

those volumes of his discourses which were translated into English.

There is very little story in this volume. Vinet, born in 1797 and dying in 1847, at the comparatively early age of 50, lived a very uneventful life. It was as a teacher and thinker that he had a history, but for one incident, namely his separation from the established Church of the Canton de Vaud and his part in the setting up of a Free Church. It would not be possible to make our readers thoroughly acquainted with the nature of this controversy, or the necessity of the step which Vinet felt bound to take. It may suffice to note here that the State had assumed the entire control of ecclesiastical matters, establishing a system so purely Erastian that it became, to a religious man like Vinet, absolutely intolerable.

Vinet was a Protestant to the core, and he exaggerated the individualism of christian life; but he saw deep into the mind of Christ and into the hearts of men, as few men have seen, and his influence upon the more thoughtful men who came near him was profound and lasting. The remarkable Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, the friend of Coleridge, of Maurice, and of Brown said of Vinet, "He has that basis of thought in him on which thoughts from all quarters can find a footing or a rooting. There are few men like him in the world. Such a combination of mental power and Christian character is the rarest of all things."

M. de Pressencé, the eminent French Pastor, does not hesitate to compare him with one of the greatest of the Frenchmen of every age, the mighty Pascal. "Vinet's *Coup d'Œil*," he says, "has not the power of Pascal; but his horizon is vaster, and his mind is freer." The "Studies" in Pascal by Vinet is one of his most remarkable works, and it is generally admitted that no man was better qualified to do the work which he accomplished. It was the opinion of Sainte-Beuve that his articles afforded "the most exact conclusions at which one can arrive on the subject of this great genius."

The extracts from Vinet's letters given in this volume are of peculiar interest. To the lady who afterwards became his wife, he wrote: "Morally, I am only a rough sketch. Everything is half-finished; my disposition, character, mind, virtues, and vices are only fragments." As the writer of the volume before us remarks, his "letters sometimes reveal the habit of ruthless self-dissection which embittered his life." He was devoted to reading. He says: "I compare my library to a collection of balms which I apply to the wounds of my heart. In very truth, books are a blessing from heaven."

Vinet had no sympathy with the sentimental, unscriptural religiosity which has lately threatened to become dominant among ourselves. When at Basle, he wrote: "The town is full of Pietists, who can be recognised a mile off. If ever I have any power, moral or political, I will spare no pains to disperse this nest of presumptuous sectarians, who find it beneath their dignity to be simply christian, and who only succeed in filling their heads with false mysticism, and in turning men away from the religion of Christ." And again, and still more severely, "We have been lately honoured with the visit of some wandering idiots, known as Methodists, all citizens of Switzerland, which is becoming a nest of sects, thanks to English influence." We fear that this last allusion is too near the truth. Vinet was, at the time of writing, only twenty years of age, and expressed himself in more trenchant terms than he would have approved of in later days; but he had always a good deal of the cut and thrust about him.

It is interesting to note his deep interest in the much calumniated de Wette. "The real Antichrist, he says, 'is M. de Wette.'" Here he was expressing the popular opinion. For himself he remarks: "You must know that during the last six months I have followed the teaching of the celebrated Professor de Wette. It has given me immense pleasure. It seems as if I had never done any exegesis before. We have read in the original the Epistles to the Galatians and the Romans. The Professor's doctrinal teaching is pure, his criticism is judicious, his views vast and profound."

Vinet has been called the Chalmers of Switzer-

land; and his influence was probably as great; but his habits of thought and mode of expression are totally different. This is a most precious volume, which will delight two classes, those who have long known and venerated Vinet, and those who now know him for the first time.

#### THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN.

By Professor William Clark: Paper prepared for a Clerical Meeting.

##### ITS PURPOSE AND INTERPRETATION.

Touching the authorship of the Apocalypse it may be sufficient to remark that, even among the freer and less orthodox critics, there is by no means unanimity in denying its apostolic authorship. Some, indeed, ascribe the Gospel to St. John, but not the Apocalypse (Duesterdieck). Others give the Apocalypse to St. John, but not the Gospel. (Baur, Zeller, Scholten). And this is perhaps the more common opinion among the disciples of the Tuebingen school. But it seems now to be generally agreed that there is no absolute necessity for assigning these books to different authors. The style of the one is, indeed, very different from that of the other. But this may be accounted for by the difference of subject, and of the period of composition. And, on the other hand, there are some remarkable resemblances even in the style; and the theological point of view is identical.

With respect to the time of composition, it would certainly appear from Irenæus, that the book must be assigned to the reign of Domitian, and Dean Alford considers that we have no other authority to set against this, and that we are bound to decide that the book was written about the year 95 or 96 A.D., (reign of Domitian 81-96).

On the other hand, it is urged that the style of the book suggests a period of production much earlier than that of the fourth Gospel, also that it contains indications that Jerusalem was still standing, and that some of its contents show that the writer had been impressed by the recent death of Nero. (Some, however, think it was written before this—in 68). Those who take this view generally assign the book to a period not long subsequent to the death of Nero, many supposing that it was written during the brief reign of Galba, in 69, others placing it a year later, in the reign of Vespasian. It will, hereafter, be apparent that our judgment of the date will affect our views of some of the methods of interpretation.

With respect to the aim and purpose of the book, a very few words will suffice. In the first place, its contents are prophetic, and profess to make known the things which are about to come to pass. In the second place, the point towards which the whole revelation is tending, and for which all is preparing, is the second Advent of Christ, with the attendant, preceding and succeeding events of the revelation of Antichrist, the Millennium, and the final judgment.

