W. Kelly’s Writings on Prophecy

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**Publisher’s Note**

This book is a collection of writings on prophecy by W. Kelly. It includes most of what he has written on this subject except the major work, *The Second Coming and Kingdom*. His expositions of books of the Bible are not included herein.
Chapter 1

Its Nature

“The prophetic word” means the communication of things to come which God has been pleased to make in scripture. The apostle Peter, in so using the expression, compares it to “a lamp that shineth in a squalid place.” It makes manifest man’s evil, which God declares He will judge and supersede by His kingdom in Christ (2 Pet. 1:19). Those addressed did well to heed it, though he desired for them still better light, and this for the heart — “till day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts.” He had of course this heavenly hope bright in his own heart, and he desired it for all of them. But the saints of the circumcision were slow in apprehending what was new and heavenly: so we see over a larger area in the Epistle to the Hebrews. They were content with the elements of the doctrine of Christ, and had to be exhorted to go on to perfection, or that full age in Christ which is proper to the Christian, based on accomplished redemption and the gift of the Holy Spirit, as well as occupied with Christ’s glory on high. Here they were dull, as 2 Peter shows them, about the Christian hope.

But the apostle encouraged them to heed the lamp of prophecy till they seized the brighter light that the gospel brings of the hope of which Christ Himself is the one personal object—Christ about to receive us and present us in the Father’s house, where He is, there we also may be. Useful as a lamp is for guiding us in darkness or guarding us from the defilements around, far better is the light of Christ fully revealed, and the accompanying hope for our hearts even now, before He gives us the Morning Star, that is, association with Himself at His coming. It is the coming again of Him Whose love we know, Who suffered once for all for our sins, Who will then consummate in heaven the love He proved for us on earth. When the day of Jehovah comes for the world, according to prophecy, it will burn as a furnace for the proud and wicked: but to those that fear His name, as Israel thus will here below, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings. Our hope is much higher, whether for our hearts now, or when it is fulfilled at His coming. It is not associated with judgment on adversaries, but founded on His own bearing our judgment on the cross, and taking us to heaven to be with Himself, apart from all thought of the earth or of man upon it.

Meanwhile, and from the earliest days, God has given prophecy in this sin-darkened world; and He took care, when human life was shortened to its present span (Psa. 90:10), to embody it in scripture as “the prophetic word.” In it lay, when Adam transgressed, the warrant of faith. Man fell and paradise was lost through sin. All hope turned on the woman’s Seed, Who would with bitten heel bruise the Serpent’s head. Whatever else might be intimated and learnt from God’s sayings and doings in those sad circumstances of ruin, a Deliverer was revealed in the future, Himself deeply to suffer, but to crush the enemy who had so soon and completely misled man. This Deliverer somehow must be man, the woman’s Seed, itself a fact absolutely unique, and a phrase of mysterious moment and ineffable grace; yet must He also be immeasurably above man, not only to resist and beat off the old Serpent, the devil, but to deal him destruction beyond remedy.

The word translated “prophet” in the OT (. . . ) is derived from “bubbling or pouring forth,” alluding to God’s action in inspiring him; “Seer” (. . . or . . .) points to the vision which distinguished such. Its scriptural meaning transcends the classical usage as the living and true God rises above the demons, who acted behind the idols that were adored by the heathen and interpreted by their prophets.

In the New Testament, as well as in the Old, the term prophet or prophecy is applied when God’s mind was communicated, as in Gen. 20:7; Psa. 105:16; John 4:19; I Cor. 14:24, 25; but its strict and appropriated sense of unveiling the future, which belongs to God only, is unquestionable. When idolatry prevailed, and God separated Abraham and the line of promise, He made known clearly and severally His design to bless the chosen family, and in a specified land assured to them. He disclosed also a still larger and more wondrous purpose, bound up with their Seed, to
bless all the families in the earth (Gen. 12:3; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). While prophecy thus embraced the laying bare of facts or persons at any time (1 Sam. 9:20; 2 Kings 5:26), so as to put conscience in God’s presence, none the less did the revelation of the future characterize the prophet, as we see throughout the range of scripture.

Nay, more, while the five books of Moses are distinctly called the Law, as in a vague way are the Psalms and the Prophets, yet every part of the Pentateuch is brimful of prophecy. Adam is authoritatively declared to be figure of the Coming One; this in righteousness and life, as that in sin and death. Cain presages the way of woe in walk and worship, as righteous Abel’s blood witnesses that which speaketh better. And if we omit not a few, Noah foreshadows Him Who will unfaillingly govern the world after it is again judged as a whole for its iniquities. The Messiah underlies every promise and every office of special dignity, Godward and manward; covenant, sacrifice, and offering, point to His work. Holy and suffering witnesses give glimpses of Him, as the wicked manifest their awful antagonism. The past public dealings of God typify greater things to come. The first battle in Genesis is vividly impressed with signs of the last; especially when we read at its close Abram’s meeting the royal priest, who blessed the conqueror on the part of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed God Most High, Who had delivered the enemies into his hand: the clear prefiguration of Jehovah’s day, with its issue of blessedness, above and below, in righteousness and peace.

One might dwell ever so long on broad outlines and minute details alike, each and all telling the same tale of the bright future that gilds to the instructed eye the humbling lessons of the history, pointing to Christ’s day, which made Abraham glad, when the whole earth shall be filled with His glory. But one must forbear even as to Genesis, rich as it is in furnishing the germs of what is developed now, or what is to be in another and more blessed way during days to come. A similar character pervades in some form every one of the other books of Moses, nay, of every book of the Old Testament. Thus Exodus points to a better redemption of God’s people, and by power as well as blood; and to His subsequent deigning to dwell in the midst of the redeemed, as He will for ever. Leviticus again, and Numbers, are no less predictive; and Deuteronomy, besides its more veiled intimations in its course and close, has more open prophecies of Christ and His coming triumphs than its predecessors. As the historical books that follow are said by the Jews to be written by “the earlier prophets,” so all are stamped inwardly to the intelligent Christian with shadows of good things to come, which center in Him Whom in their blindness they rejected. So more evidently are the Psalms full of Christ, and of the Spirit of Christ in His people. It ought to be needless to say this of the “later” avowed prophets. But we live in days of rebuke and blasphemy, when in Christendom even professing servants of His are eagerly encouraging one another to obliterate from the Old Testament Him Who, if seen therein, shakes of itself the new critical system to atoms and convicts its adherents of shameless incredulity.

The New Testament is the manifestation of the Son of God, Jesus the Christ come in flesh; and it declares redemption accomplished in Him, rejected by men, notably by the Jews, but risen from the dead and glorified Head over all things to the church His body. Consequently the kingdom, pledged in the Old Testament, assumes, while Christ is on high, a character of “mystery” (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11), or the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens; till He, having caught up the risen saints to the Father’s house, returns in displayed power to enforce the rights of God, and bring in the long expected times of refreshing for Israel, the nations, and all creation. The cross of Christ, being as it was the rejection of God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, gave occasion to Christian blessing in the gospel, and in the church united to its exalted Head; which is wholly distinct from the things to come. Yet the apostle, in Rom. 16:26, designates the divine word which reveals this new and heavenly secret, “prophetic scriptures.” From everlasting, silence had been kept about that mystery; a statement inapplicable to “the prophets,” and yet more evidently to their scriptures in the Old Testament. But now it was manifested, and by prophetic scriptures, according to the eternal God’s commandment, made known for obedience of faith unto all the nations. In thus making it known, the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians, with those to the Corinthians and others, have a primary place. And thus the saints are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone. The instruments of this special teaching are hence shown to be exclusively the New Testament apostles and prophets, as a joint class for this inspired work. But the New Testament in no way lacks the richest testimony on things to come, as the Lord promised (John 16:13). Witness Matt. 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21; to speak only of the fuller predictions in the Synoptic Gospels, and in 2 Peter and Jude, but especially 2 Thess. 2; 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3; with the Revelation, the most abundant, systematic, and profound of all prophecies.

In the Old Testament, as in the New, the greatest variety of moral appeal accompanies prediction almost everywhere, and in volume commonly exceeds it, as being of the utmost importance. But specific predictions are given throughout to be fulfilled in due time. Apply this test to Christ’s first advent, incomparably the most momentous of all facts here below, so declared to be by both the Old and the New Testaments, and what can be more decisive? From Moses to Malachi the grand testimony was to the coming Messiah. Even Genesis narrowed the limits down from the first woman to Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, successively; as the Psalms did to One Who should be David’s son, yet David’s Lord, sitting at Jehovah’s right hand before He strike through kings in His wrath (Psa. 110), Who is set on the holy hill of Zion, and sways the universal scepter as Son of man over all nations (Psa. 8; Dan. 7). The time was fixed by Daniel, the
place by Micah, the birth from a virgin by Isaiah, even the strange land (where Israel was a bondman) to the Messiah a shelter from the Edomite king of Judea, as the Spirit showed by Hosea (chap. 11:1-3). So we have in Isaiah and Malachi His herald, “A voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah”; for indeed He was Immanuel and Jehovah. By the same prophet His servant-character, so hateful to man’s pride and rebelliousness, was fully made known. It told the tale of the world’s state, His utter rejection by man, though Jehovah’s chosen, in Whom His soul delighted, Whom man despised, Whom the nation abhorred. There, too, the ministry of His life, the atonement of His death, are with equal clearness revealed. So long before, David wrote in Psa. 22 what was immeasurably beyond his own sufferings, and any kingly power of his — indeed, what He alone of all men knew. He is on the one hand the Holy One of God, abandoned by His God, as He must be to make expiation of sins, and on the other raised and glorified in virtue of it, so as to praise “in the midst of the congregation” or church (v. 22) now, as He will ere long “in the great congregation,” i.e. “all Israel” then saved (v. 25); when all the ends of the earth shall remember, and all the kingdoms of the nations worship. So it is to be, when the kingdom becomes de facto, as it is de jure, Jehovah’s, and He is the ruler over the nations.

When the dread scene of the cross drew near, was the prophetic word in vain? or did it utter generalities, or easy guesses, or dubious oracles? Was it only within the space of man’s life or observation that one predicted the treachery of a disciple (Psa. 41:9), as another did the goodly price He was prized at by them — the thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12, 13)? Was it within the compass of man’s mind to say centuries before that He, over Whom Jehovah watched with centurial contemplation (Isa. 50), because His vindication was to be by resurrection (Psa. 16) and heavenly glory (Psa. 8; 110) that grace might reign through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord? Was it the prognostic of a mortal to say of Messiah (for of Him only Psa. 22 treats), “They pierced My hands and My feet,” and again, “They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture they do cast lots?” anticipatively to provide the very words the Lord Jesus appropriated when suffering once for all for sins, Just for unjust? Was it a mere conjecture to lay down that not a bone of Him should be broken (Ex. 12:46; Psa. 34:20) when the legs of the others were? or that only He should be pierced (Zech. 12:10), whereas they were not? Was it fortuitous that even in such circumstances He should be with the rich in His death, whilst His grave would naturally be made with the wicked? ( Isa. 53:9).

No good man’s fancy more unreliable than Dr. T. Arnold’s (Sermons, I. on the Interpretation of Prophecy, 377) that history deals with particular facts, prophecy with general principles, so as to make it conditional because of evil in the creature. It was blindness to both history and prophecy, as God has given them in the scriptures; and outside His word we need not concern ourselves. In all the Old Testament, avowedly historical, or ostensibly prophetic, there are deep moral principles as surely as the facts which embody them or draw out the word that conveyed them. In all too one still grander Object of faith arose before such as believed.

This hope of a Deliverer acted with such power that the mass of Jews were found as a whole pervaded by it everywhere; so were the Samaritans down to the woman at Sychar. Never was it more general than at the time the Lord was in their midst, though their unbelief was really at its lowest, as they proved, when to their eyes He had no beauty that they should desire Him. Indeed their soul loathed Him, because He did not then take His world-kingdom, exalt the Jew, and destroy the Roman. Even His own followers had to bear His reproof, “O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to suffer these things [their stumbling block], and enter into His glory? And beginning from Moses he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself” (Luke 24:25-27).

It may be urged that the minute circumstances, of which we have had but a selection as they occurred to one’s memory, are peculiar to Christ, but that outside His person prophecy takes into account broad maxims, which can only apply in a measure, because of the mixed condition of man, and are not adequately fulfilled save in Him. But the fact is that the theory is true nowhere; and its effect is to destroy the truth, as far as men strive to carry it out. Prophecy often launches out, even at an early day, into the magnificent and solemn display of the Lord coming in judgment of the quick, the habitable world, as we read in the Epistle of Jude, who was enabled by the inspiring Spirit (whatever the means) to give us the testimony of Enoch; not as in the spurious Ethiopic book, which betrayed its source by its inability even to make a correct use of scripture. Enoch “prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with myriads of his saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (vv. 14, 15). At a later epoch Moses spoke all the words of his wondrous song, as given in Deut. 32, which testify to the same consummation, when Jehovah shall judge His people, and repent Himself for His servants; and the nations shall rejoice with His people, and He will make expiation for His land, for His people (vv. 36-43).

Take another instance, which in a brief compass illustrates the nature of prophecy in symbol as well as in simple language; as elsewhere figures are employed to give vividness. In Hos. 3 (where we are spared the usual insinuations against the alleged early date) under the prophet’s purchase of a woman beloved yet an adulteress, Jehovah set forth the relation of guilty Israel, no longer to be idolatrous, yet not properly wife. The words that follow are plain and terse.
For the sons of Israel shall abide many days without king and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod and teraphim. Afterward shall the sons of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God and David their king, and shall come with fear unto Jehovah and unto his goodness at the end of the days.

Here we have a description of the most surprising facts which no human mind could have divined beforehand, and conveyed in the most precise terms: v. 4 in course of fulfilment to this day; v. 5 awaiting it in that auspicious day which all the prophets hailed, and all saints of Old Testament or New ought surely to expect.

Who before Hosea distinctly conceived for Israel’s history a state of things “without a king, without a prince”? One, if godly, might well have thought of national disaster and humiliation; but what of the pledges to David and his posterity? But even if he had discerned in Psa. 89:30-32 the probability and danger of royal eclipse, what more opposed to his feelings and stranger to his mind than a religious anomaly without parallel among his brethren, and so hard for the few to conciliate with a divine ritual from the ever living and true God? Alas! he knew already how prone the chosen people were to lapse into idolatry, and how grace had as often intervened to recall from false gods. But here is announced a condition altogether unique, a religion neither divine nor idolatrous, but a wretched negation, “without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod and teraphim” {Hos. 3:4}

Even D. Kimchi interprets this justly enough if not fully, saying,

Without sacrifice refers to God, without pillar refers to idols, without ephod refers to God Who declares the future by Urim and Thummim, without teraphim refers to idols who declare the future according to the opinions of those who believe in them.

Beyond controversy sacrifice is and has ever been the foundation of all true worship since sin came in. It had an authoritatively spiritual place in Judaism. Christianity has it perfectly and for ever in Christ. And as the ephod points to the ministry of the high priest in Israel, so we have now Christ High Priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedek, the Son of God passed through the heavens (Heb. 5-7). But the Jew has nothing! neither sacrifice to purge sins, nor high priest to intercede for them: the astonishing spectacle before all eyes and for long centuries of a people that hate the idols they once loved, yet without the divine worship and service which their law demands imperatively. Never did such a state enter the imagination of Israel before Hosea, nor did it come to pass till long after him. Yet here it is predicted beyond a doubt as a lasting state, and so it has been and is. But the last verse (Hos. 3:5) is equally clear and conclusive to faith that they shall as a people return, not to their land merely (though this is certain from all scripture), but to Jehovah their God and to David their king, Who can be none other as the context demonstrates than the Messiah. “And so,” says the great apostle, “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom. 11:26). None can deny the national and unparalleled religious ruin of Israel according to prophecy: why should any stop there and entirely disbelieve their restoration, not only as a nation, but to be the earthly center of all the nations for the word of Jehovah in Zion? But how, we may ask, were either of these stupendous changes, in ruin or in blessing, within man’s horizon when Hosea wrote with such startling plainness of speech?

Psa. 22 is just as striking as Isa.53, for its first half sets out prophetically, as if a fact before us, the Messiah rejected, suffering, crucified, starting with that most wondrous of truths from His own lips to which atonement alone gives meaning -- His God abandoning Him when in the deepest abyss of need and shame. But so it must be when God for us, as for the Jew, made to be sin Him Who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). For if sinners are to be forgiven righteously, or justified, it must be on the righteous basis of sin judged as it deserves, and of God then glorified about it in an adequate sacrifice; so that He can be righteous in blotting every sin of the believer from before Him. And as the sufferers were unfathomable, so is the glory in divine answer to them; as our Lord said in a still deeper way looking on to both, “If God be glorified in Him (the Son of man), God will glorify Him in Himself, and will straightway glorify Him” (John 12:32).

Righteousness set the risen Christ, the Second man, at God’s right hand on high, as He declared His Father’s name to His brethren. Blessing unbounded flows through His atoning death. In the midst of the congregation He praises, as in John 20:19-22; Heb. 2:12. By-and-by the “great congregation,” when all Israel is saved, will re-echo His praise. Nor this only, but all the ends of the earth follow. For the day will then have come, not for gospel testimony as the church is now, but when the kingdom is Jehovah’s, and He is the ruler of the nations as an actual fact. All mortals shall bow before Him, from those most at ease to Jehovah’s, and He is the ruler of the nations as an actual fact. All mortals shall bow before Him, from those most at ease to those most at ease the utterly destitute hitherto, and that not of the then generation but of those to be born, to whom it shall be declared that Jehovah hath done this -- His infinite work transcending all before and after.

Neither David is here, nor any that ever lived or died, but only the Messiah Who once for all suffered for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God; Who is glorified on high while the church is being gathered, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; and Who, after receiving them to Himself changed into His glory, will come to make good the kingdom according to the prophets, to the joy of heaven and earth. Who but God could have conveyed these anticipations, wondrous beyond all comparison? It is an eminently feeble effort to ascribe such a psalm to the exile or later, in the desire of taking it from the greatest of the psalmists; but put it where you will, you cannot silence the voice of God in His word, sounding across the ages, and still witnessing of glories to come in Christ the Lord. Fully owning the true and sound application of the principle to the gospel (as in Rom. 15:10), one is bound to look for the fulfilment at the end of the age, when Jehovah will no longer hide His face from Israel, and they are not only reduced to the utmost extremity, but turn in repentance to Messiah Whom they slew, saying, “Blessed be He that cometh in the name of Jehovah.”
Chapter 1: Its Nature

5

Indeed, it is upon this coming age that the prophetic word converges; so much so that 2 Pet. 1:20 pronounces, as a thing we ought to know, that no prophecy of scripture is of its own interpretation. Far from being thus isolated, as it must have been if it emanated from the human mind or will, it forms part of the great scheme which, as the Father counseled it for the glory of His beloved Son, so the Spirit reveals in the prophetic word which centers in His coming kingdom. So, in contrast with His action in the Christian, and in the church, the Holy Spirit in Rev. 19:10 is designated “the spirit of prophecy,” and said to be the “testimony of Jesus.” In the Acts and the Epistles He acts as the power of communion on the ground of known redemption.

The truth is that the earliest book of scripture completely refutes the assumption of such contemporary interests as blind to the future of God, and illustrates what the last book of scripture proves as matter of fact, that prophecy exhibits the greatest variety of form according to God’s wisdom. The first intimation (Gen. 3:15) is worthy alike of Him Who spoke, and of Him Who was spoken of, as it disclosed the end from the beginning, the judgment of the subtle foe, the suffering grace and overwhelming power of Him Who would deign to be the woman’s Seed. It was sovereign grace, Satan’s irremediable overthrow and punishment; while it was conveyed in terms adapted to an earthly people, and in view of divine government with present results, like the law as a whole. On the other hand, Noah (Gen. 6:7, 13) is divinely warned of things not seen as yet, both on the ground of special relationship and on that of His nature; while Gen. 7:4 follows up the general intimation with precise details; and as it was predicted, so was it punctually fulfilled, as scripture expressly affirms. No history could be more precise or circumstantial in few words. Gen. 9:25-27 is a luminous prophetic sketch of the world, with both divine names, and each in its requisite place as ever: no sketch more opposed to appearances for centuries; none more verified as time rolled on; yet to be proved absolutely true in the day of Jehovah, as later prophets declared to the ear of faith. This, however, may be said to be only a vast outline.

But to take only one instance more, what of Gen. 15, when “the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision”? Can any prediction be conceived plainer or surer? Yet it stretched over more than four centuries, and defined the relative position of the chosen race and of the nation they were to serve in affliction, but at length to triumph over by a human book or the revealed truth of God? The circumstances foreshown are wholly different from Abram’s then, and they change from a quasi-exile in sorrowful bondage to a coming out therefrom with great substance, and to a subsequent conquest, not one of which conditions were yet existent. Yet beyond dispute here in this brief and clear prophecy all is of its essence and substance, instead of being alien to its spirit. How did any one of these vast changes arise out of the circumstances of the time? The system, calmly stated at home, and violently abroad, is nothing but a distressing libel on scripture, and rank rebellion against God, under the show of a critical investigation of the record that leaves untouched the divine inspiration and authority of scripture. But he is a simpleton who trusts these smiling augurs, who, in their own imagined processes of literary composition, lure one another and their followers on to the deadly sin of undermining God’s history and denying prophecy in any genuine sense.

How strong the contrast of His word by Isaiah in his great continuous discourse! All flesh is grass. The word of our God stands for ever. And He it is Who is coming, Who is a tender Shepherd to His people, though the Maker and the Master of all the universe. Who will teach Him? What are the nations, or the idols they have made? To Israel speaks He Who knows the end from the beginning, and He it is Who acts above the powers He employs to chasten or deliver.

Produce your cause, saith Jehovah; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and declare unto us what shall happen; let them show the former things what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare unto us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of naught: an abomination is he that chooseth you (Isa. 41:21-24).

Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them” (Isa. 42:9).

True prophecy is His claim; and it is an abiding one.

Thus saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer, and He that formed thee from the womb, I am Jehovah that maketh all things, that alone strecheth forth the heavens; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself (or, who is with me?); that frustrateth the tokens of the liars (or boasters), and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backwards, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his
messengers, that saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built and I will raise up the decayed places thereof; that saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers; that saith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid (Isa. 44:24-28).

Declare ye, and bring it forth; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath showed this from ancient time? Who hath declared it of old? Have not I, Jehovah? And there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me (Isa. 45:21).

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure; calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man of my counsel from a far country. Yea, I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it (Isa. 46:9-11).

I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass. Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass, I have even from the beginning declared it to thee; before it came to pass, I showed it thee: lest thou shouldst say, Mine idol hath done them, and my graven image, and my molten image hath commanded them. Thou hast heard, see all this; and will ye not declare it? I have showed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. They are created now, and not from the beginning and before this day thou hearest them not; lest thou shouldst say Behold, I knew them (Isa. 48:3-7).

These citations from a single prophet suffice to prove what stress God lays on that communication of the future which modern criticism seeks to belittle or deny; and Christians beguiled by its assurance are willing, yea, anxious to throw it into the background, so as to render prophecy indistinct and powerless. No believer need shrink from the demand of a notable sceptic in his Creed of Christendom: -- to mark

1. What the event was to which the alleged prediction was intended to refer;
2. That the prediction was uttered in specific, not vague, language before the event;
3. That the event took place specifically, not loosely, as predicted;
4. That it could not have been foreseen by human sagacity.

Take the following predictions of Christ as they are given in the Revised Version {of 1881}:

Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel (Isa. 7:14).
rebellious neither turned away backward. I gave my back to the
smitters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not
my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD will help me;
therefore have I not been oonfounded: therefore have I set my face
like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that
justifieth me; who will contend with me? Let us stand up
together: who is mine adversary? Let him come near to me.
Behold, the Lord GOD will help me: who is he that shall condemn
me? (Isa. 50:4-9).

Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be
exalted and extolled, and be very high. Like as many
were astonied at thee, (his visage was so marred more
than any man, and his form more than the sons of men,) so
shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut
their mouths at him: for that which had not been told
shall they see; and that which they had not heard
shall they consider (Isa. 52:13-15).

Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm
of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him
as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he
hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see him, there
is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised
and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted
with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he
was despised; and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath
borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did
esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But
he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised
for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was
upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we
like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to
his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the
iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, yet he humbled
himself and opened not his mouth; as a lamb that is led
to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers
is dumb; yea, he opened not his mouth. By oppression
and judgment he was taken away; and as for his
generation, who among them considered that he was cut
off out of the land of the living? for the transgression
of my people was he stricken. And they made his grave
with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; although
he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his
mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath
put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an
offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his
days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his
hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be
satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant
justify many: and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore
will I divide him a portion with the great, and
he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he
poured out his soul unto death: and was numbered among
the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made
intercession for the transgressors (Isa. 53:1-12).

Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul
shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with
you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have
given him for a witness to the peoples, a leader and
commander to the peoples. Behold, thou shalt call
a nation that thou knowest not, and a nation that knew not
thee shall run unto thee because of the LORD thy God,
and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee
(Isa. 55:3-5).

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the
LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the
meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to
proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the
prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable
year of the LORD, &c. (Isa. 61:1, 2).

I am inquired of by them that asked not for me: I am
found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me,
behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name.
I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious
people, &c. (Isa. 65:1, 2).

Comment is almost needless. The passages speak for
themselves, and can apply to none but the Lord Jesus: to His
birth as unique as His ministry in the least likely sphere; to
His followers associated with Him during Israel’s
non-recognition by Jehovah; to the lineage of which He was
born no less than the power of the Holy Spirit that rested on
Him beyond any of the sons of men; to His person, peculiarly
put to the proof, and a foundation for the believer as none
other was or could be; to the delight of Jehovah, the meekest
in Israel, yet righteousely blessing the Gentiles in the face of all
opposition; nor this only, but when owning His apparent
failure through Jewish unbelief and rejection, to His having
the promise from Jehovah to be a light of the nations. And what
can incredility do, but gnash its teeth at Isa. 50; 52:13-53?
The suffering Messiah alone answers to the prophetic picture.
Here there can be no possible presence for imagining, as in the
case of Cyrus, a sign on the horizon. For as the prophet wrote
indisputably many centuries before His advent, so the events
intended are unmistakably, specifically, and exclusively
verified in the Lord Jesus; and this from His birth to the
gave, yea, beyond it, to His resurrection and the work that
occupies Him now in heaven, His intercession, as well as that
which He carries on by His servants on earth, even to the call
of the Gentiles and the rebellion of the Jews. Hence the notion
of human sagacity foreseeing all, or most, or any from first to
last, is unreasonable in the highest degree. Even the blindness
of Israel that withstood the light in Him Who has blessed, Who
is blessing, once besotted heathen, is a distinct trait of the
prophecy; as it has its counterpart now in Christendom where
men receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved.
Nay, more part remains to be fulfilled in His earthly
exaltation, which is incompatible with His present work, both
in executing judgment, and in establishing His glory in power
over all the earth.

It is allowed that there is One Who is the true object of
prophecy, being man in His sufferings and temptations, God
in His holiness no less than His strength and power. We see
says one, how His resurrection and ascension into heaven are
its entire fulfilment. All the promises of God in Him are yea, and through Him, Amen. But as to all others the language could not be literally accomplished: firstly, because it was not properly applicable to any earthly nation from the imperfection of all human things; and secondly, because even that character of imperfect good or evil, which made certain nations the representatives of the principles of good or evil themselves, was not and could not be perpetual. As every people changes for better or worse in time, the prophecy could not be fulfilled at all, as in the case of Jonah’s prophecy of Nineveh’s destruction. In all cases the fulfilment will fall short of the full strength of the language, because in its proper scope and force it was aimed at a more unmixed good and evil than have ever been exhibited in the character of any earthly people. Hence is deduced, as the general principle of interpretation, a uniform historical or lower sense, and also a spiritual or higher, almost involved necessarily in the very idea of prophecy.

It is striking to find how such a false start exposes souls to perilous delusion. In this case the effect is to discard openly the latter part of Daniel. And no wonder. Prophecy, as was assumed, has to do with general principle, history with particular facts. Now it is plain that Dan. 11, on the face of it, is as minute as a history, so far as it speaks. There are evident gaps, not by error but by design, in its course; one brief after verse 3, the other very great after the Maccabean era till “the time of the end,” as verse 33 itself points out. This scripture should have arrested Dr. A.’s steps. Instead of judging himself and his fallacious principle, he fell into the sin of rejecting God’s word, the root of infidelity. Inspired history is as suggestive of general principle, prophecy is occupied alike in the Hebrew and the Greek scriptures with distinct places, fixed times, definite persons, and particular facts. Even in the symbolic forms of Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and the Revelation this holds good: how much more from Genesis throughout the entire range of discursive prophecy! The general difference is one of degree only. Prophecy is anticipated history, though it is much more; and its language is occasionally no less explicit, though we can understand that in divine wisdom it is often veiled, so as to exclude human intention from its fulfilment. Thus it becomes all the more impressive when surprisingly accomplished. Scripture, whether historical or prophetical, is full of anticipations of Christ in contrast with the first man led of Satan. It abounds in particular facts and precise dates, which no wit of man could have anticipated. God divulged the future to act on souls there and then according to spiritual zeal and intelligence, whilst not a little might remain only to be cleared up later. No maxim, however, is more erroneous than the assumption that it is only the event which explains. This is to deny the proper value of prophecy, till, becoming history in effect, it ceases to be prophecy. Not so did Noah, Abraham, Daniel, Simeon, Anna, or those that looked for the redemption of Jerusalem. Doubtless it yields evidence when accomplished to convince unbelievers; but its proper function is to cheer, guide, and edify believers beforehand. “Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do?” {Gen. 18:17}.
Chapter 2

Its Object

Scripture itself lays down, in a text already referred to, the criterion of its object so clearly as to preclude argument when it is understood.

And we have the prophetic word more sure; whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a squalid place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of its own interpretation. For not by man's will was ever prophecy brought, but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

Here we learn that the prophetic word was confirmed by the vision on the holy mount, where the King was seen transfigured, the Old Testament saints represented, the chosen witnesses of Israel in their natural bodies; and the Father's voice was heard from the excellent glory pronouncing His complacency in His Son, the center of the whole scene. The apostle, in his making known the transcendent blessings of the gospel, admits the value of taking heed to prophecy. It is like a lamp for those that need the reasoning or traditions of men.

For the Spirit of Christ that was in them did point, when it is understood. The Spirit sent forth from heaven; which things angels desire to know into (1 Pet. 1:10-12). Can any words more explicitly assert the peculiar blessing attached to this day of, not promise only, but accomplishment enjoyed in the power of a present Spirit? Among other results is the heavenly light so far surpassing the lamp of prophecy, good as this is. The hope is as much enhanced as the faith; and love proved, tasted, and shed forth as it could not be before, whatever be the reasoning or traditions of men.

But further, we have it laid down as a known first principle, that no prophecy is of its own (i.e. isolated) solution (2 Pet. 1:19). Local and temporal circumstances give occasion; but it forms part of a great whole, of which Christ the King is the center. Taking it by itself is like severing a bough from a majestic tree, of which it is an integral part. All points to Him in that day. Hence the way in which both advents are connected habitually in the Old Testament, whilst the second is set forth prominently in the New. Hence the habit of the Spirit, when predicting the fall of Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, etc., of ever linking them with the day of Jehovah, when the Lord will in personal presence inflict vengeance on ungodly Jews and Gentiles. Making these prophecies of their own solution is when men stop short with present fact, and even misuse this to the deeper unbelief of effacing the great unraveling of that day when Jehovah alone shall be exalted, and every word verified indisputably by divine judgment.

Such is the genuine unforced meaning of this scriptural canon. It is not "our," viz. the readers', any more than "of one's own," viz. the prophet's, solution; for neither is here in question. Not the prophet but the prophecy had as yet been before us. Nor again does ἐπίλυσις mean γένεσις, production, but "interpretation." The verb, γίνεσθαι, here translated "is," does not warrant any such thought. Even if we plead for its primitive force of becoming or coming, the meaning is that no prophecy of scripture becomes a matter of its own solution. It is by its nature such as to exclude isolated interpretation. It belongs to a vast system which has Christ and His kingdom for its object. For though the prophets were men, they "spoke from God" under the power of the Holy Spirit. He Who used them to write is the only source of sound interpretation; and this views each prophecy of scripture as a component part of God's testimony to Christ, in and by Whom only His glory is secured and yet to be displayed.

This, it ought to be evident, excludes the notion that history interprets prophecy. Of course, man's history, as far as it is true, must coincide with prophecy, as far as it is accomplished; but what of the great mass of prophecy which bears on the day of Jehovah? Will it not be too late to get its interpretation then? The very text itself disproves the thought: prophecy was given as a lamp for the dark place all through: and now that Christ is come, a better light -- the True Light -- shines, at least for the sons of light and day.
indeed for all who truly bow to Him. Plainly one must understand or interpret aright the prophecy, before it can be applied save by guess-work to any event of history; but even so, if this be made all, prophecy is made of private solution. In fact it would be truer to say the converse -- that prophecy interprets history: for God’s mind is given in prophecy, which ever looks to Christ’s glory, anything short of which is at best partial and misleading. The only effectual interpreter of prophecy, as of all scripture, is His Spirit, Who deigns to work in the believer.

It is only then, as we seize the association of Christ with each subject coming before us in the prophetic word, that we really understand it as a whole or in detail. For the divine purpose is to display His glory on the earth, not only in a people called to the knowledge of Jehovah as His own, but with all nations yet to be blessed when His own people are blessed (Psa. 67; Isa. 60). It is Israel that have the earthly call and purpose of God, the nations then subordinately.

But there is blessing for none apart from Christ, the object, center, and security of all the promises of God. And this, in varied form and fullness, the Old Testament demonstrates. Of old a curse came, not the blessing, as the law was violated, God’s witnesses were despised, and idolatry more and more prevailed, first in Ephraim, then in Judah, “till there was no remedy.” God’s people not only vanished from the land of promise, but were pronounced Lo-ammi (not-My-people {Hos. 1}). The return from Babylon, important as it may be, was but provisional, and in no way the restoration of God’s people according to patriarchal promises or early and later prophets. It was only a remnant of Judah and Benjamin, with individuals of other tribes, especially of Levi, who were in time appointed to have their King, Messiah, presented to them, and, alas! rejected disdainfully to death, but in that death glorifying God and atoning for sin, as He had already glorified the Father in a life that bespoke the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth. When the Jew rejected the testimony of the Spirit to the Messiah exalted in heaven, Whom they had crucified on earth by the hand of lawless men, it was all over with the returned remnant, as before with the nation. The same evil heart of unbelief, which gave up Jehovah for idols, rejected Jehovah-Messiah in Jesus, as well as the gospel through His blood; and “wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” The King was wroth; and He sent His armies, and destroyed those murderers and burned their city, as the rejected Messiah forewarned (Matt. 22:7).

Then God began a new call above, believers from among Jews and Gentiles united to Christ on high, as the one body wherein is neither Jew nor Greek: all the old distinctions are blotted out; Christ is all and in all. They are not of the world, as Christ is not; they are heavenly, as He is heavenly, though they be on the earth for the little while that God is calling them out. This explains why the church of God is not properly an object of prophecy; for prophecy regards the earth and living man upon it. But the members of Christ have died with Him, and belong to Him for heaven, being warned against “all that is in the world,” and exhorted to set their minds on things above: a state not at all contemplated by the prophetic word, which is, we saw, as a lamp shining in a squalid place. This lamp we can use, and do well to heed; but we have by grace already a better light in our hearts, and are waiting for Him to take us where He is, the constant hope of the church, wholly independent of prophecy with its earthly times and seasons, its judgments and blessings under Messiah’s government here below.

But has God cast away His people? This the apostle has answered elaborately in the Epistle to the Romans (ch. 11). To the saints in the metropolitan city of the world that then was, the Holy Spirit has declared on the contrary that the day is coming when “all Israel shall be saved” (Rom. 11:26), that is, all Israel who survive the tremendous judgments of that day. He, Paul, was himself a pledge of it: as in Elijah’s time there was a remnant, so there was in the apostle’s day. No doubt, the mass now, yet more than then, are blinded, and salvation is for the Gentiles, not to cast off the Jews but to provoke them to jealousy, as Moses predicted (Deut. 32). Now, if their fall be the world’s wealth, what will be their future rise? Life from the dead. After all, the Gentile was but a wild olive grafted into the olive tree of promise, and is warned not to be high-minded but to fear, seeing how God spared not the natural branches. It is only Gentile pride and delusion that Israel are gone forever to make themselves “the Israel of God,” and abide till time melts into eternity. Not so! Assuredly if the Gentile abide not in God’s goodness (and who will dare to affirm this?) he will be cut off, and the Jews will be grafted into their own olive tree. Then the apostle drops argument and figure, declaring in plain terms that a hardening in part (it has never been complete) has befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; “and so all Israel shall be saved,” according to the prophet ( Isa. 59:20). This will be the true restoration of Israel in the day of Jehovah, when the Gentiles meet with condign judgment at His hand. It is only fleshly Israel that can be said to be “enemies for your sake as touching the gospel.” It is only they who are “beloved for the fathers’ sake, as touching the election.” What theologians call “the spiritual people,” “the Israel of God,” or believers, cannot answer to this language. It is the same people, enemies as regards the gospel yet beloved as regards election, who shall be saved. For, adds the apostle, the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance -- they are subject to no change of mind.

1. The reader in weighing Gal. 6:16 may satisfy himself how little the phrase sanctions the use commonly made of it. For the apostle distinguishes “as many as walk by this rule” i.e., of the new creation, from “the Israel of God,” instead of confounding them, as the popular error does. He means by the phrase such Jews as were so in deed and in truth. This indicates the propriety of his language. The error assumes that the apostle wrote incorrectly.
on His part. God will assuredly restore His people yet. Thus does the great prophet join the great apostle.

For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In overflowing wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Jehovah thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, saith Jehovah that hath mercy on thee (Isa. 54:7-10).

So perfectly coincides the teaching of Paul with the prophecy of Isaiah; as both are set aside by the figment that it is henceforth only a question of the church, in which merge all of Isaiah; as both are set aside by the figment that it is henceforth only a question of the church, in which merge all.

Without full credit to God’s purpose in this respect, the prophets are unintelligible. Given the restoration of Israel not only to their land, but to Jehovah their God, Whom they will own and see in their manifested Messiah; the field of prophecy begins to be truly discerned. Jerusalem is the city of the great King. “They shall look upon me whom they will own and see in their manifested Messiah; the field of prophecy begins to be truly discerned. Jerusalem is the city of the great King. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced.” More than carnage may open “that day,” when the garments, rolled in blood, shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire. But how blessed when they say, Un to us a child is born, unto us a son is given! And the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon the kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with judgment and with righteousness henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this” (Isa. 9:6, 7).

Nor is this all. As grace called Gentiles when the Jews rejected the Messiah, so prophecy shows us Him in glory the Head of Israel and the Gentiles here below. And it shall come to pass in that day [not in this], that the root of Jesse which standeth for an ensign of the peoples, unto him shall the nations seek, and his resting-place shall be glorious” (Isa. 11:10).

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him [the Son of man]; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:14).

And Jehovah shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall Jehovah be one, and his name one (Zech. 14:9).

The key of all is Christ seen in His various glory: not alone Only-begotten Son of God in personal right, but Christ Jesus a Man, dead, risen, and glorified in virtue of His work as well as person; Son of David, Son of man, and, withal Head over all things to His church, the body of Him Who filleth all in all. It is this fact which emerges with heavenly brightness in Ephesians and Colossians, as well as partially elsewhere. It is the omission of it (the mystery, hid in God from the ages, now revealed), which enfeebs alike Fathers, Greeks, Orientals, Copts, Abyssinians, Romanists, Anglicans, Lutherans, Reformed, Moravians, Methodists, etc. Yet the proper character even of Christianity cannot be intelligently apprehended without it. Thus it is a far larger question than prophecy: for it affects all things spiritual, individual and corporate, inasmuch as we ought to be now on earth, as by-and-by in heaven, the answer and witness to Christ at God’s right hand.

Hence also we need not disparage in the least the Old Testament saints, but can allow ungrudgingly their future and heavenly glory in reigning with Christ. Hence we can leave adequate room and time for the displayed kingdom of Christ over the habitable world to come, which is therefore neither the present age nor yet eternity, but between the two. Then the Jews and the Gentiles shall be blessed under Christ’s reign -- Jehovah King over all the earth, the peoples all suitably and sovereignly blessed, none confounded one with another, still less with the bride, the Lamb’s wife, the new Jerusalem, the metropolis not of earth only but of the universe in heavenly glory, yet specially connected with the earth. Even now on earth is neither Jew nor Gentile in that body of Christ, but He is all and in all.

Now there ought to be not the smallest hesitation about this great truth: for it is no question of prophecy as to its full revelation, but of the weightiest and plainest dogmatic scripture, as in Eph. 1:9, 10: Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of the times, to sum (or head) up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth -- in him, in whom also we were allotted (or obtained) inheritance, being fore-ordained according to the purpose of him that worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.

Thus it is sure that God’s purpose in the coming economy {the millennium} is to put all the universe, heavenly and earthly, under Christ as head, we who believe (whether Jews or Gentiles) being His joint-heirs in this unbounded and glorious inheritance; of which, as the apostle proceeds to explain, the Holy Spirit, Who has sealed us unto that day of redemption, is meanwhile the earnest in our hearts. The latter part of Col. 1 may be compared in proof of the general purpose, grounded on the work of the cross, and of the church’s special relationship with Christ as the head of His body. Hence we shall reign in that day with Christ, not certainly giving up our characteristic blessings in heavenly places, and therefore, as Rev. 5:10 says, “over” rather than “on” the earth, where the Jews shall have the central place and first dominion (Mic. 4:8), and the Gentiles willingly
bow, even their kings and queens, to Jehovah’s disposal and ordering (Isa. 11; 49; 60; 66).

It is thus the special relationship with Christ that makes all clear in scripture, and assigns the just place to each, whether to Israel, or to the Gentiles. As the church was part of “the mystery,” which is expressly declared to be hid from ages and generations (Rom. 16:25, 26) and hid in God (Eph. 3:9), it is never as such the subject-matter of the prophets, though principles of the glorious future are already verified and applied to the gospel now. We may regard it as bound up with, and eclipsed in, Christ (cp. Isa. 50:8, 9, with Rom. 8:33, 34). But when the day is come for the display of His glory before the universe, Rev. 21 shows the bride, the Lamb’s wife, as the heavenly city, the new Jerusalem, the witness of grace, even then with healing for the nations (Rev. 22:2); as the earthly Jerusalem will be the witness still of earthly righteousness. “For that nation and kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted” (Isa. 60:12). She, in the heavenly places, will reign with Christ over the earth; Israel will be reigned over, but the inner circle on earth, as the Gentiles also more distantly but blessed indeed.

What throws all prophecy into confusion, darkness, and error, is making ourselves, the church, its object. This the church is not. Give Christ, the true center, His place; then everything falls into order, and shines in the light of God before our souls. Such is the effect of God’s word intelligently enjoyed by His spiritual power. Without it all vision becomes

as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned saying, Read this, I pray thee, and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed. And the book is delivered to him that is not learned saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned (Isa. 29:11, 12).

"By faith we understand." There is no other way, nor ought there to be.
Chapter 3

Its Occasion

The is occasion, or moral ground, of prophecy departure from God, Who sends thereon His word, which convicts of the sin, and holds out His intervention in power to deliver by the judgment of His and their adversaries those who believe. This we see verified in Eden from the fall of man. God at once appears on the scene, brings home to conscience the sin of each, and, in pronouncing judgment on the Serpent, points to the blessing that hangs on the triumph of the bruised Seed of woman, the bruiser of the Serpent’s head. A state of innocence before, or of fidelity afterwards, drew out no prophecy; which, on the contrary, laid the evil of the creature bare, and held out God’s sure resource in bringing in not only judgment of the evil but a better hope: the first man superseded by the Second.

So it is always as a general principle. If Enoch prophesied, it was, Behold, the Lord came with His holy myriads to execute judgment against all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly works, and of all their hard speech against Him (Jude 14, 15). If Noah so opened his mouth, it was the wickedness of Canaan that drew out the curse, whatever the blessing to Shem and Japheth. It was the foreseen oppression of Egypt and iniquity of the Amorites that formed the background for the predicted gift of the promised land to the seed of Abraham; and it was the too plain failure of his sons which led the way for dying Jacob to tell beforehand what should befall them in the latter days, culminating in the advent of Shiloh, to Whom the obedience (or gathering) of the peoples shall be, however long the interval between the first part and the second.

Man’s theory is that the people of Israel, their kings, and their prophets, stand forth in the history and in the prophecy of scripture as the representatives of God’s cause and of goodness; and that as the history shows them imperfect representatives, so they can only be imperfectly the subjects of predicted blessings, which did or did not belong to them in the measure of their faithfulness. Thus Moab was not all evil, Israel was not all good. Prophecy spoke without reserve of God’s triumphs and of His servants: if Israel belongs to God only imperfectly, her share in God’s triumphs must in that proportion be imperfect also. But the theory does not hold: for it is alleged on the one hand that Moab, Ammon, Amalek, are vanished out of history; it is allowed on the other that Israel exists still unchanged. Yet what were the sins of those nations compared with Israel’s, if at least we bow to the Lord’s estimate (Matt. 11:21-24)? Jonah’s case, too, is misused to prove that it all depends on circumstances whether prophecy could be fulfilled or not. In all cases the fulfilment is supposed to fall short of the strength of the prediction, because it was aimed at a more unmixed good and evil than ever was in any people. Christ, therefore, remains the real subject of all prophecy for good: the Son of David has reigned for more than eighteen hundred years, owned over all the earth as King and Lord, and of His kingdom there shall be no end!

Scripture in no way sanctions this sliding scale and the uncertain or partial fulfilment it involves. The only thing true is that Christ is the object and security, not only of all God’s promises to faith, but of executing His wrath and threats. He is the Son of God, in Whom there is life eternal for those that believe; He is the Son of man, the executor of judgment on those that believe not. That God used Jonah’s preaching to awaken the Ninevites to repentance for a season did not hinder Nineveh’s utter ruin ere long, as Nahum predicted, nor Nahum’s going on to the last Assyrian, when Jehovah will make a full end, and affliction shall not rise up a second time. He may go forth in the pride of power, imagining evil against Jehovah; but, behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows; for the worthless shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off (Nahum 1:15). The Ruler out of Bethlehem shall be thy peace, when the Assyrian shall come into the land (Micah 5:2, 5). Prophecy, whatever it may take in of partial accomplishment, stays not short of the consummation at the end of the age, when He, Whose right it is, takes the kingdom. Thus what is partially accomplished amply encourages that faith which ever waits and longs for His appearing, whilst it furnishes material, because it is necessarily partial till then, for the unbelief which doubts the past and disregards the future, because its pleasure and its confidence are in man, not in the true God Whom it knows not.

But the thoughts even of good men are far from God’s mind and counsel; and deeply interesting it is to trace how true it is that moral ruin in man’s past brings out more and more God’s voice in prophecy. Never were the Israelites in the wilderness lower than when Balaam was hired of Balak to curse them, after their manifold unfaithfulness in the day of temptation. His false prophet went forth to meet -- ! But Jehovah met Balaam, and put a word in his mouth. In His moral government He passes over no fault in His people, but blames and chastises. Before the enemy He brings out His
thoughts and grace and purposes of glory. Every effort of Balak draws forth a fresh blessing from Balaam, compelled to be the mouthpiece in Jehovah's hand. Israel dwell alone, are justified, and beautiful in God's eyes; they have Messiah coming to be their crown of glory and power. But even so it is Israel, and not some other people, and carrying all expressly on to "the latter days." For no prophecy of scripture is of its own or isolated interpretation. It is part of God's revelation in view of Christ's glory on earth in that day.

So Moses' song (Deut. 32) flows from Jehovah's unchangeable purpose, whatever the undisguised failure of Israel, the center of His government of the world (v. 8). The very call of the Gentiles is but to provoke them to jealousy (v. 21), as the apostle drew from this long after, when it came to pass (Rom. 10:19). No doubt, the Gentiles proved utterly unworthy, and God will take vengeance on them (Deut. 32:40-42); but even when He restores Israel as He will (v. 36), He calls the Gentiles to rejoice with His people (v. 43): a principle already, as we know, accomplished in the gospel, but to be fulfilled in the kingdom of Messiah.

When the priests failed as fully as the people, we hear of Samuel raised up on God's part; as Peter says (Acts 3:24), "beginning with Samuel and all the prophets." And as the prophet was raised up in sovereign grace to speak for God, so a King is held out even before this as the hope of Israel.

And I will raise me up a faithful priest that shall be according to that which is in my heart and in my mind; and I will build him a sure house, and he shall walk before mine anointed for ever" {1 Sam. 2:35}.

The Messiah is the key, the King in God's counsel, the new and only true Anointed (1 Sam. 2:35), before Whom the priest should walk (soon to have an earnest in David and Solomon, who rejected the house of Ithamar, and brought forward Zadok of the line of Phinehas), as will be seen fully in the kingdom.

Then, when the kings even of David's line fail more and more palpably, the prophets proper, who were inspired to write their imperishable books whether on a great or on a lesser scale, were raised up of God. Here, if we take Isaiah as a sample of the greater, and Hosea of the less, we may see the same principle as clearly at least as ever. For the introductory chapters (1-5) of Isaiah self-evidently lay the ruin of Israel as the basis of His announcing divine intervention in judgment of evil, and mercy to the repentant remnant, as chapter 6 reveals his formal inauguration on that very ground. Nor is Hos. 1 less explicit, called during the same kings of Judah, but adding Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, with children given as signs of the kingdom ceasing from the house of Israel; of no mercy thereon; and, what was still more serious, of Lo-ammi pronounced; yet withal of the gathering of both another day under one head; "for great shall be the day of Jezreel," thus carrying us on to the glorious scenes of the latter day. In both the ruin was imminent and irretrievable, save provisionally, till Messiah reign over the earth.

But Christ was wholly rejected in that capacity, as the New Testament clearly shows, in fulfilment of Psa. 2 and a crowd of Old Testament prophecies. He has never reigned for one day as Son of David. Undoubtedly the cross brought in higher things, and He sits on the Father's throne, where David never did, never will sit; as by-and-by He will sit on His own throne {Rev. 3:21}. Then not only will the holy hill of Zion be the seat of His power, but He will ask and receive the nations for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession, to break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel -- a statement of His rule clearly future, and incompatible with His grace as now under the gospel. And though we Christians gladly own Him Lord, "King" does not express His relation to us, but Head, for we are members of His body; and the difference is as momentous in practice as in doctrine. In that day, when Israel is restored, and spiritually as well as literally in their land under Messiah and the new covenant, the nations shall be blessed, and bow before the Son of man. In that day the races that have vanished out of history will once more reappear, according to prophecy, as Isaiah distinctly declares ( Isa. 11:14), and others also. The mouth of Jehovah has spoken it. Infidels cry, Impossible. Good men as credulously listen to their vanity, as they fear to trust the word that lives and abides for ever. But God will justify it in its time, and all the more, because not a trace appears now. Scripture cannot be broken. Races remain, whatever the shiftings of time, place, or circumstances, as Jehovah will prove in honor of His King.

John 13:31, 32 puts the case from His own lips in the light of God. The moral glory of the cross is the basis of the Son of man's heavenly glory, and this straightway, i.e. without waiting for the kingdom which He is to receive, when He returns in visible power and splendor. Then only will the inhabitants of the world learn the righteousness which they dislike and disdain, while favor is shown as now in the gospel of grace to the wicked (Isa. 26:9, 10). Meanwhile Jesus is a world-rejected Lord, but on the throne of His Father -- a seat which none ever had or can share; and He will only take His own throne (Rev. 3:21) at His coming. And hence the only true place of the Christian now, according to the uniform strain of New Testament teaching and sanctioned practice, where fellowship with Christ's sufferings and conformity to His death are the highest privileges. We who are His are called in the measure of our faith and love to share loyally His reproach in separation from the world till He comes, Who is Lord of all. Then shall we be with Him where He is and for ever; then too shall we reign with Him, instead of being blessed and reigned over here below: a prospect bright beyond all thought, so that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory.
Prophecy is occupied, not with heaven, but with the earth, and consequently with Israel and the nations. This is evident to any familiar with its general scope or its details. Principles which apply in the highest degree to the Christian, the gospel, or the church, may and do appear therein. But the more closely the prophets are scrutinized, the more evident it becomes that Christianity and the church as such lie outside its purview, and that a wholly different condition is contemplated: the government of the world, or divine dealings there to introduce it, not the action of heavenly grace by the power and presence of the Spirit, uniting those who believe, freed or justified from sin, to Christ their Head on high.

Hence it is, as the attentive reader of scripture will not fail to discern, that times and seasons and external signs, as they are not for heaven, so belong not to heavenly men while on earth, save as they may read and understand them concerning others. They are given in profusion about God's earthly people, whether for their own help directly, or to signify God's hand on their enemies. Where the Jew is concerned, alike in the New Testament as in the Old, there do we find those suited landmarks. The hope of the Christian and of the church stands wholly on the Lord's sure promise of love.

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, [there] ye may be also (John 14:2, 3).

It is His word, expressly and wholly independent of earthly events.

As their faith, so is their hope. Pharaoh was not in question, nor Balak, nor Sihon, nor Og, nor the many hostile kings of Canaan. Satan did resist to blood by human instruments; but an infinitely greater must be met in death and judgment of sin. And so it was in the life of Christ, if we read it, as we ought, in the light of heaven and eternity. There sin is seen leveling all distinctions, and no difference before God between Jew and Gentile is proclaimed: for all are lost. But grace through faith saves all equally and for ever, and constitutes a “new” man of which Christ is head above, wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile, but all are one in Him. This is the church, the fruit of sovereign favor, the heavenly Eve of the last Adam. It has nothing to do now with the government of the world, or with the execution of earthly judgments. God in love gave His Only-begotten Son, not only to become man for us men, but even to be made sin for us sinners, that we might become God's righteousness in Him, yea, and be raised up together with Him and seated together in Him in heavenly places indeed, in the glory of His grace: for His own counsels in Christ alone account for it all. We are accordingly called to a walk quite different from that which was imposed by the law on the ancient people of God; created, as the apostle says, “for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them,” the details of which fill the New Testament in general. Our worship too is confessedly distinctive, as is our service or ministry. Christ is the center and object and expression of all, as the Holy Ghost is the power acting by the word of God. And the heavenly hope is the crown: His own coming, we are sure of soon, we know not when, to receive us to Himself and present us with Himself in the Father’s house on high.

Prophecy, strictly so called, is quite distinct, and bears directly on the future tribulation, whether that which is called “the great one,” out of which God-fearing Gentiles come from every nation and tribe and people and tongue (Rev. 7), or the unparalleled hour of Jacob’s trouble, out of which he will be saved (Jer. 30:7). In either we never hear of the church; and no wonder. For the Lord, apart from those predicted sorrows, will have called us to meet Him in the air; so that we follow Him from heaven when He appears to deliver the Jews and Israel, who are ready to be swallowed up by their adversaries. On all this the lamp of prophecy sheds its light, deeply needed for the squalid place of the world. But we can say believingly, and without presumption, that we are not of the world, for Himself has told us so. We therefore find a better hope spread before us in His word, though many lose it by confounding it with the just expectation of the Jewish remnant, who look for deliverance by His appearing to take vengeance on their foes. Our hope has no such connection, as it is by our being caught up to meet Him. It is the translation of heavenly grace. For “that day” we come along with Him from heaven. Hence when Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then shall we also be manifested with Him in glory. “The day” is a time of displayed divine power, when “every eye” shall see, and Jehovah be exalted in that day. On this all prophecy
converges.

“The land,” and the earth too as a whole, will then become a direct object of divine blessing; and the reader of Old Testament scripture is inexcusable, who overlooks the many obvious places in which God pledges Himself to this end. Doubtless His people and the nations are nearer to His heart; but the long groaning earth, the creation travelling in pain together until now, shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty (not of grace, which is for souls by the Spirit now, but) of the glory of the children of God at Christ’s appearing. Does this surprise or offend any? It was here the Son of God, Who created all, became man, and lived, and died, by the grace of God. It was here was manifested the wonder of a divine person, humbling Himself in obedience unto death -- yea, death of the cross. It was here God was glorified in the Holy One made sin; and here that Satan was vanquished for ever by Him Who had accomplished redemption by His blood, and was raised in power according to the Spirit of holiness. If heaven and God’s throne be the worthy reward, this earth shall be delivered and reconciled. It may be a little spot compared with the universe, but it is the little spot where Christ wrought in divine love a work matchless in value, to which not man only is indebted for blessing, but God for His retrieved moral glory, and in virtue of which blessing the man who believes is made God’s righteousness. If sin of the first Adam subjected all to vanity, how meet it is that the retrieved moral glory, and in virtue of which blessing the man who believes is made God’s righteousness. If sin of the first Adam subjected all to vanity, how meet it is that the second Man should more than restore all things! How blessed that Satan should be banished, not only grace as now given Him and He has given us, when we shall be perfected the promised earthly blessings of the Old Testament, not set aside but sealed in the New Testament, leaves room for all that divine mercy has in store for Israel and the nations and creation generally, and without confusion conciliates with the accomplishment of the prophets the resurrection glory of the departed saints from the beginning, and above all, the incomparable results of the mystery of Christ and the church, now revealed in the New Testament, then to be displayed in the heavens and over the earth.

Thus also is the progressive character of the divine dealings made evident. For under Christ’s reign in this fulness of glory, Israel will advance from the old to the new covenant and to their Messiah glorified, as the church from her present anomalous ruin to be the glorious bride of Christ; and all nations be delivered from their infidelity, superstitions, and other abominations, to flourish in righteousness and peace; the whole earth be filled with His glory, and the heavens no longer severed from it through the first man’s sin, but maintained in the power of the Second Man from heaven. Not only is there nothing retrograde in any sphere, but there is blessed progress everywhere for heaven and earth. It is only from looking at part of the coming glory that Christians have failed to seize the truth of an advance so marked and universal.

Prophecy then treats of the earthly people, or rather the righteous remnant (Isa. 1; 4; 6; 10; etc.), saved by the Lord’s appearing for the destruction of their enemies, not by translation to heaven, as the heavenly saints will know like Christ Himself, without any dealing in vengeance on the world. The difference is simple and complete. Hence it connects itself with day-light dawning and the day-star
arising in the heart, as compared with the prophetic lamp (see 2 Pet. 1:19). Our hope rests on the assurance of His love that He will come and take us to heaven; prophecy tells of blessing and glory for Israel and the nations too on earth by the judgment He will execute on its evil. Hence a Christian might and ought to be waiting for Christ with all his heart, who knew little of prophecy, however good to be known in its place; as on the other hand, souls might be familiar with prophecy, on whose heart that heavenly hope has scanty power, if it have dawned there at all. The apostle Peter was solicitous that the believers he addressed, besides heeding prophecy, should enjoy a brighter light and the hope that belongs to it.

