In this and the next three trumpets, a *third* of the  
elements is smitten. Why is this? First, we may  
observe, that the span of God’s judgments is extending.  
The fourth seal sent forth agencies that destroyed over  
a *fourth* only of the earth: now it is a *third*. The  
judgments deepen too, in intensity and in nearness to  
the offenders, as they proceed. The first four trumpets  
affect the natural objects which surround men.  
 It would seem as if in this third of earth there was  
a reference to the peopling of earth by Noah’s three  
sons: and that the Asiatic third of earth was intended.  
At least we see Palestine afflicted by the plague. And  
not merely is the land of Palestine smitten, but Joel  
supposes the Jews to be in their land, and the temple  
to be built. ii. 15-17. Here, then, is another proof  
that the trumpets have not begun to be sounded.  
 The plague descends on “the land” generally; as  
the next trumpet affects “the sea” in general. The  
issue of the storm is that a “third part of the land is  
burnt up.” The fire is the prevalent and most terrible  
portion of the plague. It destroys “the land,” or  
“earth”: that is, buildings, flocks, and herds, as distinguished from the crops, and forests, and natural  
pastures. Such were the effects of the Egyptian  
plague.  
 The third of the trees burnt up would refer, I should  
suppose, to the third of the forests in the portion of  
the earth which is desolated by the storm.1 This would  
account for the next words, “and *all* green grass was  
burned up.” Two-thirds of the stronger trees upon  
the desolated third of the globe escaped. But all  
smaller vegetable produce was consumed.  
 How desolate the aspect of the portion of the globe  
  
1 Hence the importance of the article before “trees,” omitted  
in our translation. “Of *its* trees,” that is, of the trees of “the  
third of the earth,” mentioned just before.