

The Last Prophecy: An Abridgment of Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticae*



Quotes from Wikipedia:

"Horae Apocalypticae is an eschatological study written by Edward Bishop Elliott. The book is, as its long-title sets out, 'a commentary on the apocalypse.'"

"Edward Bishop Elliott (24 July 1793, in Paddington – 30 June 1875) was an English clergyman, preacher and premillennarian writer. "

"*Horae Apocalypticae* (Hours with the Apocalypse) is doubtless the most elaborate work ever produced on the Apocalypse. Without an equal in exhaustive research in its field, **it was occasioned by the futurist attack on the Historical School of interpretation.** (Emphasis mine.) Begun in 1837, its 2,500 pages are buttressed by some 10,000 invaluable references to ancient and modern works. *Horae Apocalypticae* consists of 4 volumes."

As the title of this article says, this is an "abridgment" meaning a condensation of Edward Bishop Elliott's four-volume work, 2500 pages of his work condensed to only 273 pages! My good friend Steve sent it to me. You can find it in PDF format on Lutheran Library.org For those of you who are new to this website, I'm posting it in sections in HTML web format to make it easily readable from a phone.

Edward Bishop Elliott

The Last Prophecy

**An Abridgment of
*Horae Apocalypticae***



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The Last Prophecy: An Abridgment of Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticæ*. An Introduction to Church History.

by Edward Bishop Elliott

Dedication

To
James Bateman, Esq., M.A., F.R.S., etc.
A friend long esteemed and loved by The Author of
The *Horae Apocalypticæ*
This Abridgment of his larger Work
Is inscribed,
As a tribute of sincere regard
by
H. E. E.

Preface by Lutheran Librarian

In republishing this book, we seek to introduce this author to a new generation of those seeking authentic spirituality.

EDWARD BISHOP ELLIOTT (1793-1875) "graduated from Cambridge in 1816 and he served in various positions as a minister for the Church of England. He ultimately settled at St. Marks Church in Brighton. He was of the Evangelical school... A first rate scholar, he was deeply interested in bible prophecy and devoted his lifetime to its study. His *Horae Apocalypticæ* is the greatest HISTORICIST exposition of the Apocalypse ever written. Begun in 1837, it ran for five editions between 1844 and 1862.

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Preface.

THE FIFTH EDITION of the *Horae Apocalypticæ* being almost exhausted, it has been suggested that now is a proper time to send out a Third Edition of the Abridgment.

It has no merit as to originality or research, being only intended to bring before those persons who have not access to the larger work the views which it contains in a simple form. Omitting the learned and elaborate arguments, the writer has kept almost verbatim to the text in Mr. Elliott's work. Not many months before his lamented death he looked over the little book, and expressed an approval of it similar to that in his preface to the Second

Edition, which is subjoined.

It was his express wish that the views he held as to future events should be but briefly touched on in the Abridgment. For references and authorities the reader must be referred generally to the *Horae Apocalypticæ* itself, no fact being stated in the smaller book which is not fully verified there.

The Postscript – giving his latest thoughts on the unfulfilled portion of the prophecy – is placed at the end of the volume. It expresses his views as to how the events then passing verified his historical explanation of the Apocalypse, and furnished a key to the meaning of those prophecies yet unfulfilled.

To James Bateman, Esq., the writer is indebted for an interesting paper in the Appendix; and to the Rev. Christopher Bowen, late Rector of St. Thomas', Winchester, for having kindly edited this Abridgment; which – if it shall please God to bless to the directing to further inquiry into prophetic truth, and the fuller study of those portions of His Holy Writ – the purpose designed by its publication will have been attained.

H. E. E.

Recommendatory Notice By The Author Of The "*Horae Apocalypticæ*."

HAVING BEEN REQUESTED by the writer of this Abridgment of the *Horae Apocalypticæ* to revise it preparatorily to the issuing of a Second Edition, I have done so.

I can recommend it as faithful, correct, and well calculated, I think, to bring usefully before the minds of the young, for whom it was chiefly intended, those lessons in Church History, as well as in Prophecy, contained in the *Horae Apocalypticæ*. The former – I mean the history of the Christian Church – is that which, nowadays more especially, must be considered an essential in education.