Thus, to say nothing of prophetic “burdens” on the various nations that assailed or oppressed Israel, it is striking to observe that the blessed result of prophecy is, in every case where it is predicted, associated not with the energy of divine grace as now in the gospel, but with the unmistakable execution of God’s judgment at the close of the age. Who does not hail with joy the assurance that “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea” (Isa. 11:9). It is certain, however, that the prophet declares that the Lord shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips (cf. Isa. 30:27, 33) slay the wicked (11:4), as introducing this blessedness here below. The apostle cites this in 2 Thess. 2:8, and binds it up with the manifestation of the Lord Jesus. Moses had referred to the same thing in Num. 14:21. Judgment there too, not preaching the gospel, is connected with filling all the earth with the glory of Jehovah. Hab. 2:12-14 is yet more explicit; for after pronouncing woe on violence and iniquity, the prophet asks if it is not of Jehovah that the peoples labor for the fire, and the nations weary themselves for vanity: “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea.” What the peoples toil at is but for the fire to consume; their weariness for vanity (cf. Jer. 51:58) the judgments of the Lord will demonstrate, but will do more and better. They will cause the earth to be filled with the knowledge of His glory. Then only will the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness, whatever be the vain hopes of Gentile conceit. Not the gospel in man’s mouth, but judgment in the Lord’s hand, will inaugurate the earth’s deliverance, blessing, and glory (compare Dan. 2:35, 44, 45; 7:11-14). The gospel is now calling and forming souls, apart from the world, for heaven.
Chapter 5

Its Language

As much is often essayed to mystify prophecy on the score of its language, it may be well here to notice the subject a little.

The fact is that all language is more or less figurative, more especially where it is poetic or impassioned. History, if it be not a dead chronicle, abounds with figures; but none the less does it aim, or at least profess, to give nothing but the truth. Simple language is distinguished from figurative, though both styles are freely used and understood readily in all compositions, as well as in oral address and ordinary conversation. Carnal and spiritual are the true correlatives, as also literal and mystical; but these respectively apply to the sense of what is said or written, rather than to the diction. Allegory, parable (or its abbreviation in proverb), and symbol, again, are varieties of form in which truth may be conveyed, but they ought not to be confounded with figurative language. A symbol may be a material object, actually existing, and applied morally; or it may be made up by combining in one a variety of existing objects, so as to give God’s moral view of what is thus revealed, as the four beasts or Gentile imperial powers of Dan. 7, the fourth of which reappears in Rev. 11-19. But symbolic language is exceptional, and seems limited to prophecy during the times of the Gentiles. It is in no way characteristic of prophecy in general. In every case what was conveyed was real, not artificial: when accomplished, it is history from the divine side.

It must never be forgotten, however, that, whatever the form or figure employed, the subject-matter referred to in prophecy is not ideal but real, any more than in the rest of scripture. It may be a fact or a place, a person or a people, a time or a state of things. Simple language may be used alone, or with figures to impart vividness, as in all speech; or symbol may be the method, as sometimes in Ezekiel and Zechariah, and yet more in Daniel and the Revelation; but what is conveyed is a reality, and not a figure. Poetical elevation is not uncommon, any more than figurative representation; and only in an exceptional way, as in Daniel 11, have we the revelation of events successive in relation to each other, though with gaps first and last, for which room is carefully made in the terms of the prophecy itself, before the grand terminus of all, the conflict of the close, in which figures for the first time “the king” in “the land,” as distinct from him of the north and him of the south. “The king” it is as idle to confound with Antiochus Epiphanes as with the Pope or Buonaparte. It is the final catastrophe, ending where all the visions of Daniel, and we may say generally of the prophets, do end, in the coming kingdom of the Messiah. As they have one divine authority, so have they one glorious consummation, when He takes His great power and reigns. Thus, as all prophecy looks to that end, none is of private or isolated interpretation. It is the Spirit glorifying Christ, when He shows the things that are to come.

The Revelation, as it is the latest, so it is by far the most elaborate, of all prophetic books, consisting throughout of visions, in which symbolic objects fill a larger place than anywhere else in scripture. Still, it is to be observed that the prophet conveys literally what he saw in the plainest language. The objects and acts in the scenes which he in the Spirit saw, and the words announced to his ears, are given with precision. The symbols we have to study and comprehend in the light of general usage and of the particular context; for symbolic forms, though less pliant than the ordinary expressions of thought, are, like the rest, modified by their associations; and the Holy Spirit alone can guide rightly in this and in all else of scripture; as common sense does in the affairs and intercourse of natural life. Save in the symbolism which forms a comparatively small part of prophecy, its language differs only in degree from that of scripture generally, and must be interpreted on exactly the same principle. Indeed even the symbolic portion finds its counterpart in the types not only of the Pentateuch, but of scriptural history as a whole. The form may vary according to divine wisdom, but one mind and purpose will be found to pervade all. Every scripture is inspired of God; and as Christ is the image of the invisible God, and He alone declared the Father, so is He the object of all revelation, and others only appear as related to Him.

The late Dr. P. Fairbairn (Prophecy, 86), who sought to allegorise the prophetic word, contends that, if Gen. 3:15 is to be read literally,

it speaks merely of the injuries to be received from serpents on the one side, and of the killing of serpents on the other: and any member of Eve’s future family, who might have the fortune to kill a serpent, should, by so doing, verify the prophecy.

But no spiritual mind could tolerate such an interpretation, no fair mind allow the relevancy of the argument. Jehovah Elohim addressed the tempter, and winds up His sentence by the words (so pitiably travestied for controversial purposes) which, understood in simple faith, have comforted believers
from that day to this. It is burlesque, not argument, and utterly vain to maintain that Israel means the church, or that Jerusalem means the New Jerusalem, which is the desired conclusion. Nor is there the slightest force in explaining away the bearing of Isa. 40:3, which was accomplished in the Baptist’s ministry preparing the way of Jehovah; as Isa. 53 was in Messiah’s humiliation and atonement. But all that these scriptures say is not yet fulfilled, and cannot be till His second advent in power and glory, which will make good every word which the allegorical school dissipate into thin air. The rejection of the herald and of his Lord has suspended very important parts of both predictions as of prophecy in general, which await “that day,” when Jerusalem’s heart shall hear what is spoken, and rejoice that her warfare is accomplished and her iniquity is pardoned: then the glory of Jehovah shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. Even the first prophecy, like the great mass, awaits that day for its full effect in the execution of judgment on the Serpent. For prophecy, as the rule, lets us see the glorious end of God when Christ takes His great power and reigns. We may and ought to see what faith alone can see now; but the future King of glory will be the public display to every eye.

Those whose theory it is that all prophecy is ideal, have to face the fact that a vast deal given out by the prophets has been fulfilled literally. Ignorant self-will denies in vain what is patent. Its accomplishment is plain in Nineveh and Babylon, in Tyre and Sidon, in Edom and Egypt, as well as in the Medo-Persian and the Macedonian powers, to say nothing of Rome; above all, in Israel before the Assyrian and Chaldean captivities, and in the subsequent partial return of the Jews to be dispersed again, as they were by the Romans, still more terribly after the cross of Christ and the rejected gospel. In the predictions simple language, figures, and symbols were employed as God saw fit; but the cities, the nations, and the lands were known historically, as the changes were punctually accomplished; and many an unbeliever has been arrested by this evidence, to learn still better and deeper things from God’s word, even Christ and His redemption.

Take an example of symbol in Ezek. 17. The parable of the eagles is as determinate as if the prediction had been couched in literal terms. The scripture itself interprets the first great eagle as the king of Babylon, the second as Pharaoh. By the breaking off the topmost twig of the cedar of Lebanon, and placing it in a city of traffic, was meant the king of Babylon putting down Jehoiachin, and carrying him captive to Babylon. By the taking of the seed of the land to become a vine of low stature, we are to understand his setting Zedekiah (for so Mattaniah was new named by the conqueror) to be his vassal king in the land. The king of Egypt, though typified by a great eagle with great wings and much plumage, is not said to be of long pinions, nor with feathers of various colors like the king of Babylon. Yet Zedekiah breaks his oath, and turns for aid to Egypt against Babylon, to the destruction of his kingdom by Jehovah’s decree. The manner of conveyance differs from that of history; but the parties in view, and the results of the action, are no less certain, fixed and exclusive. If there are general lessons in divine prophecy, so there are in inspired history. Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh-Hophra (the Apries of the Greeks, and perhaps Psamatik III of the Egyptian monuments) are here intended, and none else. So it is with the two deposed Jewish kings.

But it has been contended with no small assurance that Ezekiel, referring in ch. 17 to Isa. 2, connects it with circumstances which oblige us to understand the elevation of the sacred mount spiritually, and as verified in what has already been, and not in what is to be. The reference is dim to moderate eyes, without disputing that the elevation of Moriah is of a moral kind. But the evidence is certain that the glorious promise is future in both chapters. In the tender young twig from the highest branch of the lofty cedar is undoubtedly meant the Son of David, and not Zerubbabel. Yet it is not the first advent, but the second, which is in the perspective of the prophecy. It is the kingdom, and in no way the church. Never will the “little stone” expand into the great mountain that fills all the earth till the blow is struck on the toes of the image of the Gentile powers {Dan. 2}, and breaks them all into pieces, like chaff to be swept away by the wind. The lowly condition of Messiah is no doubt pointed out here, but yet more the power and glory of His kingdom, when He is set, as He will be set, on His holy hill of Zion. The church, on the contrary, is unfaithful to her calling if she be not a despised pilgrim and stranger here below, as He was, till she joins her coming Bridegroom in the air, before she appears with Him, when He appears to fulfil His glory over all the earth, as He will in that day. Symbolic language therefore is no more vague than any other.

Again, the attempt to turn the prophetical style and diction into an engine for setting one prophecy in opposition to another is unworthy of a Christian. Isa. 56:7, 8; 60; 66:21-23, are in no conflict with Isa. 56:3-5; 65:17; 66:1-3; any more than Jer. 3:16 with 30:18-22; 31:31; 33:15-22. Such objections spring from ignorance; for evidently the statements arrayed, one against another, are quite consistent, and teach distinct truths. So Ezekiel’s last vision, where the temple is so important on earth, in no way contradicts John’s last vision of the New Jerusalem on high, wherein is no temple. These cavils are a fair sample of the follies of spiritualizing, which confounds heaven with earth, and sets prophet against prophet, and even the same inspired men against themselves. It is too sad to find such teaching in a believer, set forth and accepted with no small blowing of trumpets, though worthy only of an infidel. But it may be for that very reason the more instructive a warning against false principles of interpretation. Nor is it prophecy only.
that is misunderstood. The error substitutes Jewish for Christian relationship to our Lord, destroys that bridal separateness which is enjoined on the church (2 Cor. 11:2, etc.), and consecrates desires and ways of undisguised worldliness to the dishonor of God and His word about us.

Granted that prophecy in each case exceeds what history can tell. This is an essential constituent of its character. It is a vast system of divine prediction, the center of which circle is Christ, and Christ assuming by God’s gift the government of the world with Israel nearest to Him at the end of this age. If the prophecies, even about races supposed to have vanished, were exhausted, every one might be made of its own interpretation. But it is not so. They look onward to “that day.” Their partial accomplishment is the pledge of all that remains to be fulfilled. Faith, accepting the part, assuredly awaits the whole.

Unbelief, over-looking the divine mind, works evilly in two forms. Some are too instructed to deny the tallying of facts with the words of the prophets. Starting with the assumption that prediction is impossible, they essay to prove that the alleged predictions must have been written after the event. Hence the importance of knowing when the prophet wrote; for, this once clear, their inspiration by God flows from the correspondence of word and fact, which is confessed. There is another class, however, who, if they could, would pare down or eliminate all exactitude, and reduce the word of prophecy as much as possible to general principles and ideal forms, without definite line or historical issue. Vagueness of interpretation is so complete that even in the Apocalypse distinct prediction is nowhere, unless there remain enough Protestantism to discern Romanism in Babylon.

It is vain to reason from the curse on “the Serpent,” or the raising up of “David” in the future (Ezek. 34:23, 24), against a strict and full accomplishment of prophecy. All who are worthy of consideration agree that the context demands the great enemy in the one case, and the great King of Israel in the other; all repudiate a lowering literalism, with which the surrounding words are incompatible. There is a genuine as well as a spurious literalism, with figures interspersed, as in Isa. 2 or 40, which none but adversaries urge in their efforts after allegory. As vain is it to argue the discrepancy of Isaiah in his later chapters, which await the days of the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; as do the passages cited from Jeremiah, and yet more obviously those from Ezekiel. That Rev. 21 is symbolical is true, as it treats of a heavenly object; whereas all the others speak of Israel and the Gentiles on the earth in plain terms, with figures here and there. Scripture is perfectly consistent. The fault is in the confusion of its misinterpreters. Israel and Judah mean expressly the two houses or families of Jacob’s posterity, and none other; Zion and the mountain of Jehovah’s house mean the seats of the throne and the temple respectively in the land, and the Gentiles are the nations of the earth, distinct from Israel here below, and from the church and risen saints generally on high. The attempt to spiritualize these objects is a mere dream, which no idealist among Christians at least has ventured to act on consistently. For the theory is that all these objects distinguished in prophecy are the Christian church now, or in the future, under the gospel. What? Israel, Judah, Jerusalem, and the New Jerusalem, Zion, Moriah, and the blessed Gentiles too! Can any scheme to interpret be more despairing or grotesque? It is really the aim of the enemy to discredit and destroy the true force of the prophecy, and thus of God’s word altogether. The result is little but cloudland, as it would be wholly, if it were applied logically throughout.

If it had been drawn from an induction of scripture that prophecy is not mere history anticipated, but admits of a perspective, and that an accomplishment may be true and not complete, that only the manifested kingdom of our Lord in a day yet to come will exhaust it in its opening, its establishment, and its results, no sober Christian could rightly deny this. But the principle is false: for as the rule, prophecy sets forth divine intervention, not in grace, as in the gospel, but in judgment and power, as in the world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ. There are common grounds of mercy and exceptional hints, which were fulfilled in part, and justify the gospel meanwhile, as the New Testament shows. But prophecy cannot be fulfilled as a whole till Christ be glorified in Israel and their land, the center of earth’s promised blessing, of which it speaks abundantly. Incredulity avails itself, not only of extravagant spiritualizing on the part of erring Christians, but of fulfilment not yet complete, to deny what has been really accomplished. Let us search and see how that part was accomplished, and thus learn what to expect for the future. That there were great moral principles, that there was a manifestation of God’s ways and glory, is most true; but these are actual facts before all eyes. All this we shall find in the light of the New Testament; not less, but far more, we may surely expect for the day when every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him, whatever the peace, joy, and blessing, and glory that follow.

But it is pleaded by the allegorists of the Old Testament, that the apostle Paul in particular sanctions their principle of interpretation; and they cite in proof Rom. 2:28, 29; Gal. 4:26; 6:16; and Heb. 12:22. These scriptures, however, do not touch the question, and are therefore invalid for their purpose. Let us review them in their order.

In the first {Rom. 2:28, 29}, the apostle is expressly arguing with the Jew from v. 17, and charging home his guilt notwithstanding his privileges; as he had dealt with the Gentile in the latter half of ch. 1, and in the first half of ch. 2 with the speculative moralist, who might pique himself on being no longer an idolater. In order to afford any show of
reason, the text in question should have been an address to Gentiles treating them now as Jews; whereas it is to the Jew strictly and exclusively, to show that his privileges can in no way screen him if ungodly, and that he only is an accepted Jew who is so inwardly. There is not a thought accordingly of calling believing Gentiles, Jews.

Nor is there any satisfactory ground in Gal. 4:26; and this is the more in point because the apostle does say that Abraham’s two sons, and their mothers, contain an allegory; not the language of the prophets, but the persons and facts in Genesis.

Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to the Jerusalem that now is; for she is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem that is above is free, which is our mother,

the critical text rejecting the word “all.” The truth is that this scripture disproves the hypothesis, instead of giving the least warrant to construe Jerusalem of the church. Our mother, says the apostle, is “the Jerusalem that is above.” The note to p. 32 {footnote 1 on p. 10, herein} has shown “the Israel of God” to mean those Israelites who now believe the gospel, and so to give no license to call Christians, Israel, or to read Israel in the Old Testament into Christians. The general body of believers are distinguished from this special class, “the Israel of God,” in the verse itself.

In the last passage, Heb. 12:22, the apostle contrasts with Sinai (the mountain of the nation’s responsibility under law, with its associations of judicial terror and gloom) Mount Zion to which the Christians had come, no less conspicuous as the seat of royal grace, which was won for the true king of God’s choice in the past, after man’s choice had fallen by Philistine hands instead of working deliverance; Jehovah’s resting place for ever, for there He will surely set His King, upon His holy hill of Zion. But the Epistle proceeds in the next clause to distinguish it from the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, as well as from myriads of angels, a general assembly, and from the church of firstborn ones, with which last the hypothesis identifies Zion. Any intelligent Christian has only to weigh the passage in order to be satisfied that those addressed are here said to have come (of course by faith) to the entire circle of what is to be blessed in the coming day, rising up from Zion to God, Judge of all, and thence coming again to the blood-sprinkling, that speaketh better than Abel for the earth, when curse shall yield to peace and glory. No disproof of the traditionary confusion can be conceived more complete or decided.

There is another consideration which must strike every unbiased mind. The restoration of Israel is so plainly intimated in the very scriptures which declare their ruin and scattering, that some of the allegorising school admit cordially, not their conversion only, but their return nationally, though truly renewed and for such peace and glory in their land as they never had of old. Now this is to give up their false principle. For were it to stand logically, it is hard to conceive how on that principle God could predict His gracious purpose of restoring, in the latter day, Israel for blessing in their land under the Messiah and the new covenant. Taken in their plain and uniform meaning, the prophets are full of that blessed expectation for Israel in divine mercy, but not without hints here and there of grace toward the Gentile, sometimes during their eclipse, as in Isa. 65:1, 2, and Hos. 1:10. Yet these texts afford no pretense for the identification, but the contrary.

It is full of interest to observe the spiritual skill which was given to the apostles Paul and Peter in quoting from Hosea. The former, in writing (Rom. 9:25, 26) to the saints in Rome -- chiefly Gentiles -- applies, not only Hos. 2:23, which predicts the future recall of Israel, but also Hos. 1:10, which reveals the actual call of Gentiles, not to be His people as Israel shall be by-and-by, but to have the blessed title of Christians now, “sons of the living God.” Mark the singularity of the phrase “in the place where it was said unto them Lo-ammi, there it shall be said unto them, ‘sons.’ ” It was among the nations while the Jews are not recognized as such. The latter, in writing (1 Pet. 2:10) to the Christian Jews scattered in Asia Minor, applies only Hos. 2:23. The mass of their unbelieving brethren forfeits any such privilege now, however surely to be made good to those that repent at the last, as God declares it will when the prophets are to be fully accomplished. Those who now believe anticipate that blessing (with much more peculiar to Christianity), “who were once not a people, but now God’s people; who were not objects of mercy, but now obtained mercy.” Only in the verses following it is carefully shown that, instead of being sown in the earth, never more to be rooted up, but to flourish for ever in the bright kingdom of Messiah here below, they are called to follow Him in present rejection and reproach and long-suffering, “as pilgrims and strangers” till His appearing in glory. This is the present calling of the Christian.
In Matt. 1:23 we have Isa. 7:14 cited, and applied to the birth of the Messiah. The facts stated prove its literal fulfilment. Now there are symbols and figures, as well as simple language, in Isa. 7-9:7; but this does not hinder the Holy Spirit stamping the prophecy of the Incarnation, not as an “idea” or general principle, but as an objective fact. There were other children for signs and for wonders in Israel -- Shear-jashub already born, and Maher-shalal-hash-baz about to be, sons of the prophet; but they are as distinct from the virgin’s Son Immanuel, as Hezekiah, already a dozen years old at least and born before Ahaz came to the throne. Neither he, nor Isaiah’s children, were born of the virgin; nor could even Hezekiah, still less a future unknown son of Ahaz, call it his land, as Immanuel can. Whose name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, the Destroyer of the last Assyrian, and the Deliverer and King on David’s throne for ever. Alas! there is the secret root of unbelief. He is the Great Unknown, not the writer of chs. 40-66, though Isaiah’s was indeed the pen that indited them, but Isaiah’s theme, the virgin’s Son, in the striking parenthesis of his introductory chapters. Had men but seen as God reveals Him at the beginning, they had not doubted the voice of God through Isaiah at the end.

Even the chief priests and scribes (Matt. 2:4-6) could answer unhesitatingly as to the place where Messiah should be born. It was none other than Bethlehem of Judea according to Micah 5:2. The Holy Spirit in no way discontenances, but accepts the light they saw from the lamp of prophecy. Luke 2 adds the providential ordering by which Joseph went from the north of the land to this particular spot in the south. God was taking care, we may boldly say, that the word should be fulfilled to the letter. And the true-hearted believer may see how full of instruction is the context; for the words immediately preceding declare that the Judge of Israel should be smitten upon the cheek. Then comes in the parenthetical v. 2, which reveals not only His birth as David’s Son, but an everlasting kinship (for indeed He is Immanuel, God with us). And because of the Jews thus contemning their Ruler in Israel, they are themselves given up (says v. 3) till she which travaileth hath brought forth -- till the birth of the divine purpose for the restitution of all things. “Then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel,” or, in the figure of the apostle, the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree. Then will the glorious hopes that follow be punctually fulfilled. Neither Satan nor the Lord will have any difficulty in finding the Assyrian who, in that day, is to perish in the land. There the Assyrian stands on the page of prophecy, as he will on the stage of the future to perish for ever. So false is it that neither the restoration itself of Israel, nor the events growing out of it, can be understood according to the letter. So true is it that those who reason thus maintain that, in this sense, considerable portions of the prophetic scriptures can have no proper fulfilment. “And why, then,” they boldly ask, “should any be supposed to have?” It is systematic dishonor of God’s mind through ignorance of the scriptures and of His power.

The next quotation (Matt. 2:15 from Hos. 11:1) is full of interest. The prophet was inspired to blend, as it were, Israel of old and Christ called out of Egypt. He, before God, was the true Israel, and their history recommenced in that blessed Person for Whose sake God had led out the ancient people at their beginning. There is a sad tale of self-will, rebellion, idolatry, yet to be repented and forgiven, when the generation to come shall say, Blessed be He that cometh in the name of Jehovah. The observant reader may see in Isa. 49 a similar transfer and identification of Israel and Christ. This is not merely literal, but spiritual in the true sense, not the vague spiritualizing which fritters all away, forgets the glory and relationship of Christ, blots out Israel as such from God’s mercy in the future, and lowers the church from heaven to earth.

Matt. 2:17 exhibits a difference in the form of citing: “Then was fulfilled” Jer. 31:15. What can more strikingly testify how Christ is ever before the Holy Spirit than the application here by our inspired evangelist? A heathen, or certainly a Jew, might admire the beauty, and boldness, and elevation of the impersonation; who but God would have thought now of the mourning prophet’s words, which brought His Son before Him in the Edomite’s slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem? Matthew does not say that it was the object of the prophecy, as in other cases. If the evil one prompted the savage jealousy of Herod, God felt for Rachel’s children afresh when shielding the Messiah, Who will yet reward her work, give hope for her latter end, and bring the children again to their own border.

The last verse of ch. 2 {Matt. 2:23} gives another variety, that differs not only in the form, but in the general reference: so that (διὸ τὸ αὐτὸ, not ἵνα) it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets. It was their scope. He was to be despised of men. So His residence accorded. “Can any good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). There Joseph took Mary and the Heir of all the promises of God. Such was the scope of the prophets.

“Isaiah the prophet” is said, in Matt. 3, to have predicted
John as “the voice of one crying in the wilderness” (Isa. 40:3). This would be decisive if higher criticism consisted with the fear of God -- if it trembled at His word. How came men to set themselves above apostolic authority? Because they must otherwise, accepting prophecy, give up their scepticism and bow to God’s revelation. If Isaiah wrote this wondrous moral pleading to the end, he clearly predicts Cyrus by name and character, by mission and work, and graphically foretells Babylon’s fall, and the return to Jerusalem; nor this only, but the rejection of the Messiah, and His atoning death, by the faith of Whom the people, no longer impenitent, become God’s servants through Jehovah’s Righteous Servant, Who appears at length for their final deliverance and everlasting joy, and the destruction of enemies within and without. As to the bearing of the words quoted by the Baptist, they must be childish indeed who fail to see that they describe the service of John as Messiah’s herald, a moral work set out in material figures, as is common in the New Testament. Never have I heard a whisper of future “engineering” intended, save by believers in human progress, and in a millennium brought about by man’s instrumentality rather than by Christ’s advent. But there may be souls no less simple and rash on the other side.

“Isaiah the prophet” is cited again (Isa. 9:1, 2) in Matt. 4:14-16, and with marked propriety. Just so much of the prophecy is used as bears on the first advent of Christ, the great light that shone on her that was distressed, “the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,” &c. The figurative language of the former quotation in no way forbade its literal accomplishment in John the Baptist, without a vague series of heralds to bring in the Lord. So equally bold figures here only render vivid testimony to that True Light which Christ was, not to His forerunner who bore Him witness. They are both definite and accomplished prophecies. Only the very next words in Isa. 9 open the unfulfilled coming glory of Messiah here below:

Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased their joy. They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil:

words alien from gospel blessing and from heavenly glory, but perfectly expressive of the world kingdom of our Lord at the end of the age. Hence the flash which shines next, lighting up the judgment which brings it in.

For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, thou hast broken, as in the day of Midian. For all the armor of the armed man in the tumult, and the garments rolled in blood shall even be for burning, for fuel of fire. For unto us a child is born, &c. (R.V.)

This ought surely to be unmistakable. It is the Second Advent, not the first. In the perspective of the prophet the one is followed by the other. Christ’s death separated them; the New Testament, and its special work and heavenly relationships with the exalted Head of the body, come between. But the one is as literal and distinct as the other, though figures cluster round both to enlighten faith, not to wrap in mist and cloud as men wish.

The next quotation of prophecy is from “Isaiah the prophet” (Isa. 53:4): “Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases” (Matt. 8:17). The evangelist applies it to Messiah’s removal of disease. Atoning work is distinguished, and even contrasted, with the latter half of v. 4, in vv. 5, 6, 8 (last clause), 10, 11, 12, though there is more than atonement. And so the New Testament cites these, not v. 4, for atonement. Thus all is precise and definite in the prophecy, as well as in apostolic citation. It is scientific theology which produces darkness, of which it is equally unconscious and vain, with which it would, if it could, envelope the divine word. It really deceives itself. The prophecy is luminous throughout, opening and closing with Messiah’s exaltation in His kingdom to come; but almost all between is the inimitable portrait of His humiliation and death in man’s rejection and God’s atonement. It is not surprising that those who love to regard the prophets as dwelling in their own fog are shy of a chapter which is not more sharply defined than it is momentous and humbling. Nor is it that figures are lacking, but that simple language pervades it from first to last. Symbol is wholly absent, and all excuse for allegorizing; and the rather, as there is most needed yet spiritual food already prepared of God for the spiritual.

The Lord, in Matt. 11:10, warrants our personal application of Mal. 3:1 to the Baptist, stopping short of the verses that follow, which await His coming again. And though Luke 1:17 clearly refers to Mal. 4:5, 6, it is even there only applied morally, or to faith, not historically; as our Lord Himself puts the case in Matt. 11:14 and Mark 9:13:

And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah which is to come.

Nothing is farther from His mind than to set aside a future action of Elijah (cp. Mark 9:12; John 1:21) before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come, a description in no way suiting His first advent in grace, even though moral judgment accompany that grace.

The only other quotation that need be noticed here is in Matt. 12:17-21, from Isa. 42:1-4. The folly of a great unknown prophet {that, allegedly, wrote Isa. 40-66} is cut off here also by anticipation. “Isaiah the prophet” spoke it: a distinct prediction applicable at that time to the Messiah’s presence in lowly meekness, and with tender care for the crushed or the dim, waiting for ultimate triumph. Never can it apply again as then, though it looks to the end from that beginning. The poor of the flock would, and did, appreciate His unpretending grace, whatever the disappointment of His brethren after the flesh, and however the wise and prudent find excuse for unbelief and a plea for stumbling. But divine wisdom is justified by all her children.
Chapter 7

General Remarks

Summarily then it may be said that the New Testament affords proof, ample and clear, that the prophecies of the Old Testament are so much the more strikingly accomplished, because they are selected from all its three parts -- Law, Psalms, and Prophets -- written by many hands, scattered over many centuries, yet all meeting as in a common center in Christ. His lineage in general and in particular, culminating in His unique birth, with its time and place; His despised position, His meek and lowly life, the gracious character of His ministry, and His miracles distinct from all others before Him; His disciples with the law sealed among them, while Jehovah hides His face from the house of Jacob, yet the mass not neglected, but instructed in righteousness by His knowledge. And what can surpass the minute care with which the Holy Spirit treasures up incidents of no value in the eyes of small or great who despise? but how momentous and precious for such as love Him, even where His infinite work of dying in atonement for our sins might seem calculated to overshadow all else! If God embalmed all in prophecy, His children do not explain away the literal fulfilment of His redemptive acts, but take it all to be God's word, such questions are decided. The sentiments show how deadly is unbelief, even as to prophecy, and in a most estimable man.

Another remark may close this section. Christ has been made an exception, and prophecy allowed in His case to be not hyperbolical, though assumed to be everywhere else. We have just seen how grudgingly its application even to Him is allowed. But where is the warrant for considering prophecy in His case valid; in every other, precarious and exaggerated? Scripture draws no such line; and man's unauthorized rule to this effect is as capricious as absurd and irreverent. It is forgotten in effect, as always, that every scripture is inspired of God, and that the prophetic word is His, no less than the Law or the Psalms, the Gospels or the Epistles. Even in human testimony, if we could not receive the witness of men about the least things, how trust it about the highest? Truthfulness we want, and have, nor this only, but divine character and purpose everywhere. If we believe it all to be God's word, such questions are decided. Impossible that God could lie anywhere, or as to anything. If we can trust Him when promising life eternal in His Son, assuredly no less if He speaks of Edom or Egypt, of Jerusalem or Judah.

The current interpretations of Christendom are here altogether at fault; and the consequence is the scanty interest in the prophets, of which people are conscious that they

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understand little and enjoy less. Men of learning owe much directly, and more indirectly, to Origen and Eusebius among the Greeks, and to Jerome and Augustine, for that perverse ingenuity which has darkened this large department of holy scripture. The earlier Christian writers, such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus with Lactantius, were at least simpler, and avoided that allegorizing to which those already named gave so large an impulse. But they were utterly wrong in confounding the Christian hope with the expectations of Israel. By this error was provoked the vague reaction which followed, in which Jerusalem or Zion, Judah or Israel, were regarded as no longer applicable as of old, but to be henceforth realized exclusively in the church. Thus by a different route the same evil result ensued: on the one hand, denying the faithfulness of God to His promises, and hence casting off Israel from that mercy which awaits the people in the day that is rapidly approaching; and on the other, leveling down the church to the plane of Israel, in ignorance of her proper and heavenly relationship to Christ as His body and bride.

Error, as it injures and darkens the good, lends ready and effective aid to the evil and corrupt. Hence the Romish harlot greedily adopted and perpetuated a system of interpretation exactly suited to earthly aggrandizement and intolerant pride and unrelenting persecution of all that stood afool from its unscriptural aims. The commentary of Cornelius à Lapide may be seen as by one of its ablest exponents. Take as an instance his observations on Isa. 60:12-14, though any other of less renown might suffice. Rome’s faith and kingdom, he says, stand from Christ’s coming through 1600 years, and will stand till His return at the end of the world. For it is needless to say that, like theologians generally, this learned man wholly confounded “the age” with the world, and did not know of “the age to come,” introduced by the unsparing judgment of Rome, as well as of the quick everywhere, long before the world passes away. He adds that the boding unto Zion of their sons that afflicted her, and the bowing down of all that despised her at the soles of her feet, is plainly fulfilled in the Roman Pontiff, who is the church’s head. What a contrast with Christ’s beatitudes for His own (Matt. 5:3-12)! and especially for His chief servants (Luke 22:24-30)! The vain Corinthians began what Popery consummated (cp. 1 Cor. 4:8-13): but God is not mocked. “Ye have reigned without us,” said the blessed apostle, content in present suffering to await the coming and reign of Christ.

Let us now hear Calvin, who is no less a representative man among the Reformed. He says (Calvin, Tr. Series, in loco) that Zion denotes here, as in other passages, captives and exiles; for however far they had been banished from their country, still they must have carried the temple in their hearts. Can anything be more vague and vapid? He adds that Paul justly concludes from Isa. 59:20 (the passage cited in Rom. 11), “that it is impossible that there shall not be some remnant that come to Christ.” This is quite a misconception; for the apostle had already shown that this is true now, but contrasts with the remnant at present the day when “a nation” shall be brought in at once, and all Israel shall be saved. Calvin, like others, ignores this through his mistaken principle. So on Isa. 60:10-12, though heartily denouncing the Papists for their torturing the passage to uphold the tyranny of the Pope, he only modifies the same untenable ground, and deduces the submission of kings to the authority of God and of the church. He has not even a glimpse of Israel under Messiah’s glorious scepter, but swamps it all, saying that Isaiah “intends to speak of that obedience which kings and nobles and the common people render to the church when they promote, as far as they are able, sound doctrine.” Vitringa, in his elaborate folios, sees in v. 15 the change brought to the Waldenses and the Bohemian brethren by the Reformation from affliction to an eternal excellency. The Papist and the Protestant are equally mistaken in principle: which of the two is the more abjectly poor, and distant from the mind of the Spirit, it may be hard to decide; but Rome is more consistently proud and oppressive.

There is another popular variety during the last century, which is, if possible, more ruinous; for it appropriates the earthly glory that restored Israel is to have under the Messiah as the portion of the church universal when it advances more and more on its race after perfection here below. The hoped-for conversion of Israel and of all nations, or at least their profession of the gospel, it claims to be the fulfilment of the prophecy.

These absurdities disappear when we believe the word as the Spirit wrote it; and, while holding fast the hope of Christ for the heavens, we can all the better rejoice in the ancient people blessed under the new covenant in Immanuel’s land, and made a blessing to all nations of the earth: the grand, constant, and universal prospect, which is found in all the prophets. The special Christian relationship, our calling, inheritance, and hope, are unfolded only in the New Testament. It is “the mystery concerning Christ and concerning the church,” founded on redemption, and formed by the Spirit sent from heaven to baptize us into the one body of the ascended Head. The effect of ignorance on this score is as disastrous for practice. For Christians have slipped from their rejected lot and the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings, as they await heavenly glory, and thus become earthly like Israel in desires and walk and worship. Whereas we are not of the world as He is not, and are not to think it strange if fiery trouble come for our trial, but, as we share in Christ’s sufferings, to rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed we may rejoice also with exceeding joy. It is a settled thing for the believer that the present age is an evil one, instead of the vain hope of man to make it a good age by education, science, moral suasion, or religious influence. The gospel, as God sends it, essays no such aim, but is the testimony of God to separate us from its evil in order to be with Christ on high. Him, therefore, we are continually to await, knowing that He will judge the habitable earth in that day, and thus bring in the new age of righteousness and
In Rom. 11 the apostle lays down the true and only sound principle: the ultimate blessing of all Israel nationally. It is the more remarkable because in the first half of the Epistle he treats of the gospel which effaces the distinction between Jew and Greek, alike guilty, alike justified by faith in the indiscriminate grace of God. There is no distinction on the one hand; for all sinned and come short of the glory of God; as, on the other, there is no distinction between either, for the same Lord of all is rich toward all that call upon Him. The rejection and death of the Messiah left the Jews justly rejected, and gave the occasion for God to proclaim His grace to every creature under heaven, that all who believe in Christ should be saved. When this work of the gospel is done according to God's purpose, He will take up that government of the world of which Israel has the foremost place according to promise and prophecy, but on the ground of sovereign mercy in which He will also bless all the nations, and this by His Son returning in power and glory to reign in Zion, and possess the uttermost parts of the earth -- indeed to be the Head of the universe in that day, as the New Testament clearly proves.

For the apostle in that chapter furnishes the most conclusive evidence that God has not cut off His people, as it might have appeared from the freeness of the gospel. First, there is a remnant of Israel (Rom. 11:1-6) at this present time also, of which the apostle himself was an instance, the remnant according to the election of grace. Of no other people is this true. Its attaching to Jews only is the witness that God has not absolutely cast them off. Next, though the Jews have as a people stumbled at the stumbling-stone of Messiah's humiliation, it is not in order that they might fall, but by their trespass, salvation is to the Gentiles (or nations) to provoke Israel to jealousy, and not therefore to cast them off. Again, the figure of the olive-tree teaches the same lesson. For theirs is that line of promise and testimony; and the Gentile, only a wild olive, was but grafted in, on the breaking off some of the branches; and he is called not to be high-minded but fear, lest, failing to abide in God's goodness, he be also cut off (Rom. 11:7-12). As it is certain that the Gentile has not so abode, but dishonored the grace and truth of God in the gospel, at least as much as the Jew failed in his previous responsibility, the natural branches shall no less certainly be grafted in, when the Gentile is cut off (Rom. 11:13-24). Lastly, direct and absolute proof is adduced from Isa. 59 to expose the fond delusion of conceited philosophy that the Gentiles have a lease of favored place for ever. For when that complement or fulness of the Gentiles is come in, which God is taking,

All Israel shall be saved; even as it is written, the Deliverer shall come out of Zion; he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And this is the covenant from me to them when I shall take away their sins (Rom. 11:26, 27).

Not a word of this could apply to the so-called spiritual Israel,
Preface

These lectures on the Book of Daniel were taken in shorthand and printed first some forty years ago, with a very slight correction in a later edition. It would be easy to fill up details and to improve their literary form. But as they are, they have helped not a few souls, and not least since Great Britain and the United States have been beguiled into their growing pursuit of that guilty and withering craze which calls itself the “Higher Criticism.” What is it in the main but a revival of older British Deism, aided by devices of foreign unbelief, and decorated with modern German erudition or its home imitation? Yet all fail to conceal hostility to God’s inspiration, and ceaseless effort to minimize real miracle and true prophecy, where, as in this country, men dare not yet deny them altogether.

The notorious Oxford Essays, which roused strong feeling in a former generation, are quite left behind. Dissenters vie with Nationalists (Episcopal or Presbyterian), Methodists with Congregationalists, and of late Ritualists with avowed Rationalists, in showing themselves up to date in freethinking; as if the revealed truth of God were a matter of scientific progress. What joy to all open infidels, who cannot but hail it as the triumph of their contempt for His word! It is not now profane men only, as in the eighteenth century, but religious professors, ecclesiastical dignitaries in the various bodies or so-called “churches” of Christendom, and particularly those who hold theological and linguistic chairs in the Universities and Colleges all over the world, who become increasingly tainted with this deadly infection. Alas! it is the sure forerunner of that “apostasy” which the great apostle, from almost the beginning of his written testimony, said must “first come” before the day of the Lord can “be present.”

Take, as a recent instance (and it is only one out of many in the conspiracy against Scripture, the present Dean of Canterbury’s contribution on the Book of Daniel to the Expositor’s Bible. Self-deception may hide much from its victims; but no believer should hesitate to say, “An enemy hath done this.” While claiming for the Book an “undisputed and indisputable” place in the Canon, think of the infatuation of denying openly and unqualifiedly its genuineness and its authenticity! “It has never made the least difference in my reverent (!) acceptance of it that I have for many years been convinced that it cannot be regarded as literal history or ancient prediction.” Yet such persons assume to be actuated simply by the love of truth; for this they confound with the counter-love of doubting. Alas! they are under “the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6); or, as Jude so warns, “These speak evil of the things which they know not: but what as the irrational animals they know, in these things they corrupt themselves.” May the Christian keep Christ’s word, and not deny His name!

W.K.

Cannes, April, 1897.

Introduction

Daniel is characteristically the prophet of the Babylonish exile. The frightful excesses of Antiochus Epiphanes find their place in the course of his visions, and a special place, quite distinct from the general ground on which the book starts and proceeds. From the first the solemn fact is made evident that the Jews are for the present Lo-ammi (not My people): God no longer addresses them through the prophet. They are called Daniel’s people in Dan. 9:24; 10:14; 11:14; 12:1; and God is distinctively designated “the God of the heavens” (Dan. 2:18, 37, 44); which is repeated in Ezra 1:2; 5:12; 6:9, 10; 7:12, 23; Neh. 1:4, 5; 2:4, and also in 2 Chron. 36:23. The state of His people, their idolatrous apostasy, made it incompatible with His nature and majesty to act at their head or in their midst as “the Lord of all the earth” (Josh. 3:11). He is only called “Jehovah” in the prophet’s own prayer and confession (Dan. 9). “Thus saith Jehovah” would have been equally out of place.
Yet, as the God of the heavens, he designed to make known to the heathen king “what should be at the end of the days” (Dan. 2:28); for then only will God’s purpose be manifest to every eye in the judgment of the Gentile empires, and in the subsequent establishment of his kingdom, which shall fill the whole earth and stand for ever. Hence Daniel gives, as no other does, the “times of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24). This large scope is precisely suited to a great prophet raised up at the starting-point in Nebuchadnezzar’s day, and continuing in singular honor not only before a mighty king at first and an unworthy successor at the close, but none the less when the new dynasty superseded the “head of gold,” and Medo-Persia rose to supreme power. All this and more agree with “the six magnificent opening chapters,” as well as with the latter six, more wondrous still in unveiling the infinite inequalities of the great powers, at the close in particular, and the glorious intervention of the Ancient of Days and Son of man to set them aside judicially, and bring in a kingdom universal and everlasting. Here only we see that the saints of the high places have judgment given to them (Dan. 7:22), and their “people” have the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven (Dan. 7:27).

In this vast sweep of prophecy “the days of Antiochus Epiphanes” receive not the smallest notice. Neither was there any analogy between the circumstances of that day to suggest such great considerations. Nor, again, did the persecution of that cruel enemy of the Jews, his profane contempt for the institutions of the law, and his rabid zeal for Hellenizing their worship, resemble the evils foreshowed thus far in Daniel. Historically the Syro-Greek antagonism is set out in Dan. 8:9-14, and reappears with fuller detail in Dan. 11:21-32. As not another reference to his days can be proved to occur in the entire book, this may serve to expose the absurd assumption of the “higher critics.” Yet absurdity is a venial fault compared with the infidelity which ignores the absurd assumption of the “higher critics.” Yet absurdity proved to occur in the entire book, this may serve to expose its undisguised poetic style, and its apocalyptic form. Hence their blindness and contempt for the details in Dan. 11, so considerately given in the absence of living prophets. But surely a man is too bold to destroy the prophet dwelling on the closing scenes, which induce the judgment, not even yet accomplished, to be surely executed in the day of the Lord. Only unbelief is surprised at the peculiar traits of the book: what they call its cosmopolitanism, its rhetorical rather than poetic style, and its apocalyptic form. Hence their blindness to its moral and doctrinal elements, and their undisguised contempt for the details in Dan. 11, so considerately given in the absence of living prophets.

The new and elaborate effort to defraud Daniel of the book which God gave him to write is the more egregious and unreasonable, as it is not denied that “Daniel was a real person, that he lived in the days of the exile, and that his life was distinguished by the splendor of its faithfulness.” The fact is, that no prophet has in the Old Testament such a testimony to him as Ezekiel renders twice (Ezek. 14:14, 20 and 28:3); nor is anyone more commended by our Lord in the New Testament to the reader’s heed (Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14). And what does the fact mean that the great prophecy which concludes the Canon of Scripture (the Revelation) is grounded on the Book of Daniel more manifestly than on any other prophet.

Is it objected as strange that two languages, Hebrew and Aramaic, should be employed in this book? Such a phenomenon, on the contrary, suits the time of Daniel, not that of Antiochus Epiphanes. Is it not notorious that Jeremiah, his elder, has a verse in Aramaic (Jer. 10:11) strikingly preparing the way? and that the inspired scribe-priest Ezra, who followed and flourished in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, incorporates Aramaic through several chapters (Ezra 4:8 - 6:18; 7:12-26). Why, then, object to a similar course in Daniel?

As to the particular words questioned, the reader may well be wary of plausibilies; for hostile criticism is unscrupulous. Take the spelling of the name of the Babylonian conqueror. It is alleged that Daniel always uses Nebuchadnezzar; while Ezekiel invariably writes Nebuchadrezzar, the assumed correct form. But it is remarkable that Jeremiah’s prophecy employs both forms, Daniel’s no less than Ezekiel’s. How does this favor the date of Antiochus Epiphanes? and why be stumbling by some Persian words, allowing the fact to be certain? or even by the three names of musical instruments which resemble Greek words?

The depreciators of the written word cry out loudly against the “uncharitableness” of those who denounce their evil ways. But can those who know the truth be indifferent to a matter so serious and daring as the systematic perversion of the miracles in Daniel into Haggadoth, or religious romances, and of its prophecies into histories pretending to prediction? To such as neither love the Scriptures nor believe in their divine authority, it is a mere question of literary criticism. Is it not utterly vulgar to feel or to speak with decision about a Hebrew sage? Why not cultivate “sweetness and light”? God is in none of their thoughts.

Some fifteen seeming mistakes are set forth from Dan. 1 to 11:2, all of them founded on appearances against reality, which can only be accounted for by uncommon confidence in man and his monuments, and a total want of faith in Scripture. They have been refuted abundantly, as Dr. Farrar ought to know. That the answers satisfy unbelieving minds is what grace alone can effect until judgment come. Let the first “remarkable error,” as it is called, serve for the rest; -- "In the third year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah." Now, against such a flippant attack let me cite the calm and clear language of an acknowledged expert in chronology, who was not a theologian, and had no controversial aim but simply the truth. Under the year B.C. 606 (371) Mr. H. F. Clinton
The fourth year of Jehoiakim, from Aug. B.C. 606. The 23rd from the 13th of Josiah: Jeremiah 25:3. The deportation of Daniel was in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim: Daniel 1:1. Whence we may place the expedition of Nebuchadnezzar towards the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th year, in the summer of B.C 606. In the 4th year of Jehoiakim Baruch writes the book: Jeremiah 36:1, 2 (Fasti Hellen. 1:328).

Anyone, even a pert boy, can question anything. But could an upright mind on reflecting fail to see that the supposed contradiction of Dan. 2 is the strongest evidence of truth? No writer in the Maccabean age would have allowed it to appear; but a contemporary, when all was notorious, could leave it to be understood. "The second year" is necessarily Nebuchadnezzar's sole reign, as ch. 1 implies association with his father; and Daniel's three years (Dan. 1:5) would fall in with it. Scripture is written for believers, not for irreverent cavilers.

Two more of these "surprises" betray unmistakably malevolent ignorance -- Nebuchadnezzar's prostrate homage to Daniel with an oblation and sweet odors; whilst the critic asks in astonishment whether Daniel could have accepted the offering. Now it is demonstrably false, from the king's own words, that he regarded Daniel as a god; and it is certain that Daniel disclaimed any such blasphemy as much as Paul and Barnabas. But the heathen king believed, what the Anglican dean does not, that God supernaturally intervened in the case, in making "Daniel the prophet" to recall the forgotten dream, and to be the interpreter for the future throughout the "times of the Gentiles" till His kingdom come. Such a revelation led Nebuchadnezzar, in his deep emotion and gratitude, to pay Daniel the highest honors, even to what we westerns regard as an extravagant degree. There is no semblance of a sacrifice as at Lystra. The word translated "oblation" is frequently and rightly used for "a present," irrespective of the true God or a false one; just as prostration and worshiping were often expressive of no more than civil reverence. But imagine a Jew trying to write the book in Maccabean days; would he have written in this freedom of truth? If he had introduced it at all, what care to tell the king that he must worship and offer to God alone! As to the sweet odors, can anyone be so infatuated as to contend that the very great burning made at the burial of King Asa (2 Chron. 16:14) implies its deification? As a like offensive tone with utter unbelief of Scripture pervades much of the rest, one may well turn to something more decorous if not better founded.

The unity of the book, so often and vehemently assailed, is now admitted even by the most advanced freethinkers, save eccentric men. This is in no way weakened by the fact that only in the latter half (from ch. 7) does the writer speak in the first person, or "I Daniel." The first half having the historical form, Daniel is spoken of, and the Gentile chiefs are prominent; especially he who was the object of divine communications (Dan. 2:4), though the prophet only was given to recall the first and interpret both. The historic chapters (3-6) are of the utmost value as following the outline prediction of Dan. 2, and introducing the moral view with its richer instruction of Dan. 7 over the same ground. In the second half of the book the prophet alone has the visions and interpretations.

Accordingly things are presented, not in their external aspect, but in their relation to God's people, and with yet higher aims. When Babylon fell, even during the transition of Darius the Mede, a marked change is observable in answer to the prophet's intercession, as he knew by the books that the captivity was near its end. A new appearance and insensibly plainer language were vouchsafed as to the city and sanctuary of Jerusalem, but with the appalling fact that Messiah was to be "cut off and have nothing," and its dire consequences, not only then but when the last week of the seventy is in accomplishment at the end of the age. Lastly, when the restorer from the exile was reigning, the final communication comes in plainer language still, corrective of all vain hopes for the present founded on the return, and in God's gracious condescension giving those continuous and unwonted details which have so roused the scornful unbelief of men, that they have dared to brand them as pretended or "pseud-epigraphic prophecy." They must give account of such incredulity to God. Meanwhile this indulgence in the principle of infidelity -- the preference of our own thoughts to God's word -- does not fail to spread one knows not how far. It may seem little, but it is the little beginning of a very great evil.

The book thus derives its special form from Daniel as the prophet of the Exile far more impressively than any written by even his contemporaries. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel were inspired to dwell, one on the future blessedness of Israel in the land under Messiah and the new covenant, the other on a wondrous display of the divine glory, which will give a new form to the city and the temple, and a new partition of the land to the restored tribes, when the nations shall know that Jehovah hallows Israel, and His sanctuary shall be there for ever. Their task was outside God's purpose by Daniel, which helps to explain why he abode among strangers when he might have returned to Jerusalem with the remnant in Cyrus' day. He had learnt definitely that the time for Messiah's coming was not yet, and that, when come, He should be rejected. He was shown consequently that "at the time of the end" not only should the kings of the north and of the south resume their conflicts, but a new and portentous personage should reign in the land and be assailed by both, the counterpart of Messiah in evil, the man of sin as He of righteousness: a state totally different from and irreconcilable with Antiochus Epiphanes in any of his phases, and introduced by the prophet, not only after that "vile person" had long ceased to trouble the Jews, but expressly at an indefinitely distant time -- the end of the age. This, once pointed out, no serious person can intelligently deny to be correct.

Then will an unparalleled tribulation befall the Jews; but
another remnant shall be saved out of it with an unparalleled deliverance. Then shall God’s people as a whole awake from their long sleep in the dust of the earth, some to life everlasting, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Then shall faithful and zealous intelligence in the dark day receive its reward when the glory of Jehovah is risen on Zion (still desolate). Then the times and the seasons shall be punctually fulfilled when the scattering of the power of the holy people is accomplished, and he that waited is indisputably blessed. Till then the words were closed up and sealed for the Jew as such till the time of the end. But we Christians know the Incarnate Word, and believe that in His rejection by the Jew and the Gentile He accomplished redemption, and has given us life eternal; so that meanwhile a fuller revelation said for us to a greater prophet, “Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand” (Rev. 22:10). Till the time is arrived Daniel was to rest, it did not matter where on earth, still more and better above, as much above the weeping of the old men as above the joyous shouts of the young (Ezra 3). He was assured, as all saints should be, of standing in his lot at the end of the days.

The style is perfectly adapted to the circumstances with which the book was meant to deal, as much so as richness and sublimity to Isaiah’s work, or tender feeling to Jeremiah’s, or rugged grandeur to Ezekiel’s. How utterly incongruous with the disclosures of Daniel would have been the impassioned and poetic manner of the Psalms! Daniel was given the extraordinary province of revealing “the times of the Gentiles,” both in their splendid aspect of conferred imperial power and in their inward reality as “Beasts” before God uncared for and unknown, with special seducers and oppressors within those times; as well as the transgressions of the chosen people and their chiefs, which brought on them such chastenings and such an abnormal state, but also a faithful remnant first and last, who alone were wise and understood His mind.

As Babylon was in God’s ways the appropriate place, so during that first empire, till Cyrus the Persian succeeded, was the period for this peculiar testimony. Who can conceive an epoch less morally or circumstantially in keeping with its entire scope than about B.C. 167 for “a brave and gifted anonymous author, who brought his piety and his patriotism to bear on the troubled fortunes of his people”? That Porphyry of Batanea, who hated Christ, should have invented such a fable is intelligible. That an unbelieving Jew like Dr. Joel should not be ashamed of following a heathen philosopher, one can also understand. But is it not treason for a baptized man, for a Christian minister so called, to imitate such profane impiety? As faith is discarded, so any intelligent apprehension of the book becomes impossible. Daniel opens with fixing attention on an event so momentous as the Lord’s delivering over the king of David’s house to the Chaldean, who carried off part of the holy vessels into the house of his god. This is followed up, in Dan. 2, by the distinct announcement that God set the conqueror of Jerusalem as the first of the world-powers. Only Babylon had this place direct from God; Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome had theirs simply in providential succession. So thoroughly is this distinction recognized in Scripture, that the fall of Babylon brings before the Holy Spirit in Isaiah and Jeremiah the final destruction of the Gentile authorities as a whole, and the connected deliverance, not of Judah only but of Israel also, Cyrus’ being but its foreshadow. It is not so with the intermediate empires, till the judgment is fully manifested which yet awaits the fourth or Roman; for in the final sense “the Beast,” or that empire, perishes only when the Lord Jesus appear from heaven, as we read in Rev. 19:19, 20. Now this was made known in Dan. 7 no less clearly. What could a patriotic Jew know about it at a time when prophets admittedly had long ceased? No, it was first given to “Daniel the prophet” to reveal.

The theory of histories turned into pretended prophecies is only worthy of men without faith, insensible to the unique value, character, and authority of God’s word when it is before their eyes, with a malignant intent to make spots where they cannot find them. When parables appear (or as goes the Rabbinical term, Haggadoth), they are so styled, or self-evidently such; whereas not a book in the Bible takes aside for a while. Hence the remnant, when captive in Babylon, are proved alone to have His secret, even as to the distant future, and maintained by overwhelming supernatural might against all the rage even of the powers that then were.

Dilettantists critics do not like to hear that their system gives the lie to Daniel, even if we say nothing of the Holy Spirit. And as to objections founded on language, history, general structure, theology, etc., why do they repeat what has been often answered satisfactorily? Do they presume on popular ignorance or personal indolence, too apt to yield to the last or loudest voice? The book itself, like all Scripture, is the best reply to calumnies.

**DANIEL 1**

Chapter 1 is a preface, from Jerusalem losing the direct government of God (who set up meanwhile Babylon in a fresh imperial position), down to the first year of Cyrus. Dan. 12 has also a conclusive character in the judgment of the Gentiles up to the deliverance of Israel. From Dan. 2-6 Gentiles are prominent in an exoteric way. From Dan. 7 to the end, only the prophet receives and communicates the mind of God intimately on all, with the glory of the Son of man and His people here below and His saints on high. We may therefore call this half esoteric. What had so immense,
as well as intimate, a range of truth in keeping with Maccabean times? It is true that the Syrian king’s furious persecution of the Jews, and his profanation of worship, find a marked place in the course of the book; but where it does, plain indication is given of a greater power and worse evil typified thereby before “the end of the indignation.” What sad belittling of an inspired book to make that king, audacious as he was and cruel, a blind not only to the final actor in that sphere, but to others on an incomparably larger scale, who are all to come under divine dealings at “the time of the end” -- a time which assuredly is not yet arrived!

**DANIEL 2**

Chapter 2 conveys the interesting and important fact that “the God of the heavens” acted by a dream on the first Gentile head of empire, to show the general course of dominion then begun till its extinction: an image gorgeous and terrible, but gradually deteriorating as it descends, and closing with great strength and marked weakness also. Then He sets up another kingdom, His own, after destroying not only the fourth empire in its last divided condition of the ten toes (which did not exist when Christ suffered or the Holy Spirit came down), but the remains of all from the first -- the gold, the silver, the brass, as well as the iron and clay. Only when judgment was executed does the “little stone” expand into a great mountain and fill the whole earth. Here the rationalist coalesces with the ritualist in teaching the self-complacent nonsense of an “ideal Israel,” the church or Christendom. Yet in the church is neither Jew nor Greek, but Christ is all. It is the body of the glorified Head; and its calling is to suffering grace on earth, awaiting glory with Christ in heavenly places. But, whether believed now or not, the first dominion on earth will surely come to the daughter of Zion in that day, and as long as the earth endures.

**DANIEL 3**

The special aims of chapters 5, 6 are of no less serious moment. Neither the one nor the other resembles or represents Antiochus Epiphanes. In Dan. 5 we see dissolve profanity eliciting a most solemn token of divine displeasure on the spot, and judged by a providential infliction that very night. Monuments or not, the word of our God shall stand for ever. Nothing more dangerous than to trust any thing or one against Scripture; and what can be more sinful? What avail the brave words of men enamored of Babylonish bricks, cylinders, etc.? Let them beware of the snares of the great enemy; not even resurrection power broke Jewish unbelief. In Dan. 6 man was by craft set up for a while as the sole object of prayer or worship, which brought on its devisers the sudden destruction they had plotted for the faithful. What bearing had this, any more than the chapter before, on the grievous time of Antiochus Epiphanes? They evidently prepare the way, for the judgment of the future Babylon in
the one (5), and for that of the Beast in the other (6), as given in the Book of Revelation, where both perish awfully though differently.

**DANIEL 7**

Next follow the more complicated communications of God’s mind about the four “Beasts,” the last especially, much fuller and more intimate than in Dan. 2. The movement of heaven is disclosed, and God’s interest in His people, and particularly in the sufferers for His name, specified “as saints,” and even as “saints of the high places.” The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, condescending as it was to him and awe-inspiring in itself, contained no such vision of glory on high, no such prospects for heaven or earth, no such display of divine purpose in the Son of man.

But as in Dan. 2, so yet more in Dan. 7, the last and most distant empire, the fourth, is much more fully described than the Babylonish then in being, or the Medo-Persian that next followed, or the Greek that succeeded in its due time. For we have a crowd of minute predictions of an unexampled nature, the many horns in the last empire at its close, the audacious presumption and restless ambition of its last chief, who from a small beginning governed the rest, and, not content with trampling down the saints, rose up in blasphemy against God and His rights, which called forth summary and final judgment on all, with the action of heaven in establishing the everlasting kingdom of power and glory.

