The question propounded at the beginning of my first paper was practically answered in the course of it. The Revelation of John must be interpreted in like manner as the Jewish apocalypses, i.e., as referring to the end of the world as the Jews and early Christians conceived it. It is utterly preposterous to find here a veiled description of past or present events. It can be as little interpreted in this fashion as any of the Jewish apocalypses. Moreover my first paper demonstrated that much of the material incorporated into the Revelation of John was derived from tradition. The remainder of the book, except the second and the third chapters, in general had the same origin. Some of these traditions must have received their present form in Judaism and probably had even been committed to writing prior to their insertion in the Revelation of John. Also, the form in which the author of this book asserts that he received his information regarding the future is similar to that of the Jewish apocalypses; he insists upon having had visions. But in some cases at least he is employing figurative language loosely; for he could not have seen, not even in a vision, what he claims to have seen. For example, in the very first chapter we read of one like unto a son of man, who had in his right hand seven stars and out of whose mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword, but who nevertheless laid his right hand upon the seer and spoke to him. How this was possible the writer does not explain; hence he surely has not seen, but only invented this vision. There are, however, three points in which the Revelation of John differs from the Jewish apocalypses.

1. There are no such vaticinia ex eventu in it as in all of these; the whole book refers to the end of the world. This indicates that it probably was not attributed to a man of the past. In fact, such an assumption is excluded by some remarks in the first and last chapters. To Daniel Gabriel says: "Seal thou up the vision, for it belongeth
to many days to come.” Enoch is said to have prophesied “not for this generation but for the remote generations which are for to come,” and similar passages are found in the Assumption of Moses and in the Apocalypse of Ezra; but John is commanded by the angel “not to seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand.” Consequently the Revelation of John cannot be pseudonymous, since, if it was ascribed to another man subsequently to his death, the author would be guilty of absurdly representing it as a postmortem composition; and if, on the other hand, it was attributed to another who was still living, he could have repudiated it. Therefore the Revelation of John must have been written by a John; but whether this John was the apostle, the elder, or another of this name, is a question that cannot be determined here.

2. The apocalyptic John evinces much more culture and even naturalness in his description of the future than the other apocalyptists. It is true, the first vision cannot be fathomed; the plagues that are to precede the end, especially the locusts and the horses in chap. 9, and the beasts in chaps. 11, 12, 13, and 17, are depicted in a very fantastic vein; it is hard to imagine how the heavenly Jerusalem, a colossal cube, of twelve thousand furlongs, i. e., 1,500 miles long, broad, and high, could have a wall only a hundred and forty-four cubits, i. e., 216 feet high; but all this fades into insignificance compared with the oddities and absurdities in the later Jewish apocalypses. The Book of Enoch represents in that long-drawn-out vision in chaps. 85–90 all personages in the history of the Jewish people as animals: Adam is a white bull, Eve a heifer, Cain and Abel a young black and red bull, etc. Or think of that unnatural parable in the Apocalypse of Baruch, chap. 36: “A forest was planted on the plain, and over against it arose a vine and from under it there went forth a fountain peacefully. Now that fountain came to the forest and prevailed greatly, so that it left nothing of that great forest save one cedar only. Then that vine began to come with the fountain in peace and great tranquility, and it came to a place which was not far from the cedar. And lo! that vine opened its mouth and spoke and said to that cedar: ‘Art thou not that cedar which was left of the forest of wickedness, and by whose means wickedness persisted? But now thy time is sped and thy hour is come.’ And after these things I saw that cedar
burning, and the vine growing, itself and all around it, the plain full of unfading flowers.” How grand and imposing, how lofty and sublime is everything in the Revelation of John compared with these marvelous allegories and parables!

3. A last point in which our apocalypse differs from those of the Jews is closely connected with the preceding. The Jewish apocalypses consist of a number of visions more or less arbitrarily combined, and referring in part to the same subject; the author of the Christian apocalypse has composed from the apocalyptic material transmitted to him a complete drama in which each scene has its proper place and in which the events follow each other as they are expected to do in the future. He proves an artist not only in the delineation of the details, but also in the arrangement and setting of the whole.

