

PREFACE

IN giving to the Public the following Lectures on *The Revelation of St. John*, the author can do little more than refer to the opening sentences of the first Lecture for a statement of his deep sense of that responsibility which he has felt to be involved in undertaking such a task. It is an old conviction with him that, so long as that book is retained in the Canon of the New Testament, the Church lies under an imperative obligation to endeavour to understand it, and that no difficulties met with in its interpretation can justify neglect of what she receives as a portion of the will of God revealed to her in Scripture. The present work is, therefore, simply an effort on the part of the writer to contribute what he can to the discharge of this responsibility; and, in the circumstances, he can only hope that, whatever criticism his views may have to meet, he will not be charged with arrogance or self-sufficiency in expressing them.

In publishing the Lectures the author labours under

one great disadvantage, which he has found it impossible to overcome. They ought to have been accompanied by a series of Discussions on important texts of the Apocalypse, and on the principles adopted in their interpretation. Without these too much may seem at times to have been taken for granted, and many may be of opinion that assumptions have been made without their correctness having first been proved. To have attempted this would, however, have swelled the volume to an unreasonable extent. Whether such a series of Discussions may be published at some future day will depend on the amount of interest taken in the inquiries here pursued. Meanwhile the author would venture to refer to his "Commentary on the Apocalypse," in the *Commentary on the New Testament*, edited by Professor Schaff, and published by the Messrs. Clark, Edinburgh. The views expressed in that Commentary have not indeed in every case been now adhered to. In particular, the exposition there offered of Rev. xix. 11 to xxii. 5 has been modified in several particulars, of which the meaning assigned to the words "a little time" in chap. xx. 3, and to the "loosing" of Satan in connection with them, may perhaps be said to be the most important. In other respects there is no material change; and if, in alluding to this perplexing passage, the author reminds his readers that his interpretation of the "thousand years" was published long

before¹ Kliefoth adopted a somewhat similar interpretation of the figure of time there used, he does this from no desire to claim originality, but that he may not be charged with not acknowledging obligations that have no existence.

The list of books referred to at p. xv. is not to be regarded as a summary of the literature of the subject. It is no more than a list of those actually quoted in this work, and it is given where it is for a twofold purpose—that the references to these books may be afterwards shortened, and that the reader may see more clearly what particular editions it was in the writer's power to consult.

In conclusion, the author has only to express his earnest hope, not that the view of the Apocalypse taken in this volume may be accepted as a whole,—that were too much to hope for,—but that his labours may help forward the study of one of the most instructive, elevating, and consolatory portions of the sacred volume.

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