Such a revelation fundamentally clashes with the canons of the Higher Criticism, and demonstrates, if believed, their utter futility. Hence we can understand their efforts to get rid of the unvarnished truth Daniel sets before us in this vision. The attempt to separate the Medish and the Persian elements, so as to make them respectively the second and third empires, is desperate and unworthy. Dan. 5:28 was explicit beforehand as well as Dan. 6:8, 12, 15; and afterwards Dan. 8 demolishes such contradiction of Scripture. The bear in chapter 7 answers to the ram in chapter 8, which had two horns, the kings of Media and Persia -- not two Beasts but one composite power expressly. The leopard, therefore, with its four heads answers to the goat of Greece, for whose great horn, when broken, four stood up in its stead. The fourth Beast, different from all the Beasts before, is none other than the Roman Empire, which has ten horns in its final shape, after which, when further change comes, divine judgment falls in a form without previous parallel.1

If we let in, as we are bound, the further light of the Apocalypse, where we cannot but recognize the same “Beast” as Daniel saw in the fourth place, we gain the fullest certainty from Rev. 17 that the seven heads were successive governing forms, of which the sixth or imperial head was in being when John saw the vision (v. 10); and that the ten horns were contemporary, for all receive authority as kings for “one hour with the beast.” It is preparatory to the last crisis, when they make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them (vv. 12-14). This is also decisively shown in v. 16, “And the ten horns which thou sawest, and [not ‘on’] the beast, these shall hate the harlot,” etc., as they also give their kingdom to the “Beast” until the words of God shall be fulfilled. This, accordingly and absolutely, disposes of the attempt to make the “ten horns” mean only ten successive kings, so as to apply the list to the Seleucides, and make it appear that Antiochus was the little horn of Dan. 7, who got rid of the three last of his predecessors. Such a scheme is mere perversion of Scripture, wholly dislocates the chapter, and deprives us of the only true interpretation. For this suppose a divine interposition at the end of the age in judgment of the Roman Empire, revived to fulfill its complete destiny and to be judged by the Lord Jesus at His appearing.

The first empire had a simplicity peculiar to itself. The second or Medo-Persian had dual elements; and so has the symbol two horns, of which the higher came up last. The third or Macedonian had after its brief rise four heads, of which two are noticed particularly as having to do with the Jews in the details of Dan. 11. The fourth empire, beyond just doubt, is the Roman, diverse from all before it, and distinguished by the notable form of ten concurrent horns, ere its destructive judgment by a divine kingdom which supersedes all, and is truly both universal and everlasting. Then shall the saints of the high places have their grand portion, surely not to eclipse the Son of man, as these sorry critics would like, but to swell the train of His glory who is Heir of all things.

None but the Roman Empire corresponds with the feet of iron and clay; none other furnishes an analogy to the ten toes in one case and ten horns in another, the only true force of which is ten kings (subject to the violent change indicated) reigning together. Nor can any power that ever bore sway be so truly compared to “iron breaking and subduing all things,” or a most ravenous nondescript brute with great iron teeth which “devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it.” The entrance of the Teuton clay indicates the brittleness of independent will (in contrast with the old Roman cohesive centralism), which, as it broke up the empire in the past, will culminate in the tenfold division of the future in that revival of the empire which is presupposed in Dan. 7 before judgment falls, and is distinctly revealed in Rev. 17. This is a trait wholly absent from all previous empires, as well as from the Syro-Greek kingdom, which never was an empire nor approached it.

As this revival of the Roman Empire is so momentous a fact of the future and for “the time of the end,” it may be well here to point out the clear and conclusive evidence of Scripture. On the showing of Dan. 2 and 7 the fourth or

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1. As far as I know, Ephraem Syrus stance alone among the early ecclesiastics in treating Antiochus Epiphanes as the little horn of Daniel 7. A devoted man, extremely attached to monasticism, and vehement against the heterodox, he died in A.D. 378; but one has yet to learn why his differing from all other fathers earlier and later should have weight. Grotius and others, notorious for excluding the future and Christ, and for limiting prophecy to past history, followed in modern times, though early fathers enough led in the same path of unbelief.

2. As far as I know, Ephraem Syrus stance alone among the early ecclesiastics in treating Antiochus Epiphanes as the little horn of Daniel 7. A devoted man, extremely attached to monasticism, and vehement against the heterodox, he died in A.D. 378; but one has yet to learn why his differing from all other fathers earlier and later should have weight. Grotius and others, notorious for excluding the future and Christ, and for limiting prophecy to past history, followed in modern times, though early fathers enough led in the same path of unbelief.
Roman Empire is in power when the kingdom of God comes, enforced by the Son of man. But the Revelation explains how this can and will be. In Rev. 13:1-10 is seen the “Beast” emerging once more from the sea or revolutionary state of nations, having seven heads and ten horns. These last have been ever held to identify it with Daniel’s fourth empire. And the seven heads, now appropriately added, can only confirm it, for (explained as it is in Rev. 17:9, 10) this description applies to no known empire so significantly as to the Roman. Only we have to observe an absolutely new fact in connection with the healing of that one of his heads (the imperial, as I conceive) which had been wounded to death, that the great dragon (who in Rev. 12 is declared to be Satan) gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

Pagan Rome was evil exceedingly, and had its part in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. The same Roman Empire will reappear at the end of the age, energized by Satan in a way neither itself nor any other empire ever had been. This gives the key to its extreme blasphemy and defiance of the Most High as well as its other enemies, because of which the judgment shall sit and the dominion be taken away by the wrath of God from heaven, when the Beast with its host dares to make war against the Lord descending in power and glory. The horns will then act as one will with the “Beast” that is then present to give imperial unity. For still more clearing the intimations of Rev. 13, Rev. 17:8 is most explicit, “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go into perdition.” Again, at the close of the verse, “Seeing the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall be present.” (See also verse 11.) It was the “Beast” without the horns under the Caesars and their successors. Horns in their varying numbers were without the “Beast” in the middle ages and onward: “The beast was, and is not.” But the wonder of the future is that the Beast, before the closing scene, is to arise not only out of the sea, but, with the far more awful symbol, out of the abyss, the prelude of perdition. Here, again, the consistency of the truth asserts itself. To none but the Roman Empire can these predictions apply. To Alexander’s empire they are irrelevant, how much more to a mere offshoot of it! No, it is the empire that rose up against the Lord in humiliation, which, blinded and filled by Satan’s power, will make war with the Lamb when He comes in glory to its appalling ruin.

**DANIEL 8**

Chapter 8 is manifestly of a character and scope more circumscribed than the general prophecies of chapters 2, 7. Yet it is none the less important for its design, because it takes up only a special part, but all alike conduct us to the catastrophe at the end. As this we have seen to be evidently true of the great general visions of the book, so is it equally of the particulars, which circumstance exposes the fallacy of identifying the objects. All come into collision with divine judgment: but they are distinct in character as in fact. “A divine kingdom” crowns the two general series of the four empires, as even rationalism does not dispute for Dan. 2., and admits that our Lord in Matt. 26:64 alludes to Dan. 7.

There is, indeed, an effort to treat “the personality of the Messiah” as “at least somewhat subordinate and indistinct.” But such unbelief is vain. No believing Jew severed the coming kingdom from the Great King, as haughty Gentiles are prone to wish. The saints of the high places are very far from usurping the Son of man’s place in the vision, which makes Him the manifest center and the object invested with dominion for ever. But their blessedness also is carefully shown. Whatever honor these saints may have in that day (and they reign with Christ, as the New Testament plainly puts it), it is a false interpretation which denies Him personally and supremely the excellent glory.

In this chapter 8, then, the first of the special prophecies, we have the second empire of Medo-Persia assailed overwhelmingly by the third or Greek kingdom of Alexander the Great. How any upright mind can fail to apprehend this from the simple reading of the text is hard to account for. The great horn was broken when it became strong, and in its stead came up four notable horns. Out of one of these four kingdoms rose a little horn which became exceeding great, and also meddled peculiarly with the Jews and the sanctuary. It is a deplorable lack of intelligence to confound this oppressor with the little horn of Dan. 7, the one being as manifestly a ruler over a part of the Greek Empire in the East, as the other from a small beginning arrives to be the chief of the Western Empire. Both are to be excessively impious and wicked, and both are punished by God beyond example; but to confound them is to lose the difference of the actors at the close, even wholly opposed as they are to each other, though both inflict the worst evils on the chosen people. But there is the less need of many words here, as it is agreed that the vision in its later part from v. 9 does set forth the Seleucid enemy of the Jews and of their religion. And it would appear that vv. 13, 14 apply to his defilement of the sanctuary and suppression of the daily offering.

As usual in Daniel, and elsewhere in Scripture, the interpretation not only explains, but adds considerably, and in particular dwells, not on the typical Antiochus Epiphanes, but on the final antitypical enemy in the same quarter at the latter day. It is weak to pretend that the awful end predicted for the infamous personage of the future in this chapter and at the end of Dan. 11 was fulfilled in the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, terrible as it was in the estimate of Greeks as well as Jews. Thus the real prediction of his history in the preceding verses of the same chapter 11 up to v. 32 does not dwell on it as comparable with that of him who is found at the end.

Even in the earlier portion (Dan. 8) there is a remarkable parenthesis in vv. 11, 19 defined by “he,” as compared with “it” in the verses before and after. This appears to give marked personality to the evil actor that is chiefly in view, however much the king who sought the apostasy of the Jews and the destruction of such as refused to Hellenize made him a type.
But the prophecy goes on to the consummation when God interferes in unmistakable power. Hence the angelic interpreter would make Daniel know “what shall be at the end of the indignation.” Who can say with the smallest show of truth that this was in the days of the Syrian’s evil or of the Maccabean resistance? “The end of the indignation” will only be, when Israel are truly repentant and God has no more controversy with His people. Nor should this surprise anyone who reads the Scriptures in faith, for all the prophets look on to that happy time. The real person before the mind of the Holy Spirit at the close is one who will “stand up against the Prince of princes,” but shall be “broken without hand,” in a way far beyond its type in past history. A gap, therefore, necessarily occurs in every one of the prophecies. In no instance is continuity aimed at. Enough is said to make the general bearing plain; but in every case the Holy Spirit dwells on the final scene which connects itself with the subject-matter before us, because then only will the judgment of God decide all absolutely and publicly, and introduce the kingdom of power and glory that shall never pass away.

**DANIEL 9**

Daniel 9 has its own peculiarities. Those who contrast this book with other prophecies, as lacking the predominantly moral element, only prove their own blindness. In no prophecy is it so conspicuous; and the same chapter which so profoundly tells out to God a heart that identified itself with the sins and iniquities (“we have sinned,” &c.) of the men of Judah, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of all Israel near and far off, but with the most earnest intercession, is precisely the one that, as he prayed, received from God a prediction in some respects the most striking and important of such scriptures. Here even rationalism cannot but own that the promised blessings of v. 24 belong to the Messianic hope, when the 490 years are closed. Thus it shares, with every other prediction in the book, the mark of going down to the end of the age when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and God sets up His kingdom in Christ by judgments executed on all wickedness, Jewish or Gentile. But here, where Jeremiah’s seventy years are referred to, with the provisional return of a remnant from Babylon to rebuild the city and the sanctuary, we have not only Jehovah the Lord God of Israel addressed, but also Messiah’s first advent and cutting off. This interrupts the thread of the seventy weeks, as it naturally must, and an undated vista of desolation follows. For it clearly includes Messiah’s rejection, and leaves nothing but the destruction of the city and temple, and a flood of troubles on the Jews. There evidently is the break. Messiah’s death was “after” the sixty-ninth week = 483 years. Then follow the desolation determined, and to the end war, outside the course of the “weeks” altogether, as it is hardly possible to deny.

The last week remains for the close, without fixing any connection or starting-point, save that the Roman “prince” (whose “people” came and destroyed Jerusalem) will, at the time of the end, make covenant with “the many,” or mass of faithless Jews, for a week or seven years, and will in the midst of it cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. That is, he will put down the Jewish religion, contrary to his covenant; and “because of the protection” (rather than the over-spreading) “of abominations” or idols, which take its place, a desolator will be, even until the consumption and that which is determined be poured on the desolate, i.e. Jerusalem. The desolator seems to be the last north-eastern enemy, as the Roman prince is he who is so prominent in Dan. 7, where we saw the times and laws given into his hand for the same last half week, or three and a half times.

Instead of this plain, worthy, and homogeneous interpretation, what do the neo-critics say? “There can be no reasonable doubt that this [the cutting off Messiah] is a reference to the deposition of the high priest, Onias III., and his murder by Andronicus (B.C. 171)”; while the rest is turned to Antiochus. Of course, all is chaos among the critics. The design is to pervert the prophecy from Christ’s death and the burning of their city and the flood of desolation, to those murderers. The precise scope is clear if the interruption of the series is observed in the text, with the future bearing of the last week. If this be true, it is a death-blow to the “higher critics,” and an unanswerable proof that the true Daniel wrote it, who here distinctively brings in the awful truth of Christ’s rejection, which has deferred the world-kingdom till His second advent, while the disasters of the poor Jews are shown not only till the Romans destroyed their city and temple, but at the end of the age when they meet their worst tribulation before deliverance comes for the godly in that day.

It is well known that De Wette in his German version of the Bible strove to eliminate “Christ” from this great prophecy, so striking for its chain of dates; and that the dogs of rationalism do their worst in rending it ever since by exaggerating whatever difficulty may exist. The chief difference among believers is the slight one of applying “the word to restore Jerusalem” (Dan. 9:25) to the decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus in his seventh year (Ezra 7), or in his twentieth year (Neh. 2). The prediction itself leaves a margin, not “at” but “after” the 62 weeks, added to the preliminary 7 (= 69 weeks, or 483 years); so much so, that some suppose this margin covers the three years or more of our Lord’s ministry before the cross, answering, in fact, to the first half {week} in evil of the future Roman chief’s covenant with “the mass” of ungodly Jews. Otherwise the lineaments are plain. Here De Wette betrayed his unbelief; for Messiah no more in Hebrew than in English requires the definite article. It is correct to say, “Messiah shall be cut off.” Why did he say *here only* “ein Gesalbter,” when elsewhere he gives “der G.”? Was it not to get rid of the weightiest truth predicted and fulfilled, and to avoid the total refutation of the reverie here about the days of Antiochus Epiphanes? But all this effort is fighting against God’s word. May men learn their folly and sin before His judgment overtake them! may they be spared to proclaim the truth they have sought to destroy, and glorify God thereby, if to their shame, assuredly to their joy and blessing for ever!
Of course to these critics the chapter is confusion, and wholly unworthy of a prophet. But the cutting off of Messiah was an event of transcendent importance, especially being through the will and guilt of His people; as is implied in the interruption of the weeks, and the undated vista that follows of their desolation, in which is prominent the accomplished destruction of their place and nation by the Roman people. It is not yet, however, the prince that should come. He is reserved for the last week, when he makes covenant with “the many,” or ungodly majority, in contrast with the faithful remnant of the Jews, and breaks it with yet more iniquity, when the end of evil comes, and the long expected blessing follows.

**DANIEL 11**

The last three chapters are also a particular prophecy, and chapter 11 is exceedingly minute, to the fierce dislike of such as think for God, and would dictate to Him if they could. There is a rich variety in Scripture, and not less in the prophetic word. Our place is to bow to God and learn of Him. Unbelief sits in judgment on Him who is worthy of all trust and adoration. Now chapter 11, peculiar as it may be, demands and deserves our fullest confidence, whatever say the scorners. It was in the third year of Cyrus that the revelation came to Daniel. Three more kings were to arise in Persia -- Cambyses, Pseudo-Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspes; then the fourth, richer than all, Xerxes, who, when waxed strong by his riches, should stir up the whole against the kingdom of Javan, or Greece. This gives the fitting gap, which necessarily must be, unless an uninterrupted thread were inserted: a thing unprecedented in such cases, as the gap we have seems to be regular.

The next personage is the Macedonian chief, who repaid the blow intended by Persia. No honest man can avoid seeing Alexander the Great in verse 3, or his divided kingdom in verse 4, which introduces two of those divisions, the kingdoms of the north and the south, and their conflicts which follow. Again, it is clear and certain that in Dan. 11:21-32 we have a full account of him who more than any hated the Jews and their religion. The theoretical picture is, that a patriotic Jew in his day personated Daniel of ancient renown in the exile, and converted the past history into professed prophecy up to that time. But the fact stands opposed that, when Antiochus Epiphanes is dropped, Dan. 11:33-35 give a protracted state of trial which ensued long for the Jews, when their old foe ceased from troubling, and that the text expressly declares their trial was to go on to “the time of the end.” Here, therefore, is the great gap implied in accordance with the other predictions of the book, and even with the same principle on a smaller scale between verses 2 and 3 of this chapter.

Then from Dan. 11:36 we find ourselves confronted with the last time. We are told, not of a king of the north or of the south as before, but of “the king,” that final wicked one whom a prophet so distinguished and early as Isaiah presents in chapters 11:4; 30:33; 57:9 with the same ominous phrase, the personal rival of the Anointed, reigning in the land according to his own pleasure, and thus fully contrasted with Him who only did His Father’s will. It is an energetic sketch of one exalting himself against every god; whereas Antiochus Epiphanes was devoted to the gods of Greece and Rome. Though speaking impious things against the God of gods, he is to prosper till the indignation be accomplished -- God’s indignation against His guilty people (as Isaiah also spoke), another proof of days still to come. The Palestinian prince (which Antiochus Epiphanes was not, but king of the north) will have no regard for the God of his fathers, namely, Jehovah (for he is an apostate Jew), nor the desire of women (Messiah, the hope of Israel), nor any god (i.e. of the Gentiles), which last it is absurd and false to say of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is, in truth, the long predicted and then present Antichrist, supplanting Christ, denying the Father and the Son, coming in his own name, and received by those that refused Him who came in the Father’s. His and their destruction is shown elsewhere; but here the prophet turns to the old struggle of the kings of the north and of the south, both being as opposed to “the king” as to each other: an incontestable proof of the folly, first of fancying Antiochus Epiphanes here, and next of denying that these events, believed or disbelieved, are set forth as the prophet’s prediction of the last future collision.

**DANIEL 12**

Observe, finally, what accumulation of proofs Dan. 12 affords of these events to come, which of themselves refute the petty scheme of seeing only Antiochus Epiphanes up to the end. For when the last king of the north perishes by divine judgment, a divine intervention on behalf of Israel is assured “at that time.” Sorely will the Jews need it, for they will have passed through this their last and severest tribulation. But, unlike their calamitous history for long centuries, “at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” It is no mere policy nor prowess, but mercy for the righteous. Hence the appropriate figure of many of the sleepers in the dust awakening, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. So Isaiah (26) and Ezekiel (37) employed the same figure of resurrection for the uprising of Israel nationally, but with the rejection of the unrighteous, as our prophet plainly indicates.

**CONCLUSION**

The result, then, of this brief survey of the book, assailed by neo-critical unbelief, is to show that their scheme is unfounded from first to last, and that it overlooks the grand scope of Gentile empire, both exoteric (2) and esoteric (7). In this so inconsiderable a ruler as Antiochus Epiphanes could
have no place, still less be the culmination of all in bringing on the divine extinction of the entire system of Gentile empire, and hence in restoring Israel under conditions of blessing and glory which will change the world’s history. It is plain that no such time is come. When Christ came, the fourth empire was in power; which will also play its part against Him at His second advent, as the New Testament carefully and clearly reveals. His cross laid the basis for reconciling, not believers only, but all things also in due time. Meanwhile in the world “the times of the Gentiles” proceed, and “the indignation” against faithless Israel. The gospel is indeed sovereign grace toward all and upon all that believe, and the church is Christ’s body for heavenly glory. But the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is not yet come, nor can it come till the seventh trumpet is blown. Even in the particular prophecies of Daniel, where Antiochus Epiphanes is referred to (Dan. 8 and 11), the book itself teaches us to look on from his evil to a greater and worse antitype expressly bound up with “the time of the end,” which in no way applies to the Seleucid king.

Thus every part of the book, when received in faith, is seen to rise up in rebuke of the unbelieving dream that makes Antiochus Epiphanes the paramount object and chief upshot. And as the Roman Empire, in its not yet revived shape, is from the earliest vision predicted, and its judgment when the Son of man appears in glory, so also we learn of a north-eastern monarch who is to oppress the Jews at the final crisis (Dan. 8). Nor is the book silent on the role of the western chief in making and breaking his compact with the Jews, and in imposing idolatry on them, and thus bringing on the consummation (Dan. 9). Then Dan. 11:36-39 presents the clear picture of the lawless king in the land, who magnifies himself above God and Christ, as well as every pretended god, yet honors a strange god himself, exalting whom he will, and dividing the land for gain. If we had not the Lord Jesus vindicating for ever “Daniel the prophet,” such a survey calls for believing and thankful acknowledgment of the book as not only genuine and authentic but inspired of God, casting His light authoritatively on all the Gentile empires, and especially on the end of the age, on which each part converges.

It was for others rather than our prophet to descant on the bright scenes of righteousness and peace under Him who is alike David’s Son and David’s Lord, the Man whose name is the Branch and Jehovah, King over all the earth, as He is also Head over all things. But Daniel simply abides prophet of “the times of the Gentiles”; and this he is with a divine precision and fulness for all who are children of light now. For others it is only natural to love darkness rather than light.

What else after all could be expected from one who, ignoring the word and Spirit of God, takes his stand on “our reason and our conscience as lights which light every man who is born into the world”? The apostle Paul alleges, in Rom. 1 and 2, that these suffice to leave without excuse even a Gentile who has not the law (still less the gospel). Think of a professing Christian abandoning his precious privileges for heathen ground! And what perversion of John 1:9 to a similar purpose! There the evangelist is really asserting the supreme excellence of Christ as the Light, which coming into the world, sheds its light on every man, instead of acting, as the law, in the limited sphere of the Jews. One could understand such ideas in a Quaker, though not a few of the Society are beyond that. No wonder that one so far from the truth of the gospel testifies his gratitude to the heathen philosopher Porphyry (86, 87, 317), the bitterest foe, not only of Christ, but of Christianity and of revelation. No wonder that he praises the “manly words” of Grotius in avowedly adopting this part of Porphyry’s scepticism. “The unjust knoweth no shame.” The “higher criticism” begins in disloyalty to God and His word, and can only work to more and greater ungodliness.

Taken from the 1897 edition of Notes on Daniel.
The Only Key to Daniel’s Prophecies

This is a bold title, but such a thing is not so uncommon across the Atlantic. Dr. Sayce counts it “a great advance on previous interpreters” to make these prophecies “end with the beginning of the Christian Church, instead of lengthening out into a still unknown future.” Most Christian students in Europe and elsewhere will agree that neither Mr. A. nor the Assyriologist know anything of value about the matter. If it were not that Mr. A. sincerely believes that the book is “a most important part of the word of God,” his “only key” should have no notice here; if he really understood Daniel, he would find it incomparably more important than all he sees of it as yet.

Perhaps his strange omission of Dan. 2 accounts for much. Nebuchadnezzar’s first dream, to say nothing of the second in Dan. 4, is of immense moment. There the four Gentile empires or world-powers, according to the prophet’s interpretation, are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome; paralleled by Daniel’s own vision of the same powers, as beasts out of a great sea: all at the end of the age rising up into collision with the Son of man coming in power and glory to establish His kingdom universal and everlasting. By attempting to squeeze all this into near about the First Advent, the book is shorn of its chief value. Every vision goes on to that future judgment of the quick. It is the Lord’s judicial dealing with the last phase of the powers, which as God’s first act shall be destroyed, and then “the whole earth” is to be filled forthwith with His kingdom.

Neglecting Dan. 2, Mr. A. makes a false start with Dan. 7, in taking the lion as not Babylon but the Medo-Persian empire; then the bear as Greece. What a blunder! In the leopard he gets right as the Macedonian or Greek. But his notion about the ten horns of Rome how grotesque! 1 Marius, 2 Sylla, 3 Pompey, 4 Crassus, 5 Julius Caesar, 6 Brutus, 7 Casaius, 8 Octavius, 9 Antony, 10 Lepidus. For the ten horns are concurrent vassal monarchs supplanted in part by a subsequent little one who becomes sovereign of all, and by his audacious wickedness brings down final and fiery destruction on all, and makes open the way for the public kingdom in righteousness of the Son of man, when the saints of the high or heavenly places shall take the kingdom. For the saints are to reign with Christ. To apply this to the First Advent, or to events since, is preposterous. It is the same fourth or the Roman Empire, which played its part in crucifying the Lord of glory, which (Rev. 12; 13; 17; 19) is to rise again by Satan’s energy, but for perdition. Then the Lord will take His great power and reign, instead of the kingdom of God to faith as now, when all enormities are done in the world unjudged of Him. To make this accomplished A.D. 70 or so is to bring Daniel’s prophecy and all others into contempt. It is to be carried away by a human idea. See p. 20.

Mr. A. is less astray as to Dan. 7 in the preliminary part; but he is wholly wrong as usual in the most momentous conclusion of the matter, of which Antiochus Epiphanes was but a type of “the king of the north” in the latter day, the antagonist of the Roman Emperor about Jerusalem and its sanctuary. Both are to perish with their adherents, successively, at our Lord’s coming again. What in the past can compare with this? Then, and not till then, will come the days of heaven upon the earth. Earthly judgments precede them; for “when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness” (Isa. 26:9). The latter rain of the Spirit will as it were fertilize it. The gospel does not, nor is it its nature to, govern the world; and the so-called church (no matter which) has made an awful mess in attempting it. Its true work is to gather saved souls out of it for Christ and heaven.

Similarly Mr. A. is entirely ignorant of the true bearing of the last of the seventy weeks. For the Roman siege and subsequent trials are supposed to have taken place before v. 27. After the 69 weeks began a great gap created by Messiah’s cutting off; and the last verse {Dan. 9:27} is about “a” (not “the”) covenant for seven years, which the future chief of the Roman empire will make and break, depriving the Jews of their rites; whereon the great catastrophe follows (Dan. 9).

The prophecy in Dan. 11 is similar: only it is not the western power that figures; but the wilful king, the Antichrist in Palestine “in the time of the end,” and his enemy, “the king of the north,” the then monarch of Turkey in Asia, as “the king of the south” is of Egypt. It is the hour of judgment for all powers, the last of which is Gog, the lord of all the Russias; after which Daniel himself is to appear and stand in his lot among the risen saints of the high places. Thus there ought to be no such mistake as men make in foreclosing prophecies, which all end with the Lord’s appearing, and then only.

Mr. A. ought not to have confounded Darius the Mede, the ad interim and complimentary king after Babylon’s fall before Cyrus succeeded, with Darius the Persian, who was

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conventionally chosen after Cambyses and the impostor Gomates. Ezra 4 makes this certain, Ahasuerus answering to the former, and Artaxerxes to the latter. Then comes Darius (Hystaspis) King of Persia.

*The Bible Treasury, New Series 5:237*
It may be well here to notice that the book of Daniel is divisible from its nature into two nearly equal parts. The first six chapters may be regarded as the first volume, the last six as the second. This is not at all an arbitrary division. It is one founded on the contents of the book. For the early chapters consist of visions which the Gentile king saw, or facts of a moral kind that befell one or other of the monarchs of Babylon vindicating God’s mind and sure judgment; whereas the last half of the book communicates visions which the prophet saw. Accordingly there is a marked difference between the two portions, even when they treat of the same subject matter. We see this clearly by comparing the seventh chapter with the second. They go over the same ground precisely, but in a different way. The earlier of the two gives the public history of the world as made known to the first man whom the God of heaven made monarch of all mankind, as well as of the lower creation (Dan. 2:37, 38); in the later (Dan. 7) we have a presentation of it to a saint, and details in relation to the Lord and the saints at the end of the age.

Nebuchadnezzar was not able to enforce his sway universally -- man never is. But as far as the sovereign gift of God was concerned, it was wheresoever the sons of men dwelt. Cyrus, the Persian, extended his sway somewhat farther; but it was not until the Chaldees gave new courage and strength against its suzerain. Whatever the pretension, the Assyrians did not succeed in getting a universal empire. Egypt sought the same thing afterwards, but Nebuchadnezzar crushed any such aspiration. God had decided to exalt a hitherto inferior kingdom. Who on earth then would have thought of Babylon? Yet was it chosen of God to hold this new place of imperial power. It had under Merodach Baladan become independent no doubt, but it was soon put down again and made tributary to Assyria. Hitherto they appear to have been chiefly of Hamitic race; but some time before the Chaldees gave them a new impetus, coming down from the northern mountains, being of Japheth, from which source were the races that overspread Europe.

But whatever the providential course that wrought, the empire of the world depended on another and all-important turning point. Israel, Judah even, had proved utterly unworthy to be the leader of the kingdoms of the earth. They ought to have been a central witness as a people to all the surrounding kingdoms, a pattern of righteous government under the law of God that all the nations might take heed and see the blessing of having the Lord Jehovah for their God. All this, however, had completely and shamefully broken down before God allowed Babylon to be anything but a power aspiring to independence, but not yet succeeding even in this. When it rose for a little, it was friendly toward Judah, as we may learn from Isa. 39.

You remember how, after recovery from his sickness, Hezekiah the king displayed his treasures to the ambassadors from Babylon, and how the prophet was promptly sent to announce that all should be carried to Babylon without a remnant, and his own sons captives and eunuchs there. No
such destiny had God allowed to the Assyrian, who on the contrary fell under an immense disaster, even the destruction of a mighty host of them, through the angel’s intervention. A hundred and eighty-five thousand in their camp were left dead corpses in a single night. Do you ask how these facts were not acknowledged by the ancients? How could you expect a vainglorious and idolatrous king like Sennacherib to publish his own shame under the evident interposition of the living God?

These ancient despots were ready enough to blazon their successes on enduring pillars or other monuments of pride. Who ever heard of people disposed or ready to acknowledge their own defeats, especially when the defeat was of divine origin as in this instance? And if such be the might of Jehovah’s angel, what of His hand? In fact, God then held things in the balance, until first Israel and then Judah proved altogether failing to present the picture of a righteous people here below. Had He continued to keep Judah after Manasseh and others, it would have been God supporting Himself in the wickedness of the kings and the people. He cannot deny Himself. For those who know His nature and ways, it is impossible to conceive His doing otherwise than He did in their case; and so He warned them early. “Hear this word that Jehovah hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:1, 2). Who finds anything like this in the Vedas or the Sutras, in the Zend-avesta or the Yih-king, the Kuran or the like?

The spurious sacred books of men rather flatter and puff up their votaries, while they harden their hearts to destroy better men who refuse their impostures. God’s wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men that hold the truth in unrighteousness. He will not sanction but punish those who couple His name with their own evil; and is it not most just? The Epistle to the Romans declares His grace to the ungodly, yet He does not let them go unpunished. He will not sanction but punish those who couple His name with their own evil; and is it not most just? The Epistle to the Romans declares His grace to the ungodly, who, when they confess the name of the Lord, are brought into the richest spiritual blessing. But if they insult the God Who blesses them, what can be before them but righteous judgment? God is not mocked. So the gospel declares. But Israel is still kept as a people to be blessed of God. They are in a truly abnormal state, having been for many centuries without a king and without a prince, and without a sacrifice and without a pillar, and without an ephod and teraphim. What is there that remains to Judaism but dry and empty form? All they can do in Jerusalem is to wail. But this is not the spirit or language of those who have the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. These may and ought to confess their sins; but if they be not happy, there is something wrong with their faith or their state. They who believe the gospel have the deepest, highest, and simplest grounds for rejoicing in the Savior. “Rejoice in the Lord always,” said the prisoner from Rome; “again I will say, Rejoice” {Phil. 4:4}; as he said of himself, “Yea, and if I be poured forth upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all” {Phil. 2:17}.

Those that in faith of Christ read the New Testament, or the whole Bible (for one likes it as a whole and not merely its latest part), cannot but glean from it very considerable good. But if they practice what is contrary to the word, the Holy Spirit of God is grieved and therefore makes them miserable in the sense of their unfaithfulness; for He witnesses against their faults till they judge themselves before God. But their regular state is of one of peace and joy in believing.

When the children of Israel not only fell into wickedness against God, but their wickedness became systematic and complete as apostates from His name -- not merely the people and the priests, but also the prophets and the kings such as we see them at the end of Kings and Chronicles, God gave them up to one of the most idolatrous of the Gentile nations; and Nebuchadnezzar by His appointment became “the head of gold” {Dan. 2:38}. Undoubtedly Babylon was a great city from the earliest days, and “mad on her idols” {Jer. 50:38} as time went on. You may be aware that there was no idolatry in the antediluvian world. All flesh on the earth had corrupted its way, and the earth was filled with violence; but there was as yet no setting up of false gods. When, however, the heavens darkened against them and the waters of the great deep swept them away from before God, after this it was that Satan induced men to worship the hosts of heaven and deprecate the avenging powers of death. They thought nothing so reasonable as to propitiate the heavens that they might ever shine favorably, and the waters that they might no more overwhelm them in their resistless flood. Therefore religion took the form of paying honor to the higher powers of nature as well as of satisfying those lower. All immorality followed, and even contrary to fallen nature itself.

But God called His people Israel to bear witness to Himself as the One living God; and when departed into idolatry, He handed them over as captives to the vilest of men, setting up Babylon as the first of the great world-powers. It did not matter that they pretended to honor Jehovah along with their false gods; indeed such an alliance made things worse in His sight. However solemn might be their zeal for His feasts, their tampering also with idols only heightened their guilt and His indignation. But the fact was undoubtedly, that they often showed themselves more zealous for the false gods than for the true God; as Christians now, when they take up bad doctrine are absorbed with the error, and seem to lose the very truth they once professed.

God then chose Babylon to be the vessel of supreme earthly power for the punishment of His guilty people. Its ruler was not only a king but a king of kings, an emperor in the fullest sense of the word. Such was Nebuchadnezzar. His thoughts, we are told, came upon his bed what should come to pass hereafter; and God was pleased to reveal the secrets of futurity. But this He did, so as to impress on the Gentiles that true intelligence is only with those that fear
Himself. In vain had the king applied to the ordinary means of his empire in order to recall or understand the vision. He asked, as his wise men told him, what no king had ever asked before. By their confession none but He whose dwelling is not with flesh could give the answer. In his imperious style he demanded it on pain of death, and when his minister was about to put the cruel decree into execution, where did God raise up a witness? Among the captives of Judah. If power was vested in the Gentile who scourged a people more guiltily offensive to God, the light of God was vouchsafed to Daniel the captive. God prepared for others too a deliverer from the king’s wrath out of the king’s palace. Daniel was morally prepared, as we see him in Dan. 1. 1 refusing the king’s dainties, which were invariably offered to idols. He was willing to die rather than dishonor the true God, Who gave him favor with his guardians, so as to abide faithful. For “them that honor Me I will honor; and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” {1 Sam. 2:30}. The great principle here is that, if you are to have the secret of the Lord, you must look to Him and stand clear of the world, and especially of its religion which never is nor can be the truth. Do not expect to enjoy the holy light of God if for your ease or honor or safety you conform to what is of the world.

Accordingly Daniel was blessed remarkably. The king, though he had let slip the dream, was conscious of something altogether extraordinary in it, and in the furious haste of his rage apparently overlooked Daniel. Nor was it till the last moment that he went in and desired of the king that time be allowed him. This given, he betakes himself with his three pious friends to prayer. And God heard. “Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision” {Dan. 2:19}. How cheering and beautiful the dealings of God! As Daniel in faith took the initiative, though all four joined in prayer, God singled out Daniel. What happens thereon? Does he at once rush off to the king? He turns to God in thanksgiving. “Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven” (v. 19). As he had looked to Him alone, so the glory he renders to God only. “Art thou able,” said the king, “to make known the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?” {Dan. 2:26}. “There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days” {Dan. 2:28}. answered the lowly prophet. And he adds, “But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living” {Dan. 2:30}; yet was he the wisest then on the earth. But God was in all his thoughts, to Whom be glory. It was a wonderful revelation for king Nebuchadnezzar; but think, my friends, what we have given of God in the whole Bible.

If you say that we have not Daniel, do not forget that we have a better than Daniel. A wiser and better than Daniel? Yes, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, that other Paraclete, the gift of Christ’s redemption. The Holy Spirit had indeed wrought always, notably in Daniel and his companions; but there is now more, the personal presence of the Spirit of God to dwell with and in the Christian for ever, and in the assembly or church of God. See John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:20; 16:7-14. He abides, among other privileges of the utmost value, enabling the believer to enjoy all the revelation of God in the measure of his faith by grace. Oh! I what a wonderful boon for the Christian and for the church of God. See that you sink not below your privileges, but enter into them by faith; for it rests not on your own opinion or the authority of other men. There is much blessing in the communion of saints; but God’s teaching must be individual. “They shall be all taught of God” {John 6:45}.

Remember that the Lord lays down what has just been stated in His remarkable series of parables (Matt. 13). They represent the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and we are in it now. With the kingdom as here made known we have to do now on earth, while the Lord is exalted and hidden in heaven. Yet, though embracing so large a sphere, the Lord says in ver. 9, “Who hath ears to hear let him hear.” In the Old Testament the call was to all Israel, to all the people; but now it is to each of us, to a Christian individually. Whatever comes, this responsibility in hearing and receiving the truth of God is inalienable; and woe to such as deny or weaken it. You will do well to lay it to heart.

Daniel then repeats and interprets the dream to Nebuchadnezzar: a gorgeous image with golden head, with breast and arms of silver, with body and thighs of brass, and with legs of iron, ending in feet of iron and clay, smitten by a little stone which reduced the whole to powder; after which the stone that smote the image became a great mountain which filled the whole earth.

There is also evident deterioration, as the power is distant from its source, and becomes characterized with more of man lower and lower. It has nothing to do with the extent of empire, which, on the contrary, became greater successively. But Nebuchadnezzar in his imperfection acts absolutely, as only One can perfectly to God’s glory. In the Medo-Persian empire, wise men counsel much; as in the Greek soldiers of fortune. Rome goes down to the dregs, and is governed instead of governing, so that power from God is swamped by the people as its source.

Not a word of Christ’s suffering for our sins, nor of the gospel going forth in consequence to every creature; not a word of Christ’s sitting as the rejected but glorified Lamb on the Father’s throne, and of our meanwhile suffering with Him while He there waits. It is Christ coming judicially in power and glory, dealing with the fourth empire in its last divided state, as well as with all that remains of its predecessors. Only after this destruction does God’s kingdom fill and rule all the earth.

When Daniel had the vision of these four powers as it is given in Dan. 7, they are presented to his eye as four ravenous beasts. The vision as dreamt by Nebuchadnezzar was comparatively external, as man’s eye might see; but the same objects seen by the prophet were according to what a spiritual understanding could enter into. The reader may find
an analogy in the parables referred to, first some before all
in public, then others to the disciples within the house (Matt.
13).

In Dan. 7 the prophet sees the four powers emerge from
the sea or ungoverned mass of peoples: first, a lion with
eagle’s wings, which ere long is humbled; secondly, a bear
which raised up itself on one side and had a measured
voracity; thirdly, a leopard with four wings, and eventually
four heads, which none of the preceding had; lastly, a beast
to which none in the realm of nature answered, beyond all
dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly, with great iron
teeth, devouring and destroying with contempt, diverse from
all before, and at length with the peculiarity of ten horns,
&c. And here, answering to the little stone of Dan. 2, we
have the Son of man before the Ancient of days, receiving
dominion, glory, and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and
languages should serve Him: an everlasting dominion which
shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be
destroyed. Here we have the internal view according to
God’s mind, with yet more added to the interpretation.

But it may be remarked in passing, that the intervening
chapters are as valuable for the world-powers, as Dan. 1 we
have seen to be for the moral state of Daniel. Dan. 3 shows
that the first recorded act of Nebuchadnezzar was to enforce
the most senseless idolatry, on the king’s authority, as a
means of binding together the peoples, nations, and
languages; which only brought out fidelity at all cost on the
part of the three Hebrew youths, the remnant, and the
Gentile king’s recognition of God their deliverer. Dan. 4
points to the Gentile power, after the seven times of a beast’s
heart, restored to praise the King of heaven. Dan. 5 is
plainly the profaning Gentile judged in the destruction of
Babylon: as Dan. 6 attests the Gentile that took the place of
God (according to the law that passeth not) confessing the
living God Who alone rescues from the power of the enemy,
and His kingdom which shall not be destroyed and His
dominion unto the end. It is in the then facts the
prefiguration of Gentile power abased and of Jew saved at
the end to God’s glory and the triumph of His kingdom. For
no prophecy of scripture is of private (of its own, its isolated)
interpretation. Every one bears, all converge, on the grand
object of God in the exaltation of the Anointed, at the close
of man’s busy restless day. The Holy Spirit in what is
written never stops short of that conclusion, so worthy of
God and His Son, so blessed for the universe and every
creature in it, save those that have rebelled persistently
against His will. No accomplishment in the past, even if true
and important, exhausts the meaning or satisfies the divine
end.

If ever man tried to govern the world of his day by his
own will absolutely, it was “the head of gold”; and as he
sinned in giving the glory not to the Most High but to
himself, he was abased personally as no monarch or man was
before or since. But mercy intervened in due time, and
presented a hope “at the end of the days,” which shall not
make ashamed; when the nations shall be gladdened with
His people and hope in Him Whom they together slew on the
tree.

When the monarch took counsel with others, nobles or
military chiefs, it was not really better. And when it was
avowedly the people with or without an emperor, no tyranny
so selfish, none so oppressive, nor so presumptuous against
the true God. Never will the divine ideal be realized till He
come again to reign, Whose right it is in the fullest way,
divine and human, the Father of the age to come, the Prince
of peace. All governments meanwhile are imperfect and
provisional in His providence, though every soul in
Christianity is bound to be subject, as unto higher authorities
of this world. The existing authorities, whatever the form,
are ordained of God; and he that ranges himself against the
authority is a resister of the appointment of God. Yet
consisting of sinful men, not one of any sort but has failed
and sinned. How blessed to know that He, Who is coming
to be King over all the earth, here lived and died and rose
and ascended, not only the Lord but the Servant of all, and
the Servant of God in serving all others not in love only but
as the propitiation for our sins.

For indeed there is one Man, and one Man only, Who
never thought of any other object but doing or suffering the
will of God. It was therefore and necessarily one course of
ever deepening humiliation, though moral glory, till He
reached a, depth unfathomable save to Him. He it is Who,
when He returns in power and glory, will take the whole
world, as scripture fully shows. Meanwhile the Lord Jesus
is very far from now governing the world. If He were,
would He suffer Satan to be god and prince, as God’s word
declares he is, even since Christ took His seat on the Father’s
throne?

God’s providential care does not fail of course, but what
occupies Christ now is His loving ways with the church, and
saving sinners to serve God and wait for Him from heaven.
They are not of the world as He is not, and He is coming to
receive them to Himself in the Father’s house. This is far
better. No matter how effectual and glorious the government
of the world by-and-by when Christ reigns, it is not at all
comparable to union with Him even now, and suffering with
Him here below, and enjoying His love as Bridegroom for
ever in heaven. This is what Christ is now carrying on in
God’s children, that, when He shall be manifested, we may
be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.

But returning to the first vision, we note that it was a
great image, whose brightness was excellent, and the form
thereof terrible. So it was seen by Nebuchadnezzar; whereas Daniel was given to behold the self-same first
empire as a lion with eagle’s wings. This power was not to
endure long, because its continuance was measured, as
Jeremiah (ch. 25:11, 12) had already predicted, by the
captivity of Judah -- in round numbers about seventy years.
It was a power of peculiar majesty and splendor, Nebuchadnezzar being called “the head of gold,” as it
appears to be in part, if not mainly, from receiving his power
as king of kings direct from God in a way that none else of these empires did afterwards, and allowing no human element to enfeeble his acting as so constituted. It was not won by conquest merely; it was God’s immediate gift in his case, instead of being derived successively from others put down. Thus Cyrus was in many respects a greater man, and employed to do God’s will on behalf of the Jewish remnant typically. Even Nebuchadnezzar was not a ruler to be despised, being (I suppose) the greatest city-builder the world ever saw. There are to be seen countless bricks with his name on them still, although thousands of years have passed since they were made. There they remain, strong and recognizable as ever almost, circumstances being no doubt peculiarly favorable for their preservation. Nebuchadnezzar also had much energy and practical wisdom in many other respects, as in seeing to the water-ways of the great rivers, and the irrigation of his fruitful plains, in order that the country might flourish and the people be prosperous as it never was before.

Under his reign Babylon became by far the most powerful and celebrated city of that age on the globe. The country was watered by two great rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris, rivers having their rise in Eden, where was the original Paradise of man; a remarkable proof that the deluge which left neither man nor beast on the earth did not blot out so much as some think. And as this great king actively provided work for the people, so also did he promote immense foreign trade. We read of “the cry of the Chaldees in their ships,” and their ports then became a source of enormous wealth and led to enterprise without end. Yet when the allotted hour struck, the golden city was razed, and, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, became in due time as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. Nor was there in all history so tragic a scene, if so righteous a fate, as that which is portrayed in Daniel’s account of her last night as an imperial power.

Then followed the second empire of the Medes and Persians, the captors of Babylon, set out by the image’s breast and arms of silver, and by the bear that raised itself on one side: a kingdom of larger extent, but inferior in vigor and splendor, which lasted some 200 years before it fell before Alexander the Great, the founder of “another third kingdom of brass, which should bear rule over all the earth.” Who could have conceived of an empire so much wider than its predecessors, from the vain and contentious Greeks, led by the despised race of Macedonia, and their boy king? Up to that time what did they present but a cluster of jealous factious states, if one except Sparta, struggling for leadership, whatever their skill in arts or letters? The attacks of Darius and Xerxes at length united them for a while in patriotism with a humanly brilliant result. Only God could have led the king to dream, and the prophet to interpret, the Greek or Macedonian kingdom. Yet there is the living picture, the details of which cover the beginning of Dan. 8.

There is more particularity as we descend the stream of time; so false is the maxim of the rationalists who leave out God, or count Him such a one as themselves. How plainly does He put contempt on their assumption that a prophet anticipated no more than the imminent future! They are given as God pleased, Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greeks, and Romans. The first or Babylonian no doubt was there before men; but which of the rest could have been foreseen even plausibly by a single soul on earth? Least of all would Nebuchadnezzar have conceived changes so beyond calculation.

We have seen the extreme improbability of a world-wide empire from Greece or its rude neighbor Macedon. What is the fact as to the Rome of Nebuchadnezzar’s day? The philosophers count its annals as for the most part uncertain if not fabulous. Yet we need not doubt the city was then ruled by such petty kings as Italian towns could boast of old, kinglings indeed. Long before, we see a sort of analogy in the numerous kings whom the sons of Israel smote under Joshua (ch. 12), more than thirty. The kings were succeeded by consuls; dictators too ruled occasionally; decremivs; and consular tribunes; till the chaotic condition morally and politically gave opportunity for an emperor, though still employing republican forms. Rome yet for hundreds of years had been engaged in constant struggling with its rival neighbors. Sabines, Volscians, Veientes, and the like. Finally they had their city taken and burnt by the Gauls; they further had to fight for their very existence with another competitor. And what think you, was the power that rose up to dispute in a life and death conflict with Rome? It was Carthage, an active mercantile city, exceedingly ambitious and aspiring, planted and colonized by the accursed race of Canaan.

From early days God had pronounced against that son of guilty Ham, who had indeed many sons; so that we may admire the mercy that all were not involved in similar ruin. It was righteous that God should mark His displeasure. Is there not a moral necessity to deal with men guilty of signal wickedness? Even an infidel husband would not condone his wife’s dishonor, or his son’s stealing the family’s money. If justice is not only free but bound to render according to the due desert of human deeds, is God alone to be debarred from that prerogative? In the three Carthaginian or (as they are called) Punic wars, the two cities fought for supremacy, and so for life. Rome fought in Sicily, in Spain, and at length, after desperate defeats on her own soil, in Africa. In the last of the three Rome’s stern determination was to destroy Carthage. The senate felt that thence emanated an enemy that would entirely frustrate all their hope of progress and conquest; and so the cry that Carthage must be blotted out arose accordingly. These wars stretched from long before Christ; but they were still longer from the time of Daniel who died an aged man more than five centuries before our Lord’s birth. Yet even then all that so deeply concerned the last of the empires was made known and written down by God’s inspiration. Here we have, from
two separate aspects, a complete sketch-map of the world-powers that were to govern from first to last until the Lord appears in power and glory. Even so it is given clearly in the brief space of a few paragraphs.

Does any one object that there are few particulars? If time permitted and such were my present object, it would be easy to prove that they are many more than hasty men imagine. And is it observable that, just when we are brought down to the fourth empire, then these details are supplied in most abundance. What a rebuke to rationalism! And why was it so? Because the Roman was the empire in which Christ was to be born and be cut off; as that empire is to rise up again by Satan’s power when He will shine forth in judgment from heaven. The Roman empire was to be expressly different from all its predecessors. The Babylonian lost its imperial power; so did the Medo-Persian; as well as the Macedonian or Grecian, never to rise again. Yet they were all to exist, and so they do still; but their dominion was to be taken away, as it is laid down in Dan. 7:12. There was to be no revival of their imperial character, though a prolonging in life was given them, when their dominion was lost. Rome and Rome alone is the empire which must rise again, as we learn in Rev. 13 and more awfully than of old, quite falling in with what Daniel predicts of its end in chs. 2 and 7.

A great many Protestants think all this refers to the papacy. But the Pope essentially differs from a Roman emperor. The Popes have played a shameless imposture in Rome under the abased name of the Lord. Babylon is much more like their evil in pride and corruption and persecution than a Roman emperor. It was the Roman power that was responsible for the crucifixion of Christ under the apostasy of the Jew long before the first budding of the papacy. Pontius Pilate who condemned the Lord was the local expression of Rome in Judea. God as well as man always holds the governing power to be responsible for its public, deliberate, unpunished acts; as we see sometimes in international affairs. In the face of his conscience, of his conviction of Jewish unrighteousness, and of solemn warning, the governor condemned the Just; the Roman empire far from repudiating it accumulated its acts of enmity. This is the power whose head was wounded to death but healed to universal astonishment on earth; and it emerges not only from the sea but from the abyss, the historical fact being given of the little horn in Dan. 7 as the character is in Rev. 13, 17. It “was, is not, and shall be present.”

Nothing so wonderful in all past history as that which is predicted in the Book of Revelation, as for instance this three-fold condition and its moral source at the end, as well as God’s judgment of it: “the beast that was, is not (which we can now say still applies), and shall come forth out of the bottomless pit” (as Christ Who died and rose will be present from heaven). The first points to a condition of past existence, then to its non-existence (we know it was destroyed by the Goths and other wild races, chiefly the Teutonic tribes of that day), and lastly to its future re-existence. The moment of its revival surely hastens. Already a great step is taken toward the re-appearance of that empire. Italy has become a kingdom; and not only so but a great power is Italy now considered. I cannot doubt that it is destined to become still greater before the sure execution of God’s judgment on the peculiar iniquity of the empire. Scripture cannot be broken; and we find that which has been said fully proved in Daniel and the Apocalypse. The outline was manifested clearly enough in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, and yet more in the vision of Daniel. Then above all in the Revelation our attention is drawn to a principle of the greatest moment. Most is said throughout on the fourth or Roman empire. Thereon the Spirit of God dwells most, because of its collision with the Lord Jesus. That would have seemed most difficult, humanly speaking: to deal most fully with the most distant is not the manner of man, who would have naturally said as much as possible about Babylon; then, if at all, more hazily about Persia, and not a word could have been said of the two western empires.

Again, how could man prognosticate that only four world-powers were to rise? There was ample ambition of founding more. Even in the middle ages Charlemagne tried to set up such an empire and failed, with the strongest desire to succeed. Then a military genius arose in this century no less ambitious, and never scrupling at violence or corruption to effectuate his schemes; Napoleon Bonaparte essayed it. He sought, if ever man did, a universal empire, but notwithstanding all means, skill, and opportunity, he broke down utterly in the attempt. God employed Britain to smash all Napoleon’s hopes. Nelson with his fleet completely crushed his navy, and on the field of Waterloo Napoleon saw his star set forever. There was to be no new world-power, though all know of course there are those who style themselves emperors in a quite subordinate sense.

But now what is the “little stone cut without hands,” which at length becomes a mountain? Perhaps all my readers are accustomed to hear this referred to the Lord gradually making good the kingdom of God. Undoubtedly He will come in that kingdom of God when the hour strikes. But take care that you understand its true force. Excellent men will tell you that it will be through the gospel -- the kingdom of God introduced by the Spirit. Allow me to ask this, Does the Gospel smite kingdoms of the world? Does the Holy Spirit by the word destroy powers that be? The first action of the “little stone” is to fall upon the feet of the great image, and the effect of that decisive blow will be to scatter its fragments like chaff of the summer threshing-floors.

You know God’s gospel is the revelation of Christ applied by the Spirit of God to save sinners, Jews and Gentiles that believe. But the “little stone” on the contrary symbolizes a power, small in appearance, which at once deals destructively with all that is high, great, and strong on the earth, at the first blow reducing the entire imperial system to powder. Consequently the attempt to make the gospel out of it wholly fails. The word of God is by the Lord compared to the seed that, sown in the good ground, bears
fruit more or less abundantly, as a germ of life by the Holy Spirit. It is plain that the “little stone” is not the gospel or the church, but the kingdom of God which Christ enforces when he returns. Conclusive and clear is the proof of this from the comparison of the closing scenes in Dan. 2 and the corresponding part of ch. 7. It is not only an intervention from on high, but of a judicial and even executory character. The gospel is no doubt of God, but it is His sovereign grace based on the cross of Christ. Whereas the “little stone” smites the powers of the world, the mightiest then reigning no less than the remnant of all that preceded, and at once crushes them to atoms.

What can be more in contrast with the gospel? After this the “little stone” grows and becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. The gospel never smote any earthly power, never will destroy a single king or kingdom. God’s work in the gospel is to reconcile the sinner to Himself and render him meet for heaven. Can one conceive things more different? All Christians profess to believe the Lord Jesus is coming again. What to do? Is it not to judge the quick and the dead? Even the common creeds of Christendom admit that; Copts and Jacobites, Nestorians and Greeks, as well as Latins and Protestants of every variety, confess this truth. They read, say, and sing that Christ is coming to judge, not the dead only but the living also; and these before the dead, we may add.

It is easy to theorize, but scripture shows Christ to reign a thousand years, and to judge the quick. The judgment of the dead follows, as Rev. 20 teaches, and this after the heavens and the earth flee away; whereas the quick He will judge on this earth. Will not Christ’s feet stand on the Mount of Olives? and when He stands there, will not the mountain be split in two? So Zech. 14 declares. Yet there it is still, as solid as ever; but it will be cloven yet, giving testimony to its Maker and to the word of God. Who can wonder when the Creator stands there in power and glory? When He came the first time, it was in grace and humility, bearing all and enduring all, when He deigned to die a sacrifice to God, yet at the hands of His own creatures, that their sins might be blotted out. Then it was all pure and sovereign grace, in which He bore God’s judgment of our evil that we believe might be delivered from wrath. But when He comes again, it will be in judicial power and glory. And will He come alone? His own glorified hosts will follow Him -- they that are Christ’s (Rev. 17:14; 19:14).

Carefully avoid the new-fangled notion that seems to please some in the present day, that none are with Him but “superior Christians.” I have generally found those men when weighed sadly wanting. They and their set are no doubt excellent in their own eyes; but God forbid that a true-hearted saint should regard Himself as better than others. We are debtors to God’s grace in Christ alone for salvation; and we have abundant reason to humble ourselves before God while here below. There is doubtless power in the Spirit of God to keep us; but as a matter of fact, in many things we all stumble. Let us look to Him Who alone can keep us from falling. It is a strange delusion, by way of what is called “deepening the spiritual life,” that any can jump into holiness practically; and why connect this idea of themselves and the like with the translation of the saints to heaven at Christ’s coming?

For such self-flattering expectations scripture gives no warrant. “We shall not all sleep,” says the apostle, “but we shall all be changed in a moment,” and the same moment. The living saints found when our Lord comes are not to die. The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, not some of us but all, shall be caught up together with the risen to meet the Lord. This is the mystery as it is called, or New Testament truth, added to that of resurrection revealed in the Old Testament.

When Christ comes and those that are His along with Him from heaven, He will smite the powers in open blasphemous rebellion (Rev. 19), and call all the nations to account, as He will in Matt. 25:31-46. The two leaders civil and religious will be thrown living into hell. Their followers and kings and armies will be slain on the spot. Did you ever realize who these will be? The flower of the civilized world, the rulers and hosts of the then kingdoms of the west. They will have hastened at the Emperor’s demand to protect the Jews and their king in Jerusalem. The Jews who rejected the true Christ will then have received the Antichrist. Then will all the powers of western Europe be involved in the same sin. Balance of power is long gone. The satellite kings “have one mind, and shall give their power and authority to the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with Him (the glorified saints) are called, chosen, and faithful.” “For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled” (Rev. 17:13, 14, 17).

There will remain for divine judgment the last king of the north (Dan. 11:40-45); and after him Gog from the land of Magog, Prince of Rosh (Russia), Meshech (Muscovy), and Tubal (Tobolsk), the power that makes the king of the north mightier than his own strength could command. These shall all perish in due time after the Lord has appeared: all must receive the due reward of their deeds. Is this not as far as can be from the kingdom of God in spiritual power such as we know under the gospel? But it is in full accord with that which is the true meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and of the prophet’s interpretation, as well as of his own visions in ch. 7 and elsewhere. The destruction of “the beast” and other powers which will then be in a state of rebellion must be fulfilled at the end of this age.

And what is preparing for an end so awful? The superstition and the infidelity of the day: each provokes the other beyond measure. Where are these men so different in appearance and pretension, yet alike unbelievers, the one sanctimonious, the other profane? They are everywhere; their name is Legion. You have them both here in your quiet
little town, lively and strong. But it does not matter where
they may be: God is not mocked, and they are His enemies.
How they swarm in the great city, the metropolis of the
kingdom! It is not so strange that they often join arms,
sometimes are combined in the same persons. Such are those
who dare to say that God did not inspire the Bible, and deny
him who wrote this book to be “Daniel the Prophet,” although
the Lord declares so it was. They would make it a romance
written hundreds of years after his death. Whoever so speaks,
and whatever he pretends to be, no orthodox believers should
shrink from denouncing such a man as infidel. They are
corrupting this country and America, as others have Holland
and Germany.