Revelation begins with the vision already alluded to: John declares that he saw one like unto a son of man, i.e., the Messiah or Christ, in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, having in his right hand seven stars. The stars and the candlesticks originally signify the seven planets known to and venerated by the ancient Babylonians, i.e., the sun, the moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn. When the Jews became acquainted with the Babylonians they tried to prove the superiority of their own religion by explaining these planets as candlesticks standing before their God or Messiah, or as stars in his hand. The author of the Revelation of John, of course, no longer knew this original significance of the candlesticks and the stars, he had only heard the Messiah thus described; so he interpreted the candlesticks and the stars as seven churches, and their guardian angels, for which the revelations allotted to him were intended. He begins therefore by writing to them seven letters which are, in general, at least capable of interpretation, and therefore need not be explained more at length.

This prelude is followed by another, which is still more imposing. The seer sees one like a jasper stone and a sardius, i.e., God, sitting upon a throne and round about it twenty-four elders, and in the midst of it four living creatures, the first like a lion, the second like a calf, the third with a face as of a man, the fourth like a flying eagle. To judge from their description these elders must be angels and, being placed before God’s throne just as all seven spirits previously men-
tioned, they must be interpreted as stars too. Indeed, we learn from Diodorus that in addition to the zodiac the Babylonians venerated twenty-four other stars which they called rulers of the world. The four living creatures, on the other hand, that appear also in the first vision of the prophet Ezekiel, seem to be identical with the main signs of the zodiac which, as we saw a moment ago, were worshipped by the Babylonians, though they to some extent termed them otherwise. But Lion and Taurus were called by these very names and are ninety degrees distant from each other; so they may be assumed as indeed meant by this Jewish tradition. The third creature, it is true, cannot be Aquarius, who is again ninety degrees distant from Taurus; for this sign of the zodiac was not called Aquarius by the Babylonians, but water-cask; nevertheless they represented Scorpio, which is opposite to Taurus, as a man with a scorpion’s tail; consequently we may recognize the creature having a face as of a man in this sign of the zodiac. Finally, the fourth creature, like a flying eagle, is probably not to be identified with the sign of the zodiac now bearing the same name; for we do not know whether it was thus called by the Babylonians and at any rate it is not opposite to the Lion. Here we find Pegasus, the winged horse, which seems to have been known to the Babylonians, too. Therefore we may refer the eagle to it. To be sure, Pegasus is not in the zodiac, but that does not matter; it is quite probable that the less conspicuous signs of the zodiac were named only later and that the corresponding parts of the ecliptic were previously designated by constellations lying north or south of it. It is true, thus far, we cannot prove that these four constellations, Lion, Taurus, Scorpio, and Pegasus were especially venerated by the Babylonians; but bearing in mind that they venerated the signs of the zodiac, and recalling that all these four constellations contain one star of the first magnitude, it seems very natural that they should have marked them out in such a way. As the seven stars and the twenty-four stars they must have been subordinated to the true God by placing them in the midst of and round about his throne. Of course the author of Revelation no longer knew the original significance of all these numbers; he had only heard that God’s throne in heaven was surrounded by four living creatures and twenty-four elders.
In the next chapter John sees on the right hand of him that sits on the throne a book written within and on the back, close sealed with seven seals. Now in the first century after Christ everybody knew that a book sealed with seven seals was a testament—just as in our fathers' days everybody knew that a letter with five seals was a money letter. Moreover, a book sealed with seven seals must in the hand of God, of course, symbolize his testament, his last will for the end of the world. Thus we understand the expectation of the author: the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, the Lamb that has been slain, is to open the book and the seven seals thereof, i.e., the reappearing Christ will fulfil what God has determined for the last days. Since, however, different events will happen then according to tradition, John imagines that the opening of each seal results in one of these events. In this way the first act of the eschatological drama is introduced.

The first four events that occur with the opening of the seals are also depicted in the symbolism of the four riders, one on a white, the second on a red, the third on a black, the fourth on a pale horse. These horses must also have been handed down to John by tradition, otherwise he would hardly have introduced them here, where he had previously used another figure. Indeed the prophet Zechariah has referred to these horses; but whereas he represents the four winds by them, the author of the Revelation of John, who no longer knew their original significance, makes them usher in the four plagues that are to precede the end; conquest, war, famine, death. That the third rider is not allowed to hurt the oil and the wine and that the last one has authority only over the fourth part of the earth is assumed because later on other grievances are announced for which, so to speak, provision had to be made. The interpretation of this verse recently given by Mr. Reinash and Professor Harnack, who were of course followed by other scholars, must be abandoned.

