

On the Rationalistic interpretation of the temple in Revelation 11:1-2

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According to another view, which we may call the Rationalistic, although unfortunately it is not supported merely by Rationalists, the temple is the second temple of the Jews, the holy city, the Jerusalem still not laid in desolation by the Romans. In this prophecy they find the most undoubted proofs that the Revelation was composed before the taking of Jerusalem, and therefore not, according to the ecclesiastical tradition, under Domitian. The patriotism of the author of the book could not embrace the idea of a complete destruction of the temple and city, though he describes an approaching judgment, but he lightens the matter as much as possible; of the temple he gives up only the outer court, and of the holy city and its inhabitants only the tenth part. [1]

This view must be regarded as one of the most singular proofs of the modern subjective tendency, which judges of everything by itself. On the territory of sacred Scripture that pseudo-patriotism, that blind partiality for one's own people, is never in place. Our Seer would stand quite alone with it. As the prophets, before the Chaldean desolation, with one voice predicted this, as it was then held to be a mark of a deceiver, of a prophet speaking out of his own heart, when any one denied, that the full measure of sin was to be followed by the full measure of punishment; so precisely in our day do those brand themselves in the eyes of believers with the stamp of false teachers, who say peace, peace, where there is no peace, who on the very eve of judgment are doting about a glorious era for Germany. The prophets after the Babylonish captivity likewise announced with one voice, a coming second total desolation, which was to break in as soon as the sin, which had begun again in their day to germinate, should have reached its maturity and brought forth fruit –that, namely, which was to be effected by the Romans, and whose internal connection with the Chaldean was made palpable by divine providence ordering it to take place on the very same day that the other had done. Our Lord rests on these prophecies of the Old Testament, when he says in Luke, ch. xxi. 22, “For these are the days of vengeance, when all that is written shall be fulfilled;” and in Matth. xxiv. 15,

where he distinctly alludes to the properly classical prophecy, that in Dan. ix. 24-27, which was usually referred by the Jews, before the catastrophe by the Romans, to a future destruction of the city and temple. (See the proofs in my Beitr. I. p. 265, Christol. II. p. 576.) If the abomination of desolation on the holy city announced by Daniel stands; that is, if the abomination, which, according to the eternal law of recompense, according to the principle, "I will sanctify myself on them that draw near to me," has desolation for its inseparable consequence, then deliverance is only to be found in the curse; because by the faithful word of God, uttered by Daniel, all was to go to ruin. What Daniel declared, when the city and temple still lay in ashes, pointing to a second desolation lying on the farther side of the approaching restoration announced by him, was also intimated by Zechariah shortly after the return of the people, and the city and temple had begun to be rebuilt. God's righteousness is not less energetic than men's sinfulness; a new, severe, and destructive judgment shall break in, according to ch. v. 1-4, a new captivity, a long exile, ver. 5-11, another entire desolation of the land by an enemy coming out of the north. The prophecy of the last among the prophets, Malachi, is entirely of a threatening character. "Behold," it said in ch. iv., "the day comes burning like an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that comes shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, who shall not leave them root or branch." His prophecy, and with that the whole volume of Old Testament prophecy, runs out into the threatening, that the Lord will come and smite the land with a curse. First—such is the conclusion of Malachi's prophecy—Elias the prophet comes and endeavors to restore all (Reformation), then the Lord himself appears, and smites the land with a curse. The messenger makes a last attempt to sanctify the Lord in his people. Then the Lord sanctifies himself upon those, with whom this attempt has proved fruitless. The Old Testament prophecy revives once more in John the Baptist. He threatens with the baptism of fire, declares that the axe is laid to the root of the trees, and points to a day of coming wrath. Christ, our Lord, was certainly a patriot; he wept over Jerusalem; but the approaching destruction of the city and temple stands as clearly before his soul as if it were actually present—a pattern to us, whose eyes are so much riveted to the visible, whose knowledge and hatred of sin are so dull, whose apprehension of the avenging righteousness of God is so languid, and who are so apt to think that the storm, which appears in the far distance, shall somehow blow past. He says of Jerusalem in Luke xlv. 43, 44, "The days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another, because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation." He says of the temple in Matthew, ch. xxiv. 2, "See ye not all these things? There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." [2] As by the word of his mouth our Lord thus announced the approaching destruction, so did he also by the symbolical actions of the cursing of the fig tree, and the purification of the temple.

Now, it seems quite incredible that a Seer, who was educated with such pains, who, as his visions show, had received into his soul the prophecies of the Old Testament, should altogether renounce the earnest spirit of prophecy, should know his people after the flesh, and in a foolish patriotism conjure up illusions respecting the future;—incredible, that one, who everywhere makes him-

self known as a decided follower of Christ, who was filled with such profound reverence toward him, that when he saw him he fell down before him as one dead, who regarded it as the most honorable title to be called Christ's servant, should yet have acted contrary to him in a point so important, so variously treated, and so distinctly and prominently brought forward. An exposition, which yields such a result, bears on its front the stamp of reprobation.