But let it be understood that no mistake is greater than to
suppose Roman Catholic countries free from scepticism. No
country more abounds in infidelity than France and other
Popish lands. The women may go to mass and confession, and
some of the men may follow occasionally; but this is no
disproof of their infidelity. And the issue will be (spite of all
forms, and processions, and what not) the falling away or
apostasy, as the apostle told the Thessalonians. The open
abandonment of the gospel is at hand. Then man under
Satan’s power will become the object of universal admiration
and worship to the exclusion of God; and this will bring down
the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven. So He in
Dan. 7 answers to the “little stone” of ch. 2. He is seen
coining to the Ancient of days, and receiving dominion and
glory and a kingdom that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve Him. It opens with the execution of consuming
judgment on earth, and most unsparingly where most light had
been given and given up.

Is it possible to find a scene in stronger contrast with
grace? The gospel of God’s grace is founded on Christ’s first
coming, and on His death, resurrection, and ascension; for
His object was atoningly to suffer to God’s glory for sins.
When He comes again, it will be as the “little stone cut
without hands,” wholly apart from human means to destroy the
kingdoms (then apostate), and to establish God’s kingdom in
power, righteousness and glory over the earth. He will appear
from heaven, and (falling, as we see in Dan. 2 and 7, on the
Roman empire) will efface all the authority set forth by the
image or by the four beasts. The beast (or he who then shall
wield the power of the fourth empire revived) and the false
prophet are to be consigned to the burning flame. That is, the
imperial as well as the religious chiefs are to meet this
unspeakably frightful doom, while their adherents are slain
(Rev. 19:19-21). Besides, judgment falls on all the other
elements. “Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver,
and the gold, broken to pieces together.” So too is it in
Daniel’s vision of the beasts whose dominion had been taken
away and their lives prolonged (Dan. 7:12). There is no
It is the Son of man Who makes good the kingdom over all the
earth, as His first advent gave grace its scope for heavenly
glory, which the Christian and the church should enjoy now in
faith.

The Bible Treasury, New Series, vol. 1:4, etc.
We have had before us most prominently the West, which among the earthly powers was the chief object for the prophet’s contemplation as unveiled by the Spirit of God in the second and the seventh chapters of Daniel. This is the fourth and last Empire of man, and its revival under Satan’s power, the occasion which will bring the Lord Jesus from heaven (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 17, 19) to the judgment of the world, and to the setting up of what is called in the Revelation, “The world-kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ” (Rev. 11:15). Thence we see the Christ has not yet received His world-kingdom. It is clear that the state of things proclaimed under the seventh trumpet has not arrived, but assuredly it will in due time. It is plainly to be at the end of the present age or dispensation, which is followed by a new “age to come” before the everlasting state.

Now you will find in all these visions of the Book of Daniel, whether made to Nebuchadnezzar or vouchsafed to the prophet, that they look forward to that epoch or what is called in a later chapter, “the time of the end.” As the additional visions are given, further light is afforded or there would be no reason for giving them at all. They all, more or less, evidently end with divine judgment on the power to which they refer. Further it is clear that the vision of which we have been reading in Dan. 8 is of a comparatively limited nature. There is a preliminary review of the second and third empires; and you may wonder why a branch of the third should stretch away to the still future time when the Lord comes in judicial power and glory. But the reason of this will appear presently. You will do well to remember the truth already stated, that these successive world-powers or empires were superseded by one another; but there is no intimation that they lose their existence when they lose their supreme power. They retained a subordinate place after they were subdued; but they are shown to have a continued existence still. This indeed is distinctly stated in Dan. 7:12: “As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.”

Here then we now hear of the Persian empire; where we would draw attention to the fact that Persia is no longer as in Dan. 7 shown as a bear. There the moral judgment of the Holy Spirit expressed itself symbolically about it and the other powers to Daniel. Nor is it either the arms and breast of silver, such as Nebuchadnezzar saw. The glory of Persia is somewhat diminished in comparison with the kingdom of Babylon, under Nebuchadnezzar; but still it was a kingdom of great energy and conquest, especially at first. But why is it here changed from the bear of Daniel in the seventh chapter to be the ram as portrayed in Dan. 8:2. It would appear to be for a very interesting reason. The second and third kingdoms were friendly to Israel in a way that neither Babylon nor Rome could pretend to be. Rome has hitherto and always been the enemy of the Jews. It was Rome that also razed the city and the sanctuary of Jerusalem to its foundations. None save the Edomites have been such unrelenting persecutors of the Jews as the Romans. And so the Rabbins identify Edom of old with Rome in modern times as the unsparing enemy of God’s earthly people repudiated for a while for their sins.

No doubt the guilt of Israel was inexcusable and shameless, but God has not for ever cast off His people whom He foreknew; He may be indignant, but always has pity for them; and He is looking onward to the day when He will gather Israel out of the lands from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Whatever God gives, He stands by it; and sooner or later, when the day comes for His grace to work according to His promise, His call will indeed be effectual. The Jews are enemies now as regards the gospel, and grace brings Gentiles meanwhile to God. But as regards election, they are beloved on account of the fathers. For as the Gentiles once were disobedient to God but now become objects of mercy through Jewish unbelief, even so these were disobedient to your mercy, that they also may become objects of mercy. For God shut up all unto disobedience that He might have mercy on them all. And so, when the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, all Israel shall be saved {Rom. 11:26}. There ought to be no doubt that their call was from God and in the end sure. Every Christian knows it for himself and for the church; but he ought in no way to question it for the Jew. Rom. 11:29 is said by the apostle himself expressly about Israel, though the principle is no less true of ourselves, who should never forget His people, and God’s mercy yet in store for them.

Now there was exceptional kindness on the part of Medo-Persia; and this is seen from the first in the conduct of Darius, who was the first actor of that empire recorded in this book (Dan. 6). If Babylon was the power which became the enslaver and jailor of the Jew, Cyrus was the characteristic restorer of the Jews to their own land; and this in the very first year of his reign. It is clear that the prophecies of God had a powerful influence on him. It is
true he did not know God; but God knew him, and this struck him immensely. He was not disobedient to the vision, as some men nominally Christian are today. Isaiah wrote not his chs. 44, 45 in vain for him. Daniel too was famed among Jews and Gentiles before that day; as the prophets were acquainted one with another, and cherished the highest reverence for such as had gone before. It is only a conceited age that raises up its petty head, and shakes it at the word of God. But what opens the door of true intelligence in the scriptures is on the contrary faith, and as a consequence love for everything of God.

Christ personally is the living bread that came down out of heaven that the eater might live for ever; and such is His written word, the sustenance of that life: not bread, but God’s word; and in such a way as cannot be destroyed, though in detail it may by man be injured as other things. How perverted has Christian baptism been! and the Lord’s supper, in what divergent ways, how deeply! And what shall we say of priesthood, ministry, the church itself, from early centuries? So the word of God may be perverted through either ignorance or craft; not only if truly rendered, it stands, but nothing can be conceived so admirable. Even the scholars of the world cannot rest without being occupied with it. Who in Christendom but literate are cares about the Vedas, or the Avesta? the Yik-king, the Shooking, or the She-king? or about the Koran if we come later? Yes, the remarkable fact confronts us of mere rationalists, who believe in nothing of the Christian truth, spending their lives on the Bible, Old Testament and New. A few scholars may look into the heathen books to see what were the beliefs of ancient races; but think of the many baptised sceptics who give themselves up to the life-long study of the Bible! No doubt they do not lack boldness in treating of the holiest themes; nor are they indisposed to show by their peremptory decisions what wonderful critics they are, as well as the strange shortcomings of others who differ or are opposed to them. What a contrast with the inspired, both in communicating their messages and in estimating the prophets of old!

However, be this as it may, Dan. 7 sets before us a bear and a leopard as the symbols of the Persian and the Macedonian empires, which Dan. 8 represents under a ram and a he-goat. The reason for this change we take to be the close bearing of the latter chapter on Israel, and the kindness shown by those empires in their early days. Cyrus and Darius Hystaspes stand out prominently as their benefactors; and Alexander the Great paid them marked honor, as is known, whether or not we receive the account Josephus gives of the High Priest meeting Alexander and the reverence paid him by the conqueror.

Although viewed before God the Medo-Persia and the Macedonian were but “beasts,” and no better than the Babylonian before and the Roman after, still God did not fail to appreciate kindness done to His chastened people. Hence the change of the symbols in Dan. 8 compared with 7. In this special aspect they are presented as clean animals. First, Medo-Persia is now viewed as a ram, and, secondly, Greece as a he-goat. Whatever might be their consideration of the afflicted Jew, there was no mercy, nor lack of ambitious will one toward another. We have the ram as remarkably described now as the bear had been in the preceding vision. It was necessary to intimate a composite power. In Dan. 7 the bear raised itself on one side. In Dan. 8 the ram had two horns, both high, but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. Nothing like this was the case with the eagle-winged lion of Babylon. Notably distinct was the Greek he-goat, first with one conspicuous horn between his eyes, and later, when it was broken, four of mark (answering to the four heads of the leopard) toward the four winds of the heavens. Still more different was the Roman beast, with its ten horns, and a little one that subsequently overthrew three of the first horns.

Plainly then we herein see the peculiarity of Medo-Persia thus described as a twofold imperial power, and so contrasted with the one before, and the rest that succeeded. This quality belonged to it only. Nor this only: for, as we have read, it is stated carefully that one of the high horns came up after the other, and that the later one became the higher. This was the Persian element, which, though later, surpassed the previous Medish state. There was nothing similar in any other of these world-powers.

Care is taken that one cannot among the nations and kingdoms of the earth find anything really analogous but the Medo-Persian kingdom, thus assailed and superseded by Alexander the Great. He of course is the he-goat’s notable horn. All is contrast. No other horn comes up to dispute with that conspicuous horn. Yet it was broken, as neither Nebuchadnezzar was, nor Cyrus. Alexander did indeed come from the west as one that touched not the ground, and in the fury of his power ran upon the hitherto mighty Persian power that pushed westward, and northward, and southward. Yet in the strangest and saddest way Alexander’s course was cut short as a young man of thirty-two, in the midst of far-reaching plans beyond all his predecessors. And his generals began, as they often do, to fight one with another, if one could not inherit all, which should have the largest possible share of the broken Macedonian or Greek empire. After a few years’ conflict emerged four kingdoms, four notable horns. Give if you can, out of any history, anything that so clearly answers to the vision. The facts are notorious and exactly correspond with the prophecy, and as contrasted as can be conceived with other conquerors in the East. 5

But two of these four horns are specified, and in a

5. “At every step of his course the Greek language and civilization took root and flourished; and after his death Greek kingdoms were formed in all parts of Asia which continued to exist for centuries. By conquests, the knowledge of mankind was increased; the sciences of geography, natural history, and others, received vast additions; and it was through him that a road was opened to India and that Europeans became acquainted with the products of the remote East.” (Sir W. Smith’s Dict. of Greek and Roman Biography, 1, 122, col. 1).
continuous manner beyond example in Dan. 11, whereas in this ch. 8 one only is selected. Why? Because of its bearing upon Israel and their worship in contempt of their God, Who at the set time ("the end of the indignation") will surely judge it. It is not at all here a question of Christianity but of the ancient people, already captive and scattered, a revelation for whose instruction and consolation was given to the prophet. There was then no such thing as the church as we know it now. Only one people had the law of God, yet broken and unhappy, because they had been guilty and even apostate people, priests, and kings. But still they had most of the Old Testament scriptures; and God looked on them with matchless patience. So He is still doing with fallen Christendom in spite of those men whom it ill becomes to fight against Him and His word. And while the Gentiles are being called by the gospel, God has not done with Israel, who are, spite of all, beloved for their fathers’ sake. “The last end of the indignation” is an instructive statement in this very chapter, which shows how God, while cutting off the transgressors of Israel, will yet assuredly accomplish the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For God cleaves to His word and His oath, though we may have to wait for the set time. Israel will yet awake to far greater love than that of the fathers, and on a deeper basis. They are beloved of Christ, and will be brought into living relationship with Jehovah under the new covenant.

It is clear that this time is not yet come. But all these visions bring us down to the border of that wondrous change, if they do not prepare the way for it. Accordingly, toward the end of Dan. 8 in the interpretation given to Daniel, we find not the date named in the vision, which appears to be already verified under Antiochus Epiphanes, the type of the coming foe, with details about this closing personage. The main interest centers in what is still future. There is no excuse for turning back on the past after so close an intimation from Him Who knows. Full information is given immediately after from verse 19, where we read “Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the latter time (or end) of the indignation.” What was the beginning of the indignation? What does “the indignation” mean? It is first employed, similarly applied as far as one knows, in the prophet Isaiah, as you may verify for yourselves in ch. 10 especially: God’s holy displeasure at the persistent idolatry and corruptions of Israel. Therefore did He at length let the Gentiles not only master them but use their victory to expel them from the land. The “end of the indignation” will terminate in their restoration inwardly and outwardly, as all the prophets testify. It has nothing at all to do with the Christian or the church.

Christian interpreters rack their wits in vain to bring in their own relations with God and His Son; and as the Papist tries to fasten on Luther or Mahomet, so do Protestants on the Pope. But this controversial style is a wholly unintelligent way of reading prophecy. Besides, it panders to the selfish and schismatic leaven which alike produced, and is perpetuated in, the anomalous sections of the Christian profession. We surely ought to search and understand the scriptures, having the Holy Spirit to this end among others; and we are bound not to force or twist them, either for outdoing others or for our own comfort. In the gospel we have got good measure, well pressed down, and running over. Being thus blessed as we are in the Lord Jesus and by His perfect work, we ought to be under no temptation to take anything away from Israel. There they are through idolatry first, and rejecting the Christ last, in the worst plight possible, scattered and banished till the latter day, when they must pass through a tribulation unparalleled; and for what could it be but because of national apostasy? They will once more return to idols, little as they think it, and set up “the abomination of desolation” in the sanctuary. They refused the Christ; they will receive the anti-Christ as the retribution. God never chastises nor does He ever give His people up to their enemies, except they flagrantly depart from Himself. Then His aggrieved love proves that He is a jealous God, and has indignation against the enormities of His people. Judgment begins there.

What has all this to do with the Christian or with the church? It was through Israel’s fall that salvation came to the Gentiles, but even thus ultimately to provoke Israel to jealousy, and to display at the end the saving unfailing mercy of God. You may tell me Christians are often unworthy in their ways; and so they indeed are. You may tell me the church has been quite as guilty as ever Israel was in the past; so much, that one, who knew what it was to be alternately a Protestant and a Papist and a freethinker, ventured to say, “The annals of Christendom are the annals of hell.” He who so spoke never knew the Lord in any of his phases; yet his words do not misrepresent Christendom. He was a brilliant historian, but not having the Son of God, he therefore had not God. He could see evil, but knew neither grace nor truth. Thus and there it is, that man’s judgment comes into such collision with everything divine, while believers are bound to judge the wickedness of a hollow Christian profession. “Everyone that is of the truth heareth My (Christ’s) voice.” The only true God is faithful and true, and having given us grace and truth in the Lord Jesus, He calls us to be decided and uncompromising before the world. Begotten by the word of truth, it becomes us to be ever careful about the truth; but where we are not assured of it from God, it were well to wait in silence, yet earnest to learn and confiding in His love.

To resume then, this power that stood up (one of the four from out of the broken Greek empire) has its representative at the end of the indignation. “The ram which thou sawest having two horns; they are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Greece (Javan); and the great horn that was between his eyes is the first king,” Alexander of Macedonia, surnamed the Great.

Now that being broken, whereas four stood up in its stead, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not with his power. And at the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors shall have come to the
full, a king of bold countenance and understanding dark sentences (or riddles) shall stand up.

Who are “the transgressors” in this or in other scriptures? The reprobate among the Jews; and why? Israel only had the law of God given direct to themselves, the violators of which are therefore termed “transgressors.” How does scripture describe Gentiles? “Sinners of the Gentiles,” not transgressors. We of the nations were led away to dumb idols, howsoever we might be led, as the apostle describes it; and by the gospel we were brought straight from idolatry to Christ. Gentiles did not pass through the kind of legal apprenticeship which the children of Israel knew. It is plain that the correct designation of our once heathen state is therefore “sinners of the Gentiles.” Scripture is more accurate than theology or any human authority; and to unlearn current phraseology in divine things is an invaluable Biblical exercise.

The text intimates here that the Jews are at the end of the age to become worse than even now. So said Isaiah and the prophets generally; as our Lord also in the parable, as we may call it, of Matt. 12:43-45. The unclean spirit, which had gone out of the man, but returns to his house, empty, swept, and garnished, takes with him to dwell there seven other spirits worse than himself, and thus the last condition of that man becomes worse than the first. So shall it be to this wicked generation also. “Empty, swept, and garnished” had been, was then, and is now the condition of the Jews. In striking contrast with their ways of old, there has been no idolatry among them for more than 2,000 years. God’s discipline in sending them to Babylon suppressed their inveterate love of strange gods, which were no gods but demons. As a clever Hebrew apologist admitted in the Quarterly Review some few years ago, the Jews that forced Pilate to crucify our Lord, Pharisees, priests, and all, were just like the Jews of the present day. Granted; and therefore did our Lord characterize them as “this wicked generation”; but as He said elsewhere, “This Generation shall not pass away until all these things shall be fulfilled.” It is still the same moral state, till all that the prophets predicted of “the end” be accomplished. This Christ-rejecting generation that crucified Him is going on still; there is the same self-will, the same enmity, against Him Who came to die sacrificially. There is no change for the better, no repentance to believe. The house is still “empty, swept, and garnished.” The Holy Spirit does not dwell there. Consequently the Jews, though fairly moral and clear of idolatry, have no life Godward, and lie open to the final delusion. So the Lord declared there is a sad change coming at the end; and that change is parabolically described by the old unclean spirit accompanying the seven spirits worse than himself, when he returns for the close. How little the Jews believe they are going to establish idols again! Yet this is as certain from various scriptures as anything can be, notably Dan. 9:27, and 11:38, 39, which await their fulfillment. Thus the last state will be worse than the first. But only at that time will deliverance come, as well as destructive judgment for “the many.”

So shall it be also to that wicked generation. Here the transgressors shall come to the full, and God allows the Gentile scourge in “a king of fierce countenance and understanding dark sentences,” who shall stand up.

And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; and he shall . . . corrupt the mighty ones, and the people of the saints.

Scripture describes Israel according to their privileges and moral responsibility, even when they are as far as possible from answering to them.

And through his policy also shall he cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he will magnify himself in his heart; and by peace (or prosperity) will corrupt many; he will also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand (Dan. 8:19-25).

This evil agent is not the wilful king or Antichrist who is to reign in Palestine in that day. It is another king that from without opposes Antichrist, is no less wicked, and perishes as awfully. He is the same who in the last prophecy of Daniel (11:40-45) is called “the king of the north.” Many no doubt are aware that out of Alexander’s broken empire arose the kingdom of Syria which fell to Seleucus Nicator. Of that line Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 11:21-32) persecuted the Jews and insulted the God of Israel beyond all others, and sought to destroy the Jews and their religion. Who was raised up as a stay in that day? A great empire? Nothing of the kind; the Maccabees who knew their God and were strong and active. This movement among the Jews, mingled as it was, is described in Dan. 11:32-35; but we need no more now, as it will come before us later.

The Bible Treasury, New Series 1:86, etc.
INTRODUCTION

There is no prophecy of which the general scope is more certain than this of the Seventy Weeks; yet there are few on which so much debate has wrought, so much difference exists even among genuine believers. This is apt to create a certain measure of prejudice. So slow are our hearts to expect sure light from God, that the existence of a great variety of opinion, more especially if it be in those that love and value the truth, is apt to deter and turn aside even children of God. It ought not to be so; yet it is too often the fact. Yet to exclude part of the truth of God is not faith, but manifestly owing to prejudices or prepossessions; and particularly has it been so in the case of these Seventy Weeks.

But this at least is plain, that what God was here revealing to Daniel He was revealing through His servant to us. There is a snare too prevalent among Christians, now as ever, that they are on the look-out for something to bear upon their own circumstances. They have been apt to consider that the Church of God, being so great an object to God Himself, must therefore be always the foremost thought in prophecy. But this does not follow, nor is it true in the Old Testament. The Church is not properly a subject of prophecy, but part of the mystery for which Scripture left room, and which is now revealed. Yet there may be some here who are under the influence of this opinion, and for their sake especially I may say that, besides salvation, there are two great subjects in the Bible; the one is the kingdom in the Old Testament, and the other is the Church in the New Testament. But nearer to God than the kingdom or the Church there is another object, and this is Christ, who is Savior, as well as Head of the Church, and King not only of Israel but of the nations too. Hence the true key to understanding any part of Scripture, you will find, is to divest yourself as much as possible of any such external prepossession -- in favor, for instance, of either the kingdom on the one hand or the Church on the other -- as would hinder you from seeing that God is first of all thinking of Christ, whatever His special relation may be.

In this scene of the Old Testament we see the true centre -- Christ, but Christ there in view of the kingdom in its earthly aspect; that is, the kingdom of Messiah as the display of the divine power on earth, of which display Israel is the center. Indeed this is what gives us the real importance of either Israel or the Church; it is not because of anything intrinsically deserving in them, but wholly of Christ as connected with each. The moment we see that God is glorifying His Son, we understand that His object in heaven or earth must be Christ.

God, however, takes care that in the Old Testament there are words which could not be understood until the Church or Christianity came in. These words here and there received a blessed meaning when the assembly was introduced. And so with the New Testament: God takes care that none should think that the kingdom is done with. And this was of great importance. God had not abandoned the kingdom. Be it that the Church comes in; but even when it has been revealed fully, the kingdom must come also; so that neither when He was about to form the Church had He dropped the kingdom, nor, on the other hand, when He has brought out all His glorious thoughts as to the Church, has He given up the kingdom. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”

This helps us in the subject before us. If I approach it with the desire of seeing how it applies to me or the Church, I am off the true ground. The translators seem to have turned aside the edge of the passage by trying to make its meaning bear on the Christian Church, whereas you will learn that this adds nothing to us, but rather takes away. Whatever is meant for the Church is given in the best possible way in the Scriptures which speak about the Church: everything from elsewhere is apt to weaken the truth.

I will use no further preface, but at once turn to that which is before us; and I think we shall see at a glance what God has in view in the Seventy Weeks.

DANIEL 9:24

But first of all I would call your attention to the error of regarding the vision as something which one cannot comprehend. The word is, “Understand the matter, and consider the vision.” Further, had it been simply for Daniel’s personal understanding, it would not have been revealed to us. Daniel was inspired by the Holy Ghost to reveal the Seventy Weeks that we might not only read but with intelligence. We may, therefore, look to God tonight to give us such help by grace that we may comprehend this great matter.

And first of all you will notice that in Dan. 9:24 you have the entire period. “Seventy weeks are determined”; which is to say, that from the mass of time God was pleased to cut out a certain portion for a special object; but whether the portion or portions set apart, or cut out, for the object in question -- seventy weeks -- were to be all in consecutive order, or whether there was to be a gap or breach between them remains to be seen. But the first object conveyed is, Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint a Holy of holies.
Thus we have the scope of the vision; but we are not left to conjecture. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people." Whose people? Daniel’s people. The Church? Clearly not. They were the Jews, notoriously at that time in the utmost possible depression -- so completely degraded from the grand position in which God had planted them in their earliest history, that God had at this time taken away His name from them. Gabriel does not say that seventy weeks are determined on “God’s people” or on My people, as if speaking for Him, but on “thy people.” They were only Daniel’s people now. Hosea had predicted this a long time before. He was the instrument in making it known to Israel, a most solemn fact for an Israelite that had the fear of God and felt the just delight that his nation had been singled out from all others to be the people of Jehovah and have Jehovah as their God. But God announced to them by His prophet that they were no longer to be His people, though grace will surely make them so once again. The Seventy Weeks therefore, it will be seen from the very words with which they open, are bound up in the clearest possible manner with the Jewish people.

And now, you observe, they were in captivity. It is true the time was very nearly at hand when God declared that they should return from Babylon; but they were not yet taken from under His sentence. It was just before Jeremiah’s prophecy of seventy years was fulfilled. They were on the eve of closing the seventy years of captivity in Babylon, and Gabriel was sent to announce the “Seventy Weeks” -- that is to say, seventy weeks of years. Of course, these years were on that very same people; but on that people, be it noted, not yet taken from under God’s solemn “Lo-ammi.” Whatever might be His glorious purposes in the future, and whatever His gracious ways with them for the present, still it is distinctly “thy” people -- Daniel’s people. God no longer owns them publicly as His people. No doubt there were believers among them, children of God like Daniel and others (as for instance, his three companions were of similar spirit, having received like precious faith with him); but the angel was not speaking of believers only, but about the Jews as a people.

It is the Jews then who are called, not “My people,” but “thy people” -- Daniel’s people. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city.” Jerusalem, doubtless, is still called a holy city; but it is no longer as God’s own city: it is “thy” -- Daniel’s -- holy city. All this tends to make the great object of the Seventy Weeks perfectly plain. It is not Christianity or the Church that is contemplated, but Jerusalem -- Daniel’s holy city, and Daniel’s people, the Jews.

The Seventy Weeks therefore, it will be seen from the very words with which they open, are bound up in the clearest possible manner with the Jewish people.

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness.

Of the aim one cannot doubt when we look at these expressions as a whole; though we might perhaps have a question if we took up an isolated one. For instance, “to finish the transgression” is, literally, to restrain it. But if one might have a little question about its meaning alone, when he adds, “to make an end of sins,” or, literally, to seal up sins, “and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness,” these words make the bearing perfectly plain. The seventy weeks were determined upon Daniel’s people and Daniel’s holy city to bring in the blessed time of which the prophet spoke -- to fulfil the promises that God from the beginning held out to Israel. This, clearly, is the object; and accordingly we have it both in respect of sins, to close them, and in respect of righteousness, to bring it in, and not only so but to bring it in everlasting (that is, righteousness not only given but also secured for ever). There could be no just question, therefore, that what Daniel was intended to gather, and what faith did gather, from Gabriel’s communication was this, that at the end of these seventy weeks of years the long-promised blessing would be made good to Israel. It is plain however that we must look into the prophecy to see whether the Seventy Weeks were to be continuous; whether or not there intervene a break, an interruption or postponement of some. But at any rate these Seventy Weeks, described as they are here -- for this is all-important for the truth of the prophecy -- must be filled up in all their details for the Jew and Jerusalem. I shall show the importance of this before I have done. Clearly the end of the seventieth week would close, according to the word of God, with the fullness of blessing, and righteous blessing, brought home to Daniel’s people and Daniel’s city.

That is, it is not at all a question of saving souls and bringing them to heaven; it is not here a question, therefore, of the purposes of God in connection with Christ above. It is the earth, and, above all, the well-known city, Jerusalem, and the Jewish people. These are the objects of the prophecy. “And to seal up the vision and prophecy” is another thing, too, confirmatory of what I have said. Prophecy, instead of being given out more, was to be sealed up; the whole thing was to be closed. It implies the completion of what prophets had been raised up to predict; henceforth it was to be sealed up, and a Holy of holies appointed; or, in other words, the unfailling power of the Spirit of God would make the sanctuary of the Lord to be in the fullest sense the most Holy. There is in the phrase a slight difference, which has been used, not only by unbelievers, but even by believers, to bring in confusion. But I do not dwell on small points now, wishing to develop the object of the prophecy in as clear and brief a manner as possible.

Daniel 9:25

Let us examine further. Dan. 9:24 sums up the general scope of the Seventy Weeks; but now we come to look at the parts into which the Seventy Weeks are broken up.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem. Here again we have most abundant confirmation, if this were needed, from the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem. It is not the new and heavenly city, but the old Jerusalem. The end, no doubt, would be Jerusalem brought under the new covenant and the Messiah -- under the sway of the King, when the Lord will reign over Israel; but still it is Jerusalem.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth
of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.

Surely this is a remarkable way of expressing it. The natural mode, it might seem to us, would be sixty-nine or threescore and nine; but not so: it is “seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks.” There is a design in this. God never says a word without a blessed reason -- a wise and gracious motive; and so there is here. In thus naming the seven weeks there is a purpose, which appears in what follows; for we shall find that each of these two portions of time -- the seven weeks, that is, forty-nine years, and then again the sixty-two weeks of years that follow -- has a description that follows, which explains them, and shows the reason of the division, as well as the starting point.

From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

Here is the reason of naming the seven weeks. The rebuilding of Jerusalem, hindered as it might be, was an object of interest to God: His word both predicts and records it.

Sanballat, Tobiah, and their fellows, might show their scorn of the little walls that were rising up. Precious to God was the death of His saints -- their very dust; even then His servants took pleasure in the stones of Jerusalem. So it will be in the day that is coming, when indeed it will be the full accomplishment of what is always before God. But even that which reminded Him, if I may so say, or was at any rate meant to remind Him, that God had purposes of good for His degraded and long guilty Israel -- that God would yet appear for them, and rear up Jerusalem to far more than pristine splendor -- this was before God even then. It is full of interest, and, I think, an instructive thing for us, beloved friends, that God in a day of ruin takes special consideration of what is despised. Nay, I believe further, that what was lowly, and calculated to draw out the indignation of those that hated them, and the scorn of proud men against them, had a very special interest for God, and God reveals it here. We might have thought it not worth while to have spoken of such a thing in a book of prophecy; but God would give ample encouragement to the Jew in the midst of such adversaries. Was it not sweet to them to know that God had told it them beforehand? Were they then to be discouraged? Now the books of Ezra and of Nehemiah particularly throw beautiful light upon the facts which were the accomplishment of this word. There we find the street built again; there we find the details of the wall. We know the different men that took part in building it. We know some women too; for these too were not wanting even for that work. Wherever the heart is in question, you do not find women absent; and so it was that God has taken care to record their names for ever -- those that took part in the building of that very wall, and occupied those very streets in these troublous times.

In short, then, we see these seven weeks are singled out that God might give us not merely a history but a prediction of the troubles. The derision, the hatred, the enmity, the endeavors to destroy, the continual intrigues and plottings in and round the land, the efforts to stir up the court of Persia against them, the carelessness of the people, the faults of the princes, the unfaithfulness of the priests -- all these things counter-worked, the bitterest and most humiliating of all their sorrows being found among themselves -- Daniel’s people, not the Gentiles or even the Samaritans. Here then we have the prediction, not only the history of it; so much does God think of His people in the day of small things. This, I think, explains the reason of the seven weeks.

But now for the sixty-two weeks. What makes up the sixty-two? Ah! here we come to something, I will not say externally grand, but I do say of all moment for God and man; and what was that? The death of the Messiah -- His cutting off. “After the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off.” You will notice the peculiarity of the expression. It is not here said precisely, that He would be led as a lamb to the slaughter. It is not the point that He is to have our iniquities laid upon Him.

“It pleased Jehovah to bruise him.” This is not the way in which it is now spoken of. The death of the Lord Jesus may be looked at in one of two ways; either from God’s side, in the way of atonement, or from man’s side, in the way of rejection. It is in the latter point of view that Daniel was here inspired to predict it. “Messiah shall be cut off.” It is the violence of His death from man’s hatred, and particularly too, as we know, because He had been cut off through the Jewish people -- Daniel’s people. That is the very scene opened here. We find it elsewhere. “After the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.”

Now here I have to call attention to the warping, not to say the blinding, influence of prepossession. Our translators considered that the death of the Messiah could only be viewed as an atonement. I dare say we have known people of similar mind. We have known persons who could not take in the death of the Lord for anything except to atone for sins. That is, being preoccupied with self and the wants of self, they have forgotten that God comprises other views. For instance, God must use the death of the Lord Jesus as a proof of the wickedness of man. This is not atonement, although it be when man is thus guiltily rejecting and slaying the Messiah that God accomplishes atonement. But still, we may look at it on the side of man and man’s wickedness, or on the side of God and God’s grace, which are two different things. In short, the true meaning of the clause is not that which our translators have given. The margin is much more correct -- “and shall have nothing.” I am not aware of any version which, on the whole, presents the true thought more clearly than this.

It has been a matter for a great deal of discussion to many, and particularly among scholars. And my experience, beloved friends -- and I know a little about what these men have said and written -- is this, that there are no men less to be trusted than mere scholars, because, being scholars, they are naturally apt to be proud of their scholarship; and whatever we are proud of is always the very thing in which God will humble us. There is the mistake that Christian people often make. They very often overvalue the knowledge of a little Greek, or less Hebrew. Depend upon it, that to know the English Bible well is far better than to know somewhat of Greek or Hebrew; and I have rarely found that knowing a little of these languages has any other effect ordinarily than to
give a good deal of conceit. It enables persons, of course, to talk about knotty points, especially to those that do not understand them; but I do not think that really profitable for either party. However, I will not expatiate upon this, although no doubt it has its practical lesson, because among active-minded Christians, such as those who are present, there is very often a strong desire to know accurately the things that God wrote. Now, if He give means and opportunity, I would not say a word to discourage; but I do advise you, before you begin, not to expect too much from it. Whatever may be the opportunities that you can look to have for learning, you are never likely to be great scholars. You may learn a little; but you must remember that as those of old who translated the Bible were men of real learning, so you are never likely, in this respect, to compare with them; nor can you hope to get by such study beyond what you have already got in the English Bible.

Is there no means then of getting further light? Certainly, and here we have a little help in the margin; for God takes care, in His grace, to raise up persons who, perhaps, spend a great deal of a long, laborious, and uninterrupted life in many of these pursuits; but even this would enable them, you may depend upon it, only to speak with considerable moderation. I think you will find that persons who know most are apt to speak most moderately. They are diffident, after all, as to their own judgment; and although they would give it where it is called for, they would not pronounce so dogmatically as a learner. Through such helps God corrects mistakes for His people.

I say then that the margin here gives the scope, in my opinion, more exactly; for it is not a question at all of the Messiah not being cut off for Himself. The thought would thus be that He was cut off for other people. This is the implication, as it seems to me, of our version — “but not for himself.” He was cut off for our sins. He suffered in atonement for our iniquities. Thus they only viewed the death of Christ in the light of expiation. But not so. The meaning is, that Messiah should be cut off and have nothing; that is, His inheritance is completely gone, His people refusing Him, His land not possessed, His kingdom denied, everything that belonged to Messiah taken away from Him. It was not only that Christ met with a violent death, but there was no repentance on the part of the people afterwards. Their cry was, “His blood be on us and on our children.” Was this atoning blood? or was it not the expression of utter unbelief and the occasion of divine judgment? The Lord told them that He was about to leave their house desolate. He would not call it His Father’s house now but “their” house, and they should not see Him henceforth till they should say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” And they will say so in the day that is coming; but this day is not yet come. Consequently, after the Lord was cut off on the cross, we see the Jewish people persisting in the same unbelief which put Him to that shameful death. They gave Him up then to the hands of lawless men -- the Romans, insisting on His crucifixion. And this is the point that the Spirit of God reveals here. He “shall be cut off, and shall have nothing.” The literal meaning, though you must not suppose that the literal meaning is always the best way of rendering words -- is this, “And it shall not be to him.” This, of course, conveys no intelligible idea to most readers; but I presume that the meaning of the Hebrew idiom is, that nothing He could claim as His should belong to Him. He had now lost everything, as far as man was concerned. The Jews had risen up in rebellion against their own King, their own Messiah, the anointed Prince. They had put Him to death on the cross, and He had nothing. All the earthly hopes of Israel were buried in the grave of the Messiah. But it did not at all contradict what God shows elsewhere, that He will revive them in the end, and set them upon a solid basis that never can be shaken -- that He will Himself see to it, and found it in pure grace upon that very cross, but the cross as used by God and not by man. Man used it to reject the Messiah. God will use it as a foundation for the kingdom in power and glory by-and-by, just as He has made it the foundation for our salvation and bringing us to heaven. But this is not what is spoken of here. All the vision makes known is what concerns Daniel’s people and Daniel’s city. And how did the cutting off of Messiah affect them? In rejecting Him they lost their place and nation. It was not only that He had nothing of all His earthly kingdom, but that they lost everything along with Him; and this is shown more fully afterwards.

DANIEL 9:26

“And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city.” Now, I ask, when did this come to pass? Clearly at the destruction of Jerusalem. We have seen that the cutting off of the Messiah was after the sixty-two weeks in addition to the seven (or sixty-nine weeks). Here is an interruption, and there could not be a more admirable place for marking the course of the seventy weeks as stopped. The death of the Messiah was a clean breach, not only between God and man, but very particularly between God and Daniel’s people and so-called holy city. Daniel’s people, Daniel’s holy city, rose up against their own Messiah, and crucified Him. Consequently, sixty-nine weeks having run out now, it was “after” that period. He does not say exactly at the sixty-ninth, but afterwards. That is, there is room left for a space, less or more: God does not say how long or how short. All we can surely gather from prophecy is this: Messiah was not to be cut off till after the sixty-nine weeks. “After” that time, be the interval less or more, Messiah was to be cut off, and He was to have nothing. And then the next thing of which we hear is an event that took place some forty years, we may say in a general way, afterwards; namely, the destruction of Jerusalem.

Hence it is evident that the past siege has nothing to do with the line of these weeks. Their course is interrupted. The last link of the chain was broken after the Messiah’s cutting off. The course of the sixty-nine weeks till then has been uninterrupted; but now the gap comes in. It is created by the death of Messiah; and the next thing that we hear of is, that “the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city.” What people is here meant? The Roman people. Mark, he does not say that the prince shall come and destroy. He avoids saying so. The people of the future prince -- “the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy.” There is the most guarded care not to tell us that the prince came then, but only that “the people” of the coming prince would then come for their destined work of destruction. And this is so true that, although they had a prince at their head, the prince who then came up in command of the Romans was anxious not
to destroy all. The great desire of Titus, as everybody who knows history must be aware, was to spare the temple; but, as the well-known historian of the Jews [Josephus] tells us, a Roman soldier flung a firebrand into the temple, and the consequence was that, in spite of the efforts of the Roman commander, it was thoroughly consumed.

Thus, you see, Titus is not the prince that is meant here at all. It is a prince that was coming after the people came. His people were to destroy the city and the sanctuary, and so they did. The Romans came up, were manifestly used as the executors of God’s vengeance against the Jews, and did destroy the city and the sanctuary, as the prophecy declares.

But there is a coming prince. A prince of whom? Of Israel? No; of the Romans. That prince has never yet come, and to this I call your particular attention. We have had the Messiah, the Prince; but He is the One that was cut off. Here we have a prince spoken of as coming after Messiah had come and been cut off. His people came and destroyed the city and the sanctuary; but he himself is not come. He was yet to be born. It is a future prince -- a Roman prince; and this is the great link for which Satan is waiting. When the prince lifts up his head, Satan means to put forth his power in a way that he has never yet been able to do. He is coming. “The people of the prince that shall come” -- or of a prince that shall come -- “shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood.” The destruction of Jerusalem was not at all to be the end of Jerusalem’s sorrows. “The end thereof shall be with a flood,” just like water that does not come down in one sudden shower merely, but in an overwhelming flood. “And unto the end war, desolations, are determined.” That is, you have a long vista of things desolate as well as war, and this decreed, impending over Jerusalem after the destruction of it by the Romans.

Such has been the history of Jerusalem. What has it been up to the present day, but a city evidently and always under the abiding wrath of God! None but the enemies of God have been allowed to possess it. Nominal Christians, you know, took possession of it for a short time; but they were comparatively soon turned out, and the most violent enemies of Christianity, and especially of the Jews, as the rule, have followed. Even the nominal Christians hated the Jews. Thus Daniel’s people have never had any except their bitterest enemies there, whether they might be Christians who attempted to found their supposed Christian kingdom, or Saracens, or Turks that hold Jerusalem up to the present moment. To the end of the war desolations are determined”; even as we have nothing but disaster threatened upon Jerusalem, so we also see how evidently this prophecy has nothing at all to do with the Church. It is Daniel’s people, and Daniel’s holy city.

DANIEL 9:27

But now we come to the last verse {Dan. 9:27}: “And he shall confirm the covenant.” Who is he? Why, the last person just named of course. Who is that? “The prince that shall come.” It is the Roman prince; and there is what has made the difficulty for most people in reading this prophecy, and made it impenetrable. They have actually confounded the Roman prince with the Messiah. They have not seen the Roman prince at all. They thought it must be Messiah that was to confirm the covenant. They had the new covenant in their minds, and therefore they could not understand. But where would be the good of a new covenant for “one week”? A covenant for the soul -- a covenant for our sins -- a covenant for the glory of God -- how could this avail only for seven years? Where would be the sense of it? No; it is not Messiah. The Spirit of God here speaks of another prince, and a counter-prince -- a prince that will ruin the people instead of loving them -- a prince to be connected with the people that destroyed the city and sanctuary instead of building either up. Messiah is to build the temple; Messiah is to sit on the throne of His glory, and build it up another day. But this is to be an adversary of the Messiah -- one of His great antagonists; for I suppose, not to speak of an antagonist opposed to both, that two will be at work on the same side; there will be a religious chief, and a political chief: -- a fact indeed of great importance for understanding, not only this Scripture, but prophecy in general. If the religious chief is to have his seat at Jerusalem, the political chief {Rev. 13:1-11} will have his seat at Rome (that is to say, “the prince that shall come,” or the Roman prince). The prince of Jerusalem would not be described as either coming or making a covenant with his own people. This, of course, would be quite senseless. A reigning prince does not make a covenant with his own people. He makes laws, and he sees to the execution of his laws. But we can understand a league, treaty, or alliance, whatever the form of it may be, with another people. Thus every word confirms what I have said -- that the person spoken of in the 27th verse does not mean the Messiah, who is the prince of Israel; nay, he does not mean the Antichrist, or the false prince of Israel who will be reigning by-and-by in Jerusalem; but the Roman prince, or “the beast,” the prince that shall come in the closing crisis.

A Seven Year Covenant Confirmed. When he is come, then, he shall confirm a covenant with the many “for one week.” This is the last week. Here again we see that the last week was severed from the chain of the sixty-nine. The first sixty-nine weeks ran without a break to the cutting off of Messiah. After the sixty-nine He was cut off. Then was the snapping of the connection of the last week from the chain. That week remains to be accomplished in due time; and as the first sixty-nine weeks ran out before Christ’s death, the last week is occupied with the Roman antagonist of Christ -- the future political chief of the Roman empire who covenants with the mass of Daniel’s people, Daniel’s holy city. But then the end of that seventieth week is that the Messiah comes in power and glory; and in spite of the efforts of those that help or hinder, and the excessive wickedness then to be found in Jerusalem, all the promises will be accomplished. The Seventy Weeks will be fulfilled, and divine blessing will follow.

Who can deny a great gap? and in the midst of that gap what has come in? Christianity, the calling of the Church. This it is fills up the space between the sixty-ninth week and the seventieth; so that God is always actively working in His own grace and wisdom. Not a hint of this grace to the Gentiles appears here where the prophet speak, only of Messiah’s rejection, and the consequent desolation of Jerusalem. Up to the sixty-ninth week it was a question of that poor people being delivered; but they trusted instead to the will of men and their own will to their utter ruin. They were
slaves of Satan. The moment you get man's will you will always find Satan's service. Yet so it was. Satan hastened to take possession of that people too glad to throw off Jehovah, as it were, from making use of them as His goodly horse; and on the back of Judah vaulted Satan who thereon became their master and lord. Only there are greater abominations in store.

When and what will these greater abominations be? for such is not the case now. The Jews are what you may call decent people as yet. They are not worshipping stocks and stones. The unclean spirit that possessed them is gone. He left them, as our Lord intimated, after the Babylonish captivity, and he has stayed away for many hundred years. The house is still empty, swept and garnished; but He told them that the unclean spirit shall return, and return not as he went out, but with seven spirits worse than himself. The full power of Satan would accompany the unclean spirit in taking once more possession of Judaism. This is to be in the seventieth week.

Let us look a little more into details. “And he,” this prince, “shall confirm a covenant.” It does not mean the covenant. There is no such word there as the definite article. It is corrected in the margin. This is another case in which the margin gives a sense better than the text. You cannot always expect that; for sometimes the text is far better than the margin. But here we have two instances in this very prophecy where the margin is undoubtedly accurate. He shall confirm a covenant. Man is never to be trusted; and so, whatever the appearances may say, the Roman emperor is yet to make a covenant with the Jewish people to let them have their own religion -- to sanction its exercise in their own city, and in their own sanctuary. For this, I apprehend, is what the covenant was about. “He shall make a strong covenant with the many.” “The many” means the mass of the Jewish people; and the mass of the Jewish people are thus singled out for the reason that there will be some who will not trust the prince. There will be godly ones at this very time truly looking to the Lord. There will be a [faithful Jewish] remnant, whose minds will turn towards Him and His coming; and the Lord will be working in them to draw forth that cry, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” They are looking for another prince; they are looking for Messiah the Prince; they are looking for Him whom their fathers pierced, whom they will acknowledge they pierced themselves when He appears in glory. And for this very reason, though they are only gradually rising, as it were, out of their long slumber of unbelief -- for this reason, being born of God, they distrust the arm of flesh. They look for promotion neither to the north, nor to the east, nor to the west. They cry to Jehovah; and accordingly a covenant with the Roman prince does not satisfy them but the mass of the Jews, corrupt and about to apostatize.

“He shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week.” For the present, however, he engages to let the Jews have their own worship for the space of seven years.

The Middle of the Seven Year Period. “And in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” It is not Christ doing so by His death, which is the very perverse meaning tradition has put on this passage. Why, the cross had taken place many hundreds of years before -- we may say nearly two thousand years before. We have seen in the beginning of the 26th verse “Messiah shall be cut off, and shall have nothing”; and then followed disasters on the Jewish people and city and temple. When finally we plunge into the last week, it is the latter day, the end of the age; and this Roman prince comes forward, who makes a covenant with the mass of the Jews (that is, the unbelieving portion of them or the great majority of the nation); and he promises to let them have their own worship undisturbed, but in the midst he breaks it. Men cannot be trusted in divine things. Even when they agree together against our Lord Jesus, their witness is not true. Man never succeeds where it is a question of God. The only hope for man is God Himself; and the only way in which God will make good his hopes is by his bowing to Christ Himself.

Now there was just the secret: Christ was a stone of stumbling, and the Jews would not have Him. By-and-by they fall not only under the wilful king [Dan. 11:36], the Antichrist [2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13:1ff] in Jerusalem, but besides there will be the Roman prince-- the revived imperial head -- the great leader of the western powers in the day that is coming [Rev. 13:1-11]. Ere long he stops their worship, he will impose idolatry once more. “He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease” -- the general expression, you know, for the various offerings that the Jews presented to God. God will not be with their effort: it is not really in the current of God’s ways. The time is not come. It is not a question of their offering sacrifice and oblation, but of their repenting and receiving Christ -- of their finding out their sins, and looking to God about them. But no, they have trusted the prophet-king [the Antichrist] in Jerusalem, and they have trusted the emperor in Rome; and this is the result from them both: “He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.”

One is sorry, where much is excellent in combating rationalism, to have to complain of the way in which a learned person here deserts his text, and mixes up without the least warrant the middle of verse 27 with the first clause of verse 26, to the total confusion of God’s word. The most ancient commentary extant (Hippolytus, Rom. de Antichristo), which even at Rome, in 1772, they printed along with the true and lately-found Septuagintal version of Daniel, might have guarded him from an error as popular now-a-days and long- prevalent as it is grave and obvious.

The entire cessation (says Dr. Pusey, Lectures on Daniel, p. 184) of the bloody sacrifices of the law has a two-fold aspect -- of mercy and of judgment. To those who have believed in Jesus, He caused the sacrifice and oblation of the law to cease by replacing the shadows, which portrayed His atoning sacrifice, by Himself, the substance, offering Himself once for all, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. To the Jews, who rejected Him, He caused sacrifice and oblation to cease by the destruction of the temple and city, and the dispersion of the people. On this, the death of the Messiah, follows the sentence of that utter destruction of the city and temple. Quite true; but the cessation of sacrifice and oblation stands in a wholly distinct connection, and as evidently after the Roman destruction of the city, and in the midst of an entirely novel state of things, as the cutting off of Messiah is before that destruction. Is it not serious to bring in the cessation of the Jewish ritual where Scripture is silent, and to avoid speaking of it where Scripture expressly asserts it?
It is agreed that the central unmistakable prophecy lies in the connection of the destruction of the temple and city with their great sin, the cutting off of Messiah, and that the connection here is not of time, but of cause and effect. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) is carefully intimated to be within the gap after the sixty-nine weeks close, and before the seventieth begins. Some forty years, as we know, followed the sixty-ninth week, and the Romans came and took away both their place and nation. Ever since war, desolatencies, have not been more surely decreed than accomplished.

But the seventieth week awaits its fulfillment; and it clearly supposes two immense changes still in the womb of the future, but as sure to be in the appointed hour, the end of this age, as every other word of the prediction. The Roman empire, or fourth beast, is to ascend out of the abyss, as St. John declares in the Revelation, to revive, after its long state of nonexistence, before it consummates its iniquity against the returning Lord Jesus as it did of old in His cross. "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and "[not "yet is," but] "shall be present."

This is one mighty change, pregnant with awful effects for mankind in general, and especially in these lands of the west; but there is to be another equally sure -- the return of the Jews in unbelief into their own land by political means, and to the destruction of the mass when the Lord appears to the judgment of the beast and the false prophet, with all their adherents, and the deliverance of a godly remnant. The beast of Rev. 13, 17 is the Roman empire, and the "coming prince" of the seventy weeks is none other than its last head, who is to confirm a covenant for the last week (or seven years) with the mass of the Jews, and break it in the midst, causing sacrifice and oblation to cease; when we see the last half-week of tribulation follow, or the three and a half years of Daniel and the Apocalypse.

The prophet does not say, but carefully avoids saying, what Dr. Pusey makes him say (p. 188), that "in the last seven" of the 490 years Messiah was to be cut off, or that in the midst of those seven He was to make sacrifice to cease; but to confirm a covenant, not with all, but with the many. It has been shown fully that not the foreign or Roman prince, but his people, were to come, as they did, and waste city and sanctuary, with war and desolatencies decreed to the end; and that this prince himself is to confirm covenant for seven years before this age concludes with the many of the Jews, but break covenant, and protect idols or abominations, and not without the guilty consent of the Jews; so that a desolator will come upon the desolate city, but a desolator quite as opposed to the Roman prince as to his associate, the false prophet-king in Jerusalem.

This alone squares with the grammatical context, with the scheme of prophecy in general, with a covenant for seven years (which most would think distinct enough from an everlasting one like Messiah’s), and with the evil character of “the many” in our prophet. The reader can compare “the many,” or mass, in Dan. 9:27, 11:33, 39, and 12:3, with Dan. 11:34, 44, and 12:2, 4, 10, where the article is absent and no such sense is intended. “The many” cannot be viewed as the same with “many,” but in contrast with the remnant who bow and taste the mercy of the Lord, who certainly are not to know sins ended, expiation for iniquity made, everlasting righteousness brought in, any more than vision and prophecy sealed up, or holy of holies anointed, till the seventy weeks are complete. The destruction and last ing desolati on of the city and temple are not closing traits of the vision, but during a timeless gap after the sixty-ninth week and before the seventieth. Nor is there to be consolation for Daniel, or at least for his people as such, till all the weeks are ended. No doubt we Christians enter into the blessing, while the gap goes on for the Jew; and because we by grace believe, sin is brought to an end for us, and everlasting righteousness brought in -- not a covenant for seven years, which no scripture connects with Christ. But for the Jew it is desolation, with worse to come, when the foreign prince of Rome confirms covenant “for one week” with them, and yet breaks it off in the midst -- a covenant which is plainly not the new covenant, but merely a human convention for seven years liberty to worship after the Jewish sort. Compare Dan. 7:25 for the Roman prince’s changing times and laws, and at this very epoch and for the remaining half-week. It is the Jewish laws and seasons, not the saints, which shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of times {i.e., the last half-week}. It is the more to be regretted that one should find such mistaken interpretation here, especially as Dr. Pusey does not deny, but seems to look for the Jews anew acquiring property in Jerusalem, “preparing the way probably for Antichrist” (page 189, note).

The Abomination and the Desolator. But here we come to a very difficult phrase indeed. I am afraid the margin does not help us now: but I will endeavor to render a little aid. I have no doubt God has given special light for the moment out of His word; and you must remember that Christian people have been examining carefully our English version for the last 250 years since the translation was made. We must not be surprised therefore, if faults have been found in such a long period of examination, where such vast numbers study, men of prayer as well as of spiritual ability, some few mighty in the word of God.

The literal meaning of the clause is this:

Upon the wing of abominations a desolator.

Here as often the literal way of rendering it gives but little notion of the sense; but the truth of it is that “wing” is used figuratively. Now there are two ways in which a wing is thus used in Scripture. From the expanded wing, it may be either for the wider extension of anything or for protecting, as when the hen spreads her wing over her chickens. Thus the figure is frequently used as where the Lord speaks of the bird and her young, and so on. In this case, to spread a wing over signifies to protect the weak in the hour of danger or the like. It is thus used in a good sense, which is one use of the word wing; but there is another use, where it is rather the idea of overspreading from spreading out the wing. Here our translators considered that the word meant the overspreading of the desolations. They took the word “wing” to indicate the
They must then have reality, and when the forms are not filled end find their level before God when they take up forms. If nothing more, but forms do not last; and men in the it might be said to be, as far as it went, true in the way of power, no acceptance. But still, after all, it was sincere; and with truth, they discard the form for error, because error is more congenial to the heart of man in his natural state. Hence God among the Jews, but countenanced idolatry in their midst.

Isaiah calls it, "a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell"; and he speaks of this very time, this very people, and this very circumstance. Isa. 28 will furnish you with the most important commentary on, or further confirmation of, the expression.

Let us then consider what the meaning is that we have gathered from all. "And on account of the protection of idols"; that is, because the Roman prince, along with his ally in Jerusalem, had not only interrupted the nominal worship of God among the Jews, but countenanced idolatry in their midst. The worship of God, begun in unbelief, had no value, no power, no acceptance. But still, after all, it was sincere; and it might be said to be, as far as it went, true in the way of form, if nothing more. But forms do not last; and men in the end find their level before God when they take up forms. They must then have reality. and when the forms are not filled with truth, they dis card the form for error, because error is more congenial to the heart of man in his natural state. Hence therefore they have determined to put an end to these forms of the worship of the true God. The emperor of Rome -- along with the Antichrist his ally in Jerusalem, the great spiritual chief at that time, the religious head of the world -- agrees to set up idols in the temple of Jerusalem. The latter finally sets himself up as an object of divine worship. This is the man of sin, man worshipped as God in the temple (2 Thess. 2).

But Daniel does not give all these details. We only hear that in the midst of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease, and on account of the protection of idols [there shall be] a desolator. You may remember the same general truth elsewhere as "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." It is the same time and the very same place. Compare, with Matt. 24:15, Rev. 13:14, 15. Because of the protection (which I take to be the meaning of the word "wing") given to these idols, there will be a desolator. A great scourge will be sent in the providence of God to chasten them. That desolator I hold to be what is called "the king of the north" (Dan. 11). He is the person that is referred to here; so that, in a few brief words, we have a reference and an insight to a great mass of facts in Scripture. A desolator is sent down; and you will find that in Isa. 28, to which I have called your attention already, where you have this "covenant of death and agreement with hell," you have an "overflowing scourge," the very personage that is called here a desolator.

It is a power from the north, the sovereign of Asia Minor acting under Russian influence. I do not say that it is Russia; but I do say that it is a power completely carrying out the designs of Russia, which is no less jealous of the western powers than anxious to get Jerusalem under its sway. And then they will think they have got a case, and that it is their bounden duty to interfere. Here is the emperor of the west supporting the king in Jerusalem, who is setting up idols and himself in the temple there. The emperor of Russia will not allow this, and he seizes the fact as an opportunity for carrying out his own ambitious designs. His care is not for God; but he makes this his occasion. Men must, of course, always have some plausible excuse for aggrandizement; and this will be the plea. It seems a righteous one; and, having a ground of righteousness in it, God favors it at the beginning. As far as there is righteousness, God always goes so far with it, no matter who they are. Suppose even a child of God, but that what he does will not stand scrutiny; does not God chasten for that bit of unrighteousness? Always. It may be that other people take advantage of the unrighteousness. God will deal with them afterwards; but He will chastise the righteous first. (Cf. 1 Peter 4.)

Here then, where all is bad, God permits these men to show themselves out; and, first of all, He judges and scourges the infamous alliance between the people in Jerusalem and the emperor of the west. The desolator comes down from the north, takes Jerusalem in part, and leads into captivity a certain portion (Zech. 14). Excited with hopes, and filled with the highest expectations of success, he goes down into Egypt (Dan. 11) -- as we are told in the last prophecy of this book -- to punish the king of the south (that is, the king of Egypt) in that day. In the meanwhile Christ appears and destroys the antichrist. It is the day of the Lord and of His glory; and when the king of the north comes up again, it is not a question of the emperor of the west, for he is gone; it is not a question of the king of the Jews, for he is destroyed. The northern foe too meets the Highest, and the question is decided. He is cast into Tophet. How worthy of God when the day is come to judge the quick!

This therefore is the point, although it be not all entered into here; but you will see the general facts. "On account of the protection of idols [there shall be] a desolator until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate," that is, upon Jerusalem.

Thus, then, beloved friends, I have given as succinctly, and at the same time with as much clearness, as I was capable of, the general meaning of the prophecy. May the Lord help you, in reading His word, to be more and more strengthened in your souls, and may you be enabled also to see MORE THE CONNECTION WITH CHRIST, AND SO THE DEPTH, OF THE WORD OF GOD.
One of our sages, the founder of inductive philosophy, distinguishes between divine prophecies, and such as have been of certain memory and from hidden causes. These were no better than probable conjectures or obscure traditions that many times turn themselves into prophecies. Lord Verulam undoubtedly was a man of profound thought, and (whatever his sad failure) a great deal wiser than those who now in effect deny divine prophecy altogether, and merely show themselves out as unbelievers. Now unbelief is an insult to God and His word and not merely so, but along with it goes as the rule ignorance of Christ and of redemption. Everything is shaken thereby; for the moment you begin to cavil at Scripture, where is the line to be drawn? It is no better if you question the beginning. You may begin with Genesis; for the same principle is apt to carry the mind in doubt throughout the Bible to Revelation. There is abundant evidence for Scripture, more by far than for any books of antiquity; but evidence of an external sort never raises you to faith. Scripture claims to be the written word of God and carries its own evidence as light to the conscience. Unless received on its own divine authority, men do not really believe it savingly. They may readily allow that it has a character intrinsically superior to other so-called sacred books. But this makes it only a question of old Hebrew sages or of those who wrote in Christian times, who were better or abler men.