EDWARD BISHOP ELLIOTT.

Revelation 1, 2, 3. St. John in Patmos.

View of the Infant Church, A.D. 96. – The Seven Churches of Asia Minor.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH? Where was the Church of England before Luther? Where was the Church in the Middle Ages, etc.? These are the sort of questions by which some may be perplexed, and, for want of a little knowledge of the history of former times, may be silenced.

I propose therefore to give a course of lectures on Church History, connecting it with the prophecies of St. John in the Book of Revelation, and so with early Roman history. I begin from the Apostles' time: and hope to outline the principal events (such at least as may suit my purpose) down to the present day.

One object I wish to bear specially in view, viz., to prove that the

Reformation in England was not a schism; that Popery was not the first religion of England, but rather a system forced upon her, grafted on to our ancient Apostolic Church, and only pruned away by the Reformers. Would that not a fiber of doubtful origin had been left!

In the Acts of the Apostles we have the history of the Churches which they founded, as Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, Colosse, etc. "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."

The Churches were congregations of faithful men gathered together, whether in public buildings, (Acts 3:1) in the open air, (Acts 16:13) or in private houses. (Col. 4:15) Amongst these, the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were faithfully administered, and men ordained as pastors – bishops, elders, and deacons. To these ordinations various allusions are made in the Epistles. Mention is also made of several persecutions of the infant Church raised by Pagans, and of errors which early infected the congregation.

It was during one of these early persecutions that St. John, the only surviving Apostle, was banished by Domitian, the reigning Roman emperor, to Patmos, an island in the Archipelago, now called Patino. There it pleased God to reveal to him the future destinies of the Church in a series of visions. This series is called the Apocalypse, or Revelation. It is upon these visions I propose to comment.

ST. JOHN opens with a passage from his own history, and designates himself as the writer of this book. As if he said, "I, John, who was the companion of the Lord Jesus, who heard his words, saw his miracles, was witness of his transfiguration, shared in his privations and beheld his sufferings, – I, who leaned on his breast at his last supper, stood by his cross of agony, received from him the legacy of his afflicted mother, heard his parting word and dying groan, – I, who saw him at the grave, and conversed with him after his resurrection, – I, who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that I saw, – I have again seen him, and declare unto you from him that 'Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein.' I, John, who also am now become your brother and companion in tribulation, was in the isle called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

Sixty years had well-nigh run their course since this beloved disciple had seen at the Mount of Olives a cloud receive the Lord from the sight of his disciples, – since he and they had heard the angelic question, "Why stand ye here gazing up to heaven?" and heard the promise, "That same Jesus, whom ye saw go into heaven, shall so come in like manner from heaven." Year by year had they and the Church looked and longed for the accomplishment of this promise. Other prophecies had been fulfilled; those specially which related to Jerusalem. The Jews had neglected every warning. In vain there were great sights seen, and earthquakes felt, famine and pestilence doing their work, wars and rumors of wars desolating their country, false Christs, wonders in heaven above, and signs on the earth below, – signs even in the sanctuary, as if to force on them consideration of the prophecies against them. Even just after Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and James in his Epistle, had sent

a last remonstrance to them, the war began; then the siege, and with it those horrors foretold by the Saviour. (Matt. 24:5-28.)

The Christians suffered not. Following the plain command, when they saw "the abomination that was to make desolate," spoken of by Daniel,⁷ i.e., the Roman army, – approach, they fled, and so escaped destruction. The history of this siege is given by Josephus, himself a Jew, and authenticated by the emperors Vespasian and Titus. The memorial of its truth is still standing at Rome, namely, the arch of Titus, on which is sculptured the table of shew-bread, the book of the law, and the seven-branched candlestick. This told, and tells at Rome, the story of the conquest. But where was Jerusalem's temple? Not a vestige to give response. Where the beautiful city, its towers and fortresses? Desolate and destroyed! Blood-stained ruins and rubbish alone remain.

