§ v.] PROPHETIC IMPORT OF CHAP. II. 1—12. [ivrropuction.   
   
 words ascribed to Him by St. John (ch. xvi. 12, 13); I believe the   
 apostolic Epistles to be the written proof of the fulfilment of that pro-   
 mise, us the apostolic preaching and labours were the spoken and acted   
 proof: and in writing such passages as this, and 1 Thess. iv. 13—17,   
 and 1 Cor. xv., I believe St. Paul to have been giving utterance, not to   
 his own subjective human opinions, but to truths which the Spirit of   
 God had revealed to him: which he put forth indeed in writing and in   
 speaking, as God had placed him in a Church which does not know of   
 the time of her Lord’s coming,—as God had constituted his own mind   
 the vessel and organ of these truths, and gifted him with power of   
 words,—but still, as being the truth for the Church to be guided by,   
 not his own forebodings, for her tu be misled by. What he may have   
 meant by his expressions, is a question open to the widest and freest   
 discussion: but that what he did mean, always under the above neces-   
 sary conditions, is truth for us to receive, not opinion for us to canvass,   
 is a position, the holding or rejecting of which might be very simply and   
 strictly shewn to constitute the difference between one who receives,   
 and one who repudiates, Christian revelation itself.   
 28. I now proceed to enquire, which, or whether any of all the above   
 hypotheses, with the exception of the last, seems worthy of our accept-   
 ance. For the reason given above (24), I pass over those which regard   
 the prophecy as fulfilled. The destruction of Jerusalem is inadequate   
 as an interpretation of the coming of the Lord here: He has not yet   
 come in any sense adequate to such interpretation: therefore the prophecy   
 has yet to be fulfilled.   
 29, The interpretations of the ancient Fathers deserve all respect,   
 short of absolute adoption because they were their interpretations. We   
 must always in such cases strike a balance. In living near to the time   
 when the speaking voice yet lingered in the Church, they had an advan-   
 tage over us: in living far down in the unfolding of God’s purposes, we   
 have an advantage over them. They may possibly have heard things   
 which we have never heard: we certainly have seen things which they   
 never saw. In each ease, we are bound to enquire, which of these two   
 is likely to preponderate ?   
 30. Their consensus in expecting a personal Antichrist, is, I own, a   
 weighty point. There was nothing in their peculiar circumstances or   
 temperament, which prevented them from interpreting all that is here   
 said as a personification, or from allegorizing it, as others have done   
 since. This fact gives that interpretation a historical weight, the   
 inference from which it is difficult to escape. The subject of the coming   
 of Antichrist must have been no uncommon one in preaching and in   
 converse, during the latter part of the first, and the second century.   
 That no echoes of the apostolic sayings on the matter should have   
 reached thus far, no savour of the first outpouring of interpretation by   
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