THE HISTORY OF THE KINGS OF THE north AND south

In the prophecy which now claims our attention we have as nearly as possible the language of history. We have seen the symbolic style in the earlier visions of the book. Dan. 9 is transitional, the weeks being in a measure enigmatic; the rest plain language with figures interspersed, as in all the interpretations. The peculiarity of Dan. 11 and 12, like Dan. 9, is in leaving symbolic form for the language of every day on historical matters. Thus we have a succession of kings in a double contemporary series, north and south of the holy land, which was beyond controversy God’s center on the earth. We must therefore look up or down from that fixed point.

Here we find a striking introduction before we hear of kings of the north and the south. “And now will I show you the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia.” Cyrus was then the great ruling personage. Darius was in honor only as a sort of complementary king; the conqueror of Babylon put him forward in recognition of the Medes who joined his standard, whatever may have been the exact family tie which bound them together. For scripture is silent, and the facts are by no means cleared by the profane writers of history. As Ctesias says that Cyrus made his own grandfather, the dethroned king of the Medes a satrap, it is not improbable that he is Darius the Mede of the prophecy. Probably it seems that Astyages’ daughter Mandane married Cambyses II., father of Cyrus, whom Herodotus mentions as a Persian noble, the monuments as the king, which appears to have been the fact. However this be, Cyrus was a man of real and widely extended power. Thenceforward Scripture proof of the succession appears in Ezra 4.

First we have Ahasuerus, the unworthy son of a great father, here (Ezra 4:6) called Ahasuerus, or Cambyses as he is named in ordinary history. It was not he that disturbed the Jewish remnant, after their restoration, but the usurper who followed him when the Samaritan enemies of Israel appealed to stop the work of rebuilding the temple and the city. This work Artaxerxes (Smerdis Magus) (Ezra 4:7-23) was the more ready to thwart, as he being a Mede paid no regard to the policy of Cyrus, whose son, Cambyses, did; he would be disposed naturally to reactionary measures. Darius Hystaspis became king on the revolt which set aside the pseudo-Smerdis; and he is the king of Persia who confirmed the decree of Cyrus. See Ezra 5:5, 24, and chs. 5, 6. This Darius H. is the third in Dan. 11:2, that is, the third after Cyrus the Great.

“The fourth,” it is said, “shall be far richer than they all.” This proverbially rich king of Persia was Xerxes, who tried to follow his father’s enmity to Athens (defeated at Marathon, B.C. 490), and strike the Greeks a death-blow. “And when he is waxed strong through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.” He likewise was defeated at the famous battles of Salamis and Platæa, B.C. 480, 479. How exact and terse is the prophet’s sketch! “By his strength through his riches.” It was not skill or force of arms, but wealth that mustered the vast hosts of barbarians. But his enormous armies, far greater than those of his father Darius, were unavailing. Luxury had enervated those once hardy warriors. And now also they had overstepped their limits. Whilst they pushed their dominions through Western Asia, God in His providence was with them; but when they sought the sea and Europe, by rushing into Greece, they laid the foundation of that enmity which found its vent in Alexander the Great, who led the Greeks and his own Macedonian forces against the East. The great battles at the Granicus, and at Issus, and at Arbela resulted in the total overthrow of the Persian empire. See how clearly this is set out in a few words in Dan. 11:3: “And a mighty king (Alexander) shall stand up that shall rule with great dominion and do according to his will.” But what about his own dynasty? “And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; but not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion wherewith he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides these”
(Dan. 11:4). This was all verified to the letter.

Thus are we brought to the desired two out of the four parts of Alexander's kingdom -- Syria in the North, Egypt in the South. And a most characteristic sketch it is. Gibbon, the skeptical historian, says in his sneering way that Daniel "is too exact for a prophet." "The four empires are clearly delineated: the expedition of Xerxes into Greece; the rapid conquest of Persia by Alexander; his untimely death without posterity; the division of his monarchy into four kingdoms, one of which, Egypt, is mentioned by name; then various wars and inter-marriages; the persecution of Antiochus; the profanation of the temple; and the invincible arms of the Romans are described with as much clearness as in the histories of Justin and Dio. From such a perfect resemblance the artful infidel would infer that both alike were composed after the event" (G. to Hurd, Works, v. 365).

Certain it is that the Lord does authenticate "Daniel the prophet" to every believer, who finds here in short compass a sketch more simple, consecutive, and correct than in all the historians put together, and with slight exception in the common style of history. This is admittedly a feature unusual in prophecy; and because of this some have rashly yielded to incredulity. Dr. Arnold was thus misled; for no piety can quite undo the poisonous effects of unbelief.

But no Christian can doubt that it is as easy for God to give a consecutive anticipation as a single luminous picture. It is the general way of prophecy, no doubt, to hurry on to the judgment, and the blessing that follows the Lord's intervention at the close, as being of supreme importance. But there was good reason in His eyes to give at this junction an account of the kings, north and south of Palestine, and their mutual struggles and alliances, sometimes sought to be cemented by marriage. We have these movements traced with precision; nothing in history can be more exact. Name if you are able any great writer on that time, who gives facts with as great accuracy, simplicity, and clearness, as this chapter.

Take the following curt summary: Dan. 11:5 presents Ptolemy Lagi, one of Alexander's chief captains, in remarkable strength; yet another about to be stronger than he, and to have a great dominion, the first Seleucus surnamed Nicator. In Dan. 11:6 after an indicated space we hear of an endeavor to patch up the jealousy which from earliest days had arisen about the land which lay between these powers, when Ptol. Philadephus gave his daughter Berenice to Antiochus Theus. But Laodice, the injured first wife, brought all to nought and worse than ever by restoration to the northern king's favor, when she poisoned those from the south as well as her husband and Berenice's son. Dan. 11:7 and 8 tell us of "a shoot" from Berenice's roots, Ptol. Euergetes, avenging her wrongs, when Sel. Callinicus reigned in the north, and gained great successes over the north, surviving his adversary and returning to his own land (Dan. 11:9). Then in Dan. 11:10 we have the efforts of Sel. Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great against the south, the latter of whom alone recovered Seleucia; so that even Ptol. Philopator, inerr as he was, got enraged (Dan. 11:11), and Antiochus after various successes sustained an utter rout at Raphia (Dan. 11:12). But no fruit remained to the Egyptian king, especially as he oppressed the Jews; but Ant. waited till he could fall on his infant nephew when the Jews revolted (Dan. 11:13, 14), and he took Sidon (Dan. 11:15), notwithstanding all Egypt could do to hinder (defeated at Panium), and he visited the land of beauty (Dan. 11:16). In Dan. 11:17 we hear of his fair words but foul intrigues through Cleopatra, who thwarted his craft; as in Dan. 11:18 his invasion of the isles of Greece was stopped by a Roman chief in the person of Quinctius the Consul at the Isthmus. Inglorious defeat sealed his stumble and fall (Dan. 11:19). Dan. 11:20 briefly tells us of his son Sel. Philopator, overloaded with tribute, as is here strikingly noticed, who fell through his "exactor," Heliodorus. From Dan. 11:21 to 32 inclusively follows the account of his brother Antiochus Epiphanes with a detail beyond all before, as being the foe not only of the Jews but of their God, the living God. Demetrius was the true heir. "A person vile" indeed was their supplanter. His deceit was as great against his nephew of Egypt as against his brother. At length "ships of Chittim came against him" (Dan. 11:30), as against his ancestor. The Romans compelled him to retire from Egypt; and he vented his indignation on the Jews; as later on by his order "the abomination that maketh desolate" was set up in the temple through apostates that helped him, though valiant opposition was not wanting.

If one ventured to enter into the details of those successive kings, it would take considerably more space than can now be given. But the last king of the north stands out from all the rest.

Many were bad enough, violent or corrupt. Sons did not mind marrying their sisters or other nearest relations. Some led deplorably abominable lives, and were a curse to their subjects and neighbors, even more than to their enemies. God had said that Egypt was to be a base kingdom, and no ruler of their race was to reign any longer. No wonder that those kings of the south failed; for instead of raising up Egypt to their own fancied superiority as foreigners, they sunk it to the uttermost, naturally turning to most unnatural evils. Such was the race of Ptolemy.

The worst of the Seleucidae was Antiochus Epiphanes, called by others Epimanes or the madman. This man went far in his endeavors to stamp out not only the Jews but also the Jewish religion. He placed a statue of Zeus Olympius in the most holy place, and did what none but the most profane men would have thought of -- put swine's flesh and blood in the sanctuary of God. The consequence is that his history is dwelt on with greater minuteness than anyone's. But the resistance to his aim at the close of his history led to a famous revival amongst the Jews. The Maccabees, as the Jewish heroes were called, resisted his generals, which is what is meant by "arms shall stand on his part" -- a sufficiently definite way of describing a general acting for him against the Maccabees. Their history is given among the uninspired books that compose the Apocrypha. These Maccabees were no models of piety or long-suffering; but, as Daniel says, they were strong and "did [exploits]." No phrase could more accurately characterize them (Dan. 11:32). "The people that do know their God shall be strong and act." They were far from possessing the martyr spirit in their ways, such as will be found in the godly remnant by-and-by at the end of the age. Then indeed none but those willing to lose their lives for the truth's sake will be owned by the God of Israel. Their strength will be in their weakness, they themselves ready to suffer -- yea, even unto death for Him. Who died and, little known by them, is now in glory. It is needless to say that such suffering is a far harder thing, and entails more blessing from God than anything of power displayed in the theatre of the world.
Here then we have those that were persecuted by their enemy - Antiochus Epiphanes. “And they that understood (or, are wise) among the people shall instruct many” (Dan. 11:33). The phrase means “the” many. It is to be regretted that the article is not conveyed in English where it stands in the Hebrew. For there are the two varieties: the word “many” sometimes with, and sometimes without, the article. The Revisers have taken no notice of the difference, any more than the A. V. “And they shall fall by the sword, and by the flame, by captivity, and by spoil, [many] days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help; but many shall cleave to them with flatteries” (Dan. 11:33, 34). So it came to pass that Antipater, the Edomite father of Herod, got in. For the family had not a shadow of right to reign over the Jews. Only he stood with the last unworthy scion of the Maccabees, and through Roman help also slipped into power. But such retributions were allowed in God’s providence, in order to the humiliation of His guilty people. “And [some] of them of understanding shall fall, to try them and to purge, and to make [them] white, [even] to the time of the end; because [it is] yet for the time appointed” (Dan. 11:35). Just here it is where the text itself shows an interruption of the history till we come to “the time appointed” – “the time of the end.” Throughout the prophecy will be found a similar break. Even this remarkably successional chapter discloses such an interruption both at the beginning and at the end. The first undeniably occurs at the end of Dan. 11:2, after the defeat of Xerxes, and before Alexander the Great. What left room for it is Xerxes stirring up all against the realm of Greece. After a century and a half this entailed the return blow by Alexander. All the intervening history was passed over.

In the same way the Spirit of God has brought us down to the time that follows Antiochus Epiphanes. No notice is here taken of the successive kings that reigned in the north and south; for the next we shall see to be king in the land between the two countries, a king who had not yet come to the throne. After Antiochus Epiphanes we do hear of certain Jews making a bold stand to maintain their law against the apostates, and with trials and of all kinds till “the time of the end.” That time is still future; but it shall assuredly come, the great crisis for the Jew, which the wise and prudent ignore, and therefore count all the rest of the chapter “too fabulous for a contemporary historian.” The truth is that it is all future, but will surely be fulfilled in its season. There is a perfect answer in the past history to all we have seen up to Dan. 11:35, but to nothing more. Yet it is not to be allowed that the words from Dan. 11:36 are indeterminate in the least degree. The only appearance of it (and this is intentional vagueness, if such a phrase be permitted here) is in the words, “until the time of the end.” It already covers an intervening space of something like 2000 years. The blank at any rate occurs there.

In Dan. 11:36 we read, “And the king shall do according to his will.” This is no king of either north or south, but quite another monarch who is called simply “the king.” No other designation was required. Every intelligent Jew would at once know, as every Christian ought to know, who that portentous ruler is. O. T. prophecy prepares us for an awful time that is to befall the nation before the Messiah comes in power and glory. They boast much about their boundless charity to their own people; but how little they enter into what David calls the “kindness of God!” Christians are called by their Savior to love their enemies. I wonder if every Christian here loves his enemies, no matter how unjust they may be? It is just our opportunity of showing that grace makes us to be above spite and evil. Should we be able to sing at midnight in prison, with our feet in the stocks? What can be done with such people? The world finds them invincible. No wonder that they are to reign with Christ by-and-by, seeing that by His grace they now conquer in the irresistible might of weakness. Exploits are all well for Puritans as for Maccabees; but they suit not the Christian. Stonewall Jackson in America and Havelock in India were too like the Maccabees. They had an imperfect idea of the true place of the Christian. They had not learnt to bear all, and endure all, not only in passive obedience to their earthly rulers, but in grace to such as shamefully injured them.

**THE ANTICHRIST**

Here it is supposed that the readers know there is to be at the time of the reigning in Judea an apostate potentate. Having rejected the True Light, the Jews do not realize that they are the very people to be governed by this self-exalting enemy of God. They would not deny that there will surely arise an audacious and wicked king in the land of Israel; but they forget that they are to be his subjects, accomplices, and victims. So far from being king of the north or of the south, we see here that he is attacked by the then kings of both those lands. He is simply called “the king,” as neither of those powers is ever called. He bears that name, as being then king of the land between the north and the south. The text affords demonstrable proof of this. “The king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself.” This may be no uncommon quality; but he manifests it to an unheard of degree: “He shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god.” What pretension! Did he not then require to eat, drink, and sleep like any other poor creature? Surely this ought to have convinced him how far he must be from God, or even an angel, had he not been blinded by Satan’s power. Nay, he shall “speak marvelous things against the God of gods.” Not this only, but we are told that which gives astonishing evidence of long-suffering till judgment come; we are told that he “shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that which is determined shall be done.” What a solemn way of God it is to let one go on in blasphemous pride, that wickedness may fully come out, and its downfall may be all the more just and complete! God is righteous. But what is man? What are the Jews, and particularly then?

How came such a king to reign over Judea? They refused Him that came in His Father’s name. They will then receive one that comes in his own name. Here we read what he is and does. “Like king, like people” we may say, as one of the earlier prophets said, “As the people, so the priest.” They will be in that day one evil lump. The difference is only in degree. Lawlessness will have reached its height. “And he will not regard the God of his fathers.” This shows, according to scripture language, he is a Jew. Nobody but a Jew can correctly be described thus: a simple, but incontrovertible proof for such as know the Bible. Where do we find anything like it?

An Englishman who believes may speak of God as his Father; but he cannot talk of “the God of his fathers” except as imitating the phrase of a Jew. This reference of course is to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They are the true fathers whom God chose to be the depositories of promise, on behalf of their
seed and land, yet to be verified under Messiah: a most happy time for the world, after its hitherto sinful and sad history. I do not of course speak of the gospel, founded on Christ’s cross and calling us as the church to heavenly glory. But there is a bright and blessed time for the earth when Israel shall be truly the people of Jehovah exalted above all nations and a blessing to them. The church will have a glorious place in heaven, and will reign over the earth, but not on it. This is the mistake often made in rendering Rev. 5:10. It ought to be not “on” but “over.” There is an idiom in the construction which bears this out. Why it should have been over looked by many excellent scholars seems strange; for the usage is plain enough.

Neither shall this king, to take the next characteristic, regard “the desire of women.” The phrase alludes to the well-known expectation that a maiden of Israel would be the mother of Immanuel (Isa. 7). “Nor [will he] regard any god, for he shall magnify himself above all.” So excessive is his lawless self-exalting presumption that prevalent idolatry he repudiates in his self-assertion. Yet he is an idolater after all -- this man who pretends to be the Most High God. “In his estate shall he honor the god of forces.” We can readily understand how everything at such a time will turn to the worship of material force. Never has there been such a rage for arming to the teeth as at the present moment. There have been many epochs when a countless host of barbarians has swept over the civilized world, but never a time when such vast armies stood confronting one another, though their own lands groan under the necessary taxation, afraid of breaking the peace, but ready for war if they saw the opportunity to seize the coveted prize.

Such is the strained condition west and east. Not only is it the fact, but the very powers which thus arm excessively are confessedly perplexed and most anxious under the ever increasing burden, which they necessarily incur on all sides through these bloated armaments. It is the unwitting preparation for the changes and conflicts which precede the great day when the self-exalting king in the Holy Land is worshiped, yet worships “the god of fortresses.” People do not worship what they do not prize or covet. The most audacious in pride knows his own nothingness and bows down to some unworthy superstition. Such a secret but enslaving power is unbelief. The wilful one that sets up in Jerusalem and the temple may so far remind us of Napoleon, who, however inordinate in his vanity, unscrupulous in conscience of heart, and insatiable in his ambition, worshiped his own star. The anti-Messiah will worship the god of fortresses.

“Thus shall he do in the most strongholds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory, and he shall cause them to rule over the many, and shall divide the land for gain” (Dan. 11:39). There again we see the unmistakable marks of a Jewish king in the land. We recognize in “the many” the technical word for the mass of the Jews; as “the land” in Daniel can legitimately be no other than Palestine.

THE CLOSING SCENE

“And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him; and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships” (Dan. 11:40). Can there be more positive proof sought that “the king” in these verses is quite distinct from the two contending lines hitherto described? Here it is beyond doubt that on the contrary the kings of the north and of the south attack him. How could he be the same as either of the assailing parties?

But there is a yet more important series of details to point out now, about which there have been often great disputes in the minds of Christians, simply because they have looked at the wrong time and place. The Spirit of God says a little more here about this lawless king. We learn that the king of the south appears to be the first in opposing him. This is resented by the king of the north who comes down with still greater resources, indeed, as it is said, “like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships.” From this point to the end of the chapter the account is of the king of the north. Impossible to ask fuller proof that it is no longer the wilful king in the land, but the king of the north that is described henceforth, ravaging but destroyed beyond help, as in the end of Dan. 8.

One may be asked why “the king” should be dropped here without telling what becomes of him. Great pains had been taken elsewhere to mark him out as devoted to destruction when the Lord shines from heaven at His appearing. Of course one does not heed the disgusting fiction, with which the Talmud speaks of Armillus. But the Jews, apart from traditions, were aware they will have to do before Messiah comes with a terrific and lawless chief in the land. Whence did they get the ground of their ingrafted fables? Isa. 11 clearly reveals him, and his end at that time: “With the breath of his lips shall he (Messiah) slay the wicked (one).” This is the man. The text is referred to and applied by the apostle in 2 Thess. 2:8, “And then shall the lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the appearing of his coming.” The king is the same person who is designated “the wicked” in our version of Isa. 11 and “the lawless one” in the R. V. of 2 Thess. 2. It is a single individual, and “lawless” more precisely describes him than “wicked.” He is the man who defies all law, all authority of whatever sort, every object of reverence, every heathen god, yea the true god, in order to set up himself above all. Not merely does he trample upon law and gospel, but on God Himself, and his image he sets up in the temple of God. As he reigns over the Jews, it is natural that for this he should choose the holy place in Jerusalem. “The prince that shall come,” or Roman emperor in the coming day, of whom you were hearing in chap. ix. is not referred to in this passage. But the prince of Rome in the latter day is to support the lawless king of the Jews, as its chief had the guilt of gratifying the Jews in crucifying the true King. The Roman prince or emperor of that day will be a strong ally of the Antichrist that reigns over “the land.” Rome will then have got clear of the Popes; but instead of being better, it also will rush to perdition. The Roman emperor with his satellite kings will have turned upon Babylon, consumed her flesh, and destroyed her with fire.

Here evidently the Protestant school are at fault; for they cannot deny that it is absurd to suppose the Pope would lead his vassals to destroy Babylon, whether as “city” or as “whore.” Yet it is certain that the Beast and his horns are to do so. This is intelligible and plain when we believe that the Beast is the revived Roman empire, to which even the most corrupt religious power is obnoxious. The Beast in Rome is as wilful as the king in Palestine, and will not brook the harlot’s interference. Babylon is therefore destroyed by him and his horns. The Beast
is the coming Roman prince. The empire will be reconstituted,
as surely as anything, little as politicians expect it; and Dan.
7:8, lets us know somewhat of the progress to supreme power
of a king with a small beginning, before whom three of the first
horns were rooted up. It is not for any man to say which these
are to be: least of all should we prophesy, who simply believe
the prophets. Setting up to prophesy is a great sin, unless you
are a prophet in the inspired sense. But it is a shame for a
Christian not to believe those whom such a man as king Agrippa
durst not say he disbelieved.

Here, however, we have divine ground to know that the
“little horn” of the west is at first to be a small power among
the other ten; and that he only becomes great by destroying
three of his contemporary powers. He becomes at last not only
the possessor of these three kingdoms but the suzerain of all the
rest. This is the form in which he becomes emperor of the
western powers. It is not a profitable even if a hopeful inquiry,
to conjecture the special power which thus from little becomes
so ominously great. How sad for Italy if the bad preeminence
is to be hers! But in that verse in the progress as clearly as the
facts can make it is the future, as far as God has revealed in His
wisdom. There will be, it would seem from Rev. 13, a sea of
confusion for the powers, out of which the Roman empire will
reappear.

In that day will be the startling new policy of the latter day,
when the western powers will no longer be, as now, striving
after a balance one against another. We are sufficiently
familiar with the balance of power that has ruled in Europe for
many hundreds of years, some trying to unite with others in
order to hinder predominance. By-and-by that will be
abandoned. God will allow Satan to have his own way for a
short time; and all authority and power will be at the back of
this chief, the emperor of Rome. At that time he is allowed to
dictate to the whole of them. He wields the forces of all the
western powers, among the rest, sad to say, of Great Britain.
This country once came under that empire. When that empire
will be restored, all the divided kingdoms will have their share
in the awful catastrophe.

When the Roman prince shall go to support the Jewish
king, against the king of the north, they must march at his
bidding. It will be, in effect, with the Lamb that they have to
fight, as Rev. 17 and 19 make plain. The king of the north is
the leader of the north-eastern powers, though there appears to
be another behind, which (Gog) is still greater than he, that
comes up afterwards to his own destruction. The king of the
north is so angry at the king of the south meddling with
Jerusalem, that he leaves his campaign unfinished to punish the
land of Egypt and its supporters. Half of Jerusalem shall go
forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut
off from the city, as we have it stated in Zech. 14:2. It is
expressly the coming of Jehovah’s day when all nations gather
against Jerusalem to battle. But there are very distinct events
which occur within the compass of “that day.” “For I will
gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city
shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished;
and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue
of the people shall not be cut off from the city.” A third part in
all the land had been spoken of in Zech. 13:9, as brought
through the fire, refined as silver and tried as gold; who call on
Jehovah and are heard. He will say, Thou art My people; and
they shall say, Jehovah is my God. Thus while we find extreme
trouble, no less clear is the work of God in a remnant.

It is the Assyrian or King of the north who acts as the
overflowing scourge from without, and at first is successful
against the wilful king and the apostate mass of the Jews. But
God shields the righteous remnant. While the king of the north
goes down to deal with the king of the south, the Lord appears
to the destruction of the wicked king, now reinforced by the
beast from the west and his kings and their armies, which is
described in Rev. 19. But it is omitted in Dan. 11, in order to
pursue the conflicts of the north and the south about the land
and its chief, and then to give the return of the king of the north into
the land to find his dismal end, as the others had before.

“And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push
him [the wilful king]; and the king of the north shall come
against him [the same] like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with
horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the
countries, and shall overflow and pass through. He shall enter
also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be
overthrown. But these shall be delivered out of his hand, Edom,
and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon” (Dan.
11:40, 41). Beyond question he is not king of the glorious land,
because be enters it as an enemy. Demonstrably it is the king
of the north, and not the wilful king who is here before us. “He
shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries; and the land
of Egypt shall not escape” (Dan. 11:42). This proves he cannot
be the king of the south, because he attacks Egypt and spoils it.
“But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of
silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; and the
Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps” (Dan. 11:43).
The conquered are compelled to fight under his banner. “But
tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him,”
that is, out of his own country. I have little doubt that the
tidings are about the movement of the ten tribes, in whom God
is working to return from these parts to the land of their fathers.
They were transplanted by the king of Assyria of old. And now
the last holder of that power is on the alert to oppose their
return. Much may be found in Isa. 10 which looks onward to
the Assyrian in what Daniel calls “the last end of the
indignation.” Sennacherib was but a type.

The dealings of God with the ten tribes come out in a very
remarkable way, as we may read in Hosea 2 and Ezek. 20. It
appears that God is to bring them through the wilderness again;
where they are purified by a process of spiritual discipline
through which the Lord will put them in those days.

Certain it is that tidings trouble the Assyrian out of the
north and east, and he hurries back to Palestine. “And he shall
go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away
many.” Already the proud powers of the west had gathered
there for their doom, but this he does not consider if he knew it.
Men are easily blinded by their passions; and there will also be
the special delusion of Satan. The Lord shining from heaven
will have destroyed Anti-Christ or the wilful king of the land, as
he also destroys the beast solemnly, slaying the kings and their
armies that came up to support him. The emperor of the west
and his ally in the holy land are both cast alive into the lake of
fire, called in the Revelation “the beast” and “the false
prophet,” for this king in the land pretends to be a prophet
as well as to be Messiah and God. Those at the head of the western
powers as well as their armies that follow them are slain on the
spot, to be judged another day when raised.

After this comes up the king of the north at the head of a vast force. Then shall the Lord go forth at the head of His people “as in the day of battle.” So we find it stated in Zech. 14:3. Before that it was the Lord coming from heaven that dealt with the beast and the false prophet. Now He will have taken up His people Israel. It is the rod of His power from out of Zion, as Psa. 110 expresses it, dealing with the head of a great country, who comes to the same end as the beast and the false prophet before him. This is described in the end of Isa. 30. For the king also [not “yea”] it is prepared, that is, for “the king” in the land as well as for the Assyrian. You will see that from the beginning of Dan. 11:36, it is entirely a future time that is referred to. Never has been anything like it; but God here reveals that it must be.

**Daniel 12**

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people [the Jews without doubt]; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered (v.1). But notoriously since the time of the Babylonish captivity, no matter what trouble may have come upon them (and how many and varied their trials!) they have never been delivered. Nebuchadnezzar’s blows were heavy, and at length he carried them into captivity. Still more severe was it when Titus the Roman destroyed the city and sanctuary, and sold or scattered over all the western world in particular those whom he was weary of slaying. From another authority we have the retributive fact that Titus crucified the Jews (who had crucified their own Messiah), until there was not wood left capable of torturing another Jew. Then indeed they became the dispersed of Judah to the four corners of the earth. They attempted a stand in the days of Hadrian the Roman emperor and again they were slaughtered without mercy, instead of being delivered. But so it has been since. But it remains to be verified in their last and sorest tribulation, “At that time thy people shall be delivered.” Can there be a doubt to any believer that Daniel reveals a deliverance never yet accomplished? Not, it is true, for the mass but for the godly remnant, “thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.” This is assuredly before them. There may be only a little remnant left; but “the little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation: 1, Jehovah, will hasten it in its time,” according to the words of Isaiah. The word of God ought to silence all difficulties. It is only the righteous who will then be delivered. But it is a deliverance by publicly displayed power in the earth, and in no way by the gospel, when the mass of the Jews shall be destroyed, only those delivered, who are then under the holy banner of God’s Messiah. At that time, as God says by Isaiah, “Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever.” Is this not Israel?

But we have more of detail here. The Jews in the land are the persons spoken about hitherto; but what about their brethren that were away and lost to their knowledge. Here we have a striking description of them — and an end put to that anomalous state. “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” It appears that up to that time their resurrection as a nation had not taken place. From the days of Hosea, and Isaiah, the figure of death had been used, and their rising again promised. So we find it elaborately in Ezek. 37. Many have applied this to the literal resurrection of the body, but when viewed in its connection, it will be found to be only a figure of Israel re-appearing after a long slumber of death. In Ezekiel we hear of the valley filled with dry bones, and of the graves being opened, with other metaphors. It is the same truth as here; not the literal dead raised, but Israel coming up again and standing on their feet, an exceeding great army, whom Jehovah brings into the land of Israel. How could all this describe men rising from the dead? God will bring them out of their utter inaction and impenetrable obscurity.

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” Those who learn of God, and such as labor for God, shall not lose their reward. They shall shine as the stars, instead of changing like the moon. But it is “the many,” or wicked Jews, that are here intended, who are not really turned to righteousness. So that the true fact is, “they that instruct the mass in righteousness”; and they are rewarded for their fidelity, whatever the result may be.

In conclusion let it be observed, that it was the eleventh verse of this chapter our Lord referred to in Matt. 24:15: not 11:31 which had long before been accomplished, but a future act of similar kind which will bring down divine judgment signally, “And from the time that the continual [or daily sacrifice] shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand, two hundred, and ninety days.” The days here are, I believe, so many literal days. Three times and a half, or one thousand, two hundred, and sixty days, had been spoken of in Dan. 12:7, and in Dan. 7:25, as occupied with the evil wrought by the Beast or Roman Prince. To this thirty days are here added. The Lord draws particular attention to the facts as calling for understanding on the part of the reader. It is not the Roman siege already accomplished according to Luke 21 as far as v. 24, though the times of the Gentiles are not yet exhausted. From v. 25 all is future. And the final siege will divide into two parts. The first shows us the king of the north partially successful. The second is marked by utter destruction; and no wonder. For the Lord will have taken His place at the head of His people, and sends the rod of His power out of Zion. “Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand, three hundred, and five and thirty days” (Dan. 12:12).

This is blessing on the earth; but at the same time there is better still. For those saints like Daniel that have fallen asleep are not forgotten in that great day. “But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” Daniel, like all the dead that are Christ’s, will then obtain “a better resurrection.” “He hath swallowed up death” for ever. Christ’s victory is ours, for the heavens, as His victory triumphs over Israel’s enemies for the earth.

*The Bible Treasury*, New Series, 1:163, etc.
There are few simple-minded Christians who, in searching into the prophetic Word, have not felt the difficulty of reconciling the undoubtedly normal posture of the Church in daily waiting for Jesus with the long train of successive events presented in the Revelation. The principle, if not the measure, of the difficulty is the same, whether you understand the Revelation to be fulfilled in a brief eventful crisis, or to extend over a course of many hundred years. In either way, I cannot truthfully expect Jesus from heaven from day to day, if I am looking out for a series of numerous, and some of them unprecedented, and all of them solemn, incidents to occur on earth, the gradual and accumulative evidence of His approach.

But it is certain that in the apostolic times, when the grace of God was proclaimed in its real power and freshness, when His Word was most prized and best understood, and produced its loveliest effects, the saints were habitually expecting Jesus to come. In Him they had redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and they knew it. They were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Were they, therefore, satisfied? Was not the Spirit Himself, blessed divine Comforter though He be, yet was not He the earnest of still greater blessings? Doubtless, they received Him as the Spirit of sonship, and not as a spirit of bondage unto fear (Rom. 8:15); but instead of His leading them into rest and contentedness here below in the absence of Jesus, in the same chapter it is said: “Ourselves also, (besides the groaning creation,) which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom.8:23). It is the groaning of those who are justified by faith and have peace with God. It is the groaning of those who have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, and bearing witness with their spirit that they are the children of God. It is the groaning of the adopted, earnestly yearning for the full results of adoption: of those who, because they have known God’s grace in redemption forgiving their sins, look for more, for all, -- for the redemption of the body in the actual presence of the Savior, that they may be like Him and with Him for ever!

The aim, however, of these remarks is not to prove that the personal coming of the Lord was the hope of the Church -- proofs easily found elsewhere. My desire is rather to convince those who know what is and was meant to be the hope of the Church, that God, by no concurrent or subsequent revelation, ever interfered with the practical power of that hope. That He might give fuller details as to the growing iniquity of man, of the Jew, and especially of the outward professing body, and as to His own judgments upon each before the millennial reign; that He might describe in greater minuteness the circumstances of that reign and the events that succeed it, is not only possible, but that which He has done. But that He, on this or any other theme, corrects in one part of His Word what is affirmed in another, is that which every Christian ought surely to repudiate from the bottom of his soul, in whatever modified form it may be insinuated.

The Word of our God needs no apologies from man. Unhesitatingly believed, every part of it will be found to be perfectly true, though (from the narrowness and imperfection of our apprehension) patient waiting on God is necessary to avoid the systematizing of the human intellect, and to discover in what order God puts things together. Haste in deciding such questions only leads to forcing Scripture, which will not yield; and hence the danger of framing one-sided hypotheses, which are only tenable by shutting the eye to the plainest Scripture which contradicts them as hypotheses, though there may be elements of truth in them.

To apply this to the matter in hand, it is undeniable that the apostle Paul (to say nothing of others) invariably speaks of the coming of the Lord to take the Church to Himself as that which might be at any moment, however Jesus might tarry; but no necessary detention -- no chain of occurrences involving a period virtually -- no certain lapse of time -- is ever presented to the Church as keeping Him in heaven. On the contrary, if he writes to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. 15:51) it is:
“Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” Admitting that “we” is a representative word, not the persons addressed merely, but those standing in the same privileges: still will any one say that the apostle or the Corinthian saints knew that the moment would be deferred till they had fallen asleep? 6 Was it not calculated, beyond all cavil, to keep them in simple, constant expectancy of the Lord? And the Thessalonians, (1 Thess. 1) who were trained, from their birth to God, in looking for their Deliverer, were they mistaken enthusiasts? Or, did not the blessed work of the Spirit in their case consist not only in turning them from idols to serve the living and true God, but to wait for His Son from heaven {1 Thess. 1:9, 10}? Did that wise and faithful servant, who knew what it was to mingle the service of a nurse with the affectionate care of a father, -- did he consider that blessed hope to be unsuited food for such babes? So far from it, that when he writes to them supplying some things that were lacking, the Holy Ghost impresses this great doctrine in so repeated and different modes as to demonstrate how cardinal a truth it was in the mind of God, and how influential as regards the walk and communion of His saints. It ramifies both epistles, being not only found at least once in every chapter, but in some chapters occupying the most conspicuous place. (See 1 Thess. 1:3; 10; 2:19, 20; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-10, 23, 24; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; 2:1-12; 3:5.) They had rejoiced in this hope of our Lord Jesus Christ from their earliest Christian career; they had patiently continued it through the Spirit, and the blessedness of such patience was sweet to the absent apostle, even as their work of faith and labor of love. True, they needed further light as to its circumstances, and the Lord granted it. So immediately were they awaiting the Lord, that the decease of some of their number plunged them into sorrow -- not, I apprehend, that they for a moment doubted of the salvation of those who were gone. No one knowing the Gospel in word only (much less knowing it in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as it came to them,) could have such a doubt. But they feared that death had severed their departed brethren from the glorious hope they had so brightly burning before them, of being caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. They were gone -- doubtless, were happy; but would they not be absent from that crowning joy for which they themselves were waiting? Here was the place, if they had been mistaken in so waiting, to have corrected it. Here was the place for the apostle to say: -- We have been all wrong in living with our eyes heavenward till the Son of God comes to take us to Himself: He is not coming soon. We need not expect Him, for many ages must expire before He comes. Besides, He has already given you some, and He now adds more, signs of His advent. You have not seen these signs yet. You must wait for them, and not for His Son. -- But there is the exact reverse. The Holy Spirit deliberately keeps them in the same attitude of waiting which He had previously wrought and sanctioned in them, though He gives them a comfort of which they were ignorant as to their brethren who had been put to sleep by Jesus. 7 “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [i.e. go before] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words” {1 Thess. 4:15-18}.

But it may be said, -- If the Holy Ghost did not here correct the excited notions of the Thessalonians, He did in the second chapter of the second epistle. -- I answer that the true question is, Does the Holy Ghost correct Himself? He may supply that which is suited to correct the undue sorrow of the believers in one epistle, or their fears in another epistle; but I insist upon it in the strongest manner, that if the Church is set in the position of waiting for Christ's coming in one part of Scripture, no other part can possibly alter such a position. It is necessarily right, whatever increase of instruction may be given. Let us only be well assured in the perfectness of every word of God, and we shall soon see how little the passage warrants the notion that the apostle Paul, in the second epistle, dissuades them from expecting Him, whom the first epistle had confirmed them in expecting.

In the first place, it is generally assumed that the day of Christ (or “of the Lord,” for that is the true reading 4) is identical with the coming (παρουσία, presence) of our Lord Jesus Christ” in the verse before. But it is a groundless idea. If it be affirmed, let proofs be adduced. It is quite clear to me that the day of the Lord is a distinct thought connected thing. In its full, ultimate sense, and no one disputes that such is its force here, it supposes the presence of the Lord; it is the judgment consequent upon that. But the presence, or coming of the Lord, by no means necessarily supposes judgment. Is there a word of judgment, or wrath, or destruction, expressed or implied in the full description given in 1 Thess. 4 of the Lord's coming for His own? So when the apostle says, “what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy,” (1 Thess. 2:19, 20) where is the word of judgment or evil? On the other hand, when the day of the Lord occurs, it is, whether used in a full or a limited application, habitually connected with judgment and its consequences (cp. 1 Thess. 5:2-4; Zeph. 1, 2, 3; Zech. 14; 6. Nothing, it has been observed, more strongly proves the Church's constant expectation of the presence of the Lord for it, uncertain when that was to be, than the fact that it needed a particular revelation to individuals, (such as to Paul and Peter,) about their departure first, which so far modified their individual apprehensions. The general expectation of the Church was not affected thereby.

7. Τούς κοιμηθέντας διά τοῦ Ἰησοῦ. So the Vulgate, eos, qui dormiuntur per Jesum.

8. So all the critical editors known to me, such as Griesbach, Knappe, Scholz, Lachmann, Tischendorf, &c.; and this wholly upon external evidence.
Mal. 3, 4). I conclude therefore that, though the coming of the Lord may include the day of the Lord, as the whole includes a part, the coming of the Lord is in itself presented in an aspect of grace, not of judgment, and that the terms and things are not to be confounded.

In the second place, while it is true that the day of the Lord cannot come before the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin arrive, which are to be judged in that day, yet is there a serious error in the English rendering of the last clause of v. 2, “is at hand.” The word usually rendered “at hand,” “near,” or “nigh,” is εγγὺς or ἐγγίζω, as is known to scholars. The present word εὐνίστημι, on the other hand, is never so rendered in the New Testament, save in the passage before us. On the contrary, occurring several times, it is used invariably in a way which excludes the possibility of such a rendering, (more especially when it is, as here, in the second perf.). The first occurrence is in Rom. 8:38. It is evident that here εὐνιστῶ cannot mean things at hand. It is contrasted with μέλλοντα, i.e. “things to come.” It signifies only and emphatically “things present,” and is so rendered in the common Bible. See the same words and the same contrast in 1 Cor. 3:22. Again, in 1 Cor. 7:26, διὰ τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην is properly translated “for the present distress.” A distress not actually come, but only at hand or coming, would spoil the meaning. The next is Gal. 1:4, “this present evil world,” the only possible meaning of the word here. The next world, or age, will not be evil, and therefore “at hand,” or “imminent,” is shut out. Compare also Heb. 9:9, εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τὸν ἐνεστηκότα “for the time then present,” not “at hand,” which cannot be the true force. All these are instances of the same tense as 2 Thess. 2:2. The only other occurrence is 2 Tim. 3:1, ἐνεστῆσεν, in the future middle. Here the English version renders it, “shall come.” Still, the meaning indubitably is not “shall be at hand,” which could have no point, but “shall be present.” To be impending merely was little: the grave thing was, that perilous times should be actually there. It may be concluded, therefore, from an induction thus complete, that in all the other instances the authorized version is right, but in 2 Thess. 2:2 it is wrong. It is not conceivable to uphold both; so that if right in 2 Thess. 2:2, the version must be wrong everywhere else. But we have seen, from the intrinsic meaning of the word, as well as from the sense imperatively demanded by the context, that in all the other cases the translators are justified. They are therefore mistaken here, and the proper rendering, in conformity with their own translation of the word in the same tense elsewhere, ought to be, “as that the day of the Lord is present.”

The Thessalonian saints had from the first known much affliction. They had notoriously suffered from their own countrymen, and this to such a degree that the apostle, in his earnest and watchful interest about them, sent Timothy to establish and to comfort them concerning their faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions. They knew that “we are appointed thereunto” {1 Thess.3:2, 3}. Nevertheless, they needed comfort. The apostle had warned them before, that “we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know” {1 Thess. 3:4}. “For this cause when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain” {1 Thess. 3:5} But Timothy brought good tidings of their faith and love, and the apostle could break out into thanks and joy for their sakes before God, and he lets them know it in his first epistle.

The tempter, however, was not to be discouraged, nor diverted from his wiles. They had been already taught that the Lord Himself was to come, and the saints, sleeping of living, were all to be changed, and to be caught up together to meet Him in the air, and so be ever with Him {1 Thess. 4:17}. They also knew that the day of the Lord was one of destruction and terror, unlooked for by the world: “Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” {1 Thess. 5:2}.

Accordingly, he appears to have distracted the saints by the harassing statement that the day of the Lord was actually there, thus seeking to rob them of all profit and joy in the persecutions and tribulations which they were then enduring. Nor let any think it strange if, in a time of perplexity in the world and persecution of the Church, the fears of saints might be wrought upon: particularly as they knew that the day of the Lord in the Old Testament by no means necessarily implies the personal presence of the Lord, thought it looks onward to that anticipatively. Compare, for instance, Isa. 13:6, where God’s judgment of Babylon and the Chaldeans is so designated: “Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty,” &c. (See also Joel 1:15; 2:1-11; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:7, 14, 15, &c.)

In the second epistle, the Holy Ghost conveys the needed instruction. “We ourselves,” says the apostle, “glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be

9. Since the above was in print, I have had the opportunity of examining “Le Nouveau Testament de notre Seigneur Jesus-Christ, traduit en Suisse, par une Société de Ministres de la Parole de Dieu, sur le texte Grec reçu,” (seconde édition, &c., 1849) where the original is rendered, “Que le jour du Christ est là.”

10. The words in the LXX are ἐγγὺς γὰρ ἡμέρα Κυρίου. Will men defend a version of 2 Thess. 2:2 which makes the Holy Spirit contradict there what He has unequivocally affirmed in Isa. 13:6? The Septuagint and the Greek Testament are in harmony here. It is the English version which is at fault.
glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” [2 Thess.1:4-10]. The time of retribution is not when Jesus comes, but when He is revealed. For though at His coming the Church is caught up, there is nothing yet of a retributive character. It is favor, not a process of judgment. Whereas the revelation and the day of the Lord are, as is manifest, associated with judgment, and hence there is the public award of God, then, for the first time, manifested to the world; “seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed” [v. 7]. Doubtless there is a tribulation, and even the great tribulation, in the time of Anti-Christ, previous to the revelation of Jesus; as obviously there is rest to those who sleep in Jesus now, and there will be rest in a fuller sense when our bodies are changed, and we are caught up to be with Him. But both are wholly distinct from the divine, retributive tribulation and rest here spoken of. It is the day of punishment with everlasting destruction to the adversaries, as it is the day when Christ comes, not to present the Church to Himself, nor to take them to mansions in the Father’s house, but to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe. For when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory [Col. 3:4]. It is the public, judicial dealing, (not the hidden joy or blessedness, before, then, or afterwards) which here enters into the scene.

Next, the apostle turns to the source of their agitation.

“We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled” [2 Thess. 2:1, 2]. Assuredly, the consolation administered here is not that Christ’s coming was a distant thing! Can it be that theologian upon theologian has desired to make of this fancied long and far off absence of the Lord a balm for the tried and fearful? Can it be that the poor Church has but too willingly sipped the cup, and, heedless of His words, cheers herself on the delirious career of worldliness, and folly, and faithlessness to Him? “Lord, how long?”

Not so the Thessalonians. Full well they knew that His coming was to end their sorrows and crown their joys. Under apostolic guidance they had looked, and the Holy Ghost had commended their looking, for Christ. Was it not the part of the evil servant to say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his coming [Matt.24:48]? But Paul was a blessed, faithful servant, and never says anything of the sort. He uses the fact of the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him as a comfort against the anxiety created by the idea that the day of the Lord was already arrived -- nay more, as a proof that such an idea was false. His ground of entreaty is two-fold. He urges a reason connected with the Lord and heaven, and a reason connected with earth and the man of sin.

There must be our gathering above, and the falling away below. In the first place, the Lord was to come, and they were to be gathered together unto him, in order that He and they might bring in the day and appear together from heaven. This had not taken place, and therefore they were not to be disturbed as if that day had come, or could come, previously. In the next place, he presses the point that the evil must first be developed completely which that day is to judge. “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away (or the apostasy, ἔρως ἀνομίας) first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth, and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or object of worship; so that he shall sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” [2 Thess. 2:3, 4]. But the apostasy was not then come, nor the man of sin revealed, and therefore the day of the Lord, the day of vengeance upon these evils, is yet to come. “And now (if one may translate the apostle’s word a little exactly) ye know what hindereth that he might be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness [13] doth already work: only there is one that now hindereth until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the appearing of His coming” [2 Thess. 2:6-8].

No! the Thessalonian believers were not mistaken in waiting for the Son of God. It is not wrong to believe that “the Lord is at hand” [Phil. 4:5] (ἦγγυς), as the apostle pressed upon the Philippians when drawing to the close of his career. It is not wrong to establish our hearts because the coming of the Lord draweth nigh [5:8]. Nor does the language of the Spirit, in the passage before us, depict excitement from a too eager anticipation of this glorious event, -- alas! that Christians should suppose we could too earnestly desire it. The expressions in v. 2 denote fright and agitation. The enemy sought to instill the idea that the day, the judgment was come, and that they were obnoxious to its terrors. Where then was their hope to be caught up to the Lord and to come along with Him? Would it have been sorrow and fear if Christ
had come and they had been raptured to meet Him in the air? Rather would it have been their chiefest joy, as it had been the object nearest their heart since their conversion. Their faith was growing exceedingly, and the love of every one of them all toward each other abounded; and, far from weakening that which he had already taught, the apostle prays for them in the last chapter of the second epistle, that the Lord would direct their heart into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ. That is, he confirms them in their expectancy of the Lord.

But the deceiver had affrighted them, not of course by presenting the coming of the Lord as an imminent thing, which was what the Holy Ghost had done, and which is for the Church a hope of unmingled comfort, but by the report that the day of the Lord was actually present, -- "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness" {Joel 2:2}. The apostle had already told them (1 Thess. 5) that they were not in darkness, that that day should overtake them as a thief. The tempter disturbs and confounds them with the thought that, as a thief, it was really come upon them; using it would seem some false spirit, or word, or letter, to give to it the color of the authority of Paul himself. And how does the apostle defend them from such assaults of others, and fears of their own? For, let it be repeated, it was not high-wrought feeling as though Christ were at hand, but terror arising from their giving heed to the false representation that the day of the Lord was present, and they in tribulation on earth, instead of being caught up to Jesus above. The apostle at once brings them back to the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him as their ground of comfort and protection against the alarms of the day of the Lord. As if he had said: the Lord Himself is coming, and you will be gathered to Him. When His day comes, you will be with Him. You are the children of the day: you will come along with it, for you will come with Him who ushers it in. You therefore need not be troubled, but be joyful. That day is not come. You will go to meet Him whom the Church knows as the bright, the morning star (Rev. 22:16, compared with 2:28) so that when the day breaks and the Lord appears you too will appear with Him in glory. You will introduce the day together -- that day of retribution when those, who troubled you shall have trouble, and you, the troubled, shall have rest with us when Jesus is revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance.

In harmony with this, it is written in v. 8, that the lawless one will be destroyed, not simply by the coming of the Lord, but by a further step of it, by the appearing or manifestation of his coming. 14 This scene is given at length in Rev. 19:11-21, where the seer beholds, in the prospective vision, the heaven opened, and the rider, the Word of God, upon the white horse, issuing to judge and make war. “And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” -- the righteousness not of angels, but of saints. (Compare v. 8.) The saints are already with Him. They follow Him out of heaven, as his army. Christ, therefore, must have come before this to take them to Himself, for they have been with Him in heaven and leave it together, preparatory to the battle with the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies. This then is not merely the coming of Christ. It is Christ appearing, and we with Him in glory. It is His revelation from heaven, taking vengeance. It is the day of the Lord, when sudden destruction comes. It is the shining forth of His presence, or the brightness of His coming, which destroys that lawless one. 15

Matt. 24:23-31 falls in with this view: “For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” It is His coming in connection with His earthly rights. Rejected of this generation as the Christ, He comes as Son of man (in which capacity He is never presented as coming to take the Church). “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” The elect here gathered together by the angels of the Son of man from the four winds, are

14. The word “coming” here, and frequently elsewhere, is παρουσία, which denotes not barely the arrival, (like the verb ἐρχομαι in Scripture, and like the substantive ἔλευσις in Greek ecclesiastical writers,) but the circumstance or state of being present; that is, “presence.” Nevertheless, as the presence of a person, who is now absent, necessarily supposes his coming, the latter is often and fairly enough given as its English equivalent, though the former is the full meaning.

15. If the reader is disposed to investigate further a subject so full of interest, he may derive much instruction, through the grace of God, by examining carefully the following Scriptures: --

First, as to ἀποκάλυψις, Rom. 8:19; 1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13, and 4:13, compared with the cognate verb, Luke 17:30; 1 Cor. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:5, and 5:1.

Next, as to ἐπιφάνεια, 2 Thess. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13.

Lastly, as to φανερόω, Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 John 2:28, and 3:2.

It is only needful to remark that, though (as already proved) we are not here below until the appearing of Christ, it is only then, and not before, that the result of faithfulness, or the want of it, will be manifested. The laborer is to work patiently, and it may be hiddenly, in view of that day. Though still the παρουσία, it is more than the presence of the Lord; it is the revelation, the appearing, or manifestation, as the case may be.

Be it noted, further, that the appearing of Christ is still His coming, although His coming does not necessarily mean His appearing. Thus, when Christ comes to take the Church first of all, it is His coming, but not His appearing, save to them that look for Him. But when afterwards He is revealed in view of the world, vindicating the ways of God, both as to His enemies and His friends, it is still His coming, while, as a distinctive thing, it is His day, or the epiphany of His presence, as it is termed in 2 Thess. 2:8. The recent Swiss version renders the entire verse thus: “Et alors sera révélé l’inique, lui que le Seigneur détruit par l’Esprit de sa bouche, et rendra impuissant par l’apparition de son arrivée, (ou présence).”
demonstrably not the Church, because they are gathered subsequent to His appearing. The Church, on the other hand, had been translated before. For when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Our manifestation in glory cannot be after His manifestation. Christ and the Church are manifested together. Hence the signs specified in this chapter are indices to elect Jewish disciples of His appearing. They are not to be regarded, therefore, as interfering with the posture of the Church continually waiting for the Lord from heaven. They are signs for a remnant in special relation with Judea, who will be awaiting the coming of the Son of man. No signs of this or of any other description were ever put before the Church, as such, whereby to judge of the near approach of Christ to take her to Himself. On the contrary, what the Holy Ghost taught the Church is, to a simple mind, inconsistent with such indications: she was to be expecting always, because she knew not the moment of His coming. The apostle (1 John 2:18) would have even the babes to know that it is the last time; and that, not from the spread of the Spirit of Christ, but from the presence of many Anti-Christs. But, although they had heard that the Anti-Christ should come, no signs to be seen, no evil to reach its climax, no specific tribulation, are ever put before them, as events necessarily retarding the coming of the Lord to take the Church. For the Bride, the one heavenly sign is the presence of the Bridegroom Himself. But for a converted remnant of Jews, of whom the Lord has graciously thought in afterwards, during the interval of her absence in heaven before she appears along with Him, God’s dealings, testimonies, judgments, and deliverances, on earth. The epistles gave us simply the fact of the rapture of the Church, but did not inform us to the length of the interval before the appearing and the kingdom. That such an interval existed might have been gathered; but whether long or short, or how filled up, does not appear in the epistles. The Revelation furnishes that which was lacking upon the subject, and connects, without confounding, the Church caught up to the Lord on high, with certain witnesses to be raised up during the closing term of the age on earth before He appears in judgment.

As for the relative bearings of the different portions of the New Testament, it may be said, in general, that the Gospels have a character peculiar to themselves. It is not certainly an exclusively Jewish condition, neither is it a proper Church condition, but a gradual slide, in John more marked than in the others, from the one to the other. The Lord Jesus, rejected, was with His disciples here below. The Holy Ghost, who of course was then, as ever, the faith-giving, quickening agent, was not yet given, i.e. in any new, unprecedented way, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. Hence the disciples, although possessing faith and eternal life, (John 6:35, 47, 68, 69) were not yet baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body. (Compare Acts 1:5 with 1 Cor. 12:13.) In a word, the Church was not yet built nor begun to be built: “Upon this rock,” says the Lord, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). But the Acts historically, and the Epistles doctrinally, describe a different state of things as then existing; Jesus absent and glorified in heaven; the Holy Ghost present and dwelling on earth in the saints, who were thereby constituted the body, the Church. Christ had taken His place as head of the body above, and the Holy Ghost sent down was gathering into oneness with Him there, into membership of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. Such is the mystery of Christ, which it was emphatically given to the apostle Paul fully to make known. And as the Gospels may be regarded as the preparatory transition out of Jewish relations to the blessed elevation on which the Church rests, the Revelation answers as the corresponding transition from the Church one with Christ in heavenly places, by various steps or stages, down to those Jewish relations which for a time dropped out of sight in consequence of the calling of the heavenly body.

The doctrine of the Church is clearly at the root of the ONE HOPE, which is found in the intermediate part of the New Testament. For along with the truth of the peculiar calling of the Church, as the body commenced by the descent and indwelling of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and thenceforward guided and perpetuated by Him -- along with this truth, it will be found that the peculiar aspect of the coming of the Lord for which I have contended, stands or is set down as of the Church. If they read of “this gospel of the kingdom” in Matt. 24, or of “the everlasting gospel,” it is to their minds the same thing as what Paul calls “my gospel,” the gospel of the grace of God preached now. Hence follows, and quite fairly too, a denial of any speciality in the walk and conversation of the saints since Pentecost, and a general Judaizing in doctrine, standing, conduct and hopes. It is also a simple and natural result of this, that all Protestant interpreters, if they admit a personal advent at all to introduce the millennial reign, present as the hope of the Church, that which is, in fact, the proper expectation of the converted Jewish remnant; viz. the day of the Lord, the Son of man seen by all the tribes of the earth, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Nor is the truth of the Church unknown to the Protestant interpreters only: it is equally an object of dislike to many of the Futurist school. And it is my conviction that the two baleful heresies, which have brought such shame upon the revival of prophetic study towards the beginning and the close of the last twenty years, are intimately connected with the rejection of this grand truth. For an error touching the Church
cannot but affect Him whose personal presence is what is so essential to it; and that which dishonors the Spirit goes far, in the long run, to disfigure or deny the person and work of Him of whom the Spirit is the vicar.

In the epistles, it is beyond doubt that the Church is continually addressed, as if there were no understood, fixed, necessary hindrances to the rapture at the coming of the Lord. How could this be if the Church be the same body as those saints who are described in Daniel, the Psalms, &c., as being destined to certain fiery trials still future from a little horn and his satellites who are yet to appear? How comes it that the apostle Paul, when he speaks of the coming of the Lord, never hints at this tribulation, as one through which the Church must pass; but always presents the advent as an immediate thing which might occur at one unknown moment to another? that the apostle Paul understood the just application of these prophecies, better than any since his day, is that which few Christians will question: they were Scriptures long revealed and familiar to Jews, and the Lord Jesus, in Matt. 24, had very significantly linked his fresh revelations upon that occasion with the predictions of Daniel. Yet, the Holy Ghost, in his constant allusions in the writings of the apostles to the future hopes of the Church, never once refers to these terrible circumstances as a future scene wherein the Church is to enact a part: on the contrary, the way in which the coming of the Lord is put before the Church, as a thing to be constantly looked for, seems incompatible with it. We have examined the only statement in the epistles which might appear to interpose such a barrier, and we have seen that, so far from contradicting the thought of immediateness, the apostle seeks to relieve the Thessalonian saints from all uneasiness about the day of the Lord and its troubles, by the blessed hope of His coming and their gathering unto Him, which are in his mind indissolubly bound together: a gathering unto Him which must be before He appears to the world, and judges it, because He and they are to appear together. It is certain, moreover, that there must arrive the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin (not before the coming, but) before the day of the Lord.

The prophecy of Daniel had already revealed the leading features of the interval during which “the prince that shall come” plays his terrible role. “And he shall confirm a covenant” (see margin and compare Isa. 28:15) “with the many” (i.e. of Daniel’s people, the Jews) for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, even until the consummation” (or consumption, as in Isa. 28:22) “and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate” (Dan. 9:27). That this prince is not “the Messiah the prince” is manifest, not only from this, that the former is described as one “that shall come,” after the latter has already come and been cut off, as is plain from verse twenty-six, but also from the certainty that “the prince that shall come” is the prince of the Roman people: his people “shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” We know who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple -- the people of this future prince. The latter part of the twenty-sixth verse does not continue the thread of the history, further than the general expressions “and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” In the last verse we are transported to the epoch of “the prince that shall come,” and his acting during the last week of the age. This period is shown to be broken into two parts, during the former of which, according to covenant, Jewish worship is resumed, but “in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” If ch. 7 be consulted, it will be seen that there is a certain little horn rising after the ten horns of the fourth Roman beast, before whom three of the first horns fell -- “that horn that had eyes and a mouth, that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows” (v. 20). “And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High (or of the high places) and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand, until a time and times and the dividing of time” (v. 25). Is it not evident that in ch. 7 is a horn or king whose blasphemous pride brings judgment upon the beast, or Roman empire, and whose interference with times and laws, that is with Jewish ceremonial order, continues for three years and a half? and that for the same space of time, or the last half week, “the prince that shall come,” the Roman prince of ch. 9, overturns this ceremonial worship?

But the Revelation not only takes up the two halves of Daniel’s week (Rev. 11, 12, 13) but shows what is the place of the Church during this period -- a truth which it was not given to the Jewish prophet to reveal, because it was that which supposed and fitly followed the revelation of the mystery hidden from ages and from generations. Paul had shown us the Church waiting for the presence of the Lord. What is it that the Holy Ghost adds by John? What is the great outline given in the Revelation?

After the vision of the Lord Jesus, in ch. 1, we have “things that are,” epistles to the seven churches, so conveyed as to apply not only at that time, but as long as the Church subsists on earth, and then the properly prophetic part, the things which should be after the Church-condition had passed away. Throughout the prophetic portion of the book, the Church is never described as being on earth. At the close of the third chapter, it altogether disappears from earthly view; and instead of its course being any longer traced here below, a door is opened in heaven and the prophet is called up there to see the things which must come to pass after these, i.e. after the things which are, or the Church regarded in the completeness of its varying phases on earth. Besides other things, (the Throne and One that sat upon it being the center of the vision), John sees, not seven candlesticks, but, suited to the new circumstances of heaven, four and twenty thrones, and upon them four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment and upon their heads golden crowns.

