amusements, its pictures, its topics of conversation. It will not be true that in the New Jerusalem the sole topic of conversation will be religion, or that we shall have no interest in those concerns which relate to every-day life. We shall need amusements, and will have a purified stage, whose scenes, grave or gay, tragic or comic, will all be helpful, uplifting, and profitable for godliness. There will be

music, and not all of one kind or on one theme. It will vary, from the soothing sound that, stealing over the spirit, stills apprehension and distrust and hushes the heart into trustful submission, to that which rings through the corridors of the soul and stirs it to deeds of heroic activity. There will be fiction; it will be realistic in the sense that it will be true to what is best in life, and it will be ideal in the sense that it will hold before the reader some noble possibility as yet unattained. There will be daily papers—six days in the week,—but the convictions of its editors will not be for sale by the column, and righteousness will always be more sacred to the publishers than increase in the subscription list. The fine arts will all flourish, and the learned professions will be more learned. The signs of Christ's reign may not instantly be apparent to everyone. The careless soul may say, "This running to and fro, this increase of knowledge, is but a harbinger of impending destruction. There has been no progress; and the world is hastening to its doom, and the New Jerusalem has yet to appear." But even so the careless and the prejudiced knew not the prophets of old, and looked for the Messiah, everywhere in earth and heaven, excepting in the manger where he was born, and on the cross to which they nailed him.

When the New Jerusalem has fully descended, men will build shops, dig mines, and construct highways, and organize great corporations, and seek to become wealthy, that they may glorify God. They will desire to make money,—of course they will. Money is labor's storage-battery. The man with a ten-dollar bill in his pocket is capable of doing in one minute ten men's work for all day. No wonder he prizes it. God sends great responsibility with a ten-dollar bill. What will it not do? Not to want money is to wish one's talent buried. In the millennium men will be glad to make money, and they will spend it wisely; and as God gives increasingly to those who are faithful over a few things, so, in the holy city, men will have more wealth than now. But the em-

ployer will never forget that the chief end of his business is not that he may be wealthy, but that he may glorify God in his body. The laboring-man, if he has less than he would be glad to spend, will have enough to live decently and support his family in comfort, and will be content with his wages. The period of strikes and lockouts, of wars between labor and capital, will be studied as part of the history of the dark ages. Selfishness will not be impossible, and it will appear in sporadic cases, but it will not become epidemic, and will yield to proper treatment. The problems of capital and labor must be solved in the New Jerusalem, and nowhere else, and it is time for their solution to begin. Competition will not be abolished,—men will measure strength of arm and intellect with each other, but the competition which seeks one's own by the ruin of another's business will be read of as one of the facts in history all but impossible to realize as having been actual.

There may be political parties in the New Jerusalem, as different theories of the functions of government and the duties of rulers appear differently to honest men of different minds. But machine nominations, packed conventions, party patronage, campaign assessments, and the thousand iniquities to which we have grown accustomed, but which would madden us to revolution if in all their foul hideousness they were to be forced upon us *de novo*, will have no place. In that day it will be said, not "To the victors belong the spoils," but "To the victors belongs the grave responsibility of administering the government so that every official act will stand the white light of public inspection, so that every law enacted, every committee appointed, every office filled, shall be for the glory of God, and of the nation, over which, through us as his chosen representatives, Christ reigns."

One must needs be carried by the Spirit to an exceeding mountain, great and high, that he may see the descent of the New Jerusalem. He must needs have learned the answer of

the Saviour to the question of the disciples, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" Yet, when he is truly manifest to us, the world will be likely to know something about it. Many there are whose hearts burn within them, but whose eyes as yet are holden. The world has taken kindly to, and often repeats, a quotation from Elizabeth Barrett Browning, but almost always omits the line that contains the real lesson:—

"Earth's crammed with heaven
And every common bush afire with God.
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes;
The rest sit round it, and pluck blackberries."

Lightning comes from the clouds to the earth: it also goes from the earth to the clouds. It is said that we could, if we tried, accustom ourselves to see the lightning ascend instead of descend. The holy city is to ascend from earth and descend from heaven. Viewed in progress of construction, it seems ascending. Viewed historically or, as John saw it, in apocalyptic vision, it is more exact to speak of it as coming down from God out of heaven. It is even now ascending and descending. There is evidence of this in the collapse of atheism, and the substitute for it of agnosticism, with its altar to the unknown God. There is evidence of it in the earnest thought which men, in the church and out, now give to the consideration of spiritual questions once passed upon flippantly. There is evidence of it in the impatience of the age with doctrine whose bearing has no apparent relation to character. There is evidence of it in the extent to which Christian principles have come to be accepted as social and business laws. The ideal is far from realized, but an immense volume of our business suffers instant paralysis as soon as certain Christian principles cease to be believed in and expected. There is evidence of it in the eagerness of men of all schools, sometimes with injustice to the equally important truth of the atonement, to emphasize anew the vital truths

of the Incarnation, that Jesus as a real being may come into closer union with the lives of men. There is evidence of it in the study of biblical criticism: in this, as in all else, the pendulum may swing too far, but its present direction is making the Word of God more real and sacred, and is one of the signs of the Holy City's descent.

