144,000 identical with the same number  
in ch. vii, 4? The presumption certainly is that the same number occurring  
here, representing as there the elect and  
first-fruits of the church, here as there  
also inscribed on their foreheads with the  
seal of God in the one case, and His  
Name in the other, must be descriptive of  
the same body of persons. And this view,  
if acquiesced in here, will reflect back considerable light on that former vision of the  
sealing in ch. vii, ‘Those, as these, will  
represent the first-fruits or choice ones  
among God’s people, as indeed we have  
treated them in this commentary, and not  
the totality of those who shall form the  
great multitude which no man can number,  
These, as those, are taken to represent the  
people of God: their introduction serves  
to place before us the church on the holy  
hill of Zion, where God has placed His  
King, as an introduction to the description  
of her agency in preaching the everlasting  
Gospel, and her faithfulness amidst persecutions). {2} **And I heard a voice out of  
heaven, as a voice of many waters** (reff.),  
**and as a voice of great thunder** (ch. vi. 1):  
**and the voice which I heard [was] as of  
harpers harping with their harps. {3} And  
they sing [as it were] a new song** (i.e.  
they sing what sounded like a melody  
unheard before. ‘The subject to **they sing**is of course not the 144,000, but the  
heavenly harpers. On the matter of  
their song, see below) **before the throne,  
and before the four living-beings, and  
the elders** (the whole heavenly symbolism  
remaining as before, while the visions regarding God’s temple and Mount Zion  
and the holy city are going forward.  
I would call the attention of the reader to  
the fact, essential to the right understanding of the vision, that the harpers and the  
song are in *heaven*, the 144,000 on *earth*):  
**and no one was able to learn the song** (to  
apprehend its melody and meaning, so as  
to accompany it and bear a part in the  
chorus) **except the hundred and forty-four  
thousand, who were purchased** (see ver. 4,  
and 1 Cor. vi. 20; ch. v. 9) **from the earth**  
(the song has regard to matters of trial and  
triumph, of deep joy and heavenly purity of  
heart, which none other among men but  
these pure and holy ones are capable of apprehending, The sweetest and most skilful  
harmonies convey no pleasure to, nor are  
they appreciated by an uneducated ear:  
whereas the experienced musician finds in  
every chord the most exquisite enjoyment.  
The unskilled ear, even though naturally  
distinctive of musical sounds, could not  
learn nor reproduce them: but both these  
can be done by those who have ears to  
hear them. Even so this heavenly song  
speaks only to the virgin heart, and can be  
learnt only by those who accompany the  
Lamb whithersoever He goeth). {4} **These  
are they who were not** (the past tense  
shews that their course is ended and looked  
back on as a thing past: and serves to confute all interpretations which regard them  
as representing saints while in the midst of  
their earthly conflict and trial) **defiled with  
women** (see below); **for they are** (always  
were and have kept themselves till the  
time present) **virgins** (there are two ways