Here we have, in vision, the place and functions of the Church after it shall have been taken up to meet the Lord, and before its manifestation with Him in glory. And for this simple reason, that the way in which He and they are here represented emblematically is totally different from what is
revealed as connected with either, when the moment comes to leave heaven for the purpose of judgment upon the beast, &c.; or from what is revealed touching the reign for a thousand years subsequent to that judgment: that is, in Rev. 19:11 and 20:4-6. Nor can the scene in Rev. 4, 5 be interpreted consistently with any view, save that of the Church being actually caught up and completed in the presence of God. It is a quite distinct thing from our sitting in heavenly places in Christ: that is the subject of the epistle to the Ephesians. Neither is it the same thing as the boldness which the partakers of the heavenly calling have even now to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh {Heb. 10:19, 20}. Such is the subject of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the high-priesthood of Jesus is dwelt on at length and the liberty which we have in consequence to draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith {Heb. 10:22}; for it is still faith, and not actual possession, however it may be, through the power of the Holy Ghost, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. But the purpose of the Revelation is to disclose the dealings of God, whether the facts be expressed or understood, but dealings which involve a certain condition of things, which was future if considered in relation to the circumstances looked at in the epistles, as actually subsisting at the time -- the things in short which must be after these. Nor can this chapter be supposed to describe the blessedness of the spirits of the saints previous to the coming of Christ for the Church, because the departed who are with Christ could not be symbolized by twenty-four elders: 16 that is, by an image evidently borrowed from the full courses of Jewish priesthood. The whole Church, and not a part only, is comprehended in the symbol. But this can only be after the dead in Christ rise first, then we which are alive and remain are caught up together with them in the clouds, and so are ever with the Lord. Accordingly, here they are represented in heaven, the Lord being also there, and although made kings and priests even when on earth, still the time is not yet come for the exercise of government. In beautiful harmony, therefore, with this peculiar and transitional period during which they are removed from the world, they worship above. But the saints below are not forgotten. Those above have golden harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they sing a new song, celebrating the worthiness of the Lamb to take the book and open the seals, not only because He was slain and had redeemed themselves, but had made them, i.e. these saints, to their God, kings and priests. They should reign over the earth. The fulfilment is seen in Rev. 20:4-6: the reigning with Christ not merely of those symbolized by the elders, but of the Apocalyptic saints also.

Moreover, it is clear on the one hand, that the lightnings and thunderings suit neither the day of grace nor the millennial state. Earth is certainly not yet brought under the power of the blood of Christ, when these symbols will find their accomplishment. On the other hand, it is equally clear that there are saints on earth, while the twenty-four elders are before the throne above. That is, it is neither the millennial nor the present state; but an intermediate period of a peculiar nature, in which we have the throne, not of grace as now, nor of displayed glory as by and bye, but clothed with what has been justly termed a Sinai character of awful majesty attached to it.

But those above exercise their priesthood in the presence of God as the full completed Church. Hence the symbol of twenty-four elders round the throne, at a time when, as all confess, earth is still unreconciled, however there may be, in the next chapter, the anticipative song of every creature. If this be true, it follows that the Lord’s coming to meet the saints takes place between Rev. 3 and 4: (if the thought be pursued, which I doubt not, that chap. 6-19 will be fulfilled in a rapid crisis;) room being left there for the coming described in 1 Thess. 4 and elsewhere. Then the main action of the book goes on subsequently to the removal of the Church, and after that another character of testimony from that of the Church properly is announced, and God Himself is revealed in ways different from those which He is displaying now: that is to say, not as showing the exceeding riches of his grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus, but in the chastening judgments of the seals, trumpets, and vials, preparatory to the great day of the Lord which Rev. 19:11 ushers in. On this state of things Daniel compared with the Revelation will be found to cast and to receive much light, for it seems plain that the saints of the Most High or heavenlies, of whom we read in Dan. 7, identify themselves with the saints who suffer under the beast, after the rapture of the Church and before the Lord’s appearing. They keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, which, be it noted, is the spirit of prophecy, and though they are not of the twenty-four elders, they will have their blessed and holy part in the first resurrection. And here let it be remarked, that the term has nothing to do with the question whether all are raised at the same time; it simply describes the condition of those who rise and reign during the thousand years, as distinguished from those who do not rise till that period is ended. How true this is, is manifest from the fact that Christ has part in the first resurrection, who nevertheless rose before the Church more than eighteen hundred years at least. Hence the thought is not forbidden of certain saints being raised who stand and suffer after the Church is gone.

The symbol of the twenty-four elders continues unchanged throughout the course of the book, till chap. 19. They enter into God’s ways and judgments, as interested in whatever

16. Let not the reader suppose that the omission to dwell upon the four living creatures is through inadvertence: I have designedly passed them over, because I do not at this moment possess upon the point any light satisfactory to my own mind. Some suppose that they see in them the symbol of the angelic functions, as the four and twenty elders set forth the priestly functions, of the Church above; some, that the four living creatures are the representatives of the Old Testament redeemed, as the twenty-four elders represent the New, while others conceive that in them indications are to be traced exactly opposite. The four living creatures seem to be heads of creation -- at least of the creatures which found a shelter in the ark.
affected His glory, as may be seen in Rev. 4, 5, 7, 11, 14, 19.

But in Rev. 19 there is a striking change. After the opening scene of the rejoicings over Babylon the elders no longer appear, but the time for the marriage being come, (and how evidently the Church therefore is still viewed in the Revelation as unmarried,) the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, is announced as made ready.

The heavenly joy and the Bridegroom and His bride being thus incidentally glanced at, He takes a new aspect, for the day is about to break upon the world; and so do we, for we will have gone long before to be ever with the Lord, and if He is about to appear, so are we along with Him in glory. Hence, in the eleventh verse, the prophet sees heaven opened, and a white horse, and He that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. In unison, therefore, as He thus comes to smite and rule, the armies which are in heaven follow the Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful, which expressions are sufficiently clear to determine who are meant by the armies, if any one should have a doubt. It is the Church which was in heaven following Christ, in the capacity of His hosts, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Contrasted with the marriage supper of the Lamb, all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven are invited to the great supper of God. The prophet sees the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and His army. The result all know.

Next follows the angelic binding of the dragon for a thousand years, and the parenthetic revelation of the sitting on thrones, or at least, of the living and reigning with Christ during that period, of such as had part in the first resurrection. They will not cease to be priests of God, though their office may be discharged in a different way from what we saw as to some of them in Rev. 4 and 5, but they all reign with Christ for a thousand years.

It is a prominent feature of the book, that in it is traced the sovereignty of God, not only in His purposes regarding the Church properly so called, but in His gracious ways with an election from among Jews and Gentiles subsequently. Thus, after the Church is seen in its completeness in heaven, under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned elders, (ch. 4, 5) we hear in Rev. 6:9-11 of saints suffering, yet crying for vengeance; and the announcement to them that they should rest yet for a little, until their fellow-servants and brethren, doomed to be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. Vengeance should not arrive till then. These are evidently not the Church, but saints on earth after the Church is in heaven, whose sufferings and cries to the Lord accord much with the experience detailed in the Psalms. Still, whether Jewish or Gentile saints is not named here. But in Rev. 7 we have a numbered company out of all the tribes of Israel, sealed with the seal of the living God, and after this an innumerable multitude out of all nations, &c., who are characterized as coming out of the great tribulation, and as having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. These bodies are evidently distinguished from, if not contrasted with, each other; and they are still more markedly shown to be different from the Church; for we have the facts not only of a certain defined tribulation out of which these said Gentiles come, but of the elders, i.e. the confessed symbol of the Church, being still represented as a separate party in the scene (v. 11). Under the trumpets again we find the prayers of saints alluded to, who are of course supposed to be still on earth, (cp. Rev. 8:3, 4, with v. 8,) and an implication of the sealed Jewish remnant being in the sphere, though saved from the effects of the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:4). In the eleventh chapter are seen the two witnesses, prophesying in sackcloth, and killed; in the twelfth, the woman persecuted by the dragon, who wars with the remnant of her seed that keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is accomplished in the beast of ch. 13, who makes war with the saints and overcomes them. Ch. 14 is clearly a seven-fold sketch of the dealings of God, which brings the crisis to a conclusion: the hundred forty and four thousand associated with the Lamb on Mount Sion; the everlasting gospel summoning all to fear and worship God because of the proximity of His judgment; the fall of Babylon; the declaration of torment to the bestial worshipers; the blessedness from henceforth of those dying in the Lord; the harvest of the earth, out of which were redeemed the one hundred and forty-four thousand, as the first fruits unto God and the Lamb; and lastly, the vintage of the same. The reader has only to weigh verses 12, 13, in order to have the foregoing remarks confirmed. Even here we have the patience of saints described just before the harvest; the portion, too, not of the Church, (for we shall not all sleep,) but of a special class of saints described just before the harvest; the portion, too, not of the Church (for we shall not all sleep,) but of a special class of saints here below, while the Church is hidden above. In Rev. 15 (preparatory to ch. 16, i.e. the seven outpoured bowls of the wrath of God), is heard the song

17. I cannot concur in the view put forth in the most voluminous and elaborate comment of modern times upon this book; namely, that the sealed hundred and forty-four thousand are identical with the innumerable palm-bearing multitude; the latter embodying the idea of the different generations of the former into a corporate form, (for the idea of the Church being one body here below by the presence of the Holy Ghost is utterly denied, and unceasingly distorted, in this system of interpretation.) But Mr. Elliott allows that the twenty-four elders represent the Church in the character of a royal priesthood. No one denies that the Church, in different scenes, may be set forth by different symbols. But how comes it, not only that these distinct symbols are in the same scene, but that one of the elders is found explaining who, what and whence the multitude are? and that the description is of those who, among other things, come out of a particular tribulation and thus form a peculiar class? Nor is this denied by Mr. Elliott, who connects “the great” with the fifth seal, as the complement of the sufferers there, though another and distinct body. And if Israel, in verse 4, is to be understood symbolically, why not “all nations,” in v. 9, which are plainly distinguished from the preceding company? And if the election out of Jews be the emblem of Christians, how come these same persons immediately after to be characterized as an election out of Gentiles? Where is the consistency of treating the former as symbolical, and the latter as literal? and the more so, as it is in the latter picture, that various mystic personages appear, such as the four living creatures and the elders.
of the conquerors of the beast, celebrating the works of the Lord God Almighty and the ways of the King of nations. Compare also Rev. 16:5, 6, 15; 17:6; 18:4-6. To those who kept the word of Christ’s patience (Rev. 3:10) the promise was to be kept (not in or during, but) out of the hour of trial, out of that fearful tribulation which is in store for the dwellers upon earth. But in the preceding Scriptures it is clear that after Christ has fulfilled His promise in the translation of the Church to heaven, there are saints on earth, both from among Jews and Gentiles, who suffer throughout the tribulation. And these Apocalyptic sufferers are described in Rev. 20:4 as having part, equally with the Church, in the first resurrection. For that text discloses, first, the general place of the Church in the millennium reign, “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them”; secondly, those killed in the earlier persecutions of the book (ch. 6:9-11), “And I saw the souls of those that were beheaded because of the witness of Jesus, and because of the word of God”; and thirdly, the later witnesses for God, “and those who had not worshiped the beast,” &c. (Rev. 15:2). Those saints who were called and suffered after the rapture of the Church, are emphatically mentioned, because it might have appeared that they had lost all by their death. Not members of Christ’s body before He comes for the Church, they share not in the rapture; not protected from death during the prevalence of the beast, they cannot be the living nucleus of Jews or of Gentiles, saved to be the holy seed on earth during the reign of Christ. They suffer, are cut off, but not forgotten. “They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

Thus the truth brought to light in the epistles to the Thessalonians, is assumed in the view which the apostle John was the honored servant to enunciate -- viz., the blessed condition and holy employ of the Church round the throne and the Lamb, after the removal from earth, but previous to the appearing with Christ in glory.

The central part of the Revelation then appears to corroborate on an irrefragable basis, the truth that the Church will be taken away and fulfill the symbols we have been noticing, previous to the day of the Lord, during the same time that other saints are still groaning and shedding their blood like water here below (Psa. 74, 79).

Such seems to be the main key which unlocks an important portion of the book and confirms the view, so sweet to the renewed mind, of going to meet the Lord, without one earthly obstacle between: keeping unblunted the point and energy of a truth only revealed in the New Testament. For the Old Testament spoke of His coming with all His saints, not for them; of His appearing in glory to the confusion of His enemies, and not of His descending to meet His friends, when we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed and caught up together in the clouds. And hence, it would seem, the emphatic language of the apostle, conscious that God was by him revealing a new thing to faith. For in 1 Cor. 15 he says, “Behold I show you a mystery”; and in 1 Thess. 4, “This we say unto you by the word of the Lord.”

How sweetly do the closing appeals tell upon the heart of him who has an ear to hear! “I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright and morning Star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come” {Rev. 22:17}. It would be to lose the blessedness of keeping the prophetic sayings of this book, to have any other thought than that Jesus is coming quickly (ch. 22:7). It is well to read in their light the signs of the times: knowing the closure, we can thus detect the principles now at work. But it is a mistake and a misuse to construe of such signs obstacles to the coming of the Lord: to say, until I know the arrival of this or that precursor, I cannot in my heart expect Jesus. Blessed be God! such is not the language of the Spirit. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Are these the words of mere feeling, unguided by spiritual understanding of the mind of God? As a fact, we know that the Lord has delayed; but He is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). But who will say that it is conceivable to be looking for the Lord, wholly uncertain of the time of His advent, and at the same time to have the revealed certainty of a number of events which determine the year, or, it may be, the day?

That Jesus will arise, the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings (Mal. 4), is clear, and we know that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13). But this same Jesus is more than the supreme power of righteous government on earth. His is known to the Church, at any rate, as the bright and morning Star. Blessed light of grace, ere the day breaks, to them who watch for Him from heaven during the dark and lonely night! "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.”

“He that testifieth these things saith, Yea I am coming quickly: Amen! Come Lord Jesus” {Rev. 22:20}.

The Prospect 1:165-171 (1850).
Introduction

That there is a time of trouble, a special season of tribulation for the world, revealed in several important and plain passages of the word of God, no thoughtful Christian can for a moment question. All may not be clear as to whose lot will be cast in those days, but that such a season is to befall the world is not to be doubted. That it is also to be a day through which some of God’s own people are to pass is equally certain. We shall now enquire what it is that God’s word affirms as to both those who shall be there and those who shall be in the grace of God exempted from it.

At the same time a wider question arises than the hour of tribulation. We must not confound scriptures that differ, even if the difference be comparatively slight in appearance. “The hour of temptation” does not appear to me to be exactly the same as that of the great tribulation. Temptation may take the form of severe affliction, but it is not limited to such a type of things. Temptation may assume the character of seduction, as well as of trial in the shape of tribulation. I shall show tonight that there is a well-defined period as to which scripture leaves no just ground of hesitation; that there are preliminary judgments on one side, and on the other snares of all kinds, as well as a storm of trouble that will fail on those who have slighted the grace of God, and cast away His truth.

I shall show further that it is by no means true that none of His people are to be exempted from that “hour of temptation.” The verse that I have read proves the contrary. We have the Holy Ghost here addressing to this effect the assembly of God in Philadelphia -- the Christian assembly there. More strictly speaking, the angel of the church is before us -- who was, it seems, a kind of ideal representative of the assembly -- and the promise runs in the most distinct terms:

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth {Rev. 3:10}.

It is evident that the import of this is not merely that the faithful are to be preserved; I shall prove that for others preservation is assured; but there is a special exemption promised here. We can all conceive how, supposing the fearful time of trial came, some might go, however secured, through that hour, and others might be kept out of it altogether. The question is, whether the scripture is clear that both of these methods are to be made good -- that some are to be exempted from the hour of trial that is coming upon the habitable world, but that others are to be kept, not out of it, but through it. I have not a doubt that these two schemes are true, and that God’s word explicitly teaches both.

Further, the analogy of the dealings of God in past times leads to the same conclusion. If we look back to the earliest times, when God dealt with the world as a whole, undoubtedly He kept for His own name’s sake some through that flood that swept the world away before it; but was that all? Was there merely a Noah and his family preserved in the ark? We all know the contrary. We know of one at least that walked with God before the flood came, and was not insensible to what was coming. He knew it as well or better than Noah; and whereas he walked in communion with the Lord before the season of judgment came, he was taken without seeing death. Enoch was translated from the earth, and taken to be with God above. Thus we have the circumstances of a great divine intervention -- a time most striking, and unexampled in the previous history of the world. When God was visiting the sons of men, and this with displeasure, for there was manifestly a tremendous judgment coming on the earth, God wrought in a twofold way. He removed one who looked to Himself and walked with Himself before the flood came; He brought others through the flood of waters that they might be a nucleus of blessing for the fresh conditions of the earth that were to follow the deluge.

We find again, if we look farther down the history of God’s people, one similarly taken in special grace out of the world. In the course of the Jewish nation Elijah was caught up to heaven, while his successor, Elisha, was left to testify on the earth. Thus we have clearly God giving more than once a premonition of His will and of His ways in both respects. Therefore in setting before those who are here tonight, as distinctly as God enables me, a sketch of what awaits the world, at least as to this short season of signal trial, we are not left without signs and tokens of what the Lord has done: this we way do well to compare with that which the Lord is going to do, both in exemption and in preservation.

Nevertheless, be it observed that I do not rest the proof on types. Nothing but direct scripture ought to be the foundation for any man’s faith; and I shall cite enough to demonstrate that the word of God is as precise and positive as possible. I shall show that no other meaning is so satisfactory; that it is the simple unforced sense of the word of God. At the same time I shall be exceedingly obliged to any child of God who doubts it if he will only favor me with what he conceives to be a more satisfactory exposition of any one of the scriptures we may refer to. Need it be said that we ought to be above any question of our own opinion in these matters? They are too serious; they too closely affect the glory of God and the
well-being of God’s people.

Let me add, beloved friends, another thing, that my aim is not at all to excite or entertain any one’s mind, but to furnish from the Bible for the Christian’s faith what is of very great importance. Clearly if this is what is before God, if He means to remove some of His people from the earth, if He means also to have a people for His name to go through the time of temptation as well troublous as seductive that precedes the day of Jehovah, it evidently must be of the utmost possible interest and moment to know whether we can on scriptural grounds look confidently to the precious blessing of being with Christ Himself when the fearful hour of retributive infliction shall come upon the world.

Whether we open the Old Testament or the New, however we take the passages to be cited, we shall not fail to gather instruction. But to show how little depends upon anything artificial, I shall at this time take the texts simply in the order in which they stand in our common English Bible. The Christian has no interest -- we ought surely to have none -- but the glory of God.

No doubt by putting together particular passages in an artful way it is very possible to impose on the ignorant, whether by a show of strength or by a concealment of weakness. I am giving the best conceivable evidence that such a suspicion need enter no man’s mind in this case.

Passages Concerning the Tribulation

JEREMIAH 30: JACOB’S TROUBLE

The first passage then that occurs to me as bearing directly on the subject before us is found in Jer. 30:7. There we read of a day of trouble, a time of sore distress, and we are told who are concerned in it. The seventh verse is express:

Alas I for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

There can be, no doubt as to the force of the passage. This is a time of trouble, of special sorrow, and the one who is said to be involved in it is Jacob -- a well known designation of the Jewish people. They are thus called in their weakness, and trial, and suffering, and bitter experience of their own faults, but at the same time objects of God’s faithful care; not looked at as Israel, a prince with God and men, but Jacob, as learning not a little of themselves.

Accordingly we may see how appropriately the term is used here. This time of trouble will come upon the Jews because of their unfaithfulness. God does not unwillingly afflict the children of men -- never His people, but for higher and more blessed objects. Thus we find trouble referred to in these two ways -- the loving discipline of a Father who seeks our better blessing, and along with that, in the Christian’s case, as we know, the privilege of suffering for righteousness’ sake, or, still more, suffering for Christ’s sake. But such is not the character of this time of trouble. No scripture intimates it. It is never presented as being an honor: it is a time of judicial sorrow and affliction.

Again, the party here shown to suffer in that time of peculiar trouble is clearly a Jewish one -- Jacob. At present I shall not, of course, enter into a detailed proof of the impropriety of applying the terms “Jacob,” etc., to the body of Christ, the church. Perhaps it may be assumed that most persons in this room have no question on this head at least. They know perfectly well that Jacob or Israel, in the Old Testament as well as the New, means the Jews. They know that the Christian church is otherwise characterized, and that the greatest care is taken to keep the new thing {the Church} distinct from the old, and to mark the distinction. There are principles in common no doubt. There is a great deal of the truth of God in the Old Testament which applies with equal and sometimes with even increasing force to the Christian. No one need question this. For instance, holiness, obedience, submission to the will of God, delight in His ways, suffering for righteousness’ sake -- all these terms we get in the Old Testament, and they are found even more emphatically true in the case of the Christian and the church. Therefore none can fairly suppose that I weaken the exceeding value of the ancient oracles. If I am addressing my servant, it is quite right that my child should profit by what is said to the other. Again, supposing a wise father might give instruction to a child, it is all well for any other person to profit by it. But then we must not confound the relationships. In the Old Testament clearly the Jewish people are primarily the object of God’s direct dealings. In the New Testament the great object, after the Jews had rejected their Messiah, is to bring out the church of God as a new building, characterized after another sort altogether, nevertheless surely bound to profit by all the ways of God, especially with Israel.

Without further notice I assume, therefore, as a thing beside the present mark, and not needing discussion just now, that where the Jews, Israel, Jacob, Zion, Jerusalem, etc., are referred to, these words really do refer to them, not to Christians. If so, the bearing of the word in Jer. 30:7 is plain enough. The Jews are expressly supposed to be exposed to some exceeding trouble, but with this comfort, that they are to be “saved out of it.” They are not to sink utterly in this time of trouble. Here then we have at least an analogy with one of the parties described at the beginning of this discourse. We have not persons kept from going into the time of trouble, but people that are brought through it. In short, we have the Jews saved out of their most dismal day.

DANIEL 12: DANIEL’S PEOPLE

If we turn to the prophecy of Daniel, we find, in the last chapter and first verse, an even stronger statement of the same fact:

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book {Dan. 12:1}.

By this of course the meaning of the passage in Jeremiah is strongly confirmed. There is the same time described, but in
yet more emphatic terms. The trouble is to be not only “great,” but none before so great, and never any to be so great again. It is manifest and certain that there can be only one such time. This is important. There is an hour to come beyond all that has passed upon the earth, and no subsequent hour can equal it. It is this very time of which Jeremiah was speaking; for we find, first, Daniel’s people; then, involved in that dreadful hour; and, yet more, delivered out of it. These are precisely the three points in the passage already extracted from the elder prophet.

Thus Daniel and Jeremiah do not merely confirm each other mutually, but add exceedingly to the force and clearness of the truth in question. Nothing can be plainer than this conclusion. it is true that the Jews who are brought out of this hour of trouble are supposed to be persons of whom God has a record. They have a real living relationship with Him. That is to say, it is implied that the mass of the Jews will not be brought out of that hour; but as all then alive are to pass through it, so all will be delivered from it who are “found written in the book.”

And this is the more interesting because it is, from this same chapter that our Lord Jesus quotes in the discourse recorded in Matt. 24, as well as in Mark 13. In Matt. 24:15 we read thus:

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), etc.

Now this is a citation from the latter part of Dan. 12. It is evidently implied that many who read it might not understand; at least our Lord particularly cautions those who read to see that they enter into His thought. “Whoso readeth, let him understand.” Never does He discourage from reading; but He would have understanding. His prescint eye foresaw the confusion that would pass over the minds of men, even of His own disciples. He knew well how much earthly objects of one kind and another obscure the spiritual vision. He knew well that there would be all sorts of notions afloat, more particularly about prophecy; so that many children of God mistake, and many more dread, the subject. They feel that there is gross confusion, too much of conjecture, and very little positive truth to build up the soul thereby, and thus they allow their minds often to be prejudiced. Instead of judging the thoughts of men and their systems, they turn aside from that precious word of God which certainly deserves better treatment. Surely it is to their own great loss; and it will be so increasingly; for as darkness sets in, and as all kinds of evil are brought up to the surface of the world, more and more as time goes on, the children of God will need to take heed to every word, and indeed especially to the word which casts divine light on the future.

In fact a man can no more avoid looking forward mentally than he can forbear ordinarily to look forward with his eye. It is the nature of man to do so. He ought to look up; but he certainly looks forward. But if you do not subject your mind to God’s word, you will be sure to fill it with your own thoughts, or those of other people. That is, you must either be a student of divine prophecy, or you will be in danger of setting up to be more or less of a prophet yourself. Depend on it that to study believingly, earnestly, humbly, self-distrustingly, the word of God about the future, is exactly the way to keep oneself from being a prophet, and, let me also say, from being a false one. Nobody will turn out a false prophet who is content to be only a student of prophecy.

The word of God then, where Christ, not self, governs, is the truest preservative from all error. I admit there prevails great and strange misuse of scripture. I entreat my brethren, whoever they may be, to watch against this with all earnestness. There is no need of hurrying to a conclusion. It is better to acknowledge our own ignorance; it is much better to wait on God and His word, and meanwhile to confess we do not know this or that. Why should there be haste to form a fully and clearly defined sketch of what is coming? Be content rather to get truth in a detached way; to let this matter that God reveals in His word fall into your soul, and then another matter, as He gives it. Almost all the mischief is done by forming, or attempting to form, a complete theory when we are but learning the elements. It is far wiser to take the revealed facts of the word of God, and gradually to link them together as we become matured. This is the right way with all truth. It is no otherwise even in science. It is the most serious hindrance to progress when men form a hasty hypothesis, instead of first collecting all the facts; that is to say, they thus foreclose the case, and take the place of being masters when they may be but scantily taught disciples.

In the things of God, indeed, it is true and certain that there is One preeminently capable of teaching, even the Holy Ghost; and we may be perfectly sure that He takes the deepest interest in this; for He was given to show us not merely the things of Christ, but “things to come.” Let us then thankfully and humbly look up to God, that we may be led into all the truth.

MATTHEW 24: JEWS IN PALESTINE

Turning then to the words of our Lord Jesus, and the use that He makes of the prophet Daniel, we have the same elements as in the Old Testament, but with especial light and fullness. He was instructing His disciples, no doubt; but evidently a disciple in his then condition might represent either a godly Jew or a Christian. The reason is plain. The disciples were not on proper Christian ground until the death and resurrection of the Savior, and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Everyone knows this who bows to scripture about the matter. The proof is very evident. Going up to the temple, attending Jewish feasts, keeping rigorously the traditions of the law and the ordinances of it -- no one can say that all this is Christianity in its due form. But it was the condition of the disciples then, and for some time after.

Consequently the disciples were capable of being used, according to the intention of Christ, to represent those who would be raised up in a day that was coming, substantially similar in point of circumstances to themselves; that is, men converted but still connected with Jerusalem, the land, and the hopes of Israel. Such was their condition at this very time, and therefore they were even more fitting representatives of such a state than they could be of Christianity proper. At the
same time the Lord does afterwards give prophetic anticipations of what would belong to Christians, properly so called. It is entirely a question of the manner in which He was pleased to speak, and the subject of which He treats, which enables us to form a sound judgment in which relation the disciples are viewed.

Let apply these principles to what we have here before us. What originated the discourse? The admiration expressed by some of the disciples at the beautiful stones of that splendid and wonderful fabric which was then the special adornment of some of the disciples at the beautiful stones of that splendid Jerusalem. But the Lord told them that every stone should be thrown down, not one be left upon another. Is this Christianity? It was Christ predicting the downfall of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of their temple. Does this overthrow any of our hopes? It has nothing to do with our place and relationships. It had a vast deal to do with Jewish feeling and thought and expectation.

The Lord accordingly gives first various general warnings which dealt with them as they then were. In Matt. 24:15 He comes to something much more precise. He launches out into the circumstances that surround the end of the age, and says, addressing them naturally as representatives of those faithful Jews who should be in those days --

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.

Who can be so bold (to say the least) as to affirm that this is a picture of the church at large? Do you suppose that Christians would ever be contemplated in the land of Judea alone? Clearly not. All is plain if He is speaking about Jews -- godly ones no doubt, but Jews in that particular land. It is not at all a prophetic declaration as to the saints of God in different parts of the world. It is here nothing but a view of what would be in a future day in that land alone. We all understand that the mission of the gospel of the kingdom to all nations is to be from that land as from a center; but in verses 15, 16, etc., He speaks exclusively of those in that land.

Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:

let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

Their flight was to be so immediate, that if a man was on the housetop, he was not to come down through the house; and if he was out, he was not to come back for what might seem ever so necessary.

I know there are many persons of old and to this day who apply this to the past siege of Jerusalem. But the proper prophecy of the past destruction of Jerusalem is a part of Luke 21, not Matt. 24. There our Lord speaks about Jerusalem as encompassed with armies; but there is no such sign as the setting up of the abomination of desolation, no such rapid flight called for; and, in point of fact, every one who knows history at all must know that there was neither one nor other as in Matthew, but exactly as Luke says in the past siege of Jerusalem. The Roman lieutenant who came and encompassed the city did not at all demand to be at once heeded after this peremptory sort. There were months that elapsed between the retirement of Cestius Gallus and the arrival of the still greater force under the emperor when the destruction of Jerusalem took place some years afterwards. That is to say, there was plenty of time to get away, family, friends, baggage and all. There was no need, therefore, for so urgent a flight. All this is to me decisive, that our Lord did not in the first Gospel refer to the past historical siege of the city. There He says,

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place.

This, we have seen, is never once referred to in Luke 21; but another fact, as follows --

And when ye shall see Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto.

There is not a word here about coming down from the housetop; not a word that forbids the man in the fields from coming back. In short, it is a different and more ordinary state of things, characterized as "the days of vengeance," etc, "great distress in the land and wrath upon this people," but not speaking of the tribulation, as Matthew and Mark do, and consequently without the citation from Daniel. The times of the Gentiles clearly run on after the siege in Luke, and as clearly not after the scenes of which Matthew and Mark speak. There is a flight enjoined, but no such instant flight as in Matthew. There is an analogy, and nothing more, between the past siege and the future of Jerusalem; but the past event, as Luke reports, admitted of a retreat from the city far more quietly, and with greater ease for their escape to Pella, etc. The future siege will demand a peremptory flight from Jerusalem, according to the word of God given by Matthew, who consequently (not Luke) speaks of the end of the age.

Coming back, then, to the earlier Gospel, the Lord says,

But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.

We see that it is not a question of the world at large. The winter would not affect all the earth at the same time; what is winter in one place is summer in another. It is not a universal picture. Again, there is "the Sabbath day." Everyone here, it is to be hoped, knows that such is not the name of the Lord's day. We as Christians very properly keep not the seventh day, it is to be hoped, knows that such is not the name of the Lord's day. We as Christians very properly keep not the seventh day, but the first. A man who does not know thus much has a great deal to learn, it seems to me. Christians deny, and very rightly, that there would be any sin, in case of death, or sickness, or any peremptory call, to walk a mile and a half in order to do good to a neighbor, or to seek the blessing of an enemy. I suppose there are many here in this room who would feel perfectly ready to go twenty miles, if they could visit twenty sick persons in the course of a Lord's day. All Christians surely would not censure but value it. What do I infer from this? That the Lord is not speaking here of Christians at all. He contemplates godly Jews who are to be under the sabbatic law, and who would feel themselves in a grievous dilemma, therefore, if they had to flee on that day.
He says to such, “Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter” (when inclemency might hinder), “neither on the Sabbath day” (when legally their flight could not be permitted). Then He gives as the reason for all --

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.

The conclusion to be formed from these considerations is this, that our Lord was addressing the disciples as representing the godly Jews -- “every one that shall be found written in the book,” not Jew as such simply, but the godly remnant of that our Lord was addressing the disciples as representing the Head of the church. I have already shown double relation. He is the Messiah, the hope of Israel, but at the same time the Head of the church. The angel of the Christian assembly or church in Philadelphia, the coming hour of temptation, is here writing a letter by His servant John to the new testimony, the Philadelphia church.

What have we here? Jacob? Daniel’s people? Not a trace of them. Every one knows -- it cannot be questioned -- that the Lord Jesus is here writing a letter by His servant John to the angel of the Christian assembly or church in Philadelphia. Here at once we find ourselves on different ground. Jews are not addressed, nor is it by a Jewish prophet, either before or during the captivity. It is now the Lord Jesus, who has a double relation. He is the Messiah, the hope of Israel, but at the same time the Head of the church. I have already shown that in the passages of Matthew and Mark He is instructing His disciples as to Jewish expectations connected with the land of Judea and the temple. It is clear that they had the Sabbath-day, and the number of arguments might be largely increased in proof that Jewish disciples in the latter day are referred to, and such only. But now we find none of this. In all the scriptures that concern the Jews, they are supposed to go through this hour of temptation, but at the same time they are to be saved out of it. They go through that hour; they are protected of God; but none the less are they in the temptation, although they survive it, protected by divine power. Here, contrariwise, when the address is to Christians, the word is, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience.” The Jews were far from keeping this; they had rejected Himself; they despaired the word of His patience. But one of the great distinguishing features of the Christian is, that he suffers with Christ, and, more than this, that he is content to wait, as Christ waits, for the great day. He is not anxious for the glory of the world now: his portion is not here; the Christian is waiting, as becomes the bride, for the exaltation of the Bridegroom over the earth. The bride knows that the Bridegroom is exalted in heaven, and her heart is where her treasure is. Christ is glorified at the right hand of God; and her present joy is to know well that He who is her Bridegroom is coming, and that He will first gather to Himself His bride, and that in due time He will display His bride with Himself in glory. “When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.” It is not merely that He shall take us away to be hidden in glory. He is hid in God now, and we shall be shortly. But when Christ appears in glory, those who are waiting, and are content to wait, keeping the word of His patience, will be displayed in the very same glory as the Lord Jesus. Such is the Christian’s expectation. Christ is to come for us, and when Christ is manifested we shall be manifested with Him in glory.

 Entirely falling in with this sketch of the difference between what a Jew expected and what we are now expecting,
the Lord directs His servant to write thus to the angel of the church at Philadelphia, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience.” Christ is patiently waiting to come; He looks onward to the future as much in heaven as He did when He was on the earth. He has not left His manhood behind Him because He has risen from the grave; on the contrary, the resurrection is that which binds indissolubly His manhood with His person. He took manhood in His incarnation, but He has manhood bound up for ever with His own eternal glory. As He retains manhood now in the glorified state, what a pledge this is of our blessedness with Christ when He comes again! We wait for that moment; and because we keep the word of His patience He says, “I also will keep thee,” not from the tribulation only, but “from the hour of temptation (or trial) which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” Mark, He does not say, “I will keep thee from a certain place of trouble, or from a given sphere where the tribulation is to fall.” We can understand that a man might be taken out of a particular locality under judgment. For instance, supposing Europe, or the Roman Empire, or the Holy Land, to be peculiarly the spot on which the tribulation is to fall, we can easily understand how persons outside the doomed limits would not suffer temptation in the same way. This has been a favorite theory; and I have heard of devotees who have gone east and west in order to get out of the scene of dreaded trial. But this is folly, and a total mistake as to the word of God. What the Lord Jesus says is not, “You are to go from the sphere,” but “I will keep thee from the hour.” Nay, it is a far greater promise, and infinitely more precise, than saying, “I will keep thee from the place of the temptation,” etc. Those who keep the word of His patience are not to be there when the hour comes; that is to say, it is a complete removal (not only from the circle but) from the time of the trouble. The church of God will be exempt; the faithful will be kept from it. By the faithful I mean all the children of God.

I beseech all that are here to guard against certain and self-complacent notions opposed to this, and too widely spread in America, and sometimes nearer home. They will have it that such exemption is a reward {partial rapture} for believing in premillenarian views, and that those Christians who are not so instructed are to pass through the future hour of trouble, some going so far as to teach that they will be in torture for several hundred years, -- to suppose their opinions on the millennium, as well as others on the tribulation. I do not agree with either. I am sure that all such interferences with the constant hope of Christ are wrong; and men suffer loss through it. I believe that those who assume, contrary to scripture, that there is going to be a great and long reign of good over the earth before Jesus comes are under no small delusion (postmillenialism). At the same time, while disapproving of that notion, I consider that the idea of torturing for a thousand years God’s children, in order to punish them for not being pre-millennialists, is about as bad a notion as could be entertained by Christian men. I am not now speaking of those whose scheme directly lowers our Savior by clouding His Deity, or allowing the smallest spot of suspicion to rest upon His humanity or His relation to God, because one ought not to regard such as Christians at all. They cannot be acknowledged as such while anti-Christian. They may turn out Christians, carried away for a time, of course, just as a drunkard, or any other sinner. A person may fall into a desperate sin, and after all the Lord may bring him out of it. Neglect of prayer and of the word of God, tampering with the world, etc., may draw him into any evil, as grace can restore.

At the same time, if a man goes on in sin decidedly and deliberately, whatever you may hope and desire, you cannot, and ought not, to call him a Christian. It is the same with false doctrine: only I suppose that false doctrine is yet more evil and dangerous, because more deceptive than anything else; but no one can adequately judge of false doctrine, unless as taught by the Spirit of God. This then may suffice to show how, so far as the Jews are concerned, the uniform testimony of the Old and the New Testaments is, that they are to go through this time of temptation, but that the godly ones are to be preserved. The word of our Lord Jesus in Rev. 3:10, is addressed clearly to Christian ears, representing the faithful that should be found waiting for His coming to receive them to Himself, which is the normal position of all Christians. Nor could the Spirit of God contemplate such an anomaly as those who loved Him not so looking for Him. This scripture holds out the blessed prospect of such association with Him as will exempt them from the time of predicted tribulation and the hour of temptation also. If I do not misunderstand the latter phrase it would seem to take in the preliminary sorrows, as well as later seductions and unparalleled final judgments. These do not all come at once. There will be deceits used as well as persecutions before the crash and the frightful crisis come. There is clearly defined in this very book a difference and pressure of special affliction.

Accordingly the Lord declares that those that keep the word of His patience will be kept from that hour of temptation which shall come upon all the habitable world. And for what purpose is this hour sent? That others may be tried by it -- “to try them that dwell upon the earth.” In the Epistle to the
Philippians the Holy Ghost brands the earthly-minded as being enemies of the cross of Christ, “whose end is destruction” (Phil. 3:18, 19). I hope no one will contend that this is said of a Christian, however it may be of those who had once taken that place. That a Christian may venture near the brink of evil, that he may tamper with the unclean thing, that he may be for a while drawn in more or less, is possible; but it is beyond dispute that the Spirit of God contemplates those who, professing the name of Christ, altogether abuse it; and their end is certainly and literally destruction.

Here first, in the book of Revelation, the apostle John, at the command of our Lord, characterizes a class of persons who should be found just before the hour of temptation not only setting their minds upon earthly things, but if possible yet farther gone in that evil direction. They are called dwellers upon the earth {cp. Phil. 3:18, 19}. They had given up the blessed place of holy separateness as pilgrims and strangers in the world. Such is the uniform description of Christians; nay, in a measure, of the elders who obtained a good report by faith, as the Old Testament shows, although the light then vouchsafed was by no means so full as it is in the New. What intelligent soul would maintain that it was? If the Old Testament gave all the light needed now, where is the value and where the reason of the New? If it was the same thing, why not call it all the Old Testament? why the New Testament at all? The common faith of Christians knows this, if they do not frankly confess it. The one is divinely inspired no less than the other. There is no difference as to this; but there is the striking contrast that Israel’s case is the history of a people under the law and government of God on the earth, while the church is a people led by faith out of all worldly connection to follow in the path of an earth-rejected Savior glorified in heaven, and to wait for His coming as those who know their portion with Him above. This is the calling of the Christian, properly speaking.

But whenever did God bring in a blessing with out the enemy seeking to turn it to a corruption? If there had not been Christianity, there could not be Antichrist. There is invariably with the light of God the shadow, of the adversary. Accordingly scripture is most explicit that the falling away must come. The failing away from what? From Christianity, to be sure; and very likely from the divinely-inspired testimony in general -- from that of the Old Testament as well as of the New. Nor do I conceive there will be long to wait for this. Time was, when the only persons who used to attack the Bible were wicked men such as Bolingbroke and Paine, Voltaire and Rousseau. Now, I am grieved to say, it is fashionable for clergymen -- university professors, ecclesiastical dignitaries -- to be infidels. God forbid that I should single out invidiously any one individual or any one denomination, because it is easy to see that it is found in all the nations and tongues by which Christianity is at all professed. Scepticism is confined to no class, and is as rampant in Popery, though perhaps more open in Protestantism. Honest I can call it nowhere. It professes anything, while it believes nothing. The hard thing would be to say where it has not penetrated. Not that all are as boldly bad as Bishop Colenso; not that all are infidel after so cowardly a sort as the Oxford Essayists and Reviewers. But it is plain that the spirit of infidelity reigns in quarters that yesterday, one may say, would have been ashamed and horrified; and one of the most alarming signs is the powerlessness of Christendom in meeting it. I feel often that the answers to infidelity are only less infidel, if always less, than the assaults on the faith. Witness the address of Dr. Raleigh on religion and science to which the Congregational Union of London have committed themselves. I desire only to use such facts for the warning of those exposed and for humbling ourselves before God, while cleaving to the word of His grace.

The devil is now making people bolder in the highest places, as for a good while in the lowest. You may depend on it that it is mainly in the middle classes is found the chief value for the revealed truth of God at the present moment. The higher classes are largely saturated with infidelity; the lower classes no less so. In modern times it has been seen that God, while never unmindful of the poor, has most used people between the highest and the lowest to stand for the truth, and to reject error. I believe it is so still, and that the extremes of society are those that go most rapidly to ruin. While this is no doubt true, it is patent that the extremes are advancing rapidly to a moral meeting-place, and that the number of those who are thoroughly devoted to Christ, and who have perfect confidence in the truth of all that is written, is by no means large in any land whatsoever. We may be thankful for what the mercy of God has done in our own country, but I am persuaded that the inroads of infidelity become gigantic at this present time, and that the strides it is taking everywhere are as rapid as they are vast.

If this be so, it is a deeply important matter for us to be on our guard, and so much the more as the moment hastens when these things are about to be realized. Remember, I do not venture to say a word as to defining that moment. God may prolong His patience. Man is apt to be hasty in his thoughts just as he procrastinates in his duties, so is he apt to be precipitate in his expectations. It is unwarrantable for any man to predict the day which no one knows, says the Lord. God has kept all this in His own authority. At the same time there are moral intimations; and as none ought to be blind to the signs of the times, so the church of God ought preeminently to heed the tokens of what is coming -- to read them in the word first, of course, and to seize their living counterpart in what is working round about us. It is not difficult to see that it is the tendency of the present moment to obliterate ancient landmarks -- to cast down established distinctions, especially where there is a high or exclusive claim to revealed truth -- to put all things divine and human on a common level.

However this may be, here we have the clear promise, held out by the Savior, of a people that are to be kept from the coming hour of temptation. Observe, it is not merely a question of the place of tribulation. From elsewhere it is clear that the center of the worst tribulation is to be Jerusalem. So true is this, that even if the godly escape to the mountains, they are out of the area of that burning fiery furnace then seven times heated. This is certain from our Lord’s own words. They may escape in a very short time to a place where the
tribulation cannot fall upon them. Therefore it is evident that
the unparalleled tribulation for the Jews can only have a very
contracted sphere indeed. I shall show presently that there will
be a larger sphere also.

But in the message to the church in Philadelphia we have
a distinct assurance of exemption, not merely from the place,
but even from the hour; and this not of tribulation only, but of
temptation which takes in, if I mistake not, the preliminary
troubles and seductions as well as the tribulation that comes as
a scourge for such flagrant apostasy and rebellion. Thus the
promise is of the largest character, and at the same time the
utmost precision. It is a positive certainty to those that really
wait for Christ. It is not a question of a mere doctrine. If the
heart be not toward Him, what more value in seeing the
premillennial advent than anything else? It is obvious that
there are a great many souls who have the doctrine clearly
enough, of whom none say that it does them much good after
all. I believe myself, that if Christ be not the personal object
of the soul, anything else is comparatively powerless; but
where Christ is in the heart as believed in and loved, and
of the soul, anything else is com parat ively powerless;  but
all. I believe myself, that if Christ be not the personal object
of whom none say that it does them much good after
all. I believe myself, that if Christ be not the personal object
of the soul, anything else is com parat ively powerless;  but
where Christ is in the heart as believed in and loved, and

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all. I believe myself, that if Christ be not the personal object
of the soul, anything else is com parat ively powerless;  but
where Christ is in the heart as believed in and loved, and

I am speaking, of course, not merely of being screened
from the judgment, but of the power of salvation and of joy in
the Lord now. Plainly this promise is most full, and it is at
the same time no less precise as to the exemption of a people
from this hour of temptation. Need it be added who these are?
They are Christians, and none others. None but Christians
were here addressed by our Lord. To them distinctly is the
pledge made, that those who keep the word of His patience,
the Lord will keep -- not during, nor through, nor in, but --
"from (or "out of") the hour of temptation, which shall come
upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth"; to
try such as may have borne the Christian name, baptised
persons, but their heart not in heaven, nor with Christ;
earthly-minded, earthly-dwellers [cp. Phil. 3:18, 19], spire of
the true light and the revelation of glory in the face of Christ.

REVELATION 7:13-17: GENTILES
WHO COME OUT OF IT

"The Great Tribulation." But this is not all. In Rev. 7 we
have another word, and here we have, as is well known, "the
great tribulation." I am giving the critical reading; for
remember, in cleaving firmly to scripture -- and I do not see
there is anything else worth contending for in this world -- it
is a duty to ascertain, wherever a various reading exists, what
has the weightiest claims to be received as the true: we have
no need to shut our eyes to any representative of the mind of
God. In short, the purest state of the text must be sought as
well as the most faithful version. To perpetuate a traditional
blunder is not faith, but mere ignorance or obstinate
superstition. Therefore I accept, and exhort all my brethren to
accept, every help that God affords for the elucidation of His
word. To this end every discovery of an ancient Biblical
manuscript, every help toward a more accurate version that
can be gathered from the study of the languages in which God
wrote His word, is most valuable. I do not say that everybody
ought to set up for a judge in these matters.

In fact, very few scholars, or even Christian scholars,
have this sort of competency. It is easy enough to suggest
changes of scripture, and supposed emendations of text and
translations. We have all heard of 20,000 corrections collected
by a diligent physician. It might be a wholesome check if any
competent person dealt with that magazine of
misapprehensions, as Bode did with the errors made by Mill
and Bengel through trusting the Latin renderings of the old
Oriental versions. What a tiny residue would come out from
the subjection of the 20,000 to a really critical ordeal! In
general you may dismiss at least nineteen out of every twenty
supposed corrections of our authorized Bible. They are
merely the crude guesses of tyros, the suggestions of such as
may be scholars in profane Greek or Latin, but who possessed
little or no familiarity with the Bible. Again, it is
monstrous for persons to sit in judgment on such matters,
unless they do so as Christians. I deny that genius or
scholarship will enable a man to understand aright either the
Hebrew or the Greek scriptures. The best of scholars have
made the grossest of mistakes here. Take Dr. Richard Bentley.
Did not he and the like commit very painful blunders in
scripture? I admit the scholarship of the famous Master of
Trinity in his own sphere. He was, no doubt, a man of very
unusual power, and of the largest attainments in the remains
of Greek and Roman letters; but then, as a rule, no man is at
home outside his own business. I do not trust people who
speak confidently on what they have not made their own. I
value the simplest artisan in his own craft more than the ablest
philosopher who prattles about it. No doubt, if a shoemaker
were to talk of philosophy, he would not be likely to throw
much light on the subject. He might be a genius, undoubtedly,
and to this you must give ample weight; but still, in general,
one could not expect that men outside their own proper
functions would be the most competent to give an opinion of
value on matters foreign to them.

On doctrine I hold the opinion of a scholar to weigh about
as much as that of a shoemaker. Not only is erudition in itself
of no account in spiritual things, but scholarship in one branch
does not give competence in another. The Attic nicety, which
appreciates Sophocles, may be at fault before the abrupt passes
and parentheses of the apostle Paul. But the first of all
requisites, even for those familiar with Greek, for
understanding the word of God is unfeigned faith in the Lord
Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the sole power of comprehending
and alone gives qualification to judge of divine things; and He
dwells only in those who have faith in Christ. At the same
time let none suppose that I exclude the use of every aid that
can be brought in really and honestly to enable a Christian to
read the word of God as closely as possible approaching its
original form. It is, to my mind, a positive duty to welcome
and apply every such help, let it come from what quarter it
can.
that the true reading here is “They which come out of the great tribulation. The omission of the article is wrong in the common text, and must be given in English to represent fairly the sense given by the best authorities. It is not always so; but it is needless to say that there are definite means of judging, and there is no question at all about its necessity here. To those who know these matters this is a ruled point, not without the effort of prejudice in some to resist the conclusion, but in tribulation,” many a Christian might say, “You and I have known great tribulation. This is important, because if you read it simply “These are they which came out of great tribulation,” many a Christian might say, “You and I have known great tribulation. This is a choice scripture, and it evidently applies to you and me.” Alas! how often we are misled from the prime source of all mistakes -- that is to say, interpreting the Bible by our own feelings, circumstances, and sphere. This is not the way to understand the word of God. You must look at it in connection with Christ, and not with self. Such is the only canon that will conduct a man in safety and light and joy right through the Bible by the grace of God; thus only, can one be an intelligent disciple of the Lord Jesus.

Quite different is the way in which persons in general are apt to deal with the Bible; that is, they judge from their own things, and not from the things of Jesus Christ. Connect the word as well as facts with the Lord, and what a difference it makes! There may be Christians so unintelligent as to find in the Bible nothing but Christians and their enemies; but the man who reads scripture, looking at Christ, not at himself and his church, will say, “Well, there was once a people of Jehovah before the Christian and the church of God; the Lord had Israel then the object of His care, and they broke down utterly. Then He gave imperial authority to the Gentiles, and they turned it against Him, compelling the Jews, under pain of death, to worship their idols, and give up the true God. And now the Lord Jesus, having come, has been rejected by both; and having accomplished redemption, has sent out the gospel and set up the church; and what is the result?” We have before us in scripture the revelation of the end of all, and we have the working of these destructive principles in our own day. To leave room for all is of immense importance. It clears the way for understanding these and other scriptures. The fertile source of mistake is the desire to make all bear upon ourselves.

**Gentiles Who Come Out of It.** We have seen the Jewish portion; we have heard the promises to Christians; now we must be introduced to a third party. Nor is there the least reason why we should be in the dark about it for in the latter half of Rev. 7 we read as follows:

> After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

How many believers here and elsewhere I can hear asking if this be not a picture of the church. Let me assure you that it certainly is not so. With the utmost desire not to contradict any one flatly, we must feel that there are times when it is much better to be plain and short. I must therefore take the liberty of affirming that demonstrably a Gentile multitude is meant, and not the body of Christ, the church. The proofs are clear and decisive. Every intelligent reader of the book, whatever his view of its interpretation in other respects, agrees in this, that “the elders and the “living creatures,” one or other or both, are the symbol of the church in heaven. How then could one of these elders describe this multitude, if all, elders and Gentile multitude, formed part of the same church? How could the party described and the party describing be the same body? Surely they must set forth a quite distinct thing. The elders were seen long before the multitude.

The context too will make their difference still plainer; and this is not an unimportant key to understand scripture. Never take a passage without examining its context. What is its bearing here? A numbered multitude we first hear of from the twelve tribes of Israel. I know the fondness of many for what they call spiritualizing; but it is hard to spiritualize each of the twelve tribes of Israel; and the whole of these are brought before us distinctly and separately, as if on purpose to set aside such mythicizing; for this is its true name and nature -- not a spiritual but a mystical use of the scriptures. After the Holy Ghost has shown us the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed out of the twelve tribes, the prophet then sees an innumerable multitude of Gentiles, distinct from both the elders and the four living creatures. If the elders mean the heavenly redeemed in chs. 4, 5, I suppose they must mean the same body till the last chapter in which the symbol occurs (Rev. 19). Wherever they appear, do they not mean the same thing?

I here take the lowest ground. Is it not a fair inference that, if a symbol is found in different passages in the same book, it is to be taken in the same sense consistently? That is to say, if the elders are the glorified saints in one passage, they are the same in all passages. How then could this multitude of Gentiles be so any more, than the multitude of Israel? In short, therefore, Rev. 7 shows us a numbered company of Israel, and then a countless crowd of Gentiles, separate from each other as well as from the elders, and characterized as coming out of the great tribulation. There is not the semblance of truth that these Gentiles are composed of the successive generations of God’s people throughout different ages of the world. On the contrary, they are not supposed to be risen but alive; to the prophet’s eye a number
numberless, gathered out by grace at a particular epoch, when the great tribulation comes here below. This, long known to a few scholars, is established now conclusively by the critical researches of all competent to speak, no matter what their bias.

And why should it seem incredible, or even strange, that God should begin to deal with Israel as such again? As to this, there really ought to be no question, if we believe the various scriptures read at the beginning of this discourse. And if God will keep them, why not the Gentiles too? Nay, is it not certain that He means to bless the Gentiles as such? Is it asked what He purposes to do for the church of God? We have already seen about it. Those that keep the word of Christ’s patience are promised to be taken out of the hour of trial, and those whose earthliness covers the Lord with their own shame are the persons on whom the severest judgments are destined to come. “The hour of temptation that shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth,” does not mean simply Jews or Gentiles, but, rather such as have professed the name of the Lord falsely. That true members of Christ’s body will be left here below is an idea not only, without foundation, but contrary to the clearest principles of truth, and to express statements of scripture. The evil servant and the foolish virgins mean not the true but the false.

**REVELATION 12: SATAN CAST DOWN.**

And let me add too another point of interest. We find in Rev. 12 one scripture more which gives a cause, and an occasion too, for this fearful time. All this needs to be duly taken into account. You are aware, no doubt, that the reason why the things of this world constantly appear to gain the victory over the truth, as far as what is bad triumphs, is the power of Satan, the great personal enemy of the Lord. Scripture affirms that the hour approaches when that power is about to seize the victory over the truth, as far as what is bad triumphs, is the power of Satan, the great personal enemy of the Lord. Scripture affirms that the hour approaches when that power is about to break (not merely to faith, as ever since the death and resurrection of Christ, but) publicly in the world. Satan, according to the language of Rev. 12, will be cast out of heaven. From the seventh verse it is thus written:

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was his place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. Manifestly this is a statement of things at which we are not yet arrived. It would be false doctrine and practically serious to say that such is the fact. A plain reason against it is, that Eph. 6 declares that the conflict in which the Christian is now engaged is with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places, not with flesh and blood. As Israel had to fight with the Canaanites, so our special conflict is with spiritual wickedness in the heavens. Anybody who intelligently reads the Greek Testament will know, and even those who can enquire of those who do will hear it confirmed, that the expression ἐπουρανίως means not merely “high” but “heavenly” places. No matter where you examine elsewhere, it invariably means “heavenly places”; and, in point of fact, it never does bear the sense of “high” simply, nor do I believe it to be possible. Any man who knows the language will hard deny that “high places” is a slip or an evasion. I suppose our translators did not know what to make of the passage. They may have supposed that it would sound strange to hear of wicked spirits in “heavenly places,” and so they thought to tone it down or to obscure it a little, and so put in “high places.”

However this may have been, it is far from my wish to fasten any unworthy motives on them. They have erred occasionally, but were, many if not all, excellent men and able scholars, and I believe did their work with fidelity, though with a certain measure of hindrance, especially on the part of the king. We know he was superstitious on some points, and would not allow them to alter ecclesiastical terms which notoriously foster much misconception and prejudice. I do not mean to insinuate that James I had anything to do with the mistake alluded to in Eph. 6, nor does it particularly matter who it was that suggested or kept it up; but the fact is certain, that we are said by the Holy Spirit to battle “with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places,” as Israel with blood and flesh (that is, their Canaanite enemies).

It is certain then that Satan has an astonishing facility of wiles to hinder Christians from enjoying their proper heavenly privileges; but we know that, subtle as he is, it will all speedily come to an end; and this is in part what is described in Rev. 12. It cannot come to an end as long as we are committed to the conflicts spoken of in Eph. 6. None but Apocalyptic dreamers could sustain such a thesis for an instant. For, observe, what we read here is, that when that crisis comes there will be

a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Has there ever been any time so striking for God’s blessed intervention in the past history of the church that would answer to this? Is it really true that, when Constantine adopted Christianity, salvation came? Surely not. Who is so worldly-minded as to say this? Alas! such things have been said; but, after all, the idea only requires to be viewed in the light of scripture in order to feel that it is egregious and unfounded. To suppose that the downfall of Satan occurred in the fourth century, or that the coming of salvation was when Christendom began, or any such like scheme, is to draw largely on one’s own fancy. Yet sober men, in other respects learned, sensible, and even godly, have put forth such views.

They were right good Protestants withal -- a singular fact that Protestants should concede that in the days of many a dark superstition, afterwards embodied in popery, salvation came, and the kingdom of our Lord and the authority of His Christ. But there is no incongruity too astonishing for the minds of men. However this may be, it is added that “The accuser of our brethren is cast down.” At this point Satan will
have lost the power of calumniating as well as of hindering the people of God. Hence the call to joy -- "Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and yet that dwell in them." It is evident that there are dwellers in heaven then -- saints who are no longer found here below on the earth entirely agreeing with what we have remarked elsewhere. But further: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down to you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." It is the time of great trouble; that is, the time of the unparalleled tribulation that has been already before our thoughts. Thus God will have accomplished His purpose of taking away men to be with Christ in heaven, having put away their sin and given them a nature capable of enjoying His own rest. They dwelt there in spirit when they were on earth; they looked to follow Christ to heaven when they were poor pilgrims here; they waited for Christ longingly, and they are at length to be with Him whom they loved. After this comes the downfall of Satan's power, and the putting forth of his wrath on earth for a short time. Who can pretend that this vast change has taken place? Surely if there had been a most fearful and unexampled raging of Satan here below, one would think that the world ought to know and feel it. It is a strange theory that such an immense change could have taken place without anybody being the wiser for it, and nobody particularly the worse. Be not deceived. The dread reality is yet to come. Accordingly we read of a tremendous persecution, and the rising up of the two beasts described in Rev. 13.