The opening of the fifth seal does not result in other calamities. The author now sees underneath the (heavenly) altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held; and they cry with a great voice, saying, "How long, O Master, the holy, and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" And there was given them,
to each one, a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, who should be killed even as they were, should be fulfilled." A very similar scene is depicted in the Apocalypse of Ezra; so here again John is dependent on tradition. He makes use of this trait here because he was under obligation to interpret no less than seven seals, and because his well of vexations that were to precede the end was running dry.

The opening of the sixth seal however is explained in the same manner as that of the first four; a great earthquake takes place, the sun becomes black, the moon as blood, the stars fall unto the earth, the heaven is removed as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island are removed out of their places. And the kings of the earth and every bondman and freeman say to the mountains and to the rocks: "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath is come, and who is able to stand?"

This question is answered in the next chapter where angels seal a hundred and forty and four thousand who shall be preserved from the coming calamities. Out of every tribe of the children of Israel twelve thousand are sealed: This shows that the tradition must originally have been a Jewish one. Whom the author means by these hundred and forty and four thousand we shall presently see. He introduces them here partly, as I have just said, to answer the question at the end of the preceding chapter, partly because he had there also spoken of seals.

Here he adds to the hundred and forty and four thousand another great multitude, arrayed in white robes, and with palms in their hands, which shall stand before the throne and before the Lamb. This multitude is the host of martyrs, who are introduced here, partly because martyrs had been mentioned in the preceding chapter, partly in contrast to the hundred and forty and four thousand who shall be preserved from the approaching calamities.

And now, after this double intermezzo, the seventh seal is opened but it does not issue in the end, as one ought to expect after that saying of the kings of the earth: the great day of the wrath is come; there is only a silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. The author
has still a great many other traditions to communicate; so he only
pauses a little while before beginning the description of the second act
of the eschatological drama.

He asserts that he has seen the seven angels that stand before
God, with seven trumpets in their hands. As these angels suddenly
appear, others having been mentioned in the foregoing description of
God's surroundings in heaven, they must have been loaned by another
tradition; and in fact the plagues they produce are partly the same
as those which arrived by the opening of the seven seals and originally
they cannot have been expected after these. Or, how shall only the
third part of the sun, the moon, and the stars be darkened after (by
the opening of the sixth seal) the whole sun had become black, the
moon as blood, and the stars of the heaven had fallen unto the earth?
That even here only the third part of the sun, the moon, and stars
shall be smitten, the third part of the earth and of the trees shall be
burnt up, the third part of the sea and of the waters shall become
blood or wormwood, may be explained in the same manner as the
concerning restriction of the plague after the opening of the third
seal; there are still other calamities to be announced for which pro-
vision is here made. The seven angels that stand before God as the
seven candlesticks and the seven stars previously mentioned were
originally the planets known to and venerated by the Babylonians;
that their sounding is to usher in the events preceding the end is an
idea which we meet in other places of the New Testament too and
which was readily suggested as with the soldier a signal results in a
movement; so it was quite natural to expect that the final events
would be produced by the trumpets of angels.

After the first four of these plagues have been described the author
sees and hears an eagle flying in mid-heaven saying with a great voice:
"Woe, woe, woe for them that dwell on the earth by reason of the
other voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are yet to sound." These three woes that precede the end were derived from a tradition
older than that of the sounding angels and have been interwoven
with it, as the expectation of the four apocalyptic riders with the
tradition of the book with seven seals.

The first woe consists of locusts which were expected before the
end, probably in analogy to the plague said to have befallen the
Egyptians, but here they are described as from the abyss, as having tails like unto scorpions, and stings; and as ruled by the angel of the abyss—in short as hellish, diabolical locusts. In a similar way the armies of horsemen that come forth from the great river Euphrates at the sounding of the sixth angel and form the second woe are depicted as having breastplates as of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone; the power of the horses is in their mouth, and in their tails; for their tails are like unto serpents, and have heads, and with them do they hurt.

When we read after this description of the first two woes that the rest of mankind, which were not killed by these plagues, repented not of the works of their hands we expect of course that now the final judgment will be announced. But as in the first act so in the second, a twofold intermezzo is inserted.