The force of this argument, in so far as it respects the contrast presented to the declarations of Christ, has been felt by the defenders of this exposition themselves. But the diversified attempts which they have made to justify themselves, only serve to discover more clearly with what weight it presses upon them.

Ewald thinks that, when one looks into the matter more closely, Christ never speaks of the desolation of the city, but always only of the desolation of the temple. Were it so, the difficulty would only be lessened, not removed; for, the prophecy announces not merely the preservation of the city, but also of the temple, with the exception only of the court. But the assertion itself, as a single glance shows, is a mere fancy; the desolation of the city was foretold by our Lord as distinctly and repeatedly as that of the temple; and, according to the whole style of scriptural representation, the fates of both are inseparably bound up together; the temple could not fall without the city. For, the desolation of the temple is the sign of reprobation and rejection; and this must also disclose itself in the overthrow of the city.

Lücke hesitates about ranking John in the number of patriotic dreamers. "The prophet," he says in his *Apocalyptic Studies*, "as a truly inspired Christian, could not less hate an antichristian, persecuting Judaism, than an antichristian, persecuting heathenism." He seeks to get rid of the opposition to the declarations of Christ by making the apostle prophesy, not of the preservation, but of the desolation of the city and temple. He says, "The temple of Jerusalem, as the centre of Judaism, was to be desolated, only the Most Holy Place preserved. But the destruction of the earthly temple encloses the destruction of the holy city as such in itself." The truth, however, is, that the temple is preserved, and only the court given up, and consequently Lücke's own words respecting the inseparable connection between the city and the temple turn against himself: the non-desolation of the temple includes in itself the non-desolation of the city. That this is to be thought of as not destroyed, is evident besides from ver. 13, according to which only the tenth part of the city falls, only seven thousand men, who are hence to be understood to be the tenth part of the inhabitants of the city, are killed; the rest give God the glory, and consequently are preserved—a proportion perfectly analogous to that between the temple and its court—while the prophet, in ch. xviii., cannot find words enough to describe the full and entire overthrow of Babylon.

Finally Baur, on the *Kanon. Evangelien*, p. 605, would in his usual way cut the knot, which Ewald and Lücke have tried in vain to loose. He remarks, "How could the Apocalypticist have overlooked the destruction of Jerusalem—how must he not rather have taken it for a main point of his Apocalyptic representations, if Jesus had really prophesied concerning it, as he is reported to have done in the Gospel of Matthew? In Rev. ch. xi. the Apocalypticist only prophesies, that the holy city should be trodden down by the heathen for three years and an half; yet the temple, along with the inner court (?) was to be preserved." Baur is here, as very commonly, in the right as regards those with whom he has

immediately to do; it is more scientific to get rid with violence of the contrariety between the disciple and the master, than innocently to ignore it, or by an arbitral exposition conceal it; but the method is still too heroic to be generally followed. That our Lord announced the destruction of the city and the temple is unanimously testified by all the Evangelists. The declarations are so often repeated, so extended, so entwined with the history, that to give them up would be virtually to surrender the historical character of all the Gospels. They have an important foundation in the prophecies of the Old Testament, on which they lean. That they had also made their way to those without, appears from Mark, ch. xiv. 58. They formed a leading point in the charges brought against the Lord.

But now let it be farther observed, that in the prophet the ground shows itself to have absolutely no existence, in which such a vicious Jewish patriotism could take root, as is here supposed to have wrought with the frightful energy of leading the Seer to contradict his Master to his face. He who is truly in Christ can no longer know any one after the flesh; he to whom Christ is what he was to the author of this book, the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the Prince of the kings of the earth, who has loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood, and has made us kings and priests to God and his Father—such a person is raised entirely above the territory of mere Jewish sympathies. These are to be found out of Judaism only among half Christians, with those who, in the meagre acquaintance with the glory of Christ, have never attained to the full knowledge of the difference between Judaism and Christianity.

