

a secondary meaning. It is really a revelation to Jesus Christ. According to the first verse of the book it is a revelation which God gave to Jesus Christ in order to show the servants of Christ what should soon come to pass, and through an angel it was communicated to John, who was permitted to publish it to the Saints. The title of the book might very properly be "The Revelation of Christ" rather than that of John.

It is a book profitable to study, for, in its own language, "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand." (Rev. 1: 3.) It certainly belongs to that "more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts." (2 Peter i: 19.) Being published especially for the instruction and enlightenment of the servants of Christ, there can be no truth in the assertion that the revelation is impossible to understand.

#### WHEN WRITTEN.

The revelation is generally supposed to have been written by John during his exile on Patmos, about the year 96 A. D. The early fathers Irenæus and Eusebius refer the book to the time of the Emperor Domitian; and the earliest traditions support the view that John, during the time of this emperor, was exiled to Patmos. Many, however, give a much earlier date to the book, supposing that the exile of John happened during the reign of the Emperor Nero, 67 or 68 A. D. Although this early date cannot be proved beyond doubt, yet the probability is very strong in favor of it. The very language of the book indicates an author who was not yet accustomed to the Greek tongue. The frequent references to the temple, the altar, and the sacrifices, strongly favor the supposition that it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, consequently before Domitian.

#### THE FIRST PRINTED EDITION.

It appears that the powers of darkness have been very anxious to corrupt this book particularly. When the first edition was printed it was impossible to find a Greek copy which was not more or less spurious or even incomplete. The last chapters were nowhere to be found, and so the editor had to translate the lacking part from the Latin, by means of which a very poor text was obtained. Besides, there is a notable peculiarity in the book. The author, when seeing an object in a vision and describing it, often disregards the grammatical gender, and makes his adjective or participle agree, not with the word but rather with the idea present in his mind at the time. Some of the early copyists, in transcribing the texts, apparently thought it their duty to correct these apparent anomalies, thereby producing a very spurious text. At present, however, not less than 93 manuscripts of this book

are known, some of which are very ancient, and by means of these scholars have been able to purify the text and give it to us, on the whole, as it was originally written by John. It must be admitted that, in its original form, ungrammatical though it be, it cannot be surpassed in dignity and sublimity of composition.

#### DIVISION OF THE BOOK.

Stated briefly, the book is divided as follows:

Part 1, relating to "the things which are," at the time of the writing. This part contains the seven letters to the seven churches, recorded in chap. 1, 3.

Part 2 is the proper prophetic part of the book, and relates to "the things which shall be hereafter." (Rev. 1, 19). This part contains the visions of

1. Seven seals.
2. Seven trumpets.
3. Three enemies, Satan, the beast and the false prophet warring against God.
4. Seven vials.
5. The three enemies overthrown.
6. The final triumph of Christ and the new or heavenly Jerusalem.

The whole has, by the best commentators, always been considered as one continuous chain of events, although some are, as is natural in all historical narratives, synchronical. With the central objects, seals, trumpets, vials, Satan, the beast, the false prophet, other visions are interwoven as introductory and concluding scenes, several of which relate to the Church and the Kingdom of God.

#### DIFFICULTIES OF INTERPRETATION.

On all sides it is admitted that the Revelation is a most difficult book to interpret. Its language is chiefly symbolical, and when we open its pages we are met by a number of figure-angels, books, beasts, rivers, cities, mountains. All this seems to be as intelligible as a set of Egyptian hieroglyphics. Indeed, the prophetic language generally is hieroglyphical, or, more properly still, it is picture writing, with the pictures spelled out in words instead of painted or engraved. This creates the difficulties. A knowledge of this fact may also furnish the right key to the interpretation; for if it is found that the prophets invariably use the figures to represent the similar events, as they indeed do, and if it be understood that prophetic figures sometimes are interpreted by the angels, by the seers themselves, or by the events fulfilling them, then we know where to look for a true and reliable interpretation. Clearly enough, if we, for instance, in a prophetic book, meet with the figure of a beast, and find that this in Daniel means an empire or a woman, and that this elsewhere means his Father's throne, that a virgin should conceive—all these were impenetrable mysteries, as profound as any of those of the revelation to us. It requires a prophetic spirit to comprehend them.

The gift of prophecy is one of the blessed gifts that has been again restored to the Church of God through the everlasting Gospel. The prophetic writings should therefore no longer be sealed books. And they are not. Through diligent study of the prophetic language in general, careful attention to the events recorded in history, and with the help of the "Key" revealed through Joseph Smith, the Apocalypse ought to be made quite as legible as any part of the Word of God.

#### INTERPRETATIONS.

A few instances how the Word of God is its own and best interpreter may here be given.

In Revelations, chap. 4, we read that round about the throne of God were seen four "beasts" which continually glorified God, together with the elders. The first was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third like a man and the fourth like a flying eagle. On comparing this vision with 4 Mosaic 2, where the camp of Israel is described, we find a striking resemblance, and feel assured that the two—the vision of John and the formation of the camp of Israel—had one pattern. Here in the wilderness we find round about the Tabernacle, to the east three tribes, headed by Judah, whose banner was a lion; to the south three tribes, headed by Reuben, whose banner represented a calf; to the west three tribes, headed by Ephraim, whose banner represented a human face, and to the north three tribes, headed by Dan, whose banner had a flying eagle. Upon further inquiry into the significance of this arrangement observed by Moses in the wilderness, and seen in the heavenly visions on Patmos, we are told, Doctrine and Covenants, section 77, 8: "They represent the glory of classes of beings in their destined order or sphere of creation, in the enjoyment of their eternal felicity." In the wilderness the four beasts, or rather "living creatures," represented the people of God "marching on to glory," in the vision of John they represent glory already obtained. How instructive, the two put together! What the people of God shall become in eternity they must already commence to be here.

In Revelation, chapter 6, we read that there was a great earthquake; the sun, moon and stars were affected and the heaven departed as a scroll, while every mountain and island were removed out of their places. Now, to apply this, as has sometimes been done, literally, and thereby understand a complete destruction of the universe, is contrary to the language itself. The "stars" fall to the "earth;" the heaven "departs," and yet the mountains are only "removed" out of their place; and after these things four angels stand on the earth and the events go on as before. Clearly, by the figures employed, something else is represented, and what is that? In Isaiah, chapter xlii: 9, 10, 13, we find almost the same expressions: "For the stars of the heavens shall no more let their light shine; the sun