death by fire. The beheading by axe is probably mentioned, because it was, or because it *will be* the more  
common mode of death to the saints. The Romans  
scourged with the lictor’s rods, and then beheaded with  
his axe. This view is confirmed by the word used  
concerning those under the altar: of them it is only  
said that they were “*slain*,” the mode of death being  
left undefined.  
 Here, then, the *martyrs alone* appear. But they are  
only one of three classes. And the difficulty experienced  
by Burgh and others with regard to the passage,  
as though martyrs alone would be partakers of the  
first resurrection—has arisen from overlooking the previous  
class, which is not composed exclusively of the  
slain for Christ. The beatitudes of the Sermon on the  
Mount, and many other passages, prove that others  
also shall partake in the joys of that day of glory.  
“Blessed are the *poor in spirit:* for *theirs is the kingdom  
of heaven*”; that is, the millennial kingdom. So  
it is promised to the doers of God’s will (Matt. vii.  
21), and the vehement seekers after it. (xi. 12.) Also  
the Saviour promises a recompense at “*the resurrection  
of the righteous*,” for those who make feasts not to  
receive a return now, but for such as cannot requite  
them. Luke xiv. 12, 14. Jesus in the Seven Epistles  
promises chiefly reward to *works*: here consolation is  
held out chiefly to the *sufferers* for Him.  
 Why were these servants of God slain?  
 “For the witness of Jesus.” This marks them as  
martyrs of the New Testament. John describes himself  
as thus suffering for his testimony. Rev. i. 2, 9.  
They “did *well*, and *suffered for it*.” This is our strange  
calling: quite contrasted with that of men under  
Moses’ law, where obedience was to win honour and  
present reward. Deut. iv. 6. These were slain not for  
sin, but for holiness. These bearers of Jesus’ flag of