Not merely, however, from the Apocalyptic Seer's relation to Christ, but also from his express and pointed polemical declaration against Judaism, we could show how very far such a vicious Jewish patriotism lay from him. In the epistle to the angel of the church of Smyrna the Lord says, "I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan." In the epistle to the angel of the church of Philadelphia it is said, "Behold I will give out of Satan's synagogue of those who say they are Jews and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will cause them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." The position which the Seer in these declarations takes up toward the unbelieving Jews, is as strong and offensive as it could well be. They are plainly characterized as persons unworthy of the name of Jews, and belonging to the community of Satan. That it is not single individuals of improper character that are discoursed of, but the whole fraternity as such, is evident from the expression: Satan's synagogue, "a parody of the title, Jehovah's congregation (Numb. xvi. 3, &c.), with which they flattered their vanity" (Züllig). These declarations coincide with the peculiarly strong things that are recorded in the Gospel of John against the Jews, ch. viii. 44, "Ye are of your father the devil," spoken in reply to the pretension of the Jews in ver. 41, "We have one father, God." [3] On the other hand, there was always a bridge between Judaizing Christians and unconverted Jews. Whoever has broken with these as completely as our Seer has done, to him the temple at Jerusalem can be nothing else than a den of robbers, [4] as our Lord himself called it in Matt. xxi. 13. He must therefore have denied it the name of the temple. As he recognizes none to be Jews but the Christians, so he can own no other temple but the Christian church. When Bleek understands by those who, in ch. xi., worship in the temple, "the pious servants of God among the inhabitants of Jerusalem," "together with the Christians such also

as, without belonging to the Christian church, worshipped their God in purity of conscience," he speaks, indeed, good Schleiermacheran, but bad Apocalyptic doctrine. The crisis by that time was quite past; the nobler elements had long ago been absorbed by the Christian church; the synagogue of Satan retained only the scum. Such illusions of a superficial fleshly benevolence, are quite remote from the author of the Apocalypse, against whom Baur, and with some right from this point of view, brings the charge, on account of the epistle to the Laodiceans, of being a gross fanatic: "who would allow nothing lukewarm, hence also nothing of an ordinary and middle character; he has always in his eye sharp contrasts." Whoever regards Judaism as the author of the Apocalypse did, he could the less mean by the temple that at Jerusalem, as here the discourse is simply of the temple, not of a place of worship to the Lord, but, without any qualifying term, of his sanctuary on earth, while yet of this our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, and now is, when neither in Jerusalem nor in this mountain shall men worship the Father." No one viewing Judaism as our author did, could possibly think of it as having such noble powers of life slumbering in it, as that so comparatively mild a judgment should have sufficed to set them free—that the fall of the tenth part of the city and the death of the tenth part of the inhabitants should have had the effect of "terrifying the rest, and leading them to give glory to the God of heaven." Such powers of life, according to the view taken in the Apocalypse, grow only out of Christ's blood and redemption. For Satan's synagogue tribulation is as fruitless as for the heathen, and even more so. It can only produce rage in such characters, the dark zealot-spirit.

If we allow to these cardinal passages on the relation of the Apocalypse to Judaism their full weight, we shall have no hesitation from the outset what to make of the proofs for the Judaizing spirit of the author, which some have been at pains to bring forward. We may, however, look at them somewhat closely. After the example of Lücke, Baur presses the fact of the author speaking only of twelve apostles at ch. xxi. 14, as having their names on the foundations of the new Jerusalem; so that he must have excluded the apostle Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles. Bleek has justly remarked in opposition to this, that the Jews were wont to speak of their twelve tribes, without thereby excluding any portion of the people from their community. The same thing is done also here, immediately before, in ver. 12; and if the apostle would not depart from what had been so long consecrated as a symbol of the church, the number twelve, he must likewise adhere to it in the corresponding number of the apostles. The twelve number of the apostles, which certainly had no accidental origin, was regarded as so inviolable, that even Paul, in 1 Cor. xv. 5, says that Christ was seen of the twelve, after Judas had been parted from them. How much less could it be imagined, that the author of the Apocalypse was to speak of thirteen apostles—he who throughout lays such great stress upon the numbers? Only if one were to understand really what was meant ideally, could one have desired him in such a way to do violence to the consecrated signature of the church, and render it unintelligible. And we can the less think of any intentional exclusion of Paul, as that very passage alludes to a declaration of his in Eph. ii. 20, and the more to be regarded as there are also in other parts of the Apocalypse a great number of allusions to the epistles of Paul. [5]

Baur remarks farther, "What a great contrast exists between the stand-point of the Apocalypse, by which the kingdom of God has its genuine, its truly be-

lieving and blessed members only out of Judaism, and that of the gospel, which sees in Judaism only the kingdom of unbelief." On the contrary, we maintain that the Revelation knows of no prerogatives belonging peculiarly to the Jews in the kingdom of God; Gentile Christians have perfectly equal rights imputed to them with the Jewish brethren; so much so, that the Seer makes no account of any distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers, he knows only of one holy Catholic church. And from this fact we draw the conclusion that the exposition of this section, which regards it as containing Jewish patriotic phantasies, cannot possibly be right. Which of the two opposite views is the correct one, must be determined by an examination of the particular passages.