What then had taken Jerusalem's place? what the places of her altar and her temple?

It has been said by Jesus, "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed, – which is indeed the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches." (Matt. 13:31)

From a small and despised beginning a better dispensation had been striking its roots far and wide; with a temple whose worship is spiritual, and whose High Priest and sacrifice is Christ himself, the Lamb of God; whose members are God's elect children of grace, gathered by degrees out ' of the world; – now, perhaps, despised, persecuted and scattered; but at the appointed time to form a company, a glorious body, some to come with their Lord, some to meet him at his coming.

Mighty were the efforts made by Satan to stop the progress of this religion, but in vain. Persecution hindered it not; "the blood of the martyrs proved the seed of the Church;" and however severely treated, the cause seemed still to strengthen.

Let us observe what was the state of this increasing body, when from the rocky summit of his "island prison" the Apostle, with a mixture of joy, sorrow, and anxiety, had looked round on the coast of Asia, and then on the shores of Thrace and Greece, with their gulfs, their islands, and their bays.

His eye would rest on the sites of Christian Churches; first, those of Asia Minor, where Timothy had labored and fallen asleep, and the faithful Antipas had been martyred, and where Polycarp still lived a witness for Christ; – these under St. John's own superintendence. Then, the Macedonian and Greek Churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. He knew that in the far west on one side, and on the south and east towards the other, there arose from Christian congregations the incense of prayer and praise to the Lamb of God. There was a little band gathered fondly round the ruins of Jerusalem, where the aged Simeon presided. One at Antioch, with its faithful bishop, Ignatius. There were the Churches of Alexandria and Egypt, founded by

St. Mark; of Cyprus, where labored Barnabas; and that of Crete, "set in order by Titus." His mind's eye would catch the break of light in Spain, Gaul, and in our own islands, even the British group. It would turn to Rome, that Church where Paul and many others had sealed their testimony by martyrdom, and where the leaven had reached even to the palace of royalty; for some of the household, and even of Caesar's relatives, had there professed the Christian faith. Clement, whose name St. Paul mentions as in "the book of life," fearless of persecution, presided over its Church. Another Clement, cousin to the emperor, had just been executed for conscience sake; and his wife, Domitilla, in a desolate island now endured exile.

Persecution, however, was not the worst enemy the Apostle knew to be at work to injure the rising Church. Corruption had begun within: some had erred from the faith, and false tradition had been mixed with the pure word of God. The Gnostics, – a sect of whom one division denied the humanity, and another the divinity of Jesus, – had sprung up like a noxious weed in the congregations; and in one way or other Christ Jesus had been superseded in his character of man's only Mediator, Atonement, and Righteousness. The enemy had already largely sowed the tares amongst the wheat.

St. John knew that one notable enemy would arise, mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Thessalonians as "the man of sin to be revealed." St. John calls him Antichrist. I say notable, because his profession was unlike that of other impostors, who said, "I am Christ." The word Antichrist is a word expressing a Vice-Christ; – indeed, made to express it: one who, acting as usurper in the professing Church, would be in effect Jesus Christ's superseder in it. Such, in some sort, was the nature of the Gnostic heresy; for its chief professors, while confessing Jesus Christ openly, practically set him aside; declaring themselves to be the wisdom, power, and salvation of God. St. John's first Epistle is directed mainly against these erroneous views.

This dreaded Antichrist was evidently the same power foretold by Daniel as the little horn of the fourth Beast, or Roman Empire, and which was to be the great enemy of Christ and his saints. This little horn was to rise not till after the empire's division into ten; whence it was well understood in the Church that till this empire was divided the reign of Antichrist should not be developed.

Nor indeed, notwithstanding Rome's apparent glory, were symptoms wanting which to a discerning eye might seem to indicate the possibility of Rome's fall or disruption being not so very distant. The population were alienated from their rulers, being disgusted with their tyranny, vice, and folly. Fierce barbarian hordes, especially those at the north of the empire, were hovering on the frontiers; and had more than once shown their power by defeating the Roman legions.

