support of the sacerdotal power, pagan and  
papal, has ever been the claim to work  
miracles) **it even maketh fire to come  
down from the heaven to the earth in the  
sight of men** (it is probable that, this  
special miracle is mentioned to recall the  
spirit and power of Elias, and shew how the  
false prophet shall counterfeit the true),  
{14} **and deceiveth those who dwell on the  
earth on account of** (the words express not  
the instrument, but the ground of the  
deceit: the imposture succeeds, because  
of...) **the miracles which it was  
given to him to work in the presence of  
the beast, ordering those who dwell on  
the earth’ to make an image to the beast  
who hath the stroke of the sword, and  
lived** (this part of the prophecy seems to  
describe the acts of the pagan ‘sacerdotal  
power then presently to follow. See more  
below). {15} **And it was given to him to give  
breath** (or, spirit; by inference, life) **to  
the image of the beast, that the image of  
the beast should even speak, and should  
cause that as many as do not worship the  
image of the beast should be slain.**The Seer is now describing facts which  
history substantiates to us in their literal  
fulfilment. ‘The image of Cæsar was every  
where that which men were made to worship: it was before this that the Christian  
martyrs were brought to the test, and put  
to death if they refused the act of adoration. ‘The words of Pliny’s letter to Trajan  
are express on the point: “When they called on the gods at my dictation, and  
offered incense and wine to thine image  
(which for this purpose I had ordered to be  
brought with those of the gods), and  
besides cursed Christ, which it is said that  
no true Christian can be compelled to do,  
I thought fit to dismiss them.” Above  
he had said, “those who persevered [in  
their Christianity] I ordered to be led to  
execution.” And if it be said as an objection to this, that it is not an image of  
the Emperor but of the beast itself which  
is spoken of, the answer is very simple,  
that as the Evangelist himself, in ch. xvii.  
11, does not hesitate to identify one of the  
*seven kings* with the beast itself, so we  
may fairly assume that the image of the  
beast for the time being would be the  
image of the reigning Emperor.  
It is not so easy to assign a meaning to  
the giving *life and speech* to the image of  
the beast. Victorinus gives a curious explanation: “he shall also cause that a  
golden image to Antichrist shall be erected  
in the temple at Jerusalem, and a fallen  
angel shall enter and thence utter voices  
and give oracles.” The allusion probably  
is to some lying wonders permitted to the  
Pagan priests to try the faith of God’s  
people. We cannot help, as we read, thinking of the moving images, and winking and  
speaking pictures, so often employed for  
purposes of imposture by their far less  
excusable Papal successors. {16} **And he** (i. e.  
the *second beast*, more naturally than *the*