**Summary**

There is no need to enter more into detail on this subject. I have endeavored to give a simple and unvarnished view of what the scriptures teach us of the hour of temptation as well as of the tribulation. It has been shown, I trust clearly, that the Jews are to be in the innermost circle of the trouble, though the godly are warned of the Lord to escape from it. Thus our Lord's words have the closest connection with the declaration of the prophet Jeremiah that, though so sorely tried, they are to be delivered; but how is not explained. Daniel mentions the intervention of Michael, but adds no more. Our Lord fully explains. He tells them that, when they see a certain sign, those in Judea must flee: what is that sign? The abomination of desolation. There need be no doubt what this means, according to analogy, a certain idol, the setting up of which in the sanctuary of Jerusalem will be the signal for the infliction of this unprecedented tribulation. An incident of the tribulation, or, at any rate, another element of trouble to man, and especially to Israel on earth, will be Satan's great wrath for a short time on his dejection from heaven. Antichrist will show himself openly; Satan will work by him, also by the great imperial power of the Roman empire, as he never did before; and God will send men a strong delusion, that they should believe what is false.

As men throughout Christendom will be misled deliberately and wilfully to refuse the truth, God will allow evil to rise up beyond all precedent, and will let Satan have his destructive way, such of His people as are in Judea being saved from complete ruin by instant flight according to the word of the Lord. Jerusalem, therefore, is to be the center, not merely of the great tribulation, but of the greatest; as being guilty of abandoning law and gospel with Christ Himself, always resisting the Holy Ghost, as their fathers did, so shall fall there such retribution as never was. But the Gentiles, guilty in their measure, are not to escape the storm; they may not endure the worst of it, but they must taste the bitter fruit of their doings in "the great tribulation" of Rev. 7, whatever may be the grace of God in bringing out of it a countless throng to enjoy His tabernacle over them during the millennial reign of the, Lord Jesus.

Thus God will cause a great and numberless crowd of Gentiles to come out of that tribulation as truly as He will save the godly Jews; but observe, not a word is said about the church in either. How are we to account for a silence otherwise so strange if the church were really there? If God bound Himself to save Jacob; if He is pledged to bring out a multitude of Gentiles, why not a word about the church? Nay, rather, how could He speak of His church then on earth; for you are aware that in the church there is neither Jew nor Gentile. One great feature of the church is the blotting out of such distinctions, and the formation of one new man, which is neither. Thus, whereas we were Jews or Gentiles before, we have put all this off, and as many as are baptised into Christ have put on Christ. We are baptised into one body -- the body of Christ -- such is the inspired description of the Christian; so that we who receive the Holy Ghost now abandon our Gentilism or our Judaism, as the case may be. Thus the key is given clearly and at once. The elders will have been -- at a moment kept silent in the Apocalypse -- translated to heaven, and they are seen, there before the trouble comes, not only before the fury of the tribulation bursts, but before the preliminary judgments of God on earlier evils, and the efforts of the devil to ensnare the saints by deceit, and draw them into the final apostasy.

As to this it seems to me that the general bearing of the word of God is abundantly plain, without pretending of course, to enter into every minute point. We are only learners; and a great joy it is to learn of God and in His own way. May the Lord bless the testimony of His truth, and give every Christian to have not the least anxiety, but to cherish perfect confidence in His word and Spirit! The Thessalonians were troubled by a misuse of prophecy. Mischievous men, who knew not at all the grace of God, troubled and shook their souls by a false apprehension of the day of the Lord -- the day of judgment for living men on the earth. It is a total mistake to suppose that their delusion sprang from a too eager or enthusiastic hope of, the coming of Christ. The mischief was, that their hope had been displaced and practically annulled by terror from false doctrine about the day. Excited hope was not the delusion, but dread, as if the day of the Lord was present. It was not wrong to believe that the day was at hand; but this is not what the false teachers insinuated, nor what the apostle reproves. Our English version,
unfortunately, is exceedingly to be regretted here; and I appeal to every scholar with an unbiased mind whether ἐνέστηκε does not mean “is present” (contrasted often with merely being “at hand,” and never really admitting of such a sense). They falsely taught, then, that the day of the Lord was actually come; and this was the delusion (for, which they dared to allege a pretended letter of the apostle) that distressed the Thessalonian believers. 2 Thess. 2 dissipates the notion.

It is another instance of what our translators occasionally did. They could not make sense of the passage according to the plain meaning of the word, and so they ventured to do what no man ought to do; they gave up the real meaning of Scripture, and substituted another meaning, which they thought would make better sense, and must have been intended. Nobody is at liberty so to deal with God’s word: it is not translating, but interpreting. Beloved friends, let us cleave to scripture, whether we understand it or not. If we do not, let us frankly confess our ignorance, but faithfully adhere to the words before us. What the Thessalonians were drawn into was the idea that the day of the Lord had already come.

The false teachers seem to have construed the persecution under which they were suffering as a proof that the day of the Lord was actually there. This the apostle treats as a falsehood, and the more as they claimed his authority for it. No one ought to listen to these men, nor were they to be troubled about such a rumor. He beseeches them, by their blessed hope of being gathered to the Lord at His coming, not to be frightened by the cry that the day was come.

Why indeed should a Christian be alarmed about anything? He is entitled to look death in the face, and to have boldness in the day of judgment, as John expressly says. And do you think that a man who can honestly and according to the truth and will of God thus contemplate the most solemn certainties of the eternal future should be justly alarmed at anything here below? A Jew or Gentile ought to dread the tribulation if he faces the revelation of God about it ever so briefly; for the tribulation will be a retributive dealing with the unfaithfulness of the world, whether Jews or Gentiles, and especially of those who abuse the name of the Lord. But for this very reason it does not apply to the Christian at all. This is the moral truth of the case, and therefore I may well press it on all who have not duly weighed scripture as to it. I entreat you to cleave to the Lord’s name and to His word. Value every help, and seek the best you can. If danger menaced your body, I daresay you would have recourse to those who, as you believe, could do you most good: I do not think you ought to do less, if the question is of your soul and God’s own truth and glory.

May God bless you who believe, and give you hearts truly and humbly to cleave to Him and to the word of His grace, assured that He will exempt, according to His own word, those that keep the word of Christ’s patience, and that He will also in the darkest days preserve Jews and Gentiles according to His word through the awful judgments that are coming upon the world.

There is a plain and simple fact which ought to strike any attentive reader of the Revelation: -- the churches are no longer in view after ch. 3 as subsisting and the province of the dealings of the Lord here below. I do not say that they have ceased absolutely to exist; but they are not before the Lord as the objects of His care or even chastening. They are nowhere taken account of after the seer’s prophetic visions begin. They are alluded to in the concluding observations of the book, ch. 22, when the whole course of the prophecy is closed, and the Spirit of God is merely giving, as a final exhortation, the use to be made of the book. But the fact that claims our consideration is, that from the beginning of the fourth chapter we have no longer the churches brought before us as subsisting on earth, and under the disciplinary action of the Lord.

For this reason, as well as for many others of a detailed kind which have acted on the minds of children and servants of God from early days, I have no doubt whatever that the seven churches have a mystic as well as a literal aspect. I believe that the Lord Jesus, in short, chose those seven particular assemblies in the province of Asia, because there were circumstances in them which at that time called for His particular notice. But this is not all. Along with this it was so ordered that His letters to the angels of the churches on their state should be the occasion of giving a prolonged special instruction as long as the church of God was to be the object of His dealing here below. That is, the epistles to the churches had a past historical application in St. John’s days; and from that epoch they were intended also to give a kind of prophetic outline of the chief salient points in the course of the church as long as it should be left in this world.

Thus Ephesus shows us the declension from first love which led the Lord to threaten the removal of the candlestick.

In Smyrna we can plainly see persecution from the heathen powers, but along with this the rising up of Judaism formed as a systematic body in the Christian church. It is at this point that we have the “synagogue of Satan” -- those who say they are Jews and are not, but a synagogue of Satan. In the days of Paul individuals had been always endeavoring to drag the church of God back into ordinances, or other misuses of the law; but now it was become a compactly framed system -- the greatest internal enemy the church of God ever yet had to contend against. Other things there were, some grosser and some subtler. Antichrist, too, had gone out from the family of God; but I am speaking now of that which has often deceived saints. Even as a Barnabas and a Peter (we are informed for our solemn warning) were drawn away at the beginning, so much more, during the course of the church, godly and orthodox persons have been constantly in danger on this side.

In Pergamos we behold the church where Satan’s throne is, not persecuted but exalted, acquiring power and influence under the patronage of the world.

Next we have Thyatira with the portentous figure of Jezebel, that murderous queen and false prophetess, the most relentless slaughterer of the saints of God in all ages. It does not require much of the prophetic ken to understand where the reality that answers to the picture is found. Thus you see it is no longer simply Balaam, or the teaching for hire, but Jezebel, an incomparably more advanced system of evil; and accordingly children born to her. It becomes a perpetuated race of iniquity in that which bears the name of the assembly of God here below.

After this comes Sardis, where there are no longer horrors of the kind that were contemplated under the preceding; yet, while there is profession of the truth, the Lord tells them that their works were not found perfect before His God. Worldliness, accordingly, is the great snare that is found here. It is not simply the patronage of the world, nor is it only, nor so much, the endeavor to govern the world under the name of the church (this was Jezebel); but now they boast of orthodoxy and correct morals, but, nevertheless, are no better than a name to live with death working largely.

Then we find Philadelphia, which I do not doubt has found its counterpart in the amazing liberty that the Lord has given for the spread of the Bible; in the active going forth of the gospel far and wide; in the recall of Christians, not only to the love of the brotherhood, but to their own proper portion, to which their blessed relationship with the Lord entitles them, and this in the revived prospect of the speedy return of the Lord Jesus.

Lastly there comes Laodicea, a picture of indifferentism, after truth had been largely propagated and known but where conscience altogether fails, where the one thought is the people of God and their rights, but alas! without heart for the glory of God. It is merely man under a new form; not man in the world; but man bearing the name of Christ, obliterating in his self-complacency all just thought and feeling for the glory of Christ; -- a state accordingly of great boastfulness and pretension -- state of satisfaction with the progress that has been made, and the largest expectation of that which is to be done. But the Lord counts it all lukewarmness, that indifference which, in His judgment, is more offensive and contrary to His mind than if one were honestly led away by error or evil for a time. It is a heart for nothing; it is lukewarmness to everything, even to Christ Himself. So it is the condition which is above all things loathsome to the Lord,
and which He resents; so that He pronounces not merely the removal of the candlestick, but the spewing it out of His mouth, as most nauseous to Him.

Solemn to say, it is here that the curtain drops upon the churches here below. We hear no more about them, save only that in the conclusion, as already said, there is a call to hear the book in general. But as a history under the mysterious protracted form of the seven golden candlesticks and the Lord’s messages to their angels -- a kind of prophetic history of the church as a whole from that epoch till He comes, “the things that are,” -- there is nothing more to add.

The scene therein is changed. A door is seen by the prophet opened in heaven, not yet for the Lord Jesus, followed by His saintly hosts, to come out of heaven (which remains for a later date), but for John to go up and see in the Spirit, “After this I looked, and, behold, a door opened in heaven.” It is not for drawing near into the holiest by faith: the Spirit of God never calls this the opening of a door. In Heb. 10 the veil is shown to be rent, and the believer even now by faith draws near through the value of the blood of Christ. But here we have the ordinary figure of that by which one enters in; and accordingly, lest there should be any doubt about the meaning, the first voice which the prophet heard was, as it were, of a trumpet talking with him, and saying, “Come up hither, and I will show thee” -- not exactly “things which must be hereafter,” as if it were left vague and distantly future, but “the things which must be after these” {Rev. 4:1}. Simple as the change just suggested is -- and I apprehend there is no question of the correctness of it; I do not think any unbiased person familiar with the language would doubt it -- the importance of it is this, that it binds what is to follow in the book with the termination of the history of the seven churches. If it meant “hereafter” in a loose general way, you might suppose the seven churches terminated a possibly long interval and then “things which must be hereafter”; but if we have the seven churches or “things that are,” and then the things which must be after these,” there is a close link formed between the end of the church’s state and the prophetic visions following as immediately consequent.

Now this will prove of some importance, though I do not wish to press the thought beyond that which would commend itself to any simple and unprejudiced mind. But what man of reflection can avoid seeing that the very next fact brought before us after Rev. 2, 3 is not churches on earth in any shape, but the prophet entering in by the open door in heaven? The immediate object, of course, was for the vision of which he had to write yet further, the power of the Holy Ghost giving him to behold what was seen in or from heaven and about to be on earth. And what he sees there first of all was a throne set, and One sitting on the throne. It was the throne of God on high. It is not said to be a golden throne, as in the most holy place, whether of the tabernacle or of the temple. Such was the propitiatory seat of gold where blood was sprinkled as a means for men to draw near through sacrifice, priesthood maintaining consistency with it spite of failure. But this is in no way the object of the throne in Rev. 4. The golden throne, with atoning blood upon and before it, is one of grace; it is the expression of what God can be and is to man, where grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. The throne that was now seen set in heaven was judicial, not the witness of divine grace, though it be always, no doubt, the throne of divine majesty.

“He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone.” The jasper, as we know, is used as symbolic of the glory of God in connection with the heavenly state. In Rev. 21 it is said, “He carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone.” I consider therefore that the jasper is used here, and no doubt the sardius also, as symbolic of God’s glory, as far as it could be manifested to the creature. There is a glory of God that is entirely above creature contemplation; there is a glory which may become visible to the creature. God has at various times permitted that His glory should shine on men, even on earth; but more so when rapt in the Holy Ghost, into His presence above. At the same time, I say again, it is not, of course, the essential glory of God “to which no man can approach,” but as far as God is pleased to make it visible to the creature. It is His glory in government, in the maintenance of good against evil by power.

Round about the throne was seen a rainbow, the sign of God’s beneficence to the earth, and at the same time the pledge of a limit put to judgment; but it is not as ordinarily seen among men (Gen. 9). It recalled that covenant with the earth; but there is no question of rain here, as even in Ezek. 1:28. It is simply the divine idea. It is not the circumstances of its use or application, but the grand truth that was represented there -- the faithful sign of God’s covenant with the creature. Hence it was shown in a form which was particularly refreshing to the eye; it was “in sight like unto an emerald.”

“And round about the throne were four and twenty -- not merely seats, but -- “thrones” {Rev. 4:4}. Every throne is a seat, but every seat is not a throne. These were not bare seats, but thrones for those on whom royalty was conferred. It was, no doubt, a heavenly kind of royalty; but still the thrones were for certain to fill.

This is a remarkable feature. We never hear of angels seated on thrones. Angels never govern; they were made not to reign but to be servants. They never rise above the character of service. Man was made to rule, though, of course, in subjection to God. Even the first man was made to govern. When God made him He said, “Let them have dominion.” It was not merely to do His will. As servants, all are necessarily bound to do the will of God; and all the blessedness of dominion, as of everything else also, depends on its being the will of God. No man governs aught that will not serve. No man will reign royally that has not a just view of what obedience is to one that is above him. How can he possibly impress the necessity of subjection upon those that are below him? But then, when God made the first man, he was not looking merely at Adam, or the race: the Second Man, the last Adam, was before His mind. Other men were
not worth counting. One man, the first man, was enough to comprehend all the Adam race. That one wrought, oh! what ruin upon all that followed him. And God passes quickly from the ruin, and hastens to the day when the Second Man appears, the Lord from heaven; and that man is the last Adam. There is no improvement upon Him; there is no progress after Him. The Second Man is the last Adam; and He is the one that is to govern -- the destined Ruler of all, God alone excepted. For you must remember we speak here of His reign as man; and a wonderful thought it is, that every creature of God will be put under the God -- exalted man -- the man that never exalted Himself, the man who first showed His special and wondrous glory, not by the great deeds He did, but in obedience. Others might do exploits. His servants were to do greater works than He did. But there was one thing in which no servant approached Him -- the last thing that you might expect in a divine person; but in a divine person who was a man obedience was the moral perfection of the place He took. Such is the one for whom the kingdom is reserved. He justly takes the throne. He is set, according to God’s glory, over all the works of His hands; not, I repeat, simply as God, though He was God from all eternity, and never could cease to be. But He acquired, as man, universal dominion; and He acquired it, not simply by doing the will of God: had He taken it on the ground of what He did, He had taken it alone. He alone deserved it -- but He took it, as we shall find, on a far deeper and infinitely more blessed ground -- the ground of redemption; and thus others are associated with Him. For that redemption was not for Himself, but for us; and it is on this footing alone that He could have the children of God associated with Him, by redemption, in that glorious kingdom for which He waits, and for which we ought to be waiting.

Here, accordingly, we find round the throne of God twenty-four thrones. What is the allusion in the number "twenty-four"? Numbers in scripture are never without meaning. Do not listen to the men that tell you it merely means a greater or a smaller number, that it is merely a sort of poetical figure. Why even you do not use language so capriciously as that! When you say twenty-four, you do not mean a mere random number, though you are certainly far from the deep wisdom of God in its symbolic use. But if you are a sensible man, you have some sensible idea. Certainly God will never be below man in the expression of His mind. Now, “twenty-four” is used in scripture; and, as far as I know, the only point with which we can compare our number was when the king [David] divided the priests into so many courses, of which courses there were chief priests. I do not merely mean the high priest: there was but one in such a position. As there was only one among the earthly people, so there is only one for the heavenly. But here we are speaking of the creature, and it is notorious that there were chiefs of each course of priest-hood; and as there were twenty-four courses of priests, so also with the singers. It was connected therefore, you will observe, with the ordering and arranging of the priestly service of God. Now this, I have no doubt, is the allusion here.

These twenty-four thrones were not empty. “Upon the thrones I saw four and twenty elders sitting.” What is the idea conveyed by the term, “elders”? Clearly the possession of wisdom -- in this case, of course, heavenly wisdom. The elders were seen round God’s throne, sitting on thrones, “clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.” This is another point which separates them, but at the same time assuredly confirms what has been already remarked of their separation from angels -- from the highest beings of a spiritual sort suited to heaven -- the only inhabitants indigenous to heaven, if one may so say.

The elders had never been seen there before. Visions of heaven have past before us in the Old Testament: why were no elders seen then? Why was there no such group of surrounding thrones? The apostle Paul was caught up to heaven, but not a word about elders in heaven then: why now? Surely there were the spirits of the blest in heaven; but spirits are never said to be enthroned; spirits are nowhere in Scripture described as glorified. They are with Christ; they are in paradise; but they are never spoken of as already crowned. The crown is always represented as a future glory. Why so? Because God does not mean to bring any of His people into the full result of heavenly blessedness until He brings them all in. The same moment is destined for the heavenly gathering together of all saints changed into the likeness of Christ It matters not at what time they lived or died, or if they survived till He comes. I speak, of course, now, of heavenly saints -- of those that are to be above. I do not at all exclude the fact that God afterwards begins to form a people upon earth; but I say that those who are destined for the same common heavenly blessedness are caught up together, and that the point of time when they are caught up -- the turning-point on which their translation to heaven depends -- is the presence of the Lord Jesus for them.

Proofs abound. “We beseech you, brethren, by the presence (or coming) of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him.” Any scholar knows that the presence of our Lord Jesus, and the gathering together of the saints to Him, are here represented in a remarkable manner as one combined idea. There is only one article, which therefore acts as a kind of bracket, and binds together the two thoughts. That is to say, the gathering of the saints is not before the presence of the Lord, nor is it left for a separate act after He comes to meet them. The force is, that the presence of the Lord at once gathers all the saints: whether the dead, by raising them; or the living, by changing them into His glorious likeness.

The result is apparent now. Here they are seen on high. Here they are found in the presence of God in heaven; and they are there enthroned, and crowned with “crowns of gold.” They had practically manifested righteousness; but divine righteousness alone had brought them there and thus dealt with them. It is not that they lacked the witness of righteousness in their ways and daily conversation on earth, or that they were without the answer to it now in heaven; for they are seen also to be clothed in white raiment -- a full acknowledgment of saintsly righteousness, as the gold is of God’s righteousness. The moment you get righteousnesses, you get differences among the children of God. It is known afterwards, from
Rev. 19, where the white linen is explained to be the righteousnesses of saints. That is, each has a righteousness which divine grace has produced in them and by them, and this is recognized above. It is a falsehood that God does not own that which His Spirit has produced here; but it is a still more dishonoring and destructive falsehood to suppose that the righteousness of the saints could bring any to God. The only righteousness that could fit a sinner before Him in heaven is the righteousness of God, founded on the Lord Jesus and His infinite redemption. But then, although grace works through righteousness in the redemption that is by Christ Jesus, full room is left for whatever the Spirit of God may have wrought in and by the children of God. Thus all truth is kept room is left for whatever the Spirit of God may have wrought in and by the children of God. Thus all truth is kept.

In this case then the twenty-four elders on thrones are for the first time seen in the presence of God. Scripture emphatically marks this. Indeed it is clearly the grand distinctive feature that caught the eye of the prophet, next to the throne of God Himself. There were thrones -- associated and subordinate -- no doubt; but still there were thrones around the great central throne of God; and those seated on them embrace in the most distinct manner the heads of the heavenly priesthood I say the heads for this reason; that after these saints are shown us as elders crowned and enthroned in heaven, we find the clearest reference to others that were about to be kings and priests. That is, we find certain persons who suffer and are glorified after this. The very last words that I read today show another body of saints.

It is said there, “Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed [us] to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made them unto our God kings and priests; and they shall reign.” &c. This is the critical reading. I have bracketed a disputed word, and changed where there is no doubt. And where, let me ask, is the reverence of cleaving to a reading that is undoubtedly an innovation? I hold, with due consideration of the context, to more ancient authorities. Who will deny that the nearer you get to the source, the better the reading as a rule? Of old as now many mistakes were made in copying. The scribes that followed the apostles were not inspired any more than printers or editors in modern times. We have therefore to examine everything; and the only sound principle in these matters is to look at all the evidence, and thence to form the result.

Now, I am of opinion that both external and internal evidence would lead a competent judge to the conclusion that the word “us” should be absent from the ninth verse. It would seem probable that copyists inserted ἡμᾶς (“us”) there -- not that this is at all necessary or peculiar to any views I hold. 18 The most competent enquirers who have no settled interpretation of the book or schemes opposed to mine, agree in omitting it. Thus the most famous editor of the day holds it -- the Lutheran Tischendorf. Another excellent scholar, who was when living rather more of a rationalist, holds the same thing -- I allude to Lachmann. Again, Dean Alford, of this country, and many more, accept the same reading, agreeing as far as this is concerned. I refer to these various well-known names openly, that none may allow the groundless thought that there is anything peculiar or individual in this judgment. These matters are the common heritage of the church of God; they rest on facts that cannot be gainsaid by anybody except the ignorant.

There is another point far clearer, and, it may be boldly said, indisputable. Any one who knows anything about the sacred text must be aware that in Rev. 5:10 “them” and “they” should take the place of “us” and “we.” I do not deny that this is a considerable change of sense; but the evidence is so overwhelming that no one who respects the witnesses God’s providence has preserved can hesitate. The sense resulting is excellent save in the retaining of “us” in the verse before, which would present a harsh and unprecedented change of persons, which nobody, as far as I know, pretends to understand or account for. Here, therefore, one ought to speak with still greater assurance than as to v. 9; though I believe that the change required in verse 10 makes v. 9 uncorrected to be hardly intelligible, and adds much internal force to the few witnesses for its correction. The tenth verse would run thus: “And made them to our God kings and priests: and they shall reign over the earth.” A distinct party is in question from those who are singing. The elders, and I suppose also the living creatures, are singing of others. They

18. Some years since Professor Tischendorf reported to me, among other Apocalyptic readings, that the Sinai MS. omitted the pronoun ἡμᾶς in Rev. 5:9. This I printed on his authority, which was followed by Dean Alford and others. But when the great uncial was published, I immediately perceived either that the printed text was here wrong, or that the discoverer had led me into an error, awkward to many more though to none so painfully as to me. But he had the candor immediately to reexamine the MS. on my appeal to him, and to confess frankly that he had misled me. Very different was the feeling of a scholar in this country from whom better things might have been expected. He had the temerity not alone to charge me with the fault but to mix up with it the doctrine of the rapture of the church, as if this had influenced the erroneous report. The truth is, that the weighty evidence lies in the fact that, according to the best authorities, followed even by my censor himself, it should be “them” and “they” in v. 10 (as required by the true Greek text). The elders and living creatures are praising the Lamb in that verse for others made kings and priests, not for themselves. This is incontestable. The point debated is whether ἡμᾶς should or should not be read in the preceding. Even if it ought certainly to be read, it would rather strengthen the distinction between the saints represented by the elders and living creatures. But I was willing to waive what would rather fortify my position, as honestly believing with the best critics that it is a most auspicious reading, if not certainly on external evidence an intruder. And I was convinced, as I am still that its insertion presents a sense (when the two verses are taken together) so strange that nobody has yet offered a tolerable explanation. It is therefore still more objectionable on internal grounds. But the question is really independent of doctrine, and is much more one of critical acumen and of spiritual judgment.
celebrate the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain and brought to God by His blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, &c. Whether the word "us" should or should not be in v. 9 is not the point on which we are now reasoning. Certainly there is no room for doubt as to the tenth verse. -- "and made them," not "us" -- unquestionably not "us." The Lamb "made them [that is, some others previously described or at least alluded to] unto our God kings and priests: and they shall reign over the earth."

The importance of this, the true text, is very great, because it shows that besides the twenty-four elders who have this glorious and heavenly place as chiefs of heavenly priesthood, there are others bought by His blood who, although not in the place of such exalted dignity, either now or at any later time put among the twenty-four elders, are celebrated as made kings and priests, and shall reign over the earth. Thus they are not only to be spared during the judgments that follow, but they are even to share as royal priests in the great millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus. Nothing can be simpler and surer than this, which is conclusively established by Rev. 20:4, where the sitters on the thrones are the first class, corresponding to the elders (i.e., the Bride, and those called to the marriage supper); then the early sufferers during the seals (after the elders were seen in heaven); and, thirdly, the latest sufferers under the beast in the last efforts of the Antichrist. All share the millennial reign with Christ. The assumption, therefore, that the only persons who will be found in heaven and reign with Christ are these chiefs of heavenly priesthood, is an evident mistake. Saints in a somewhat different position otherwise are to reign with Christ as well as the elders. The twenty-four, when they are seen in heaven, sing of the grace that the Lord was showing, not to themselves, but to others, and this not merely in making them blessed under His reign on the earth, but with Him and them to reign over it.

By the way it may be just observed that the rendering to "reign on the earth" is also erroneous. When the verb "to reign" is put along with the preposition ἐπί, it invariably means the sphere of the reigning and not the place where those who reign dwell. There is another word (ἐν) that is used invariably for the latter idea.

Scripture is really the most exact book in the world, it matters not what author you select for a comparison with it. If you take the finest effort of Attic Greek, it will be found that there is an accuracy about Biblical language, when people once get into its spirit and understand it, which is beyond Plato, Sophocles, Thucydides, Demosthenes, or any other master of that refined and versatile tongue. Do you allege the solecisms of New Testament Greek? They are far less numerous than pettifogging, combined with ignorance of the truth, used to affirm. But let me tell you that even those authors are not free from words, turns of phrase, and constructions which offend against rule, not only bold rhetorical terms, but structures of sentence that will not bear strict analysis. For instance, it is a fact, although it may seem somewhat odd to many, that the most celebrated of the classics not infrequently make bad grammar in the best of their few extant compositions. It is not insinuated that they did not know it was unusual; they wrote as they did because it added energy to the style. It is only dull men who occupy themselves in fiddling about grammar, and think that there must be always an adherence to technical rules of common language and everyday speech; but the best writers defy such conventionalities whenever it is necessary to give emphasis to what they wish to communicate.

It is not otherwise in the word of God. There is no doubt in scripture, as elsewhere, an occasional departure from the strict rules of ordinary syntax. Let nobody by this suppose my meaning is that it is of no importance to know how to use human speech -- our own as well as the language that God used especially, or any other tongue we may be acquainted with. But it needs to be borne in mind, at the same time, that there is for the Spirit an energy of truth, as well as rhetorical skill among men, which does not hesitate to set at nought a mere grammatical point for some higher end. This falls in with what is claimed for the word of God -- the most perfect form of revealing to men that which God would convey to him. Hence it is, that what some are quick to count blots or blemishes of style are all sanctioned and intended by God's Spirit; and that what sounds at first abrupt, harsh, or strange, spite of that peculiarity whatever it may be, conveys the idea more justly than anything else could. Yet, claiming all this for the word of God and for every line of it, we must not go beyond our text, but hold that the writers only used what can be proved by the best evidence of every kind, external as well as internal, to be the very words of the Holy Ghost.

In this case, then, we have the four and twenty elders round the throne, and besides, as already said, the intimation in the next chapter that others from all quarters are not only to be saved but to reign with Christ over the earth as well as themselves. This is of the highest interest. It shows us plainly that we must not adhere to those systems of doctrine that never can bear an infringement of a view that is held popularly. For instance, perhaps we have all been brought up in the notion that all the children of God, in all ages, compose the church of God. Now it will be found on closer research that this is not supported by the word of God. While fully granting the preeminent place in glory to the church, scripture shows there are others to be blessed in heaven as well as on earth who are not included in that particular company. And this is proved, not only by the prophetic word, such as this, but by the plainest doctrinal teaching of God. Take for instance Heb. 12, or again Heb. 11:40. In the end of the latter chapter we are told that God had "provided some better thing for us, that they [the Old Testament saints] without us should not be made perfect." Here you have clearly a distinction between them and us, as those who sing differ from those sung of in Rev. 5. The nature of that distinction is another matter. We may be more or less exact in our appreciation of the difference, but differences there are, past, present, and future, expressly laid down by the word of God. Take again the next chapter {Heb. 12:22, 23}, where it is said that we "are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem"; and more than this, "an innumerable company of angels"; then "God the judge of all", then the church of the firstborn." It is impossible fairly to overlook a distinction here
drawn (to speak of no more) between “the spirits of the just made perfect” and “the church of the firstborn.” You have clearly the assembly of the heirs or firstborn -- who are viewed elsewhere as the one body; and you have the spirits of just men made perfect -- another company quite distinct. This is enough to show that the word of God does distinguish where a great many excellent people confuse.

I do not pretend to go into all at once, but I am bound to produce from elsewhere support and illustration of that which is before me in the chapters we are now considering. Let it suffice to say then that the twenty-four elders are beyond doubt in a singular and conspicuous place of blessedness -- saints glorified in the presence of God. Yet it is clear that, when there, they anticipate others who are to reign with Christ as well as they. These others are so much the more important, because the great object of the book of the Apocalypse to show well as they. These others are so much the more important, therefore, they anticipate others who are to reign with Christ as twelve, not twenty, not twenty-one, but twenty-four. They are assuredly, and nowhere else; and here for this reason -- that described elsewhere. In short, you must insert it in some place entirely invalid. It is not the fact that it can be shown to be before me in the chapters we are now considering. Let it suffice to say then that the twenty-four elders are beyond doubt

Let us, however, go on with our chapter. “Out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices.” To this I call your particular attention. Is this the aspect of God’s throne as now revealed and known? Do thunderings and lightnings and voices proceed from the throne of God at this present time? And is this the way in which the throne of God -- the action of His throne -- is or would be qualified? Certainly not. The throne of God now is a throne of grace, to which we come boldly (Heb. 4). Impossible for man here below to come boldly to a throne out of which proceed thunderings and lightnings and voices. This would indeed be presumption; for we must then defy, as it were, that which the throne itself manifests and proclaims. Clearly the thunderings and lightnings and voices are the expression of God’s displeasure and judicial feeling, so to speak, towards things and people upon the earth.

Is it demanded, then, how the elders come to be seen around such a throne? For this simple reason -- they are in the resurrection state; they are in heaven glorified. How did they get there? They were gathered to the presence of the Lord who entitled them to stand there. How is it, then -- and this is a very fair question -- that the presence of the Lord which is to gather His heavenly ones to Himself {at the rapture} is not here described? My answer is, as it is set forth nowhere in the Revelation (if so, where?), the objection is entirely invalid. It is not the fact that it can be shown to be described elsewhere. In short, you must insert it in some place where it is rather implied than described. The only question is, where is the best place to suppose it? I answer, here assuredly, and nowhere else; and here for this reason -- that you have the chiefs of the whole body, and remember, not twelve, not twenty, not twenty-one, but twenty-four. They are the heads of the entire priesthood -- the whole of the glorified or heavenly priesthood viewed in its chiefs; and in its chiefs, because there are others to be priests afterwards. Therefore you could not have more than the chiefs seen here. If they are gathered to be with the Lord in heaven, not in spirit, but in body also -- glorified there if they are crowned and enthroned there, all this cannot be without the Lord having come and gathered them unto Himself. If so -- how? How possibly conceive such a thing as the full number? Bear in mind that there is no addition to those thrones afterwards, not even one more; never but twenty-four thrones -- never more or less than twenty-four elders. If it were merely the estate of separate spirits, there would be afterwards an addition. Room must be left for more at a later epoch. But no; the same unvarying body is found until a certain defined moment, when this symbol of elders disappears and gives way to another -- when the time is come for what is called the bridal or the marriage supper of the Lamb.

At that time of joy it is no question of elders: the Lamb does not marry people as elders, but as the bride. It is the very same body, but viewed no longer as invested with the wisdom that God conferred through our Lord Jesus; no longer viewed, in short, as elders, but as one corporate company, the bride. This is in relation to the marriage just then celebrated, which is the consummation of the hopes of the church. It is the full expression of our communion with Christ.

Then, again, when the Lord Jesus is about to execute judgment on the beast, and the false prophet, and the armies of the earth, He takes the place of a warrior, and so do they. They are at that point seen not as elders, of course, nor even as the bride; for what business has either in battle? They are seen in what is far more admirably suited to the case: they come out of heaven as the hosts on white horses, like the great Leader they follow.

Thus, it is readily seen, we have very clearly symbolic language used with the greatest possible precision in the Revelation. Of course I admit there are difficulties in this book, as there are in every other; but the man who talks about the difficulties of the Revelation I should like to see taking up Genesis. Very likely he imagines he understands the first book of Moses well; but it can easily be proved that understanding one part of the word of God generally goes with understanding another, and the people that do not profess to understand the end of the Bible, you may depend upon it, do not know much better about the beginning: at least, such has been my experience in these matters. The word of God gives us the truth; and one part of revelation makes way for another. It is a living organism. It is not a mere science that you may master up to a certain point, and not understand the rest; it is a thing of life and power. These words are spirit and life, as given by the Spirit of God; and although undoubtedly there may occasionally be one that has been blessed in directing his attention to a particular part, it is the exception rather than the rule. In general, the man that understands the Bible best is the man that reads it all, valuing it as given of God to be understood by the Holy Ghost; consequently, he does not pretend to have fathomed or exhausted any part, but he, by grace, understands a little here and a little there, and so on, right through the whole Bible. This is generally true of Christians who have faith in the word and Spirit of God; and I believe it the safest and wisest way. It is a dangerous thing to have your hobbies in scripture -- your favorite subjects, which exclusively occupy your mind. Those who so read get exaggerated, unhealthy notions by that means. I would urge
my brethren to seek earnestly a real and large entrance into the mind of God. In order that it should be deep, be assured that this depends to an immense extent on the measure in which self is judged, and the Lord is looked to; for you cannot separate intelligence in the things of God from spiritual state. It is not genuine, wholesome, or savory, without moral power; and it is a great mercy that so it is. As far as concerns the subject before us, the general result seems to me to be sufficiently plain -- plain enough to the simple; and the main point is to become simple, in order that we may really enter into the revealed mind of God.

Returning to our chapter, we may remark that beside the issuing from the throne of lightnings and thunderings and voices, we find “seven lamps [or torches] of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God.” It means the Spirit of God. He is not now described as baptizing into one body. Such is the way in which God acts in the church. But here it is in the retributive dealings of God. It is that Spirit which perfectly discerns, detects, and judges -- seven torches therefore -- that which does not fail to make manifest morally before itself. God will act to this end when His throne assumes a judicial character. The evidence is abundant that it is a different state of things from what exists now. This confirms therefore what has been said before. The churches are done with. There is no such thing as the Lord dealing with Christian assemblies on earth. He is no longer in that form of relationship when the fourth chapter begins to apply.

But, further, “before the throne was a sea of glass like unto crystal” [Rev. 4:6]. Now, in the temple there was a sea, no doubt, but it was a sea of water, not of glass (as in the tabernacle there had been a laver). Here then we have a sea, but it is a sea of glass. Why so? As long as there was one member of the body of Christ who required to be cleansed in passing through this defiled and defiling earth, so long the figure of the application of the water by the word is necessary. Why is it here a sea “of glass”? Because it is no longer a question of the word used to cleanse the defiled. Their course was over. They had passed out of the scene of defilement. Those who are here viewed in the presence of God are no longer subjects of defilement. As long as they were in the world, of course they needed to have their feet washed. He who says that, because one is washed in the blood of Christ, he does not require to confess his sins day by day, understands no more than half his Savior, and evidently sets one part of God’s mercy and blessing against another. It would be most miserable, if it were otherwise possible, with new and eternal life, to be left under the consequences of daily defilement. It is granted that if all you care for is just that your sins should be forgiven, you may have a scanty sense of God’s holiness, or of what becomes His child; but if you feel the value of communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, if you prize the blessedness of sharing the Lord’s thoughts and feelings, you cannot but be sensitive to such defilement which grieves the Holy Ghost whereby you are sealed till the day of redemption. This is precisely why God works in you by His Spirit. He sees and feels what is wrong; He acts according to God’s nature as displayed in Christ, and brings you to feel evil and to confess it before Him. Such is the effect of Christ’s priesthood. We require not only a Savior to die for our sins, but a priest to live for us, and to intercede for us though we are Christians, because we are still on earth in weakness, need, and alas! too often failure. Accordingly, it is not denying His sacrifice that will mend matters, nor will nullifying His priesthood establish souls, but simply dry them up into mummies.

The blood of Christ remains the one sacrifice; and it is of the very essence of the truth of Christianity that there is but one sacrifice, and that Christ’s sacrifice has done this work perfectly and for ever for the believer. But then, instead of a man merely looking back at the sacrifice of Christ, when he falls into a sin, he has, while holding this fast, to humble himself before God; for the Holy Ghost uses the word of God to deal with him founded on the sacrifice of Christ, but never renewing it. The sacrifice of Christ abides in its efficacy, but, so far from this being all we want, because of it there is a necessity for the washing of water by the word.” “He that is washed [bathed] needeth not save to wash his feet.” For this is he that “came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and blood” {1 John 5:6}. The Lord Jesus has provided for all. Out of His side, as we know, flowed both; and so it is, that as the blood of Christ expiated our sin as guilty sinners before God, so the water not only gives us new birth, but also, in answer to His own intercession, carries on the cleansing of the feet when they are defiled in our own passage through the world.

This is no longer the case with those connected with the sea of glass; that is, it is no longer the want when saints are glorified; and so this vision intimates. Not, of course, that the Lord will neglect any of His people who may afterwards be called. The vision to which we are here introduced simply gives us a complete picture of the change that will have taken place when it is fulfilled; and one of the new elements we see is that, instead of a laver of water to wash the feet of those exposed to the soils of earth, the mists are now seen in glory -- elders in His Presence, assessors on thrones round God’s throne. The whole work was done, not of atonement only but intercession also, as far as they were concerned. As they had thus passed out of the sphere where they needed the cleansing operation of the Spirit, the symbolic sea in this vision consists not of water but glass. It is fixed, not active, purity. It is the witness therefore that no defilement remains. As they had passed out of earth, and sit enthroned in the presence of God in heaven, we can readily understand that it could not be otherwise.

There is a subsequent vision, affording an interesting point of contact, or rather contrast, that may be called to your attention. As is easy to be seen, there are others who are called by God’s grace after these; but they go through a storm of suffering, they go through a sea of awful temptation, tribulation, and everything else that can harass mind and body. And this will fall, I have no doubt whatever, as a scourge on the guilty world-God’s retributive dealing, because of the despising of the gospel, as well as the unfelt unjudged rejection up to death of His own Son. You know that Jews and Gentiles
both put to death the Son of God. Certainly the disciples did not. Afterwards they acquired a heavenly character, and, by Paul’s ministry, pass out of the earthly scene. Christians as such were not guilty of Christ’s death. Whatever was their guilt, it was atoned for by that precious blood; but they were not called as yet, and so not guilty of the dreadful deed. Jews and Gentiles were.

Accordingly, it needs no great intelligence to see thoroughly the moral reasons why the church, being called out after the cross, should be now taken out of the scene, and why the Lord begins to work on Jews and Gentiles. They go through this retributive chastening; they are the direct proper objects of this special tribulation; and when at the close some of them are seen as conquerors -- for the Lord will surely work by grace in a certain number-when those who had won the victory over the beast, &c., are seen in Rev. 15, they are found on “a sea of glass, mingled with fire.” There is no mingling with fire in ch. 4. The fire is the heat of tribulation; and when the saints that pass through the tribulation -- those that died, and were brought by grace into heavenly glory -- when they are seen at a subsequent epoch, they have on them the marks of having crossed that sea, the tribulation through which they passed. It is not so with the elders. The reason is, that the tribulation was not even heard of yet. The tribulation, the great tribulation, was long after they were gone to heaven.

On the whole, therefore, the general bearing of the chapter is not so obscure as to binder the simplest mind in Christendom that is subject to God through the teaching of the Spirit from understanding it.

“Before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four” (not “beasts,” as is well known, but) “living creatures” {Rev. 4:6}. These living creatures show us the various qualities of God’s power; they represent it in a symbolic form. The heathen, as we know, who did not know God, exalted the attributes of God into idols which they worshipped. Here we know not merely the living creatures that are round about the throne, but Him that sat upon it; we know the one and only true God the Father, and we know Him by the Lord Jesus whom He has sent. But God does in this symbolic way teach the characters of His power in which His judgments are going to be executed.

First, we may observe the four living creatures were full of eyes before and behind. It is remarkable that, although we have the cherubim described in the Old Testament, they are not so spoken of there. They are here described as having not only eyes, but eyes within, as stated in Rev. 4:8. This is peculiar. They may have eyes, but “eyes within” seems to show an intrinsic power of discernment that is characteristic of the New Testament. Thus all the description here, while it resembles the Old Testament, gives us progress and so far difference. In short, the living creatures are somewhat like the cherubim, and in other respects like the seraphs of Isa. 6. Besides, they have their own peculiarities, resembling the cherubs of Ezekiel. The first is like a lion, the second like a steer or young bull, the third living creature had a face as a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. That is, you have power in its majesty, power in its patient labor and endurance, intelligent thought in that which was like a man, and rapidity of execution shown forth in the flying eagle. Again, these four living creatures had each of them six wings about him, just as the seraphs had in Isaiah; and they had not the wheels, a point that distinguishes them from the vision of Ezekiel {1}. “And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”

It is worth while to pause a moment and look at the great moral principles of what we have here. There are two relative qualities in reference to which may be traced a remarkable difference in the elders -- I mean righteousness and holiness.

Now what is the effect of the direct presence of God on the saints themselves displayed in righteousness before Him? Our ch. 4 shows more than this, the exercise of His throne being judicial dealing with the earth. There are lightnings and thunderings and voices. But the remarkable feature disclosed is, that whilst the elders are enthroned before God thus revealed in righteousness, they sit peacefully in His presence. There is not the very smallest symptom of alarm. There is not even a movement discernible, so truly are they made God’s righteousness in Christ.

On the other hand, when God in His holiness is celebrated by the four living creatures according to His own nature -- when they praise Him as the “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,” the elders are at once in movement. Thus before judicial dealings the elders show us the most perfect rest in the presence of God. As a question of judgment there is not one demand of righteousness that was not satisfied by the cross. If there had been any sin unremoved, oh, what trouble had been among all the twenty-four! But no; they sit in perfect peace on their thrones. But when His holiness is in question, they fall down before Him; they do homage to Him that lives to the ages of ages; they cast their crowns before the throne. Their hearts are swallowed up in the delight of what God is. What He is in His holiness draws them out. It is the attractive power of His holiness, not the (to others) alarming power of the righteous judgments of God, which kindles their spirits and engages them in adoration. In the presence of righteousness there is nothing but rest; in the presence of the celebration of His holiness there is activity of worship.

Such is, then, the scene that is presented in ch. 4. I shall say a very few words on Rev. 5 before I close.

Hitherto we have simply had the Lord God Almighty -- Jehovah Elohim -- that was, and is, and is to come; God, as He had made Himself manifest in His dealings with men here below, especially with the fathers and Israel, but now seen on the throne. And why so? How comes it that He is not here presented as the Father? You know very well how constant in the New Testament the Father is. It is notorious that we never hear such a thing as grace and peace from the Lord God Almighty -- from Jehovah Elohim, or any other Old Testament designation. And when the apostle Paul employs this his customary formula, never does he couple it with Shaddai, Jehovah, or Elohim. The same is true of the apostles John and Peter and Jude. Nor does even James, though Israel is addressed, and there are texts throughout relative to Jehovah;
but never does he give a salutation from Jehovah as such. Why is the old style and title found here? Because a change of great moment is come in; because God is no longer revealing Himself in the formation of the heavenly family. He has taken them out of the scene, which can only be by the coming of the Lord Jesus personally to receive them (John 14; 1 Thess. 4; 2 Thess. 2:1). But this is not brought out in the book of Revelation; it does not fall within its revealed object; because the aim of the prophecy is to set forth the judgments of God, and not the secrets of His grace. Consequently, as the coming of Christ for His own is an event that does not at all directly affect the world, but is intensely a matter for Christ and the church, there is a veil naturally and fittingly drawn over it here. “Behold,” says the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 15), “I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment,” &c. This mystery will have taken place when Christ comes to meet us in the air; but the object of the Revelation is not to reveal the mystery of God’s taking place when Christ comes to meet us in the air; but the object of the book is to unveil the series of judgments that are to fall on the earth, not the gathering of the saints to Christ in heaven. At the same time, you have the fullest confirmation of the object of the book here seen in the vision -- the different forms of judgment that the Lord will apply, eventually issuing in the taking of the kingdom by the Lord Jesus, and His heavenly ones reigning along with Him. “I saw in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, a book written a within and on the backside”: that is, it was full to overflowing. It was not written as an ordinary scroll, within only. There was so much to say, that it was written on the back. So in Ezek. 29. 10 the Jewish prophet had a roll of a book shown; “and he spread it before me; and it was written within and without.” It was “sealed with seven seals” -- shut up impenetrably, therefore, as far as the creature was concerned. “And I saw an angel proclaiming with a loud voice. Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” [Rev. 5:2].

No one was found, no one able, it is said, -- to open the book; and none able, because none was found worthy. But if John weeps much because none was found worthy, one of the elders -- for they enter into the mind of Christ -- consoles the prophet, saying, “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed (or conquered) to open the book.” And Jesus opens the book, not simply as a divine person; not simply as the perfectly obedient man; but by overcoming -- by the all-prevailing efficacy of His precious blood. He was worthy and able. But He took it on the ground of the price He paid, and not on personal worth or strength. Had He done it out of personal title alone, where were we? He did it on the ground of the price He paid -- all our boast and joy, except, indeed, that the beat of all that His purchase brings is to delight our souls in Him who thus bought us -- not merely in the blessings He has bounteously given us.

Jesus, then, is conqueror; but when He comes forward, it is not as a lion, but as a Lamb. He is proclaimed as a Lion, but when beheld, it is a lamb as it had been slain. The One who asserts this mighty and majestic power of God, and especially in connection with the hopes of Israel -- that Blessed One -- is seen to be the earth-rejected man, the holy sufferer whom the world would not have or suffer to live. Was it worthy of Him? It rejected Him, but rejected Him into the home and glory of God, where He is now seen as the Lamb. And mark, it is not as He descended: He came down the only begotten Son -- I do not say leaving His Father’s bosom. Oh, no! He never left it: how could He leave it? He was a divine person, and, therefore, even if looked at as a man, it could be said, “the Son of man which is in heaven,” not merely, who was, or, who was to be, but “who is in heaven.” None but He could say this, and, therefore, however much you hold fast -- (and you cannot too tenaciously hold fast -- the reality of His manhood; and whoever does not hold it fast, is no Christian at all) -- let it never disparage His deity; I do not say merely His divinity. We talk about the divinity of this book, the Bible, but not so rightly of the divinity of Christ as of His “deity” or Godhead.

Here then He is spoken of as the Lamb, in particular as the slain Lamb contrasted with the world-powers or ravaging beasts of prey, and especially the one yet to rise and trample down for the last time the people of God on the earth. The Lamb sits there, but rises and takes the book out of the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, and then all heaven is filled with
the praise of the Lamb as well as of God. 19

If He took that book, it was, not merely to read it Himself; it was in love to make all plain for us. What could make it plainer to Him? He opens the seals, and tells us the contents. He unfolds the mind of God. Oh, may we heed it!

This sketch necessarily could not be very complete; but in it I have designedly passed over nothing of importance, as it has occurred to me in glancing over the portion of the word of God before us. I trust it is at least clear to those who have given me their hearing, that the elders were beyond doubt men; that they were men no longer on earth, but in heaven; that they constitute a new class seen for the first time above. Who compose them? I have not as yet sought to answer.

For my own part I strongly suspect that the twenty-four elders include the Old Testament saints as well as the New, up to the moment of the Lord’s coming to receive them to Himself. I make this remark, because we find afterwards that when the change takes place, and the elders as such are no more seen, a new symbol is seen to take its place (Rev. 19). You have the Bride; but besides her you have certain persons that are said to be blessed -- guests invited to the marriage-supper of the Lamb. It need scarce be said, that nobody thinking of inviting a bride to her own marriage feast: others may be invited there of course. It seems to me, therefore, very plain that others are to be at the marriage-supper of the Lamb besides the bride.

Hence nothing is more easy than to understand that the twenty-four elders might include both Old and New Testament saints, from Rev. 4 to 19, when the Bride and the guests are substituted for the elders. Then it becomes a question of the church in her own proper character of communion with Christ; and you find under the twenty-four elders a twofold company -- the Bride, with others who were united for a certain end, but not in everything. This is merely a question of spiritual judgment, and depends on a great deal of scripture to decide it.

I do not therefore throw out more than a suggestion now. I have endeavored to keep to the grand landmarks of the subject, which are especially necessary for all the children of God. What I have been saying, makes this plain to any one. We see the wisdom of God in arranging this mystical history of the church. Had it been a literal history of the church, a prophetical mapping out of all with great plainness, the consequence would have been that people would have ceased to look for Christ’s coming; but inasmuch as the seven churches were there before the apostle’s mind at the time when this book was written, there was no check on the continual waiting for Christ. On the other hand, if the church tarried here below, these seven churches would expand, as it were, into a larger bearing; and as long as the church was continued, it would be always adding more and more completeness, more filling up, as it were, the previously unseen points which would then become obvious and salient.

This is the true way for faith; it is so that all the New Testament is written. If the Lord represents the ten virgins as showing Christendom waiting for Christ, it is the same virgins that went forth originally and fell asleep afterwards, who go in with the Lord. No doubt we looking back ex post facto, as people call it, can see (when the history is behind us) that it was designed to take in the various generations of Christians. But as far as the parable is concerned, it contemplates only that one generation which was existing at the time the parable was put forth. In this I cannot but see the deep mind of God. Does it not seem to you to be consummate wisdom for Him so to write His word that there should be in it nothing at variance with the hope of the Christian in always expecting Christ, and yet that, when the delay takes place, you can see that He knew of the delay perfectly well, but that He did not open it out in word so as to hinder saints from always waiting for the Lord Jesus? Thus manifestly all is true, holy, good, and wisely ordered.

May the Lord bless His truth! May there be one desire given to the children of God, so that knowing Him as our life, having Him as our righteousness, we may wait for Him as the hope of our hearts!

Taken from Pamphlets.

19. It is well to note that Rev. 5:14 ends, according to the best authority, with “worshipped.” “Him that liveth forever and ever” is a spurious addition. In fact, the elders worshiped both.
There are two forms of evil and rebellion against God which the Holy Spirit brings before us in this chapter, two figures more prominent than the rest, instruments of iniquity in the world since redemption, which the enemy has used and will yet use against God and His Christ. The first, as we clearly see, is the harlot or “great whore that sitteth upon many waters”; the second is what is called “the beast.” Now there need not be any uncertainty as to either in the mind of a true-hearted believer. God has been pleased to give us distinct marks by which we may discern and be sure of His mind.

It is not to be admitted that the intimations of prophecy are equivocal until they are accomplished. On the other hand there are prophecies unquestionably fulfilled which are still far from being plain. The difficulty therefore depends on other conditions than the question of whether they be already failed or not. Take, for instance, the seventy weeks of Daniel. It will not be disputed by any intelligent mind that at any rate sixty-nine of those weeks have been accomplished. No doubt there has been, and there is, a good deal of debate as to the seventieth week; but there are difficulties about the previous sixty-nine weeks no less than about the last. In fact, it would be easy enough to prove that the obscurity which overhangs the last week is considerably less than that which still rests for many Christians on the previous parts of that short but most striking prophecy, as for instance on the starting point of them all.

The fact is certain that people very commonly make difficulties for themselves in the word of God. Constantly too that which is regarded as the chief or only adequate means of enlightenment, if it be a mistake, complicates the whole matter, and darkens the subject instead of ensuring clearness. The true key of all prophecy is the very same that applies to all the Bible; it is Christ Himself. Were there greater singleness of eye in introducing the Lord Jesus into prophetic scripture in His revelation in each case, I am persuaded there would be incomparably more spiritual intelligence and communion, more of that happy and united conviction which is the fruit of faith and of the Spirit’s own teaching, than exists at present. It is clear however that this is but a particular case of the hindrance everywhere. The temptation for students of the Bible is to leave Christ out for canons of exegesis and I know not what; the triumph of faith is to bring Christ in. So it will be found in this particular case.

Thus in the present case the woman is a totally different symbol from the beast, but both the woman and the beast are only understood when we compare them with the man Christ Jesus. He too appears in scripture, and sometimes symbolically. For instance, in this very book the Lord Jesus is introduced in some prophetic parts. Take Rev. 12 as an instance, where He is viewed as the male of might or man-child, as He is called in our version. For man the true moral glory is dependence on God and obedience, the very qualities of the spirit and walk of Jesus here below. He came to do God’s will, and lived, as He says, on account of the Father, perfect man, though infinitely more than man — complete contrast of him who, only man, sought to be as God in independence of will, and sunk into the slavery of Satan. Clearly therefore it is in relation to the Lord Jesus that we have another subject there described as the woman of whom He is born, who can therefore be none other than Israel (Rom. 9:5). She is not in the relation of wife to Him like the church, but of mother. No matter what number of men may say the contrary, the word of God is clear and decisive on the momentous difference. People are the more apt to confound the two, because the constant tendency throughout Christendom is to mix the relationships of the Jew and the Christian together, in standing and in walk, in doctrine and in hope.

CONTRAST WITH THE BRIDE

In this case, however (Rev. 17), a corrupt woman is seen; as in Rev. 21 the bride, the Lamb’s wife. I the more freely speak of it, because there are outward signs which place them in contrast, or lead us of themselves to compare the two women. One outward sign referred to is that the Spirit of God introduces the two visions with striking similarity.

And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither. I will show thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.

Then in Rev. 21:9 we read

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife.

Who can deny that these two verses have a stronger analogy than any others in the book? You can find nothing that so answers (it is true, in the way of contrast), for chs. 17 and 21 in this respect suggest each other. We never bear of one of the seven angels coming to show any other object; nor do we elsewhere hear of another object introduced with, “Come hither, and I will show thee” — this or that. Why so? Because, as is evident, the woman in Rev. 17 is the earthly counterpart of the bride in Rev. 21.

If the holy city, new Jerusalem of the later chapter, be the bride the Lamb’s wife, or the glorified church, it naturally indicates that the great city of the earlier chapter is the antichurch, that corrupt evil body which professes to be the church, puts herself forward with supreme claims, and takes the highest ground in the Lord’s name. But there is this fatal brand on her: Babylon seeks the earth; her communion is not with
Christ. She courts and lavishes her guilty favors on the kings of the earth. She is the channel neither of blessing nor of glory for the dwellers on the earth, but only makes them drunk with the wine of her fornication. Can any traits be conceived more aptly descriptive of her who claims to be the representative of Christ, not in grace and suffering, but for her own pride and advantage on earth? We shall see other features less obvious but equally characteristic. What I am now stating lies on the surface of the scripture; and any one who reads the word of God as it is intended to be read -- not merely a verse here or there and now or again -- will not be disappointed. The connections of scripture should be looked into, as that which is given to us to be read as a whole with faith and diligence, relying on God’s goodness and wisdom, whose Spirit will lead us into all the truth.

THE EARTHLY COUNTERFEIT OF THE HEAVENLY

Thus then the woman of Rev. 17 is unmistakably the earthly contrast of the heavenly bride; a religious system, but a counterfeit, claiming to be the spouse of Christ, but only vile and corrupt in His sight, expressly pointed out by the revealing Spirit, in order to guard His people from being in any way carried away by her seductions or overmuch surprised by her persecutions. We have therefore the prophet brought in presence of this system in the vision. There was as yet only the mystery of lawlessness at work. Although the time was not yet come for the display of the fact, the apostle was permitted to see Babylon in the vision. Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore.” God gives us next the stamp that is written upon her, and, more than this, the execution that will follow in due time. For she is one “with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” Intellectual men, even those that might seem opposed, have often looked at this corrupt religious system with a considerable measure of satisfaction. They have admired the way in which she softened the barbarism of past times, and pruned away much of the asperity of savage tribes, whether of the heathen in earlier days or of men in the middle ages. But when the Spirit of God brings the prophet into his due place to regard this woman, we find only a wilderness. Babylon is seen where all was barren as far as divine enjoyment was concerned. No springs of living water were found there. “He carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness.” Whatever may have been the civilizing effects of Babylon in the world, the Spirit of God sees in her only an object of divine judgment. It is so that she is pointed out to the prophet.

SITTING ON THE BEAST

“And I saw a woman,” says he, “sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.” Here we have the other symbol. It is not one that pretended to be the spouse of the Lord, whilst really the basest of prostitutes. A “beast” is used for an imperial power in Scripture, but this with force indeed, but without intelligence or conscience, in plain contrast with Him who is called the “Lamb,” the Lord Jesus viewed as the holy Sufferer; the same too who, in contrast with the beasts, will introduce the kingdom as the glorious Son of man. Jesus will hold the kingdom and openly administer it to the glory of God. This is its object as far as He is concerned -- “that every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Not so the beasts. Whatever the powers so characterized may appear in the history of man, whatever may be their sphere or dignity, whatever the spread of art and science under any of them, whatever the nominal profession too of truth gathered from the Jews in former days, or from Christianity at the present time, -- God represents them as “beasts.” The reason is obvious. The essential difference between a beast and a man is, that the beast has no understanding of God, and is incapable of it, being only bent on its wants, or natural instincts: but there is no link of relationship with God in the conscience. Not so with man. He may be faithless; and so much the worse for him. He may reject the knowledge of the true God. He may be spiritually what Nebuchadnezzar became physically; that is to say, he may have a beast’s heart given to him. Of course this was a miraculous judgment that was executed on the arrogant Chaldean; but it is morally applicable to every man who abandons the testimony of God, and gives himself up to the mere passing enjoyments of the moment.

