At the time when John beholds the Harlot’s doom,  
this period of fornication with kings is past. During  
the middle ages, and just before the close, Rome, which  
has lost her military greatness, rules by unlawful  
influence, such as the harlot exercises over her paramours.  
It seems probable that this influence will  
reach its height just before the destroying stroke overtakes her.  
 But her sin has another aspect.  
 “*The dwellers on the earth were made drunk with the  
wine of her fornication*.”  
 To kings she is the harlot: to her subjects she is  
the dispenser of wine. As kings own her, their subjects  
receive her doctrine. To those who make the  
earth their resting-place, she is a centre of influence:  
she does not rule them by warlike power, but by force  
of doctrine. As the love of the world increases, Rome’s  
power will increase over the worldly-minded.  
 Her doctrine is strong as wine; and man is as disposed  
to partake of it as he is to drink wine. Mankind  
must have a religion of some kind: and the religion of  
Rome is suited to his fallen taste. Rome’s influence  
over kings is a sort of *personal* influence, such as that  
of a harlot: her power over the nations is more distant,  
like that of wine.  
 When once Rome’s doctrine is received, it exercises  
a mighty influence, whether over the individual or the  
community. It intoxicates: it produces false views,  
and feelings, and conduct.  
 Her doctrine is “wine of *fornication*.” Christianity  
is too holy, strict, self-denying, humbling, for men by  
nature. Rome discovers to the nations a way of enjoying  
the world to the full, yet with the flattering belief  
that they are the servants of Christ. Her wine is that  
of fornication: for her doctrine arises out of her worldliness; and earthly greatness, splendour, physical religion,