There is further evidence of the coming of the holy city in the social movements of the time. Even the restless ebb and flow of social and industrial life, advancing and receding, with its waves now dashing in blind fury against the eternal rocks, and now chasing each other in swift retreat, leaving muddy shores and crawling things exposed to view, are, after all, evidences of a deep moral earnestness, a faith in a possible good not yet attained, and indicate the incoming of a mighty tide of righteousness in the relations of man with man. There is evidence of it in the sentiment which compels rich men to endow institutions for the public good, both in the increasing willingness of the men themselves so to do, and also in the public recognition of the obligation, and the scant courtesy with which press and people treat the memory of a man who has lived for himself, and bequeaths wealth to his immediate relatives, with no large benefactions. These are not of necessity to be taken as evidences of individual righteousness, but of an increasingly righteous sentiment. The extent to which the Church is grappling with social problems, in her institutional, her philanthropic, her charitable, her reformatory, her missionary work, even if much that is at present done is no more than wood, hay, and stubble, is still further evidence, and perhaps is one of the most hopeful signs, and shows at least the line of the real Foundation of the holy city.

We speak of this as a sceptical age. It is not so. It is an inquisitive age, an inquiring, challenging age. With more boldness than reverence it puts its finger into every historic nail-print, and not infrequently it grinds as "Nehushtan"

some sacred relic beneath its iconoclastic heel, when it ought rather to loose its shoes from off its feet. It has profound faith in the natural, and none too much in the supernatural: it needs to look less on the things that are seen, and believe more in the unseen as the eternal things. But, it may be questioned whether any age has had more genuine and rational faith, such as the Son of man in his progressive coming rejoices to find in the earth. With all its materialism and speculation, it still is foremost among the ages in which men have not seen, but yet have intelligently believed. And therein is a sign of the descent of the holy city.

There is no infidelity so dangerous as that which denies the power of good to triumph, by its own inherent, God-given power, over evil in the world. Satan felt, in his attack upon the character of Job, that, if he could prove human goodness rotten at the core, it would be the strongest possible arraignment of the divine goodness; and God accepted his challenge. What the city is in all the sum of its heavenly characteristics translated into earthly realities we do not know. We know in part, and prophesy in part only. But that which is perfect is coming. And even NOW abide some things, among which are the faith that goodness has power to triumph, the hope that increasingly it triumphs and is to triumph, and the love which is of God, nay which is God, working in humanity to make the triumph actual and complete.

It is not necessary to go into the imagery of John's description in hope of making it correspond exactly with observable conditions.¹ The picture becomes incongruous as

¹ No more sound or sensible words have been written on the figurative language of this section of the Apocalypse than those of the late Dr. Israel P. Warren, in his *Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (pp. 290, 291):—

“After long study of it, we can only repeat what we have said before, that it seems to us to be an ideal sketch of the church of God in its highest and most perfect state; that which is marked out for her in the

soon as we lay down the binoculars and take the microscope. A wall 216 feet high, and houses 1500 miles high, are not dimensions that, in their relation to each other, will bear exact analysis. Nothing would have seemed more illogical to John than that it should be attempted. A cube was his idea of symmetry,—therefore the city was a cube. It was large, and its walls high and beautiful, and its gates and pavement

plans of her founder, and which she is one day to attain on earth. And because no terms known to John or his readers in that age would have been sufficient for the description in plain prosaic verity, the phraseology was derived from what was the most sacred and glorious object known to them, the temple at Jerusalem. Not that the church was to be literally a building, or a city, or a beautiful woman, the bride of Christ, but that these objects, all centering in Jerusalem and the temple, so dear to all pious hearts, were *sources of language* with which to set forth in the most lively manner what, literally, would have been inconceivable.