The first passage that demands attention is ch. v. 8, 10. "Then the four beasts and the four and twenty elders fell down before the lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open its seals, for thou wert slain and hast redeemed us [6] to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. [7] And hast made them (the persons so redeemed) kings and priests to our God, and they shall reign upon the earth." This passage is quite plain and clear: in the kingdom of God there is neither Jew nor Greek, it brings its members out of all peoples of the earth to the possession of the same rights, to be kings and priests, which is the highest dignity that can be conceived in the kingdom of God. And this enlarged oecumenical mode of representation is not like a thing that swims in the air, so that it might be regarded as a kind of isolated ray of light; it has its foundation in the worth that is here ascribed to Christ's blood-comp. on ch. xii. 11, "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." All Judaism has its root in defective views of the great work of redemption. He who perceives in Christ the Lamb of God, that takes away the sins of the world, is thereby raised quite above the contracted and partial Jewish spirit.

The second passage is ch. vii. 1-8. Here we have represented, in an episode between the sixth and seventh seals, the safe preservation of the members of the church amid the great plagues which befall the unbelieving and apostate world. The grace of God manifested toward them and protecting them, appears under the image of a seal, which is imprinted on them, before the wind blows upon the earth; that is, before the storm of tribulations breaks in upon the world with its desolating and destructive fury. To a superficial view the precedence of the Jews has here certainly some appearance of support. It is not only the children of Israel in general that are spoken of, but particular Jewish tribes also are singled out from the rest, as those to whom the sealed belong. But no one that is a little advanced in the investigation of Scripture will allow himself to be at once carried away by appearances of this sort. By a mode of contemplation in Scripture deeply rooted and widely diffused, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are the fathers of all believers; from the very beginning of the arrangements respecting salvation to the end of the world, there is but one people of God, the sons of Abraham and of Israel, from the number of whom they are excluded, who give way to a spirit of unbelief and backsliding, even though they have been born among them, according to the oft-repeated expression, "that soul is cut off from among his people;" while, on the other hand, those who have faith, wherever they may have been born, attain to equal rights with the native members. It is from this point of view that our Lord, for example, speaks to his disciples in Matt. xix. 28, "Verily I say to you, that ye who have followed me, in the

regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of his glory, shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” That the twelve tribes of Israel are here used not in the ordinary Jewish sense, that they rather denote the whole church of God, is as certain as the calling of the apostles had respect, not to Israel in the narrower sense, but to all nations, Matth. xxviii. 19. Indeed, in the calling of the apostles themselves our Lord was guided by this mode of viewing things—as certainly as the twelve number of the apostles has respect to the twelve tribes of Israel. The same mode is followed also by James, when he addresses his epistle to the “twelve tribes scattered abroad,” to the Israel out of Palestine, in the dispersion: and by Peter, when he writes to the “elect strangers scattered abroad in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.” Both of them certainly did not wish to exclude the Gentile Christians, who, as appears from the Acts of the Apostles and the epistles of Paul, were then united with Jewish Christians in those regions into one Christian body; nor did they mean to include the unchristian Jews. They addressed both the genuine original sons, and the sons by adoption. This manner of contemplation is followed also by the author of the Apocalypse himself, in ch. xxi. 12, according to which the city, that symbolizes the church in the kingdom of glory, the city in whose light the Gentiles walk, ch. xxi. 24, into which all without distinction of nation are received, who have overcome, ch. xxi. 7, and from which all are excluded without distinction of nation, who have done abomination and lies, ver. 27, has names written on its gates which are the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. The question, therefore, arises, Does the Seer here speak of Israel and its tribes in this sense, or in the ordinary Jewish one? If in the former, there is nothing to imply an undue ascendancy of the Jews over others. For, the honor of being the kernel and trunk of the people of God, even under the New Testament, is accorded to them in all Scripture, and nowhere more decidedly than in the writings of the apostle Paul (Rom. ix. and xi.); nor can it be denied them, without falling out with history, which declares the communication of the gospel to the heathen to have been made by means of believing Jews; without finding the conduct of Christ incomprehensible in confining the preaching of salvation primarily to the Jews; and without destroying the continuity of the kingdom of God, which unfortunately is very much lost sight of by the style of thought now prevalent, as also by orthodox theologians, to the great detriment not only of theology, but also of a living faith. For, if we tear asunder the two testaments, we leave the Old to be regarded as primarily destined for the Jews, and retain only the New for Christians; and thus rob the first of a great part of its edifying character for the Christian church, and receive only some disjecta membra of the writings of Scripture, as fitted now to exercise a direct and proper influence. Those who have not the Old Testament, possess the New also in a very imperfect manner.

If we turn now to answer the proposed question, there can be no doubt that the prophet speaks here of Israel and his tribes in the spiritual or Christian sense. We could prove this without calling to our aid ch. xiv., where the 144,000 again appear, and where they quite undeniably represent the whole company of Christians. In the chapter before us itself, those, whose preservation from the plagues that were to alight on the wicked is depicted in ver. 1-8, for their consolation in the time of trial, are presented to our view in the possession of that final glory which awaited them. They are spoken of there as being taken out of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, and hence from these also

must the 144,000 have been formed. [8] That we must not stick to the letter, is clear also from the omission of the tribe of Dan, for a purely theological reason, in order to exceed the number twelve; [9] from the number being the same in the small and the large tribes; and from the fact that the tribal distinctions were then lost.

