INTRODUCTION. ] 2 THESSALONIANS, [on. rx.   
   
   
 the Spirit penetrated through the next generation, can hardly be con-   
 ceived. So far, I feel, the patristic view carries with it some claim to   
 our acceptance.   
 31. The next important point, the interpretation of that which   
 hindereth and he that hindereth, rests, I would submit, on different   
 grounds. Let us fora moment grant, that by the former of these words   
 was imported the temporal political power, and by the latter, he who   
 wielded it. Such being the case, the concrete interpretatio most likely   
 to be adopted by the Fathers would be, the Roman Empire, which   
 existed before their eyes as that political power. But we have seen that   
 particular power pass away, and be broken up: and that very passing   
 away has furnished us with a key to the prophecy, which they did not   
 possess.   
 32. On the mystery of lawlessness, as has been seen, they aio   
 divided: but even were it otherwise, their concrete interpretations are   
 just those things in which we are not inferior to them, but rather   
 superior. The prophecy has since their time expanded its action over   
 a wide and continually increasing historic field: it is for us to observe   
 what they could not, and to say what it is which could be thus described,   
 —then at work, ever since at work, and now at work; and likely to   
 issue in that concentration and revelation of evil which shall finally take   
 place.   
 33. On looking onward to the next great class of interpretations, that   
 which makes the man of sin to be the Papal power, it cannot be doubted,   
 that there are many and striking points of correspondence with the   
 language of the prophecy in the acts and professions of those who have   
 successively held that power. But on the other hand it cannot be dis-   
 guised that, in several important particulars, the prophetic requirements   
 are very far from being fulfilled. I will only mention two, one sub-   
 jective, the other objective. In the characteristic of ver. 4, the Pope   
 does not and never did fulfil the prophecy. Allowing all the striking   
 coincidences with the latter part of the verse which have been so   
 abundantly adduced, it never can be shewn that he fulfils the former   
 part, nay so far is he from it, that the abject adoration of and submission   
 to “those which are called God's” and “objects of worship” has ever   
 been one of his most notable peculiarities\*. The second objection, of an   
 external and historical character, is even more decisive. If the Papacy   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
   
 8 It must be plain to every unbiassed mind, that the mere logical inference, the   
 Pope sets himself up above all objects worship, because he ereates objects of worship,   
 and the maker must be greater than the thing made, is here quite beside the purpose.   
 It entirely fails in shewing hostility to aud lifting himself above every one that is   
 called god, or an object of worship. The Pope is the devoted servant of the fulse   
 whom he creates, not their and treader down. I should not have noticed   
 so irrelevant an argument, had it not been made much of as against my view.   
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