John affirms that he has seen an angel having in his hand a little book and crying with a great voice like a lion roareth; and when he cried, the seven thunders uttered their voices. But John is not allowed to record what the seven thunders uttered, which may lead us to infer it to be nearly the same as what the opening of the seven seals and the sounding of the seven angels signify, i.e., plagues that are to precede the end. As they were too similar to these other plagues, the author could not resolve to announce this new series of calamities, nor did he wish to leave it entirely unconsidered; hence he used this as a deus ex machina. The angel directs him to eat the little book, and then to prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings; it may therefore be supposed to contain these prophecies, or, to put it differently, these prophecies were probably derived by the author from a written source.

Indeed, when in chap. xi he is commanded to measure the temple of God (but not the court which is outside the temple, “for it hath been given unto the nations”), when the temple therefore is expected to be spared, it is clear that this could only be announced before its destruction in A.D. 70. Now the Revelation as a whole was written not earlier than under Domitian; so its author has here made use of an older tradition that must have been so fixed that he did not venture to alter it, i.e., a tradition which probably had been committed to
writing. He inserted it in his book without troubling himself about its contradicting history, for it narrates another expectation that could still be fulfilled, i.e., the expectation of two witnesses who were to prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days. From their description, as having the power to shut the heaven, and over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, it follows that Moses and Elijah are meant, who were believed to have been carried up to heaven without passing through death and who therefore, according to Jewish and Christian tradition, were to reappear before the coming of the Lord. Why they should prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days we cannot yet explain; that they should be killed and rise again is probably expected in analogy to the death and resurrection of Christ. What is meant by the beast that is to overcome them we shall see at once; the whole tradition is probably inserted here because the coming of the beast itself was to be announced in the very next chapters.

Now we ought to expect the announcement of the third woe or, as I said before, of the last judgment; but if the author had depicted it here he could not have made use of the other traditions he was acquainted with and desired to use. So he only inserted a description of the impression the last judgment will make in heaven, he let the celestial temple of God be opened and the ark of his covenant appear, as if he wished to say: The end is near at hand; ere long God will go forth from his dwelling; be therefore patient and hear quickly what is still to happen.

Thereupon the third act of the eschatological drama begins with the appearance of a woman arrayed with the sun and the moon under her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. She is delivered of a son, a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, i.e., of the Messiah. But how could a Christian author have announced the birth of the Messiah, who according to his belief had appeared in Jesus? Here too the author must have inserted a Jewish tradition, but even by this theory the vision is not yet explained. On the contrary, the description of the woman just given shows that by her a heathen goddess was originally meant, just as the dragon with seven heads and ten horns that attempts to devour the child is of pagan origin. Nay, as it was to be traced back to Babylonia, and as
according to Martiannes Capella, the Assyrian Juno wore a crown of twelve jewels which designated the signs of the zodiac, it seems the most natural explanation that the whole tradition had the same origin, though thus far we know of it only in Egypt and Greece. Certainly, in conformity with such a myth, the birth of the Messiah was depicted by a Jew, and finally it was used to describe the last generally expected fight of the devil against the Christians.

For the same purpose in the next chapter two beasts are introduced. Originally they had formed one, the monster that according to a pagan myth adopted by the Israelites had been defeated by the deity in the beginning and will be defeated again at the end of the world. Our author interprets the first beast, to which authority is given over every tribe and people and tongue and nation, as the Roman empire, the second one, that maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, as the priests or supporters of the veneration of the emperor—later on it is called the false prophet. It is therefore the termination of their reign we expect to hear of in the following.

But then another body of traditions known to the author would have been pigeon-holed; hence he only lets the hundred and forty and four thousand, that are here, in accordance with the ascetic tendency of the age, interpreted as virgins, sing a hymn, three angels announce the judgment, and one like a son of man and another angel prepare it. Then we again expect to hear of the end; and again it is postponed. Seven other plagues are foretold, represented by angels pouring out their bowls of the wrath of God into the earth. This is an especially daring metaphor: the bowls that otherwise are delivered of their contents to soften God's wrath are here filled up with it and poured out to bring about catastrophes. These have such a resemblance to the former ones that they can only be derived from a different tradition. The last one contains already the fall of Rome, which is more fully described in the next chapters.