The third passage is ch. xiv. 1-5. Here it is a piece of palpable caprice in Credner, Züllig, Baur, to understand by the 144,000 who stand around the Lamb on Mount Zion, Jewish Christians, and nothing but the most imperative necessity, or the giving up also of the preceding passages, could warrant us in adopting such a view. It has, however, nothing to support it; and there are the following reasons against it:—1. All the marks throughout the passage point to Christians in general: they have the name of Christ and the name of his Father written on their foreheads; they have been redeemed from the earth, from among men, they sing a new song before the throne and the four beasts, who represent the living creatures over all the earth; they have not denied themselves with women, i. e., sins (comp. Gen. iv. 7, where sin appears under the image of a woman, with iii. 16; Zech. v. 7, 8; Rev. ii. 20, 22), they follow the Lamb wherever he goes, in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without blame. These are all clear marks for distinguishing a true Christian in any age. With Jewish Christians, on the other hand, the first distinguishing mark was circumcision, which would have made an anomalous appearance in such a society. 2. Identical beyond doubt with the 144,000, who here stand on Mount Zion and sing the new song, are those who, in ch. xv. 2-4, stand on the sea of glass, and sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. These are described as the persons who have gotten the victory over the beast and his image. But according to ch. xiii. 7, the beast has power given to it over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation, that is, over the believers from among them. These, too, are the persons who here sing the song of the Lamb, and in ch. xiv., the new song. 3. The whole fourteenth chapter, the conclusion of the group, which treats of the three enemies of the kingdom of God, and their formidable war against it, ch. xii.-xiv., forms the antidote to the pain, which might be occasioned by the contents of ch. xiii., the representation of the great oppression caused by the beast. A glance is here first given, in ch. xiv. 1-6, into the heavenly blessedness of the elect. Now, if the song is of an oecumenical character, if it concerns the saints of all tongues and nations, then the field embraced in the consolation can be no straitened one, it cannot possibly be limited to the Jewish territory.

Thus we have arrived at the result, that the Rationalistic exposition of our section is altogether untenable, because the supposition on which it rests, that the author of the Revelation had only one foot in Christianity, and another still in Judaism, is an utterly groundless one. On the contrary, it everywhere appears that he had taken for his motto, “Christ alone and all,” and in the blood of the Lamb had been washed, as well from his Jewish sympathies, as from the other stains and imperfections of his old man.

But there is also another line of argument by which we can gain the same result. We perceive that everywhere else the things of Judaism serve only as the forms and symbols under which he represents the Christian; and all these analogies lead to the conclusion that he cannot possibly mean by the temple here the temple at Jerusalem— that he must intend by it what corresponds to it on the Christian territory, the Christian church. That by Israel the author

does not denote those whom he thought worthy of the name on account of their corporeal descent from Jacob, but the entire body of true Christians, we have already seen. In like manner he holds no other to be Jews but true Christians (Vitranga on ch. ii. 9, "Jew in this book denotes one who is a Jew in secret, circumcised in heart, a true confessor of the faith"). Bold as it may seem, he must also deny to the temple at Jerusalem the name of the temple. The priests of the Revelation, who must of course have a temple corresponding to them, are not the Levitical, but all Christ's faithful people, who have been made priests to God, and his Father," i. 6, v. 10, xx. 6. Nay, the temple itself also occurs elsewhere in the Revelation in a spiritual sense, as a designation of the church of Christ. And this is the more decisive, as in each place alike the discourse is not of a temple, but precisely of the temple of God. Even in the first group, that of the epistles, it is said, ch. iii. 12, "He that overcomes, him will I make a pillar in the temple of our God, and he shall go no more out." On that passage it is well remarked by Vitranga, "That their position may be firm and immovable in the heavenly temple, which is the symbol as well of believers upon earth, as of the, saints made perfect in glory. For under the new dispensation there is a house of God, to which all the saints have access, Heb. xii. 22." The going no more out here, forms the contrast to the throwing out in ch. xi. 2. Vitranga, "It must be understood passively, as if it had been written, He shall not be cast out. The Lord by his grace and providence would take care, that those among the Philadelphians, who, with a sincere spirit and a pure affection, had confessed the truth, should never be deprived of their state and dignity." In ch. xiii. 6, the tabernacle of God is a designation of his church, in connection with those, who dwell in heaven, believers in heaven and on earth, for the citizenship of the latter also is in heaven (Phil. iii. 20), the saints, as they are presently after named by way of explanation. [10] Further, the temple of the Lord in heaven, with the ark of the covenant, vii. 15, xi. 19, xiv. 15, 17, xv. 5, as the heavenly symbol of the church, implies, that the church upon earth also presented itself to the prophet under the same symbol. As it stands in regard to the temple, so does it also in regard to Jerusalem. Whenever it occurs besides in the Revelation, it never denotes the city so named in the vulgar sense, but always the church; and we should, therefore, need to isolate the section before us from all the rest of the book, were we to think here of the literal Jerusalem and the temple of Herod. By the "beloved city," which, according to ch. xx. 9, is to be encompassed and besieged by a revived heathenism at the close of the thousand years, Lücke himself understands "the society of believers upon earth," in other words, the Christian church; and yet there can be no doubt, that this beloved city is Jerusalem, so that Ewald is perfectly right in identifying the city here (in ch. xi.) and there. Vitranga remarks, "Allusion is made as well to Ps. lxxxvii. 2, 'The Lord loves the gates of Zion,' as to the vision in the next prophecy, xxi. 1-10, which represents the church under the image of Jerusalem, the holy city, beloved of God." How also could the prophet, in ch. iii. 12, xxi. 2, 10, represent the church of the future world under the name of the new Jerusalem, unless he had already recognized the true Jerusalem in the church of the present? It was the new Jerusalem in contrast, not to that old material one, but to the spiritual beloved city in its imperfect condition here, from which this section itself tells us, how much it needs a renewal, with how many deficiencies and evils it is still beset. Finally, the heavenly Zion, with its 144,000 perfected saints, who sing there the new song before the throne, ch. xiv.