With respect to the methods of interpretation, it has been usual to speak of three, the *Præterist*, the *Historical*, and the *Futurist*; but there is a fourth which has always had advocates of importance, and which may be said to have the largest measure of support in the present day—the *Spiritual*. The first three would assign the events recorded in the book to particular periods; the last would not entirely ignore the element of time; but would regard the principal scenes in the drama as representing spiritual ideas.

I. The *Præterist View* regards the Apocalypse as referring chiefly to the destruction of Jerusalem and to the conflicts of Pagan Rome with the Church. Some, however, who have held this view, have not excluded later or more general applications of the theory. The *Præterist* view is held generally by Renan and others, who find the number of the beast (666) in the Hebrew letters representing Nero Caesar. For those who may wish to see this theory fairly stated Mr. Desprez's book on the Apocalypse may be recommended, in its second edition. The third edition is very different, and would suggest the notion that the author had scarcely attained to the blessing promised to him "that readeth," if it is a blessing to believe the Gospel.

II. The *Historical View* for a long time had a very wide influence. All who belong to this school, hold, in common, that the Apocalypse is a kind of prophetic history of the Church; but there is the widest difference in the interpretation of the details of the history.

To this school belonged the Anglican Mede, the great German critic Bengel, and the great English man of science, Sir Isaac Newton. In our own day it has been defended, in a very learned fashion, by Mr. E. B. Elliott, in his *Horæ Apocalypticæ*, and popularized in many works by Dr. Cumming.

In spite of the very considerable names by which this theory has been supported, it can hardly be said to have, at the present moment, any adherents of influence. And this can hardly seem surprising when we remember how diverse have been the particular views of its exponents, and the manner in which

their predictions, based upon their expositions, have been falsified.

As an example of the first, it may be noted that, whilst Elliott referred the sixth seal to Constantine, George Stanley Fater believed that it referred to the French Revolution. With regard to the second, several interpreters of this school have ventured to fix the date of the second Advent, with what result we need hardly point out. As examples I may mention (speaking from memory) Bengel who fixed upon the year 1836 as the date, and Dr. Cumming who chose 1866. (This is, at any rate, near the time, and minute accuracy on this point is unnecessary for our purpose.)

III. The *Futurist Theory* has certain resemblances to the historical, but also differs very widely from it. In the first place, both the theories regard the coming of Christ as pre-millennial. In the second place, both assume that there are distinct indications of time, with this difference, that the advocates of the historical view hold the year-day theory, maintaining that they have ground for this in the predictions of Daniel compared with their fulfilment; whilst the futurists contend that the days are literal days.

There are several forms of the futurist theory. It may be said to find its basis in the teaching of Papias, Irenæus, Lactantius, and others of the ante-Nicene Church, who certainly were pre-millenarians. And the adherents of this theory may argue, with perfect right, that it prevailed very generally up to the time of Eusebius, and the advocates of the historical view may also point out that Babylon was considered to represent Rome when Rome was pagan; and that this view was given up when Rome became Christian.

According to the futurist theory, as generally understood, nearly the whole of the Apocalypse must be referred to a period which is still future, whilst, according to the historical theory, the whole history of the Church is predicted in a series of visions. As an illustration of the difference, it may be noted that the supporters of the historical view regarded the Beast or Antichrist as representing the Church of Rome or the Pope, while the futurists consider it as imaging a great earthly potentate who will be revealed before the second Advent. It may be sufficient to refer to an extreme form of this futurist view which is held by those who are called Plymouth Brethren. It does not appear that any one maintained these opinions until quite lately, and it would be a somewhat rash thing for any one not wholly initiated to criticise them. These views may be found, however, set forth in a scholarly manner in Mr. W. Kelly's interesting commentary on the Book of Revelation. As one difference between this view and the ordinary futurist theory, it may be mentioned that, according to the Plymouth view, the rapture of the saints takes place at the beginning of chapter iv. of the Apocalypse, while the ordinary futurist regards it as taking place just before the Millennium.

With regard to what may be called the more moderate school of futurists, it must be admitted that it numbers men of mark within its ranks. For those who wish to study this system, the following works may be recommended: (1) On the historical view of the doctrine, Maitland's "Apostles' School of Prophetic Interpretation." (2) On the futurist exposition as a whole, Auberlen's "Der Prophet Daniel und die Offenbarung Johannes," published in English by Clark, of Edinburgh; and (3) on the exposition of the Book of Revelation in detail, the well known contemporary of the late Dean Alford. Auberlen's work is a composition of the greatest interest, and it is apparent that it has swayed Dr. Alford more than any other work on the subject. It should be added that Auberlen's book contributes largely also to the spiritual exposition of the Apocalypse.

IV. The *Spiritual Theory* may be described in the language of Elvond, in his commentary, written in completion of the work of Olshausen: "The Book of Revelation does not contain presages of contingent, isolated events; but it contains warning and consolatory prophecies concerning the great leading forces which make their appearance between Christ and the enemy. So full are its contents, that every age may learn therefrom, more and more, against what disguises we have to guard ourselves; and also how the afflicted Church at all times receives its measure of courage and consolation."

This theory has been applied to the exposition of the Apocalypse, in three recent commentaries published by Boyd Carpenter, now Bishop of Ripon, in the commentary edited by Bishop Ellicott, and published by Cassell; by the late Archdeacon Lee, of Dublin, in the Speaker's Commentary (1881); and by Professor Milligan, of Aberdeen, in the Commentary edited by Dr. Schaff and published by Clark of Edinburgh, (1883). Dr. Milligan has published more recently a series of very able lectures ("The Baird Lectures," 1885), dealing generally with the same subject.

On this method of interpretation Dr. Milligan remarks (Introduction to Commentary, p. 367) "The book is regarded throughout as taking no note of