

**THREE LETTERS ON THE PROPHECIES, ON THE
TRUE PLACE OF THE SEVENTH SEAL, THE
INFIDEL INDIVIDUAL ANTICHRIST, AND
ANTIOCHUS EIPHANES AS A SUPPOSED
SUBJECT OF PROPHECY,
BEING A CONTINUATION OF EIGHT LETTERS
PUBLISHED IN 1831**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649449835

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Cover @ 2017

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JAMES HATLEY FRERE

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OR

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AND ON

ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES AS A SUPPOSED SUBJECT OF
PROPHECY.

BEING IN CONTINUATION OF EIGHT LETTERS,

PUBLISHED IN 1831.

By JAMES HATLEY FRERE, Esq.

*"Though the Vision tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come,
it will not tarry."*—Hab. ii. 3.

LONDON:

HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY;
SEELEY, FLEET STREET; AND NISBET, BERNERS STREET.

MDCCCXXXIII.

Reprinted, as a Second Edition with a Prefatory Address,
1 July, A.D. 1859.

100 w. 53.

100 2 101

LONDON :
Printed by G. BARCLAY, Castle St. Leicester Sq.



PREFACE

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

THE present critical state of the times, and the excitement prevailing in men's minds while looking for the things which are coming upon the earth, naturally induce the Author of the following pages to make another attempt to call the attention of the Church and of the public to the result of his prophetic labours, which have enabled him, principally through the means of a new system of Apocalyptic arrangement, and the adoption of more stringent rules of interpretation than commentators have hitherto followed, not only to make known, during the last forty-five years, the general course of predicted events, but also, at every critical period, to verify the truth of his system by calling attention to the particular prophecy next about to receive its fulfilment.

But whilst he has always been confident that

he could rely upon this species of demonstration, as evidencing the real perspicuity of prophecy, and has consequently considered it his duty to avail himself fully of it; he must confess himself much disappointed to find, as the result of his now long-continued experience, that every other argument, or form of demonstration than this (which it is evident may be appreciated as well by the most illiterate, as by the best instructed) has been offered to the Church in vain.

Yet the only rule which he has adopted in his interpretation, namely that, the Apocalypse being an historical prophecy, chronological sequence must be strictly adhered to, would doubtless have been acknowledged by preceding commentators as the most simple, obvious, and satisfactory rule that could be followed, provided only that they could have brought it to bear.

Moreover the general division of the book, resulting from a strict observance of the above rule, into three distinct chronological parallel histories, (the seals or cherubic voices, the trumpets, and little opened book,) is established by an unanswerable argument, namely the repetition of certain texts, and the correspondence of others, in each history, which require no interpretation, but are evidently introduced for the purpose of directing the reader to such an arrangement.

The use of such repeated or corresponding texts, as a guide to the general arrangement of

the Apocalypse, prior to its detailed interpretation, was first brought into notice by the celebrated Dr. Mede; though the principle did not conduct him to the discovery of the true arrangement, owing to his partaking of the universal error as to the true place of the opening of the seventh seal. The principle itself, however, was then as universally approved and admired as it has been since his time universally neglected.

From whatever cause it may have arisen, it is but too evident that the spirit of genuine criticism has of late years been lost to the Church; and that the scientific investigation of the prophecies has been altogether neglected; perhaps the cause may have been simply this, that those, who have most zealously pursued these studies, *have been contented so long altogether to ignore* that which being contrary to their previous views they have found it difficult to adopt, and at the same time impracticable to controvert; while a large, and it is to be feared a rapidly increasing number, are able to find no refuge from their uncertainties, but in adopting the monstrous and destructive doctrine of futurism, which does indeed "take away from the words "of the book of this prophecy," rendering impossible any useful application of them to the past or present circumstances of the Church.

It must be hoped, however, that the vast majority of the clergy, fully occupied by their

other spiritual labours, only stand aloof from the subject of prophecy as wearied and jaded, or altogether frightened from any consideration of it, by the great variety of discordant opinions entertained by different writers; all whose difficulties, however, producing such discouraging disagreements among themselves, will be found to have arisen from the same cause; namely, their universal and similar violation of the rule of chronological sequence in one notorious instance. Many therefore who have been hitherto altogether indifferent to any attempt to interpret the Apocalypse will, it is to be hoped, be led to examine it carefully, when they become assured that they may do so with the expectation of a satisfactory result. Neither let them suppose that there is any tendency in this study to foster an uncharitable spirit; for the Author can truly say that he cordially loves the persons, respects the talents, and rejoices in the usefulness (in every other particular) of those, whose teaching with regard to the Apocalypse he feels called upon, both on their own account, and that of the Church at large, to condemn in such strong and decisive terms.

It has been the constant endeavour of the Author, by the establishment of a few simple and obvious rules of interpretation, to revive the practice of scientific investigation, and thus to deliver the Church from that diversity of opinion, which

has hitherto rendered the study of prophecy altogether unsatisfactory. Anticipations of future events, however attractive and interesting they may be to the public, he would regard as diverted from their proper use, if they were treated of alone, or considered otherwise than as evidences of the general truth of that system of interpretation, from whence they may have been derived.*

He must therefore again exhort his fellow-labourers in this department of our Lord's vineyard, in that spirit of charity and love which becomes labourers so employed, to discuss with him the important question which has so long troubled and perplexed the Church; namely, that of the true interpretation of the Apocalypse of St. John; commencing the discussion in the only legitimate way, by establishing the correct arrangement of its various visions, by reference to simple and unsymbolical texts, evidently introduced for that purpose, and requiring no interpretation.†

* See in pages xi to xviii a statement of such anticipations from prophecy.

† The Author is also entitled, on the ground of his own experience, to press upon commentators the importance of ascertaining correctly the external structure of a prophecy before undertaking its minute interpretation; for, as *all their errors have arisen from a mistake as to the true place of the opening of the seventh seal*, so the only error in his system, as first brought before the public in 1814, originated in his not having