1-5, presupposes the existence of an earthly Zion, in which believers have been prepared for it by much tribulation. Those who stick to the letter, ought, as a necessary consequence, to abide here also by the literal Zion. If the triumphant church takes the name of Zion, the name must also be proper for the church militant. For, it cannot be applied to the church as triumphing, but only in so far as it is a church. [11]

With these facts before us, to attempt to interpret the section under consideration, according to the letter, would be a mere act of caprice; the more so, as the spiritual use of the language is very extensively employed also in the other books of the New Testament, even in some where it could far less be expected than in the Revelation. The passages in which the temple occurs as a designation of the Christian church, have already been adduced; in regard to Jerusalem; Gal. iv. 26, Hebr. xii. 22, are especially to be compared.

There are besides, however, many other reasons against the reference to the Jewish temple and the literal Jerusalem, and for the reference to the temple and the Jerusalem of the Christian church.

According to the seven epistles, which everywhere contain only individual applications of what is exhibited as a general delineation in the prophetic part, we could not but expect that the Seer in the main delineation, would direct his eye upon the internal state of the church of the future. The preserving and rejecting agency of God in regard to the church, is the point that comes most prominently out in the epistles. The command, for example, "Measure the temple of God and the altar, and them that worship therein," connects itself closely with, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," ch. ii. 10, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the whole earth," ch. iii. 10. In like manner, the throwing out of the temple-court and not measuring it, is very nearly allied to such passages as the following, "If not, I will come to thee, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place," and, "I will spue thee out of my mouth," etc. That the church in the future was to undergo a great sifting, that it was never wholly to perish, but that many branches of the vine should become withered and useless, is a subject frequently unfolded in the epistles. But this agreement between our section and the epistles is destroyed, whenever we refer the former to Judaism, instead of to the Christian church. In its place, indeed, there comes a palpable discord. For the Judaism, whose preservation should in that case be announced here, is what is called the synagogue of Satan in the epistles.

One does not see, how a prediction respecting the future fates of the literal Jerusalem and the Jewish temple should have been introduced exactly here, pressed in between the sixth and seventh trumpets, the second and third woe, which have to do only with the world-power. On the other hand, by the spiritual interpretation, which refers it to the Christian church, the prophetic announcement is quite in its place. The judgments alight upon the worldpower on account of the hostile attitude it has assumed against the church, and for the salvation of the latter. And it is well, in the meantime to see, what effect has been wrought in the church itself by the very dangerous encroachment upon it through the world-power—whether it has not been internally reduced to a level with the world; the more so, since if such were the case, the whole of the treatment to be inflicted on the world-power would lose its propriety. It has the preservation of the temple of God, and of those who worship in it, for its

foundation.

The appearance of the angel of the Lord, which is described in the episode, ch. x. 1-xi. 13, has the double aim of first solemnly announcing, that the completion of the judgment upon the world, and the glorifying of the church therewith connected, should certainly take place, and then of declaring how dreadfully the temple and Jerusalem would be imperilled by the encroachments of the world, though they should still be preserved. The two parts of the mission of the angel lose all internal connection, whenever by the temple we understand the Jewish one. But adopt the spiritual meaning, and that immediately becomes manifest. The danger brought to the temple and the city by the worldly intermixture in the church could not but awaken a doubt as to the final victory of the church, and her glorification, which was met by the solemn assurance given respecting the consummation. The final glorification of the church has for its basis the preservation of the church amid the temptations threatening it; without the patience of Christ, no participation in his kingdom.