From this view we may suppose that the holy Apostle retired with joy, anxiety, and grief; – joy that the Saviour's Church was extending; sorrow that the seed was sown within it which might after a while issue in the apostasy of Antichrist; and anxiety to know how long the time should be till the kingdom of the Lord he loved should be established. We doubt not earnest

prayer would mingle with his meditations not unfrequently. The Redeemer had given his promise, "I will send my Spirit, and he will show you things to come;" so would the exiled prophet plead the promise; and in answer to such prayer, and in fulfillment of such promise, may we not believe that the revelation was given. "I was in the Spirit," he writes, "on the Lord's day. And I heard behind me a great voice saying, 'I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.'" It was the voice of Jesus; and he gave this injunction, "Write the things which are, and the things which are to happen after them." These things then were written to be read; and the blessing was pronounced beforehand, "Blessed are they that read the words of the book of this prophecy."

St. John seems to have been then abstracted from all that was around him; and though himself in the isle of Patmos, the scenery he describes is Jewish. He sees a temple, and the interior of it is open to his view. There are seven lamps burning: Jesus Christ, habited like the high priest, though with marks of divinity attaching to him, overseeing all.

These lamps are explained to be emblematic of the seven Churches then in Asia Minor; and throughout the Revelation we shall find Jewish scenery and emblems, all familiar to St. John as a Jew, used to show forth the Christian Church. The seven stars are said to be the angels or chief pastors of the Churches. It is well to mark these emblems, as again and again they occur through the book we are about to study.

It is not my intention to enter upon the practical lessons that may be derived from the exhortations to these Churches, if personally applied, and which would furnish rules for living and dying applicable to the children of God to the end of time: the warnings and encouragements being as signposts to keep each in the right way on his pilgrimage heavenwards; and the object held forth that we shall, if we overcome, "inherit all things, and dwell in the temple of God to go no more out." However useful and pleasant this, my present purpose is to follow St. John, and to show what the things were then existing, before proceeding to show what was to follow. These Churches, I imagine, were specimens of the whole state of religious society and practice then in existence, with the mixture of good and evil, tares and wheat; — the budding of that evil which St. Paul had stated would go on working until it ended in general apostasy.

The promoter of all this mischief, hidden and subtle, and undiscernible on earth, is shown to be the devil. He is described with his mimic synagogue (Rev. 3:3) as at work to injure the growing good. He is designated as the instigator of persecution, "Behold Satan shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried." Again, he is called "the devil, the old serpent, and Satan, which deceiveth the nations;" (Rev. 12:9; and 20:2, 3.) and in the same chapter, "the accuser of the brethren." It is only a repetition of the power attributed to him in other Scriptures, "the father of lies," "the roaring lion seeking whom he may devour," "a murderer from the beginning," "the enemy that soweth tares." Moreover, he remains in his enmity unchanged, and has had six thousand years of experience in his dealings with man to increase his devilish wisdom. Who could withstand him if it were not for power stronger than his, and that the power of an almighty, all-seeing, ever-

present God? St. John shows in his Epistles that an antagonistic Power would finally conquer him: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." (1 John 3:8) The call, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches," shows us that the instructions and warnings given to them were to apply to all that should ever after hear or read them. The distinct blessing pronounced on "those that hear and keep the words of this prophecy" or teaching shows that it is our duty to study and diligently lay them to heart, both for encouragement and warning.

There is a very marked connection between the promises to the seven Churches and the blessings described as belonging to the saints in the New Jerusalem at the close of the Revelation. Thus to the faithful ones in the Ephesian Church it was promised, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God;" while in the description of the New Jerusalem it is said, "On either side of the river was there the tree of life;" (Rev. 22:2) and, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life." (Rev. 22:14) To the conquerors in the Church of Smyrna, "He that overcometh shall not be hurt by the second death," a promise correspondent to that, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power." (Rev. 20:6) To the victorious at Sardis it was said, "They shall walk with me in white; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life:" the former of which was seen by St. John as fulfilled when he beheld the multitude clothed in white, with palms of victory in their hands; (Rev. 7:9) and again is mentioned at the end of the Revelation, when to the Bride, the Lamb's wife, was given to be "arrayed in white," which white robe "is the righteousness of the saints:" (Rev. 19:8) the latter refers to those whose names will be found written in the book of life at the last and final judgment. (Rev. 20:12 – 15) A similar correspondency exists with regard to the promise to the Laodicean Church, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne;" and that to the New Jerusalem, "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Rev. 20:4; 22:5)

