

THE COVENANTER.

JUNE, 1852.

[For the Covenanter.]

THE FIFTH VIAL.

Rev. xvi. 10, 11:—“*And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain. And blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.*”

THE IMPERIAL THRONE or power of the modern Roman Empire is the object of this plague. The vial is poured out upon “the seat, or throne (*θρονον*) of the beast.” It is certainly an exceedingly erroneous interpretation which points us to *the papacy* as the seat or throne of *the beast*. The papacy is certainly sufficiently *bestial*, but it is not *the beast* of Revelation. In this false view the events of 1848—the expulsion in particular of the pope from the city of Rome,—are, by a modern interpreter, in an essay in a religious magazine, declared as the fulfilment of this prediction. I am aware that in this interpretation the writer follows *Fleming*. But even with this authority the interpretation is manifestly incorrect. The papacy is no where in the Revelation termed “*the beast*,” and therefore the “seat of the beast” is not the *papal chair*. *The beast* is that monster described in the thirteenth chapter as having “seven heads and ten horns,” the well known symbol of the Roman empire as a *civil power*, and the seat or throne of this beast is the *supreme imperial power*, among the divided kings or horns of this empire. The papacy is properly “the *image* of the beast,” but not the beast itself. It is a power in resemblance of the beast, as to the outline of its structure, but not the beast, after whose example it is made, and whose throne is the object of this terrible judgment. We are not now under the fifth vial. This judgment is passed; and Fleming has not by his interpretation of the fifth vial, predicted the events of 1848.

Dr. Junkin has given the correct interpretation. “The beast is the same secular, ten-horned beast of the sea to which Satan (chap. xiii. 2,) gave his power and his seat—his *throne*. The throne must of course mean the supreme civil dominion. This supremacy has always been recognised in the imperial dignity.” We have not adopted this view of the beast from the Doctor. Sixteen years ago we stated our view as follows:—“The beast means pre-eminently, the fourth great beast of Daniel—the *civil beast*.” But we are happy in having our view confirmed by so respectable authority as Dr. Junkin. The interpretation is plain. It lies upon the surface. Why do men confound *the beast* and *his image*, and interpret the former by the latter? The throne of the beast is clearly “the supreme civil dominion,” or the imperial power of the Roman em-

It cannot be supposed that Lingard was in general favourable to the Protector, and if not, what but the force of the truth of Cromwell's sincerity moved him thus to write.

Not wishing to exceed due bounds in this article, I have passed by many, and some very important things in the life of this great man. As, for instance, his reluctance to bring Charles I. to trial, and afterwards to sign his death warrant,—his refusal to be made a king, and the grounds on which he refused, and the scenes of his death bed. But they have all the same bearing as that which I have brought forward, and I have produced enough to show that Cromwell was a true fearer of God. He was not a blameless man. He was in error in some of his principles; and I am far from attempting to justify all his conduct. But some of his faults, and even some of his crimes, were partially forced upon him by the position he held, the times in which he lived, the men by whom he was surrounded, and the great interests he had to advance. As a Reformed Presbyterian, I differ with many of his views, and I believe he sinned in not endeavouring to promote the covenanted reformation as such, but I see much to palliate his error even in that. His whole efforts were directed to advance and not to betray what he considered to be the cause of God and man—protestantism in general in opposition to popery. With the light we have now on his life, few will believe that he was not an intelligent and genuine servant of the Lord. It is freely conceded that he was not a perfect example to the Christian in all the relations in which he stood. But, surely, there was much in his character worthy of being imitated by “the statesman, the Christian, the fearers of God, and friends of humanity.” It is not our province, nor can we pronounce with absolute certainty, that he is gone to the abodes of bliss, but we are far mistaken indeed, if he has not arrived in that bright and glorious land where the happy and joyous inhabitants are engaged in celebrating the praises of God and the Lamb.

L.

Bloomington, Ind., April 8th, 1852.

(For the Covenanter.)

THE FLYING ROLL.

Zech. v. 1:—“*Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and beheld a flying roll.*”

The flying roll is a metaphor. It is not unusual to call metaphors used in prophecy symbols, but they must be interpreted by the same rules as metaphors in narrative.

The roll means the Bible. Its dimensions are the same as those of the porch in Solomon's temple. 1 Kings vi. 3. It is thirty-five feet long, and seventeen and a half feet wide. It is flying, to show that the word of Christ travels with great speed, as the angel flies through the midst of heaven carrying the gospel message. Rev. xiv. 6. For this we are commanded to pray, “that the word of the Lord may have free course,” (*τρέχει*, run.) It is “a curse,” as it denounces wrath on ungodly nations, individuals, and corrupt churches. “Christ came not to send peace” *only* “on the earth, but a sword.” “It goeth forth over the face of the whole earth,” indicating that the vision refers to the new dispensation of the gospel, and especially to its diffusion in our own times.

The penal sanctions of the roll “enter into the house of the thief,”

verse 4, and it "cuts off according to itself, every one that stealeth." "He that stealeth or sellet a man, or if he be found in his hand, he shall be put to death." Ex. xxi. 16. If men do not inflict this penalty, God, the author of the law, will do it himself. This is a fearful denunciation, proclaimed in the roll against slaveholders, against the Austrian despotism, and against the ten horns on that head of "the beast out of the bottomless pit." Rev. xi. 7, xiii. 1.

The curse of the roll is carried "into the house of him that sweareth falsely,"—all who break good oaths and covenants, and who swear bad ones. This curse impends over the British empire, surcharged with wrath when the seven thunders of Revelation (x. 4) shall be uttering their voices. All professors of religion, all corrupt churches that swear allegiance to the beast of the pit, have his mark affixed on their foreheads, and shall be "cut off on that side," on the account of church sins, for sins committed under the name or pretence of religion. Socinianism, and other corrupt Protestantism, Hellenism, Judaism, Mohammedanism, and, above all, Popery, must read their doom in this line of the roll.

"It shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof." The ruin of every house of theft, or of heresy, shall be demolished. The administration, by a metaphor here called timber, or wood work, and every bad constitution, the foundation, or stone, must be consumed. The church of Christ prospers in "troublesome times." "Thou didst afflict the nations, but them thou didst increase." Who can accomplish this great work? "I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts." The Lord Jesus Christ, who commands the armies of the living God, has pledged his truth, and "he is true;" and he is also omnipotent. All this he will do, and is now doing.

In forty-four years after the organization of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the flying roll demolished the house of Bourbon in France, and gave a death-blow to the head of the beast in Vienna, and hurled the Pope from his throne. War now rages in many eastern nations, where commerce has carried the Bible—Cape of Good Hope, Madagascar, China, and Burmah. These wars began, or continued after that of Hungary ended. The waves begin to roll back to the west. I hear the thunder of artillery from the Cimmeric Bosphorus. "Let the word of the Lord run and be glorified."

J. R. W.

THE CHURCH AND THE TIMES.*

As a church among the churches of Christ, do we rightly understand and occupy our proper ground? Do we contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints? Is there no weariness of watching and witness-bearing—no shrinking from the cross? Is there nothing of impatience under the sackcloth, or devising of expedients to find something more graceful to the eye, and softer to the flesh? Do we sincerely adopt the resolution of Moses, rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season?

Does the testimony remain in its integrity among us, not merely in the printed standards of the church, but in the ordinary ministrations of the sanctuary, and in the convictions and constant practice of our people? Has no part nor portion of it become offensive and inconvenient, and on that account,

* From a Sermon by Stewart Bates, D.D., at the opening of Synod, Glasgow, 1851.