The position of the two witnesses becomes incomprehensible, if ver. 1 and 2 are not referred to the Christian church. They are equally hated by the world-power—the beast which rises out of the abyss—and by the degenerate holy city, “which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified;” they were brought to death through the persecuting hatred of the degenerate community. On the degenerate holy city, according to ver. 13, the judgment alights, and that because of the despite it had done to their testimony. Between the world-power and the Jews, however, there existed no internal connection. But there did between the worldpower and the Christian church, which through the encroaching pressure of the former was to become to a large extent leavened with the spirit of the world.

The beast, from which, according to ver. 7, proceeds the persecution of the two witnesses, has to do, according to ch. xiii. 7, 8, not with the literal Jerusalem, but with the saints, whose name is written in the book of the Lamb that had been slain. The whole war of the Dragon, which the beast serves (comp. xiii. 2) is waged against those, who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; comp. xii. 11.

The literal Jerusalem, at the time the Apocalypse was written, even taking the earliest date to which that has been ascribed, was no longer the theatre for the two witnesses. That Jerusalem had then ceased to be the seat and centre of the church—a dignity it lost at the moment of Christ’s death, Matth. xxiii. 38—is manifest alone from the seven epistles, which proclaim the complete separation of the church from Jerusalem and its temple. But the witnessing generally has its proper territory only in the church of God, though possibly degenerate, and that here also this is to be regarded as the sphere of action, is evident from the prototypes Moses and Elias, who came forth in the midst of God’s church, and from the designation of the witnesses as the two olive-trees and the two lamps, which determine the region of their agency to be that of the Spirit and grace of God.

References

1. These expositors, in opposition to their own canon, that it is against the custom of the prophets to give definite predictions, hold that here there is really a very exact and precise announcement of what was to come: the court shall be taken possession of, but the holy city not. That Ewald was not without a sense of this difficulty, is evident from the words he has shoved in: *Si forte*

exterius templum hostium libido invadet. This also shows the inadmissibility of the lateral view, that in the actual temple, in the temple proper, in which we are placed, there were no worshippers.

2. Comp. Mark xiii. 2, Luke xxi. 6, and in regard to the city still farther, Luke xxi. 10, m.; in regard to the temple, John ii. 19, and Matth. xxiii. 38, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate"—a passage which also indirectly refers to the city. The temple comes into notice as the seat of the whole nation. If its former inhabitants were thrown out, they must lose their right to the holy city, which is to be regarded as an appendage of the temple, and this must be devoted to destruction.

3. Dr. Bleek would conclude from these declarations, that the position of the Apocalypse against Judaism is a different one from that of the gospel: "While the gospel uses the designation the Jews as alone indicating the higher class among the Jewish people in their character of opposition to the truth, and decided hostility to the Redeemer, this name is a very honorable one with the Apocalyptist; insomuch that he calls the Jews, who obstinately opposed the gospel, or wickedly persecuted it, not properly Jews, but regards them as falsely taking to themselves that name—" In reality the representation is the same in both, differing only in the form according to the different kinds of writing in the two cases. The historian employs the usual name; the prophet, on the other hand, who rises above the common reality and its empty names, denies to those Jews, who wanted the substance, also the name. How little such diversities infer a difference in the authorship, is plain from the fact of our Lord (in John viii. 37, 39 "I know that ye are the seed of Abraham." and again, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the deeds of Abraham"), employing almost in one breath both the real and the ideal manner of designation.

4. And at what period did the temple more deserve this name than shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, to which the composition of the Apocalypse is transferred by those who understand by the temple in ch. xi. the temple at Jerusalem? Even Josphus describes that temple quite similarly, as a place in which latterly all manner of abominations became concentrated. And this sink of abominations must the author of the Apocalypse, less enlightened than Josphus, have taken for the true sanctuary of the Lord, and sought to preserve from destruction? The untenableness of the position, which the modern theology ascribes to the Apocalypse, discovers itself also here. Any one that regarded the temple at Jerusalem so, could have obtained neither canonical nor a deuterocanonical place for his book. Hofmann has justly said in his Weiss, und Erf. II. p. 301, "When Galba was emperor, Eleazar's zealots had possession of the temple, from whence they robbed and murdered in the city; in the temple itself they despatched the blameless Zecharias, and practised horrors which the tongue trembles to utter. Must the author of the Apocalypse have been so very Jewishly inclined, that he should have wished to preserve the theatre of these barbarities? Are those zealots to be now regarded as the worshipping company of the Apocalypse? or shall the two witnesses be discovered in Eleazar and John of Gishala?"