“Suppose the little band of the Pilgrims in that first terrible winter at Plymouth, when one-half their number perished from cold and disease, and were buried on Cole’s Hill, their graves being carefully smoothed down to conceal their fate from the Indians, had, to cheer their despondency and nerve them to new fortitude, received, through angelic revelation to their beloved Elder Brewster, a vision of what the nation they were founding would be in 1885,—more than twenty-six decades from that time. *No literal* terms would have been sufficient for the description. Republic, States, Union, Congress, President,—much more, railroads, telegraphs, coal, petroleum, cotton, the press, and many others, would have been words without meaning. Even figures would have been to their view as absurd as a city 1,500 miles high,—three and a half millions of square miles of territory, fifty millions of people, an annual bread crop of 2,500 millions of bushels, a national debt of 2,500 millions of dollars, etc., etc. Instead of this, let the language have been derived from some object known and dear to them in the beloved England from which they were exiled, let the great city of London, the palace of St. James, Westminster Hall, the renowned seat of justice, the venerable Abbey where her kings were entombed, the universities where her divines had studied, and the like, all have been laid under contribution to furnish ideals for the magnificent vision. Then let these have been grouped with the skill of a divine artist, and let it be named a “*New England*,” and there might have been thus conveyed to the minds of the poor exiles some conceptions of the National Edifice God was about to build, and the foundations of which they were laying in their sufferings and tears. How bright the vision! How blessed the comfort!”

were splendid. Read for its general effect, the description is of entrancing beauty, and it is thus that it should be read.

The city will not be discovered by one who follows slavishly the imagery rather than the spirit of the description. The New Jerusalem will have many names,—Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, Jonesville. It will not be located alone on the Mediterranean, but on the Mississippi and the Orinoco and the Yang-tse-kiang. It will include ocean and forest and prairie. If there is no more sea, it may be because of the perfection of submarine cables and pneumatic tubes and aerial navigation. The monument in Boston Public Garden to commemorate the discovery of anæsthetics may have a suggestion of the correct interpretation of one of the prophecies,—“Neither shall there be any more pain.” If there is no night there, it may be because of the glory of the electric lights: for “the Lord God giveth them light.” Men will leave earth and go to heaven, but they will live longer and better, and death will have lost its sting, so that it may be said that there shall be no more death. There will be meeting-houses, but the real temple will be the heart of each man and woman, and this will make a temple of all the earth. The Psalmist (Ps. xxix. 9) had the thought when, looking out on the earth after the storm, and conceiving of the universe as one sublime holy of holies, he echoed the praise of every rain-slaked pool and dripping leaf, and said, “And in his temple everything saith, Glory.” So, while there will be need of meeting-houses, the real temple will be recognized. The church edifices will be temples after a sort, and so will the state capitols and court-houses, made so by godly legislation and faithful administration of justice. The church spire will point men to heaven, and so will the smoke-stack of the factory.

The New Jerusalem is coming down from God, but not as the image of Diana fell in Athens. The city will be builded of boards and brick and stone and iron, but the spirit will be according to the pattern shown in the Mount. There will be

mayors and aldermen and justices of the peace and path-masters, and every one of them will receive his office as a trust from God. Men will desire office that they may the better serve God. Men will build railroads from one part of the city to another, they will sail in ships and fly in balloons from one part to another, they will buy and sell, marry and give in marriage, teach school and make money, and sweep the streets and vote, for the glory of God. They will be none the less diligent in business, but by their traffic and commerce, no less than by prayer and alms, the kingdom of God will prevail. Men knew not the Christ, because he was born in a manger; so now they know not the New Jerusalem, because it descends to some communities in a prairie schooner, and lives in a sod house, yet there is the home of the Christ, and the holy city of his abode.

It is not worth while to question wonderingly, What are the realities that correspond with these figurative descriptions? with the thought that we may expect to discover any very exact parallel, or that any such was intended. The dimensions, the descriptions, and the chronology are to be interpreted as part of the general picture which, when the features are inspected singly, becomes as meaningless as a single impression on a multichrome. The thousand years which this state is to endure is to be taken as a round number meaning almost forever. We ourselves use the term so. When we wish to sell a piece of land almost forever, but not quite, we lease it for 999 years. That God would spend millions of years—which he counted as only a week—in fitting up the world for man, and thousands of years additional in a struggle which taxed to its utmost the Divine love and wisdom, and caused the death of Christ, to bring humanity to righteousness, and then cause all to collapse and come to an end in ten brief centuries,—this would be inconceivable. How long the millennium will last, no man is safe in prophesying, but it may be said with entire safety that God has in no sense

bound himself to cut it short by reason of John's use of the expression, a thousand years. It is not necessary to multiply it by 360, on the utterly unauthorized "year for a day" theory, nor to multiply its number of days by 1000 years, on the principle that "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years." Any such reduction of tropical language to cold arithmetic indicates hopeless inability to understand the spirit of the book. It is enough to know that the holy city is even now descending: it is not here in its completion and beauty, but "the foundation of God standeth sure," and through coming generations the superstructure will be revealed. Then, yea, even now, "we having the same spirit of faith" which in the Apocalypse causes the Hallelujah chorus to precede the binding of Satan, in cordial recognition of the good already attained, and in faithful anticipation of its culmination and triumph, may echo the glad song of heaven, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever!"