One of the seven angels with the seven bowls shows to the seer a woman arrayed in purple and scarlet and sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, which has seven heads and ten horns. Apparently this beast is originally identical with the other beasts already mentioned; but in some circles it must not have been considered an appropriate representation of the last enemy and was therefore supplemented by a
woman sitting upon the beast and arrayed in the same colors. This woman was then interpreted as Babylon and so called even in the Revelation of John where in reality Rome is meant. That is clear from the description of the woman as drunken with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus, i.e., the victims of the Neronian persecution, and especially from the interpretation of the seven heads of the beast as seven mountains on which the woman sitteth, i.e., the seven hills of Rome. Her downfall is only indicated, but the impression it will make in heaven and on earth is depicted very completely and graphically: the angels and the blessed will rejoice in it, the kings, the merchants, the shipmasters, and mariners will deplore it. There are no chapters in Revelation and very few in the remainder of the New Testament which are grander and more beautiful than this.

In the fourth act, if we may so term it, Christ appears with the heavenly armies and defeats the beast and the false prophet. Also the dragon is bound, but only for a thousand years, during which the martyrs reign with Christ. At the end of the thousand years the dragon or the devil is loosed out of his prison, he then gathers round himself all the nations from the four corners of the earth, and especially Gog and Magog, to begin war, but fire comes down from heaven and devours them. "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." We are not told who does all this. God is too transcendent for it, and so also the last judgment is described in the same passive form. The earth and the heaven flee away, the dead stand before the throne of God, the books are opened, a new heaven and a new earth appear, the new Jerusalem comes down from heaven, and there is no more death nor mourning nor crying nor pain; for the first things are passed away. Only the final or eternal happiness that awaits the faithful is described at greater length. The fourth act of the eschatological drama composed by the author of Revelation is the shortest as the third was the longest.

The main interest of John is the attack of the Roman empire on the Christians and its defeat by God's final judgment. Indeed the whole book was written for this very purpose, to prepare the Christians for the persecution threatening from the Roman empire and to
announce its ruin in connection with the end of the world. Now the other authors of the New Testament think of the Roman empire very differently. Jesus, it is true, by his famous saying, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," approves of the giving of tribute to Caesar, but he would not have done even this if he had judged the Roman empire as the author of Revelation. And Paul writes to the Romans: "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God." But probably neither he nor the authors of the First Epistle of Peter or of the First Epistle to Timothy, who follow him, would have spoken so strongly in favor of every ordinance of man and all that are in high places if some Christians had not refused to obey the Roman authorities. We may even suppose that Nero could not have charged the Christians with having set Rome on fire if some of them had not really longed for its destruction. These theories however would be mere guesses if there were no Revelation of John in which the Roman empire is indeed identified with the beast that is to appear at the end and to be overcome by the second advent of Christ. Now, it is true, during the author's lifetime things had changed; when Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans he had in general been well treated by the higher powers; four or five years later, Nero persecuted the Christians, and now Domitian wanted to be adored like a god and threatened all those who could not condescend to do so with capital punishment. But nevertheless the authors of the First Epistle of Peter and of the First Epistle to Timothy who wrote only a little earlier or even later than the author of Revelation, kept on recommending obedience to the magistrates; the mode of viewing them in the Apocalypse is therefore fundamentally different from that in the other New Testament writings. Our ideas as to the position of the oldest Christianity with regard to the state would be incomplete if we did not have the Revelation of John. The same holds good with the apocalyptic theories of the first century in general. We know from the eschatological discourse of Jesus, and from Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, and from occasional remarks in other epistles that the Christians expected different signs before the end; but only from the Revelation of John we learn what curious and queer ideas in this regard existed in some circles at least.
The very adjectives I have just employed show that we can no longer make these ideas our own. We cannot even adhere to their pessimistic interpretation of this world, and expectation of a future catastrophe which is so characteristic and of such fundamental significance to the apocalyptic writers. Nevertheless these ideas were not only of primary importance in the early history of Christianity, in so far as they prepared the hearts of the people first to listen to Christ's gospel and afterward to maintain their new faith in spite of an adverse world, but they may be instructive and helpful even to the modern man. "The apocalyptical temper," says Professor Porter, "is needed when religion is assailed and in danger; and in all times the religious life needs to maintain its purity and strength by some sort of protest against the world, some defiance of ruling ideals and customs, some faith in realities above those of sense, and in truths contrary to appearances."