5. Especially remarkable and undeniable are the references to Col. i. 16-18. On the *** in ver. 18, comp. in Rev. i. 6, ***. This peculiar expression occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, and was manifestly framed by Paul, as may be seen from the relation to ver. 16. The *** in ver. 18 of Col. is found also in Rev. xxii. 13 and iii. 14. The *** there points to the *** in ver. 15. A word

is substituted for *** in ver. 18, by which it is explained. It is to be observed that this reference occurs in the epistle to the Laodiceans, for whom, according to Col. iv. 16, the epistle to the Ephesians was also intended. Comp. besides Rev. i. 4, with Paul's form of salutation, i. 9, with 2 Tim. ii. 2,12; ii. 10 with Phil. ii. 8; xix. 8 with 2 Cor. xi. 2, &c.

6. Ewald and Bleek would expunge *** "as it cannot be thought that the author of the Apocalypse would have it to be understood that not merely the four and twenty elders in heaven, but also the Cherubim, represent themselves as those who have been redeemed out of all nations by the blood of the Lamb, and who shall again reign on the earth." But to the four beasts, the ideal representatives of the living earthly creation, belongs, as was shown in our exposition, only the falling down; the *** has immediate respect only to the four and twenty elders, and of these only does the nature of things permit us to think: the Cherubim cannot be conceived as doing the part of harpers. But the elders do not act in their own name; they do so as representatives of the saints; they have vials full of incense, which are the prayers of saints—comp. also ch. xiv. 2, xv. 2, where the saints themselves have harps.

7. Isaiah had already said, in ch. lxvi. 18, "And I—their works and thoughts. A time comes for gathering all heathen and tongues"—the Jewish people are rejected, the heathen world called.

8. The supposition of Hofmann is quite inadmissible, that the numberless multitude out of all kindreds and nations, in ver. 9, is placed over against the 144,000 out of Judaism. There would then have been promised to the Jewish believers only preservation upon the earth, and to those from among the Gentiles only heavenly felicity.—The objection which Bleek has raised against the identification of the 144,000 with the numberless multitude can very easily be disposed of. He says, first, it is not probable that, if the entire number was given at 144,000, they should immediately after be described as a multitude which no one could number. But in ch. xiv. 1, 2, the voices of the 144,000 are also compared with the noise of many waters, and of loud thunder. Numerable usually stands in Hebrew for what can easily be numbered; compare, for example, Isa. x. 19. Any one looking at a multitude of 144,000 would at once lose all thought of numbering. Balaam says, in Num. xxiii. 10, "Who can determine the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel?" already, therefore, the fourth part of Israel was held to be innumerable, and yet the whole was twice numbered during the march, and in that very book, in which such an explanation is given of Israel's being innumerable, the precise numbers are recorded; whereas here only a round number, of a thoroughly ideal import, is given, and such as only expresses in another form the idea of an innumerable multitude. For that the number has no real signification is manifest alone from its relation to the twelve as the signature of the covenant-people. Again, it is objected by Bleek that the 144,000 are in ver. 4 expressly described as sealed out of all the tribes of Israel—an expression that could scarcely have been chosen if it was meant as the entire sum of the members of these tribes, and not as an announcement of believers sealed out of the entire number of members in these tribes. But this reason can only tell against Bleek's earlier hypothesis, according to which the twelve tribes must be divisions in the New Testament kingdom of God itself. The twelve tribes are the twelve Jewish tribes (for in the whole of Scripture there is but one Israel, and the distinction made in the older theology of a corporeal and a spiritual Israel, the Christian church, has

no foundation), but the false seed are excluded, and the sons of adoption are brought in. As, therefore, a sediment, a sentina remains behind, the expression, "out of all the tribes of Israel," is quite suitable.

9. Hofmann improperly refers to the omission of Simeon in the blessing of Moses. The reason for that omission was, that Simeon received no separate territory, but dwelt under Judah, and hence was blessed along with him, and obtained no peculiar blessing of his own. But in respect to the Messianic blessing, Dan had not an independent existence, and must not have failed, if the whole enumeration was to be taken in a realistic sense. The reason for the exclusion alone of Dan out of the number twelve, is, as already shown, that the only narrative of the Old Testament, in which Dan played a part, is that respecting the worship of idols among the Danites, in the book of Judges. So that the sentiment "without are the idolatrous," in ch. xxii. 16, is here symbolically represented by the omission of Dan.

10. Besides these parallel passages, it is in favor of the temple being regarded as the symbol of the church, that the prophecy of Ezekiel, ch. xl.-xlviii., to which an allusion in ver. 1 undoubtedly is made, unquestionably refers not to an external building, but to the spiritual temple of God's kingdom, as is evident in particular from ch. xlvii. As Ezekiel beheld the restoration of the church under the image of the temple given to be measured, so John beheld its preservation.

11. Polycrates of Ephesus says, in his third epistle to the Roman bishop Victor, in Euseb. v. 24, of St. John, ***, certainly in the manner of John himself. In a spiritual understanding of the high-priesthood, he makes its nature to consist in the closest relationship to the Lord.