Thus, he that gave the promise at the beginning gives the picture of its realization at the end. How consolatory to those who are struggling forward, engaged in withstanding publicly the inroads of evil in the Church and in spreading abroad the Gospel; or having to bear in private the scorn and persecution of the cross, often unseen save in the narrow sphere of daily life, contending against inbred corruptions of the heart, and endeavoring to bring the thoughts into subjection to the obedience of Christ; – how consolatory, I say, to know that the victory will assuredly be given, and that the final end will be blessedness.

And so the scene passed away. The messages were sent and reached the ears of thousands; – a message in each case direct from God, and sent to each Church by the appointed minister: God thus recognizing the ministerial order and office. And what may have been the effect? Probably that which every faithful minister finds to be his experience in the congregation where he delivers his message, viz., "some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." Eighteen hundred years have gone since then. We have the list of

warnings and promises to read; but where are those to whom they were first sent? And, when a few more years shall have passed away, Where will those be to whom we now reiterate them?

Continued in [Revelation 4, 5. View of Scenery As It Appeared to St. John](#)

All chapters of The Last Prophecy: An Abridgment of Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticae*

- [Revelation 1, 2, 3. St. John in Patmos](#)
 - [Revelation 4, 5. View of Scenery As It Appeared to St. John](#)
 - [Revelation 6:1, 2. The First Seal](#)
 - [Revelation 6:3-8. Second, Third, and Fourth Seals](#)
 - [Revelation 6:9-11. The Fifth Seal](#)
 - [Revelation 6:12-17. The Sixth Seal](#)
 - [Revelation 7:1-8. The Sealing Vision](#)
 - [Revelation 7:9-17. The Palm-Bearing Vision](#)
 - [Revelation 8:1-5. The Seventh Seal](#)
 - [Revelation 8:6-12. The First Four Trumpets](#)
 - [Revelation 8:13. Forewarnings Of Coming Woe](#)
 - [Revelation 9:1-11. The Fifth Trumpet](#)
 - [Revelation 9:12-19. The Sixth Trumpet](#)
 - [Revelation 9:20-21. The Unrepentant State of Western Christendom](#)
 - [Revelation 10:1-3. Intervention Of The Covenant Angel](#)
 - [Revelation 10:1-4. The Epoch Of The Reformation](#)
 - [Revelation 10:5-7. The Angel's Oath](#)
 - [Revelation 10:8-11 And 11:1-2. The Covenant Angel's Commission](#)
 - [Revelation 11:2-6. Retrospective View Of The Two Witnesses – Part I](#)
 - [Revelation 11:3-6. Retrospective View Of The Two Witnesses – Part II](#)
 - [Revelation 11:7-12. Retrospective View Of The Two Witnesses – Part III](#)
 - [Revelation 11:12-14. Ascent Of The Witnesses. Great Earthquake](#)
 - [The British Church Amongst The Witnesses](#)
 - [Revelation 12:1-17. The Great Red Dragon](#)
 - [Revelation 13 And 17. The Beast From The Sea, Etc. The Lamb-like Beast. The Image Of The Beast.](#)
 - [Revelation 14:1-20. The Song Of The 144,000](#)
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- [Revelation 15 And 16:1-12, The Seventh Trumpet, The Vials](#)
 - [Revelation 11:15, 19, And 16:6, 7. The Temple Opened. The Angel With The Everlasting Gospel](#)
 - [Revelation 16:13, 14. The Three Frogs](#)
 - [Revelation 17-22. Concluding Visions](#)
 - [Appendix – The Last Prophecy: An Abridgment of Elliott's Horae Apocalypticae](#)