In short then the beast represents an earthly power which owns not God, and has no thought beyond its own enjoyment, will, or passions. This was what stamped the beasts from the beginning. They were the powers that God raised up in His sovereign action when Israel became faithless. God then permitted the most cruel enemies of Israel to become world-kingsdoms. There was Babylon first; there was Medo-Persia secondly; there was Greece or Macedonia thirdly; and last of all there was the Roman empire. Imperial Rome had a most special place as well as ancient Babylon. For the Babylonian, being the first power that God owned, became typical of the last power in its judgment. In fact however the last empire had historically a most striking place in the providence of God. It was that power which in its servants or officials was guilty of the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord of glory. The Roman empire therefore had the most serious responsibility, little as they felt it; and you must remember, that in the government of God there is nothing forgotten. Who will not prove this true when he, stands before the judgment-seat of Christ? There is nothing that can be hid. You will give an account of everything. Not that this should produce the smallest alarm in a child of God; but it is a solemn consideration. “We shall be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ.” It does not matter as to this whether a person be a believer or an unbeliever: all done by the body will be made manifest.

On a similar principle in the government of the world, nothing is forgotten before God, -- least of all the fact that an imperial power in this world which was set for just government rose up in its blind, guilty, folly, and allowed any reasons or excuses whatsoever to sanction the death of the Lord Jesus. And this the Roman empire did, though its representative in Judea well knew how wrong it was to suffer it. Under pressure of the people set on by the priests he did it, as a matter of public policy perhaps; certainly of expediency for himself as Caesar’s friend, or to avoid possible trouble. It is often if not almost always so that the greatest crimes are winked at in this world, as far as its governmental authorities are concerned.

But there is another state of things in Babylon. For there is a great difference between the woman and the man, in the
world of nature, now corrupted, not with a beast’s heart only without conscience before God but even viewed as a beast. The empires ought to have served God like the Son of man, but in point of fact they were symbolically but beasts in pride of force and will without God. The woman (having the profession of being espoused to Christ, but really setting up to be mistress of all before the marriage to the deep dishonor of the future absent Bridegroom) has quite another position and guilt. She accordingly is seen in the vision “sitting upon the scarlet colored beast full of names of blasphemy.” She pretends to guide the beast or empire. This is the way in which the Spirit portrays her here.

It is plain that the time in John’s day was not yet come historically for all this. When the vision was given, the believers were still persecuted by the empire, as he himself was an instance. John was “in the isle called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus.” He was there no doubt as a sufferer, or, as he says, “a companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus.” Hence it is plain that the world-power was a persecutor at that time rather than the woman. The vile harlot did not yet stand forth in her full-blown profligacy or her meretricious splendor. Even the Roman empire as it was then was not yet developed according to the

THE BEAST IS THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Here let us for a few moments delay, because the question might be raised why the beast should be taken as the Roman empire. My answer is, that in all the visions of the imperial powers, in all the prophecies of Old or New Testament, you never find more than the fourth beast or Roman empire until the Lord Jesus introduces a new and everlasting kingdom, -- until He brings in His own reign over all nations, tribes, and tongues of the world. We shall show how the difficulty of its actual disappearance from the world is met in this very chapter. The Roman empire has gone through various phases, and undergone extraordinary changes. Its course is not yet exhausted. All prophecy that treats of its close speaks of its existence just before it is extinguished by the Lord when He appears in glory. This very chapter proves not merely that all was open to God from first to last, but that He has made known to us in His word beforehand those singular revolutions that were afterwards to become facts. Some of these have been realized already; others remain to be verified shortly. But that this is the Roman empire is plain from the fact that it is always thus the fourth kingdom is described. A beast with seven heads and ten horns, the last empire before the Son of man takes the kingdom in power and glory, is the way in which Dan. 7 sets it out symbolically on the first occasion in which it was brought before any. There, closing the successive imperial powers, Rome appears, and is described yet more minutely than here.

On the other hand it is granted that there are features introduced into the description of St. John not found in the older prophecy. God does not introduce the subject without fresh reason and fresh light; but that it is the same imperial power, with added relationships as especially to the harlot, cannot be doubted in my judgment by any one subject to the written word. But the simplest and surest proof of all lies in the plain fact that, from first to last, we have four empires of the world, and only four, the last of which is destroyed by divine judgment, and followed immediately by the display of God’s kingdom when Christ appears in power and glory. It must be quite evident, save to Romanists, or others almost equally ignorant or visionary, that the kingdom so described is not yet established in the world. I say “in the world”; for it is not a question of heaven. Glory on high we have also revealed to us in Christ the head of the church: of this the New Testament speaks in the clearest possible manner. But it is plain that these world-powers have the earth for their theatre; and, further, that what displaces the last of them is a kingdom that God will establish by judgment executed on the quick in this world. A very great comfort it is to look onward to the certainty that God has not given up the earth for ever into the hands of the adversary -- the certainty that Satan’s plans shall be overthrown when they seem most ripe -- the certainty that, when the evil becomes intolerable, God will interfere, and this by that Man whom He has ordained to judge the quick and the dead, the Lord Jesus. These truths are taught in both the Testaments. For the present occasion Dan. 2, 7 may suffice to prove what has been just affirmed. I only refer passingly to clench the proof of what is meant by the beast here.

I say no more then of the beast than that it is beyond doubt the Roman empire: in what stage of its existence, and at what particular time will appear as we go on.

THE WOMAN’S PRETENSION

Next, the woman is described as “arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls.” It is not the bride arrayed in fine linen, white and clean; it is the gaudy splendor of the world to attract the flesh, and this very distinctively in royal yea, imperial colors, so as to found a primary claim of supremacy for her ecclesiastical pretensions; it is false glory, natural enough in the world as it is and adapted to its lusts, but altogether contrary to the express object of the Lord Jesus in having His spouse in this world. The bride of Christ was intended to be His epistle, and is called by faith to manifest Him here below among men, the constant witness of His glory, character, ways, and heavenly place. Hence she must expect at present to share His rejection and sufferings in this world. But this woman who usurps the name seeks nothing but fleshly pleasure and worldly importance, all that is naturally coveted and prized in the earth. This too and worse she ministers to others; for she has “a golden cup in her hand, full of abomination, and filthiness of her fornication.” How awful when religion with the highest pretensions to sanctity only sanctions man in the lowest, guiltiest inclinations of a nature fallen from God and subject to Satan! Further, we are told that “upon her forehead was a name written.” The first word is most significant -- “Mystery . . . Mystery, Babylon the great,
the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.”

Such a blazon on her forehead from the Spirit teaches us that here it is in no way a question of a heathen city with any amount of political influence. Its real heathenism, or rather its ungodly antagonism to God’s people now fallen, may very well be couched under “Babylon the great”; for such was Babylon of old to the ancient people. But “Mystery” goes deeper, and shows the need of spiritual discernment according to the divine revelation vouchsafed to us, in order to detect the true character of this gigantic yet subtle, imposture. Neither pagan Rome nor modern commerce nor a future city rising on the Euphrates, can possibly answer to such a designation. It well suits Rome nominally Christian. Her fall therefore has an interest and joy for heaven which attaches to no other judgment.

I may just observe by the way that “the great city,” as far as the bride of the Lamb is concerned, is excluded by all persons who profess to give the best reading according to the most ancient authorities for the word of God. And this is very interesting to us, because it is not a question merely of what prophetic students prefer, They might be liable perhaps to the thought of bias, but critics whom I could easily name if this were the place for it, who had not the slightest prepossession in favor of prophecy, have come to the conclusion now stated on the ground of nothing but clear and full external evidence. In short the way they read Rev. 21:10 is “showed me,” not that great city, the holy Jerusalem, but “the holy city Jerusalem.” It is not a question of greatness for her even when glorified, but of holiness; whereas what Babylon affects and wins at cost not merely of herself but of truth, grace, and Christ Himself, is present earthly greatness. “The great harlot” herself, she is the “mother of harlots,” as we are told, “and abominations of the earth.” Thus not only is she a corrupt system, but the parent of ecclesiastical corruptions outside herself yet akin to her. Again she is the patron of what is most offensive before God -- of idolatry in every shape. It is in vain to say that there never has been idolatry under Christianity; in vain to plead that the objects adored are only images for memory, not idols. The selfsame excuse the old heathen philosophers used to urge. They sought to excuse their superstition by the assertion that nobody thought the idols were the gods, but only the visible tokens that reminded them of beings above and behind them. The apology of idolaters in Christendom is exactly similar to that of the pagans. The truth is, that to have such visible tokens or signs is the denial of faith, the destruction of the principle and power of the idols were the gods, but only the visible tokens that introduced and sanctions idolatry on the most prolific scale, and her idolatries have this peculiarly malignant brand in God’s mind, that they betray departure from known truth for her better loved. It may be presumed that every one here is aware that “abomination” is used for idol, according to language familiar to every reader of the Old Testament. The same style is found in Matthew, who cites the prophets, and in the Revelation, which habitually adopts Hebrew phraseology. And when the prophet saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus, he wondered with great admiration -- not of course that anything heathen should be opposed to Jesus, or should attack the servants of the Lord: there was no such great matter for surprise in that. Heathen persecution was becoming an old story, as was Jewish instigation through hatred of the gospel. John himself, experiencing at that time pagan opposition, could hardly wonder if it grew hotter. But that what would bear the name of Jesus, however falsely -- what would arrogate the place and title of God’s church -- that this body should become the greatest engine of persecution and tyranny the world ever saw, turning the power of the empire especially against the saints and witnesses of Jesus, did fill him with amazement beyond measure.

I am aware of the usual pleas of Romanist theologians. But “God is not mocked.” The constant self-defence is that the church never persecutes; it is the civil power that punishes delinquents. But God looks at those who are really guilty -- not at the mere hand which does the deed, but at the mind and will which morally and under the penalty of damnation compels it. Be it the civil power that hangs, stabs, or burns -- the instrument is of small moment: His eye is on the true culprit, the more it experiences at that time pagan opposition, could hardly wonder if it grew hotter. But that what would bear the name of Jesus, however falsely -- what would arrogate the place and title of God’s church -- that this body should become the greatest engine of persecution and tyranny the world ever saw, turning the power of the empire especially against the saints and witnesses of Jesus, did fill him with amazement beyond measure.

Then comes the angel’s explanation; and this we shall find gives fresh information of the most important kind. It is always thus in the interpretations of scripture. Man’s explanations are merely founded on the thing to be explained; God out of His fullness loves to give us more, and of even deepening importance. So here we are told “the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.”

“The beast that thou sawest was and is not” -- a striking and singular fact. The Roman empire, unlike all the other previous beasts, must cease to exist and then rise again. It was, and is not, “and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit.” It was
to reappear with a diabolical character in the sight of God for its last phase. Thus the last of the imperial powers should have a history altogether different from its predecessors. After having flourished and sunk into decay and death, it should revive before its final and unexampled destruction at the appearing of the Lord Jesus. Now there is no maxim among men more settled than that the powers of the world are in this just like men. They begin and advance till they reach their height; then they decline till they vanish. But you may without fail reckon that the maxims of men are untrustworthy where they touch divine things. It is not in the power of man to discover or enunciate maxims of men are untrustworthy where they touch divine things. It is not in the power of man to discover or enunciate the truth. In this case illustration and illustrated are alike. Man having lived and died is to rise again -- not merely his spirit, but concrete man; spirit and soul and body will reappear. So must the Roman empire. I am not now speaking about other nations, though it is far from being confined to one; but the Roman empire is here singled out for the reason already pointed out, that it has a character in God’s eye because of the rejection and judicial murder of the Son of God.

The Roman empire is not done with. It may have died and passed away, speaking now symbolically. The beast may have come to an end long since. But scripture declares that the beast, which was and is not, “shall ascend” -- yea, dreadful to say -- “out of the bottomless pit.” Even when it rose up against the Son of God, it was not said then to have ascended out of the abyss. The empire is yet to be clothed with a still more distinctively diabolical character on its final reappearance than it ever had of old. It “shall ascend out of the bottomless pit and go into perdition; and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and shall be present.”

You observe the change in the latter words. It has the amplest warrant. There is no Biblical scholar now that would presume to contest the better reading or its version. I am putting forward no peculiar view, but the best representation of the undoubted word of the Holy Spirit in the passage. All classes, Catholic or Protestant, Lutheran or Reformed, Established or Nonconformist, if only acquainted with the authorities for the word of God here, will admit that what has just been given is indubitably true. It is impossible for intelligent men to stigmatise this critical correction as the peculiarity of any school whatever. It is a question now of fact, sure in itself and confessed by all competent men, many of whom never stopped to consider the difference of meaning which results from the emendation demanded by excellent authorities of every kind, and consequently no bad witnesses, inasmuch as they had and could have no object in what they introduced. As it stands in the common text, the phrase looks a sort of riddle; for what is the meaning of the proposition that the beast was, is not, and yet is? From the correct text the darkness vanishes at once. Can one hesitate which should be regarded as the voice of the Holy Spirit? Internal evidence there is as conclusively in favor of the critical change, as is external testimony. The sense that is elicited from καί πάρεσται is simple and highly important; the only possible version of the vulgarly received καὶ πέρ ἐστὶν offers no just sense whatever, but a certain mystification which none would defend save prejudiced men who confound mist with mystery, and see scarce anything with certainty and clearness in the Bible.

**REAPPEARANCE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE**

There is no enigma then in what the Spirit really wrote. He expressly tells us that universal wonder will be excited among men when they see the beast once more which had been and then ceased to exist. When it reappears, they are filled with astonishment. Just as John wondered greatly at the persecution carried on by her who bore the Lord’s name ever so basely, so the world will marvel when the long departed empire of Rome lifts its head once more.

Our own day has seen serious steps toward that consummation, or at least the way paved for it. Not at all is it meant that anything at present existing indicates that the beast has ascended from the abyss, or that it can till the saints now living on earth (with those dead before them) are caught up changed into the glorious likeness of Christ. On the contrary, I would rather seek to guard all the children of God from being carried away by a hue and cry about this person or that kingdom. Still we have seen events in the providential history of the world of no ordinary magnitude and of strange character. But nothing has been yet seen that answers to this kingdom ascending out of the bottomless pit according to the language of prophecy. I am far from saying that the Sardinian or Piedmontese progress, through overthrowing their southern adversary and swallowing up the lesser duchies and taking possession of the Papal dominions, can be fairly so interpreted. But it is impossible to avoid seeing that these extensive and profound changes in raising Italy to a great and united kingdom are not more fatal to the temporal sovereignty of the Pope than they clear the ground for the revival of the empire with Rome for its capital. In short the state of things so rapidly brought about in Italy and even Rome seems to my mind no small step towards a far deeper and still graver assumption which God will not permit till a day that is not yet arrived. Let us not therefore in any way indulge the dream that we are yet in presence of this most solemn reappearance of the Roman empire; but one can scarce shut one’s eyes to the fact that certain steps or stages, which must necessarily have preceded it in the wisdom of God, have recently been taken, and that not a few things are in train towards that which remains to be done.

Nevertheless the turning-point can be shown to be in no way a fact as yet. There is nothing in the least degree therefore that would warrant any one to point to what is now in course of formation as if the beast were being actually formed. The chief antecedent condition does not exist.

**THE GEOGRAPHICAL MARK**

“Here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. And there are seven kings.” In this statement the Spirit of God deigns to give a mark of another kind for determining the woman. We have already considered what may be styled the spiritual mark as contrasted with the bride of the Lamb. Here we are in presence of what may be called the geographical mark. For the woman is said to sit on seven mountains. Who in the world could doubt where the seven-hilled city is? Still less could it have been doubted in the time of St. John. There was but one such city, and that one rose up before every person’s mind instinctively. It was Rome, and none other.

**THE POLITICAL MARK**
Further, there is what may be called the political mark added in the end of the chapter. “The woman which thou sawest is the great city which reigneth (or hath kingdom) over the kings of the earth.” There was only one city which had reigned over kings. There can be no question therefore that Rome exclusively is the city intended here by the Spirit of God. This is so true that a great many learned persons of the Roman Catholic communion have acknowledged the fact, even some of their most celebrated controversiasts. Probably there are many here who have heard of the famous Bishop of Meaux, J. B. Bossuet, as others have heard of Cardinals Baronius and Bellarmin. These officials, of high distinction in the Romish system, acknowledge Rome to be intended. They have their own way of endeavoring to conciliate the fact admitted with their tenacious maintenance of Rome as the holy see. With this we need not concern ourselves. What we have to consider is not their way of reconciling their consciences, but their acknowledgment as far as it goes of the truth in the chapter. We have nothing to do with judging them; we can leave them in the hands of God. It is enough for me simply to use the concession, which has its importance in this place, coming as it does from those who have opposed to it the strongest possible interest if the reference were only carried out to the full. Let us beware of imputing bad motives — love of power, greed of money, pride of position in the world, or the like. These, I say, are questions for God to judge. I am only affirming now, that all the keenest prejudices of celebrated Romish ecclesiastics must assuredly be against acknowledging Rome as the city meant here; and yet, in spite of all, they have been obliged to own the fact, however they may seek to explain it away by limiting it to its ancient pagan phase.

It is certain therefore from the spiritual contrast with the bride, from the geographical place of the seven mountains, and from the special, that is supreme, relationship to the kings of the earth, that Rome and no other is the city aimed at by the woman Babylon in Rev. 17.

DISTINCTION OF “THE WOMAN” AND “THE HARLOT”

But we must distinguish between “the woman” and “the harlot.” The woman is the city that is said to have sovereignty over the kings of the earth. The reason is manifest. Rome did not wait for her governing power till she became an ecclesiastical system. We see how perfectly the truth hangs together. It is not said, “the whore which reigneth over the kings of the earth,” but “the woman” that does so. Beyond controversy her supreme authority was quite distinct from her assuming an ecclesiastical character. The latter was a change long subsequent. In virtue of its religious character, alas! false or corrupt, it is called a whore or harlot; but “the woman” is in relation rather to her place as a certain system of power or authority in the earth, just as Tyre or Jerusalem are often each compared to a woman in Old Testament prophecies, with which we are all familiar.

THE SEVEN ROMAN FORMS OF POWER

But there is a great deal more. “There are seven kings,” says the Spirit of God: “five are fallen; the one is, and the other is not yet come.” It is hard to doubt that these heads or kings here brought before us refer to the various forms of power which succeeded each other in Rome. Other beasts were simply said to have one head. The Macedonian might become four heads, and these evidently concurrent, not successive; but in Rome we hear of seven heads, and these from the language of the interpreter not concurrent but successive. The figure refers to the complete variety of political power that should characterize that empire. “Five,” it is said, “were fallen.” These were the previous kinds of power in Rome. “One is”: the sixth head was then exercising its rule. Thus the five fallen heads pointed to kings, consuls, decemvirs, military tribunes, dictators, or the like, which had been in Rome before but had now yielded to the emperor. Although there was a shadow of consuls still kept up, as is notorious, yet the imperial head was universally known to be then in force. This is the one that “now is,” as we are told. But it is added that another was coming. “The other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.”

HISTORY DOES NOT INTERPRET PROPHECY

Here I still stand to what I hold to be an important though negative principle in looking at the prophetic word: to understand it you do not require history. In general indeed the students of history applied to the interpretation of the prophets least understand prophecy. After all a conjectural opinion as to the meaning of these heads is no such great matter; nor does it really help in the interpretation of the chapter. Supposing the simple Christian believe that the five forms of power fell before the existing imperial one, what of importance can history add? He is not able to explain the details; he knows not the successive forms of power -- what has he lost? Supposing he did name them accurately, what has been gained? He is assured on the word of God that there were five, though he may not know what their histories or their characters were. He does know what was of great importance -- that a sixth form existed, the imperial line of the Caesars, as they are called and as every body knew in John’s

20. (...continued)

Testament. There she is represented as in a certain sense the bride; but in truth espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ rather than as yet wedded. And this is necessarily and undeniably the image in this Apocalyptic prophecy, where beyond a doubt the marriage supper of the Lamb does not take place till after the destruction of Babylon, when the blessed bridal of the church is celebrated in heaven. The consummation is most fittingly when all are complete who go to make up the church. It is after the Lord shall have translated to heaven all who have been baptized by the Spirit into that one body, some fallen asleep, others alive and remaining till He come to change them accurately, what has been gained? He is assured on the word of God that there were five, though he may not know what their histories or their characters were. He does know what was of great importance -- that a sixth form existed, the imperial line of the Caesars, as they are called and as every body knew in John’s

(continued...)
day. Then he knows further that there was to be a seventh. What the seventh head would be is not here described; save that when he came, he must continue a short space. And what should we gather from this? That further minutiae are of no importance to the believer.

Whatever is of real value and for His glory God explains. Whatever is of no account in this point of view God passes by with the slightest notice or none. And so it is with these different heads of power. They are none of them explained. We are told the few words we have seen as to the seventh: no more than this was of consequence; and therefore the Lord gives us this fact alone in the case. “And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven.” Thus there was to be a most curious compound character in the eighth head. He would be, on the one hand, of the seven; on the other, he would be an eighth. This seems, to my thinking, to be explained by what we find in another part of the book: the wounded head of the beast was to live. The imperial power, as it was wounded to death, so it was to appear again. When it revived, it would be an eighth; but it was one of the seven, because there had been such a form of power in Rome once before.

Hence I do not admit that there is in general anything so difficult to understand in these symbols. The information given is plain enough if we are content with the word of God. It is when we leave the simplicity of scripture that we fall into the bypath of speculation. For indeed we are in a wilderness-world, and where to turn we know not. But God has a way, though the vulture’s eye sees it not; and in His word He has been pleased to reveal it, even, Christ; and our wisdom is to hold fast to the way which grace has thus given us. Do we not need a way, if we are going through the wilderness? That way God alone can make known to us, or keep us in. But the way for us in Christ He has fully revealed.

As this is of immense importance everywhere, so is it, be assured, even in studying prophecy, just as much as anywhere else. To go from scripture to history, in order to find the explanation of prophecy, is invariably an error. It may not always work out its worst effects, because he that wanders into history for this purpose may otherwise by faith keep fast hold of the word of God; and so far he will be preserved from evil. But the tendency of looking into man’s account of the world to find the explanation of God’s mind in prophecy is to abandon light for darkness.

Let me ask a question. How can history explain prophecy? It is evident that before history can be applied to the elucidation of prophecy, you must understand what the prophecy means; and when you know what it means, for what do you want history? Is it to ascertain that God knew or spoke the truth? You have already what God gave it for, and ought not, if a believer, to take the ground of an infidel. No doubt what you discover in history, as far as it is true, must exactly fall in with prophecy. And this may be interesting, -- nothing more; but it must be evident to every one who reflects that, if we wish to be kept from fumbling in the dark, we must understand a prophecy before we can bring, it into juxtaposition with the particular event we regard as its fulfillment.

For instance, take the beast before us. Supposing it is the question with me to whom or to what the beast applies here, how can history decide this? Am I to ransack all the annals of all times and all nations first? Or am I not to weigh the prophecy with prayer that I may know of what God is speaking? One man says, perhaps it is the pope; another affirms Napoleon Bonaparte or his nephew. How am I to decide? First let me seek to understand the scriptures about the beast with their context, and when I do so by the grace of God in my measure, this is what God meant me to get without going farther and faring probably worse.

The truth is, that when God’s mind is seized in scripture, it will be found incomparably larger than questions of popery or politics. He is occupied with the glory of Christ in heaven; if on earth, with Israel as the centre when the kingdom is established by judgments on the Gentiles who now are allowed to rule exceptionally during the Lo-ammi state of the Jews. Hence what is described here is irreconcilable with men’s thoughts. Take once more as an example the pope. The papacy may come in for a certain analogy, but is in no full sense the beast. It is not certainly for me to apologize for the papal power: none can justly insinuate that I sympathize with that monstrous imposture in any way. But the word of God ought to be dearer than all controversial objects; and although some may be keen enough Protestants, nothing justifies one in departing from the word of God, nor can any end consecrate an error.

The endeavor to find out the hardest things that can be found in the Bible, and to apply them blindly towards an object that you justly censure, is serious moral wrong. Whatever then the demerits of the papacy, the apocalyptic beast from the sea is really a quite different evil altogether, being the imperial power of the west in its last phase. It will be hardly disputed that the pope is an extremely diminished power now: is this honestly the lot of the little horn of Dan. 7? Judged by an imperial standard, there is not much resemblance between the two, as in my opinion there never was. The papacy never was anything politically, or at least territorially, but an inconsiderable power; whereas the beast here described is regarded as a commanding empire in the earth, and this of course Roman. But it clearly was when the Roman empire sunk into nonentity, weakened by the Eastern rent and its own corruption, and afterwards extinguished by the barbarian hordes, that the papacy sprang up into a temporal authority no less than an universal episcopate. So far is the papacy from really answering to the beast, that it has only come in during the nonexistence of the beast. For the beast that was is not, according to St. John. Such is the true place and time of that strange incubus. Indeed the papacy is far more connected with the whore than with the beast, though I do not deny a sort of partial anticipation also. For I am not disposed to differ from the great and excellent men who attached the solemn description of Babylon to the see of Rome during the latter part of the middle ages, and at the time of the Reformation. To my mind Luther and others who so used it were justified in the main. They were right in fixing the divine condemnation of Babylon on Rome, and this not merely as “the woman” but as “the whore,” which involves other features of guilt as already pointed out.

But the beast is the imperial power of Rome, and here in its last open apostasy and rebellion against God. The other powers had disappeared as empires. The beast is the only one that will reappear imperially before final judgment, after having passed through these different states. “The beast that was, and is not,
even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into
perdition." The last holder of that power, the last head, will
display, I presume, the resurrection of the empire without and
against. God by Satanic energy, and in this condition it is
doomed to perish for ever under the judgment of God.

**THE 10 HORNS AND THE BEAST**

"And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings." This is
another most material point for understanding the chapter.
"And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have
received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one
hour with the beast." Now if we look back upon ancient and
mediaeval European history, what do we find? First of all the
Roman beast unbroken, without any division whatsoever into
separate kingdoms. There was a breach that gradually widened
after the setting up of Constantinople, as it was overtly
occasioned by that rival metropolis. There were sovereigns who
divided between them the Roman empire for a season, as we
know, when that empire began to decline; but in the days of its
comparative solidity and worldwide grandeur (as you are aware,
at any rate during the scriptural account of the Roman empire),
it was an unbroken power wielded by one emperor. In the days
of the Caesars it was invariably so. There might be a
difference, as we know there was in history, between the
Augustus and the Caesar; but I am speaking now of the
emperor; and I say there was but one emperor during the days
of the Caesars. Such was the earliest state. Passing over the
changes or modifications that took place until the barbarians
broke up the Roman empire, we find all changed when the
empire was gone. "The beast that was" ceased to be, the new
condition being briefly told in the words, "and is not."

What was found then? The various fragments of the Roman
empire were gradually settled into separate kingdoms. I am
willing now to meet our historical friends as much as possible,
and will not raise questions about "ten" by contending for nine
or eleven. Let us suppose there were exactly ten in round
numbers. If ten, we have ten horns or kings of the middle ages,
but no such thing as the empire or the beast; that is, no
corporate bond existed for these ten kings -- no single power
held a suzerainty over them all, so as to direct their united
forces, and make them all to be parts of the great Roman
empire. Such a state of things had not begun to be. But, mark,
in the time which the prophet contemplates there will be this
exactly. "The beast that was and is not shall ascend," that is,
the old corporate bond of an emperor to control and lead all that
once formed the beast or properly Roman part of the empire,
in short the west or western powers. The east appears not in the
beast, as here looked at, for reasons that need not be entered
into now. It is the strictly Roman part of the empire. The gold,
the silver, and the brass are not spoken of here, but only the iron
and clay, if we may speak in the language of Nebuchadnezzar’s
vision.

Here then is a new state of things -- ten horns as well as the
beast; not the beast alone as in ancient days, nor ten horns alone
as in the middle ages, but the beast and the ten horns. You who
desire to be under history as the rule for interpreting prophecy,
do you not hear history? Can it be intelligently said that such a
state of things has ever yet been? This is the state, I feel no
hesitation in affirming that will be. St. John shows us most
clearly what we are to expect for the future of this age, and
more particularly in the west. Naturally this must be of so much
more. solemn interest to us, inasmuch as our country forms a
part of it. The continental powers with ourselves, the western
powers, compose the material of the future ten horns or
kings. The countries of Europe, which boast of themselves
as the flower of civilization at the present time, are destined to
be redistributed into ten kingdoms when the beast rises up from
the abyss; that is, when an imperial power is allowed with Rome
as the centre to become Satan’s leader of the west. Such will be
the beast, a Roman emperor with his satellite kings. When this
future empire becomes established again, it will not be such an
absorbing power as to blot out separate nationalities. There will
be the combination of an imperial authority with each power
acknowledged in its own quasi-independent state. I grant that
there may be only a sham in such subordinate kings: still there
has been usually no lack of vapor in the earth, and the future in
question will be a day of shams. The grand point however will be
this, that the chief who governs all will govern as firmly with
iron hand as if the separate kingdoms belonged to himself
exclusively. Such is the state of things described here.

It is not imagination: the word of God is perfectly plain
about all. “These have one mind, and shall give their power and
strength unto the beast.” And they “receive power as kings
one hour with the beast.” They have their kingly authority for
one and the same time with the beast; not after nor before the
beast, but contemporaneously and in association with him. How
comes this to pass? It is explained a little afterwards. “God hath
put in their hearts to fulfil his will.” It is not their own.
National independence would refuse such servility. Is there
anything for which a kingdom would be more ashamed of itself
than to be merely the vassal of a grinding active power? But
here they are absolutely subservient: it is the common lot of all
the western powers that they for the first time in Europe do the
bidding of one ruler. Who can say that such a state of things
was ever known in the west? Under the Caesars there was no
room for it, as there were no such divided kingdoms. Since the
day that the German barbarians broke up the empire, since the
Goths, &c., (our forefathers, as you know,) set up separate
nationalities throughout the west, independence has been the
ruling feature of all these little kingdoms. They have each had
a will of its own; and all have fought most determinedly to have
their own way. They have valued above all things their right to
be governed as they liked.

A total change will pass over the west. When the
redistribution comes (which will be as usual out of a
revolutionary state; and a man must be rather blind not to see
tokens of the storm brewing, not in our own country only but in
every country where free thought and discussion have prepared
the way); when all respect for what is ancient and has been in
honor shall have passed away; when men are seized with a
passion for destroying everything that used to exercise influence
and hold in check; when the demon of revolution has acquired
throughout the west full force, and broken up all that still
survives, this is to be the shape it will take. There will be a
dividing afresh into ten separate kingdoms of no great size; but
what gives them importance is, that all will be under the central
power which is here called “the beast.” It is not of course a
mere kingly power, which is styled a “horn” in the language of
prophecy. The beast is the overruling corporate bond under
which these horns range themselves as constituents and sinews
of its strength. Accordingly there will be a novel unity unexampled in Europe or elsewhere. “They will have one mind, and give their power and strength unto the beast.” And what use does he make of it? To what end does the beast lead the horns?

**OVERCOME BY THE LAMB**

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them (for he is Lord of lords, and King of kind and they that are with him, called, and chosen, and faithful [Rev. 17:14]).

In the midst of such a dreary future, what a comfort that we shall be with Him then! You, if you love the Lord, will be with Him. Whoever you may be, if you are Christ’s, you will come with Christ in that day. He will appear from heaven, and so will you in glory. It will not then be a question of gathering His people to Himself. Not a hint of such a removal is given in this context. The faithful are already with Him. They had been therefore caught up to Him before. How this could be we know from other parts of scripture; but I do not enter into them now. Keeping myself to the passage that lies before me, I say that it is quite plain that the faithful, chosen, and called will be then with Christ. Further, these are not angels but saints. Angels are never said to be “called,” nor are they ever said to be “faithful.” It is not a question of the dealings of grace for an angel. The angels who are kept of God are holy no doubt, and, if holy, are “chosen” or elect. Such is the language of scripture about them. But an angel never is or could be said to be either “faithful” or “called.” What is the meaning of “calling”? When man fell and went away from God, “calling” was the means grace used for bringing him to God by the faith of a Savior of the world. This is not and never can be the history of an angel; it is only open to man. For he only of all fallen beings is called by grace -- man when he calls on the name of the Lord Jesus -- man visited in the infinite mercy of God, when His grace has shone upon him from on high, and brought him to Himself by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Such then shall be with the Lamb when the beast challenges the conflict which ends not in his perdition only, but in the ruin of the kings and their armies from these very lands. “But the Lamb shall overcome them (for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings).” It is no question of human resources in that day: the Lord shall be exalted, and we shall reign with Him.

**THE WHORE’S INFLUENCE**

Observe another thing. “The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” This beyond controversy distinguishes between the whore and all other religious systems; for where do you find anything corresponding to this save with “the whore?” No doubt there are many religious systems bad enough. I am far from meaning that Romanism is the only corruption of Christianity. But is there no tangible difference? Others may influence for it in their own land; but the dreadful plague-spot of Rome is that she claiming to be the universal mother and mistress is the corrupter of every land. Her claim of ecumenical dominion is the thing that points her out as the city of confusion, which answers to the Holy Spirit’s warnings in this chapter. Thus the very boast of universality with corruption and idolatry determines at once what she is. Babylon is the harlot of the western kings, the most corrupting influence religiously of all the world. Hence “the waters, where the whore sitteth, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.” There may be, I repeat, grievous departure from Christ elsewhere; still this is a mere party, or at most a national blunder in religion; but, as for Babylon, she is according to scripture the common nuisance of all nations and tribes and tongues. The result will be that her lovers will all turn on her. The ten horns -- those that she most of all sought to win and hold-will hate her in the end.

Let me mention at this point a fact in illustration which, as all may not have noticed it, is as well to name now. A remarkable change has even now taken place over the nations of the earth. They are not getting better, but the form of their evil is changing. The last Ecumenical Council held at Rome is the only one which neither had nor invited crowned heads to send representatives. The time is not yet come for the ten horns to receive authority as kings for one and the same hour with the beast. But there are practically no Catholic powers at the beck of Babylon. They are no longer her vassals, if they are not yet the minions of the beast. This is another serious state. In that council the pope could count on no civil supporters, unless perhaps some petty ones which would have only made the absence of the great powers conspicuous. Hence the invitations were exclusively to Roman ecclesiastics. No representative of Austria, Bavaria, Belgium, France, Italy, &c. was there. Even Spain and Portugal sent no plenipotentiaries to declare their adhesion to the pope: those that always had proved most submissive were for one reason or another passed by. By Babylon’s own confession the western powers though called Catholic could no longer be trusted. For the first time since they formed part of Christendom they were not called to an Ecumenical Council -- none but ecclesiastics. It is not that the time is come for the horns to take their place with the beast and to devour Babylon; but certainly there seems to be somewhat of a preparation for it in so striking a sign of her actual mistrust in her old paramours.

**HATRED OF THE WHORE**

“The ten horns that thou sawest, AND the beast,” &c. It is not “upon the beast,” as in the common text, -- an unquestionably superior reading, which no critic would think of defending. The true text runs, “The ten horns . . . and the beast.” And this is of importance. Here one regrets that the strength of mere Protestant prejudice tends to make men false to scripture. Is it not disgraceful for any one, be he Catholic or Protestant, to keep up an error in what professes to be the word of God? Why should a Christian have an interest but in the truth? If we accept the best authorities, “upon the beast” must be rejected as unquestionably erroneous; if we are not swayed by the feeblest possible testimony, we cannot evade the overwhelming evidence that the true reading is “the ten horns . . . and the beast.” And why, think you, should any one be so anxious to perpetuate the blunder of “the ten horns upon the beast?” Because the true reading is fatal to the old delusion that the beast is the pope -- a delusion completely refuted by “the ten horns . . . and the beast,” unless one can credit the pope with destroying his own city. It is too hard a saying, even for that fanciful school that the pope should turn out so fierce a foe of his own capital. Yet the words are certain, “the ten horns . . . and the beast, these shall hate the whore.”
On the other hand it cannot be denied to be perfectly intelligible that the Roman empire with all the ten subject kingdoms in its sphere will burn with implacable fury against ecclesiastical Rome, the old object of their deepest, superstitious, and passionate devotion; as I believe they will. We see that the power which has possessed itself of the papal temporalities is naturally by no means palatable to the Pope; as it also has shown but little scruple in taking his goods, we could not expect love or respect between the two parties. We know that the kingdom of Italy that is growing up has enriched itself very considerably by the spoils of the “church” so called. When the day comes for the beast and the ten horns the spoliation of Babylon will be complete. The beast will first enrich himself and his followers, and then destroy her. All that ecclesiastical Rome has earthly power, wealth, grandeur, rank, will seem but lawful spoil for them.

It will be thus seen how important the various reading, is in v. 16; and when we speak of a “various readings” here, it is not meant that any want of certainty exists. There are often various readings which have no real value. No man ought to adopt a reading, lightly or for a fancy. My own sympathy is strongly with the man who is averse to change; but there are some various readings so amply supported and certain in themselves that to hold out against them would be high treason to the word of God. The authority for “and the beast” is so preponderant that nothing but stubbornness can account for any man rejecting it, unless there be gross ignorance also.

Hence there cannot be the smallest doubt that “the ten horns . . . and the beast” are to join against Babylon. This makes the meaning of the chapter substantially plain. After the closest links of religious attachment, we see the turning of the tide at the end. It is the day when the beast will no longer permit Rome in any way to guide the temporal powers, when the civil power, become proud of its imperialism, will turn and rend the harlot who was once the object of the most debasing affection and honor. But the greater the false love then shown to Rome, so much the more by and by will be the hatred with which the beast will turn and destroy what had been so extravagantly loved and honored. “These shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.” They execute God’s destructive judgment in His providence. Such is the explanation: God hath put in their hearts to do his will."

More I need not add tonight, considering the lateness of the hour. But the subject is commended to your prayerful attention; for the Lord would have you study not only His revealed will but His word, that you may judge rightly of what is working now by seeing the end disclosed with divine clearness and certainty. You will thus also prove by experience that the prophetic word is most practical, “whereunto ye do well to take heed as unto a lamp that shineth in a dark place.” Instead of giving it up as precarious or unintelligible, you will learn increasingly how definite and interesting and important is every word for every child of God. May the present occasion stimulate you to read with confidence in His grace, honoring the word of Him who will strengthen and refresh you thereby for His service!

**Appendix:**

**Romanist Confession as to Babylon**

It may interest the reader if I present him with copious extracts from two singularly intelligent writers of the Romish communion, both priests, one Spanish and the other French, who paid homage to the truth of our chapter far beyond the partial acknowledgment of those referred to in the lecture.

**EMANUEL LACUNZA**

The first in order of time is from the famous *Venida del Mesias en gloria y magestad of Juan Jos. Ben-Ezra* (the nom de plume), or rather Emanuel Lacunza (his real name).

Two chief things we have here to ascertain: first, who the woman seated on the beast is; secondly, what times are spoken of in the prophecy.

As to the first, the doctors all agree that the woman here spoken of is the city of Rome, in other times the capital of the greatest empire in the world, and now the capital and centre of unity of the true Christian church. On this first point, which is not called in question, there is no occasion to tarry. In respect to the second, we find only two opinions. The first maintains that the prophecy was wholly accomplished in past ages in idolatrous and pagan Rome. The second confesses that till this day it has not been fully accomplished; and affirms that it will be accomplished in the times of Antichrist in another Rome yet future, and very much changed from the present.

If we attentively consider these two opinions, and the obscure and embarrassed way in which their authors explain themselves, it is not very difficult to make out the pious end which they propose, and the true cause of their embarrassment. This point is the most delicate and critical which can be imagined. On the one hand the prophecy is terrible in all its circumstances: both the crimes of the woman, which are clearly related, and the chastisement denounced upon them, are innumerable. On the other hand, the respect, the love, the tenderness, the good conceit and estimation in which this very woman has been held ever since she abolished her idolatry, makes it incredible and improbable that of her should be spoken or in her should ever be verified such crimes and such a chastisement. In so critical a situation which side can we take? The truth of the prophecy must be sacred; for no one doubts its authenticity. But it likewise seems necessary to save the honor of the great queen, and to calm all her fears. As she is not ignorant of that which is expressed in the scriptures of truth, and which might or should lay her under great apprehensions, it has appeared becoming in her faithful subjects to deliver her entirely from this anxiety. Therefore have they said to her; some, that she had nothing to fear, the prophecy having been accomplished many ages ago upon pagan and idolatrous Rome, again st which it is spoken; others, who have not been able to enter into an idea so repugnant to the text, have said to her, that she ought not to be afraid, because the prophecy is visibly directed to other times yet to come, and will not be verified upon the present Rome, upon Christian Rome, upon Rome the head of the church of Christ, but upon another Rome infinitely different, composed then of idolaters who shall have become masters of it, having driven out the Pontiff, and with him all his court and all Christians. In this Rome, thus regarded, will be verified the crimes and the punishments announced in this prophecy. Let us shortly examine these two opinions, or those two
consolations, comparing them with the text of the prophecy . . . The greatest crime of which the woman is accused is fornication, and to shut the door against all equivocation, the accomplices of this metaphorical fornication are named, to wit, the kings of the earth; and as the kings with the harlot, so she with them lived deliciously.

We ask then how this crime can be true of ancient Rome, which, according to all accounts given in history, was so far from this infamy, that on the contrary she even regarded all the kings of the earth with a sovereign contempt, nor was there any in the known world whom she did not humble and cast down under feet. Many times were they seen to enter by the triumphal gate loaded with chains, and to pass out at another to be beheaded or imprisoned. With what propriety then or appearance of truth can ancient Rome be accused of a metaphorical fornication with the kings of the earth? . . . The second difficulty of this opinion grows out of the chastisement announced upon the harlot, which, if attention be given, will certainly appear not yet to have been verified. The expressions which St. John makes use of are all the most vivid, telling of a full and eternal extermination: consider them. Rev. 18:21-23: “and a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; and the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.” Either this is all exaggeration, full of impropriety and falsehood, or it is not yet fulfilled and will be fulfilled in its time to a very tittle as it is written. Besides this, the whole context of the prophecy from the sixteenth chapter ought to be considered; where, after having spoken of the last plague in the seven vials, which the seven angels poured out upon the earth, in which is filled up the wrath of God, he proceeds immediately to say: “And great Babylon came in remembrance before God to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath” . . .

To all this ought to be added another very important reflection. If, as the author of this opinion alleges, the prophecy be wholly intended against the ancient idolatrous and iniquitous Rome, if on her be threatened the terrible chastisement whereof so much is spoken, when was that chastisement accomplished? They answer that it was accomplished when Alaric with his terrible army took it, sacked it, burned it, and almost entirely destroyed it. But in the first place it is certain that the evils which Alaric’s army brought on Rome were not so great as those inflicted by the ancient Gauls, or those she suffered in the civil wars, or in the time of Nero, as we are assured by contemporary authors, and declared by Fleury, Miller, &c. Above all, they were not so great as those which are here clearly announced in the prophecy which speaks of total ruin and eternal extermination. Secondly, in the time of Alaric (that is, in the fifth century of the Christian era), what Rome did this barbarous prince sack? what Rome did he almost entirely burn and destroy? Was it Rome the idolatrous, Rome the iniquitous, Rome the adulteress and harlot for her idolatry? Certainly not, for at that time there was no such Rome. The only Rome which then existed and which continues to this day was wholly Christian, had already cast all her idols from her, and consequently no longer deserved the name of adulteress and harlot; already accorded the true God and His only Son Jesus Christ, already was full of churches in which holy offices were celebrated; for history tells us that Alaric commanded his soldiers not to touch the public buildings nor the temples. It was already Rome the penitent, Christian, and holy. This being so, does it appear to you credible that upon this woman, now Christian, penitent, and holy, should be accomplished the terrible chastisement denounced against the wicked adulteress? . . .

Considering the grave difficulties which the former opinion underlies, almost all the doctors have judged that it is not ancient Rome which is spoken of in the prophecy, but another Rome yet future, in which will be verified all the crimes as well as the terrible chastisement here denounced against her. And when is all this to happen? It is to happen, they say, and with good reason, in the days of Antichrist. But to reconcile this ingenious confession with the honor and consolation of the sacerdotal city (to save which is the aim of both opinions), they make certain suppositions, and lay them as the basis on which their whole edifice may rest. These are as follows. First, the Roman empire is to endure until the end of the world. Secondly, that empire which now is (and for so many years has been) so dismembered that hardly a relic of it is to be seen, shall, toward the last time, recover its ancient greatness, magnificence, and splendor. Thirdly, the heads of that empire in those last times shall become, not only infidel and iniquitous, but even professed idolaters. Fourthly, they shall without much difficulty make themselves masters of Rome, establish in it anew the court of the Roman empire; and thereupon Rome shall resume that grandeur, wealth, profusion, majesty, and glory, which it displayed in ages past, as, e.g., in the time of Augustus. Fifthly, that impious race shall root out from Rome the Christian priesthood, and likewise all the faithful who will not renounce their faith: whereby Rome, being free from that great hindrance, will set up anew the worship of idols, and return to be as idolatrous as before.

These positions being all assumed, and as such requiring no proof, it is truly most easy to conclude whatever you affirm, and to affirm whatever you please. It is easy to conclude that, although the prophecy certainly speaks against a future Rome, yet not in any way against a Christian Rome, the latter, as incapable of these crimes, being likewise not obnoxious to those threatenings and punishments. By this ingenuity the truth of the prophecy is saved, the honor of the great queen is those threatenings and punishments. By this ingenuity the truth of the prophecy is saved, the honor of the great queen is saved, and she remains comforted, quiet and secure, without anything to disturb her peace or interfere with her repose, because the very heavy indignation of the spouse neither is nor can be measured out for her but for her enemies only. Those enemies, or this new Rome thus viewed (continues the explanation), shall doubtless commit new and greater crimes than the ancient Rome; shall return to be proud, haughty, unjust, and cruel; shall again shed Christian blood, and be drunk with it; and these crimes shall draw down on this city, now infidel, the whole burden of the anger and indignation of Almighty God . . . . Is this mode of treating the subject,

21. [This seems too strong, as we know that the heathen faction in Rome was strong enough during Alaric’s siege to alarm men by the pretence that their troubles came because of neglecting the old religion, so much so that sacrifices were offered to the gods in the capital and elsewhere, Pope Innocent himself consenting to it! See Zosim. H. R. v. 14.]
followed by the greater part of the doctors, also the most prudent in this other point of view; that it aims at not grieving our sovereign and common mother before the time? But this is the very reason why the pure truth ought with all humility and reverence to be spoken. For this very reason ought her true sons and faithful subjects to seek to afflict her and rejoice to see her afflicted, not because she is made sorry, but because she sorrowed to repentance. . . . Through the foreshowing of the danger, refuge may be sought and perdition escaped; but if by sparing sorrow the impression is given that there is no such danger, ruin will be inevitable, and, so much the greater, as it has been the less apprehended. It is very easy to remark the strange and singular conduct pursued in the treatment of this subject: I mean the great liberality with which many things are taken for granted which do not appear from revelation, and the very great economy with which others are withheld on which revelation is most explicit. No one tells us, for example, what is meant by the woman sitting on a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. Though the mystery be so great, novel, and strange, that St. John himself confesses he wondered with a great wonder at the sight of the woman in that state, yet they suppose it to signify no more than the figure by alliance, between idolatrous Rome and Antichrist. One should think the beloved disciple had no cause for such admiration. What marvel that an idolatrous and iniquitous city should favor and help Antichrist! . . . .

We are not ignorant that many unrighteous men, out of hatred to the Roman church, have misused in a most monstrous and impudent way this passage of scripture. But what thing is there so true and so holy which they cannot abuse? Wicked children, in what they have said of Rome under the head of this prophecy, have uttered injuries, calumnies, and invectives, and have mingled some one truth or another with endless fables. But what has all this to do, or what can it have to do, with the present subject? Because some have obscured certain truths by mingling them with errors and fables, ought we therefore not to give our diligence to set forth these very truths in their clearness and purity? Ought we therefore to deny them wholly, and pass entirely to the other extreme? Are we therefore prevented from taking a middle path equally wide of fatal error and mischievous flattery? What we say of the crimes of this woman, we say necessarily of her punishment also. Rome, not idolatrous but Christian, not the head of the Roman empire but the head of Christendom, and center of unity of the true church of the living God, may very well (without ceasing from this dignity), at some time or other, incur this guilt, and before God be held guilty of fornication with the kings of the earth, and amenable to all its consequences. And in this there is no inconsistency, however much her defenders may shake the head. And this same Rome, in that same state, may receive on herself the horrible chastisement spoken of in the prophecy; nor is it necessary thereto that she previously be taken by the infidels, that she should return to become the court of the infidel Roman empire arisen from the grave with new and greater grandeur, nor that the new emperors should root out of her the Christian religion and reconstitute idolatry."

(Tomo i. par. ii. fen. iii. §14. Londres, 1826.)

I do not cite this as entirely agreeing with Lacunza’s impressions, and of course not at all with his insensibility to the real and most grievous idolatry which has characterized Rome for so many centuries in the worship of the Virgin, saints, angels, and the host. This is clearly her characteristic to faith as blasphemy will characterize the beast. But Babylon is the mother of the harlots and of the abominations of the earth, instead of preserving her purity as the church, a chaste virgin espoused to one man even Christ. She who made herself drunk with the blood of the saints has guiltily courted the kings of the earth to the full, and has intoxicated therewith herself on the earth (not the heavenly-minded) with the wine of her fornication, for her golden cup is full of abominations, that is, of idols. Lacunza therefore deceived himself in overlooking much that is past and present in Rome; and he seems to me, however morally right in the main, less right prophetically than the doctors who see an apostate future for Rome, and judgment first providential, then finally and directly divine. But the description of Babylon as a whole is essentially idolatrous and so distinguished from the blaspheming beast, with which, strange to say, the most zealous Papists and Protestants alike confound her.

PIERRE LAMBERT

The second priest I summon is le pere Lambert, whose Exposition de Pédictionset des Promesses faites a l’Eglise appeared in Paris in 1806. But I need not cite words which more feebly convey arguments mostly given already from Lacunza, save perhaps that Lambert regards the evil which would justify the prophecy in so depicting Rome as more in the distant future. Substantially however his chapter 18 (tome ii. pp. 327-347) coincides, as far as it goes, with the great Spanish work, and is even fuller in combating the reasoning of Bossuet. Both insist that the awful destruction of Rev. 17 awaits Christian Rome.

I demand now (says Lambert, near the close of the chapter and after citing the end of Rev. 18 and the beginning of chap. 19), is there any one hardy enough to declare, contrary to the most unquestionable monuments of history, that the woes predicted by John for great Babylon are fallen on pagan Rome? or rather is it not a constant truth and generally recognized as such, that Rome has experienced nothing of the kind, either whilst it worshipped idols or since it embraced Christianity? Alaric took it and carried off part of its riches in the first years of the fifth century; Genseric did the same toward the middle of that century. Under Charles V., that perverse faithless prince, and on other occasions also it experienced similar losses. But besides that it was Christian then and for a long time since; it has never been either destroyed or reduced to ashes . . . . There is then no middle ground: either one must boldly give the lie to the Apocalyptic oracle on the terrible catastrophe reserved for Rome, or accept in good faith that its threats look to Rome Christian, and that their execution belongs to a future for which we are waiting.
The Bride, the Lamb's Wife: Revelation 19-22

In the OT the literal Babylon on the plain of Shinar appears in contrast with Jerusalem. In the NT we hear of a still more portentous Babylon on seven mountains, the great harlot on whose forehead was written “mystery,” which is in no way said or true of the Chaldeans’ pride [Rev. 17]. No principle is more unintelligent and unfounded than to assume that the Revelation, in borrowing names of persons, places, or other objects from the ancient oracles, is bound to the letter and takes no larger views. To confound the new things with the old in that twofold treasure ancient oracles, is bound to the letter and takes no larger views.

The just and true inference from God’s word is, that it is essentially neither of man nor of the earth like the Palestinian Jerusalem, but heavenly and divine and so having the glory of God, and described in figures altogether and purposely beyond the first creation, which will be ransacked to clothe the earthly metropolis with riches and beauty. Think of jasper clear as crystal, gold transparent as glass, and each gate of “one pearl!” It is all above nature; whereas earthly Jerusalem will be founded and built up with the best things of the earth. We must not think of material beauty in the heavenly city; it is a symbolic description.

This is confirmed in a simple yet important way by the opening scene of Rev. 19 where heaven rejoices over God’s judgment of the great harlot. It is immediately followed by a yet mightier outburst of joyful praise. The time came for the marriage of the Lamb and His wife made Herself ready; while others share the feast in heaven as the blessed guests at that scene of divine love and glory, which even John left undescribed, as Paul did that of our translation at Christ’s coming in 1 Thess. 4:17. Can there be a notion more incongruous and inept than to lower this wondrous heavenly vision to earthly Jerusalem? Yet so it must be if such is the meaning of the city in Rev. 21:3, and 9.

But we are told that there are just “seven signs that this is not the church.” Let us hear, though seven thousand “signs” could not set aside the irresistible force of Rev. 19, 20, and 21.

1. Christ is described as “the Lamb”; and this is called an essentially Jewish title, referring to the passover, and the daily sacrifice.

The fact is that John’s Gospel 1:20, 36 and 1 Pet. 1:19 use the different word ἡμίσυς, the Revelation ἡμίσυς in pointed contrast with ἡμίσυς. But in no case is there a limited or Jewish horizon. What can refute this contracted view more flatly than the Baptist’s words, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world?” So Peter lifts the believing remnant he addresses wholly above the nation and the earth and time itself, by pointing to Christ foreknown before the world’s foundation. So does the earth-rejected “Lamb” of the Apocalypse glorified on high while the Jews have lost their place and their nation) point to dealings of judgment far wider than the Jews, and to heavenly and earthly glories far transcending those secured to Israel according to OT prophecy. The true deduction is therefore quite adverse.

2. The company is described as the Bride, the Lamb’s wife.

This sign again is no less invalid. For, though a wife is an OT figure, not so is the wife of the Lamb,” which the context states to be “of heaven,” in the most evident distinction from the earthly Jerusalem, “the beloved city” of Rev. 20:9. Jerusalem is
authoritatively declared to be “the city of the great King”; it is a great honor that He will reign over it as nowhere else here below. But the church is the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, who, suffering with Him on earth, shall be glorified with Him on high.

To confound these relationships is to lose the key to their distinctive force as revealed in scripture.

3. It is “a city,” a holy city, which John is shown. This is thought to exclude the church, Christ’s body. But God declares it to be the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, which we have learned to be the church, and nothing else. It is not even the city wherein the bride dwells. The holy city is declared authoritatively to be the Bride (Rev. 21:9, 10); and scripture cannot be broken. It is vain to fly to Heb. 12:22. The misquotation and the perversion are only fresh proofs of error not without prejudice. “We are come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,” is a daring change from God’s word to man’s will. “And” is left out after “Zion,” and before “the city.” But it is essential for marking each new object. Zion is the highest point, as it were, on earth; then follows what is above it, “a living God’s city, heavenly Jerusalem.” This was Abraham’s hope, the seat on high of the saints who shared his faith (cf. Heb. 11:13-16). But it was not the church of firstborn ones, enrolled in heaven, which is another object as the “and” designates, though the A. & R. Vv. are here as dull as the commentators, swayed by tradition against the only sure word of God. The bride is neither Israel nor Jerusalem, but “new Jerusalem,” which a tyro ought to distinguish. And how strange to see that the heavenly city in Rev. 21 has “no temple”; whereas earthly Jerusalem will have the temple so minutely predicted in Ezek. 40-48. Can nothing clear such dim eyes? It may be added that “mother of us all” is a known bad reading, itself the parent of a great deal of bad theology ancient and modern.

4. The city comes down out of heaven from God. How does this sign identify it with the earthly city? How does it clash with its heavenly character and glory? It is a necessary part of God’s counsel for heading up all things heavenly and earthly in Christ (Eph. 1:10) in Whom we also are allotted inheritance. We reign with Him, as He is Head to the church over all things. It is only en the new heaven comes that the new Jerusalem when on the new earth in the eternal state, when the kingdom is given up to Him Who is God and Father. Earthly land, people, and city are no more then: God’s tabernacle is with men.

5. The city had “a wall great and high” (12), the figure of its perfect security. Think what the mind must be that confounds this with Eph. 2:14, though even so obliged to blow hot and cold on it!

6. The gates with the names of Israel’s twelve tribes are next alleged.

But the twelve angels might have guarded from such a blunder, and also

7. the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

For God evidently one way or another connects with the holy city associations of government, whether angelic, Jewish, or apostolic. It is the heavenly seat of the kingdom; and it will display in that day, what is even now ours to say in faith, that “all things are ours.” Paul was not given to so describe the church’s glory, but speaks of her as the heavenly Eve of the heavenly and last Adam. John, while expressly identifying the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, with the new Jerusalem, develops here only the city side. It was needless for him to dwell on what OT prophecy so fully reveals, the blessedness of Israel in that day. It was of interest to mark, that the kings and the nations pay the most distinct homage to the glorified church, as they will also to the earthly city and people of God. The context requires “unto,” not “into,” for which the Greek had but one and the same word. But it ought to be familiar to all that the true reading is “the nations,” omitting “of them that are saved,” which is spurious and almost nonsensical.

Having dismissed the seven “signs” which are no signs, let me add that Rev. 22 is as clearly opposed as we have seen its predecessors to be against the earthly view of the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Such is the constant aspiration and cry of the church as led by the Holy Spirit Who dwells in her. But it will never be the case with the earthly bride. For she will receive that great gift of the outpoured Spirit when the Lord will have appeared to her everlasting joy; and after that it will be too late to say, Come. It is ours in the power of the present Spirit to say, Come, while He is absent on high.

The Bible Treasury, New Series, vol. 1
Part Three:

Papers on the Second Coming

The Heavenly Hope

John 14:1-3

The Introduction of the Heavenly Hope

There is another aspect in which scripture presents the coming of the Lord. It is part of that immense change intimated in the Gospel of John, when the public testimony was closed, and the Lord unbossoms Himself to the family of God, before He gave Himself up to the band led by the traitor for His apprehension and death. He had already and publicly announced His crucifixion (John 12:32). The time was come to leave the world.

John 13 introduces the new subject. It is a distinct transfer from earth to heaven. Messianic hopes are wholly eclipsed. The chosen nation are no more in evidence than the city or the sanctuary. It is not the Lord correcting the earthly expectations of the disciples as they drew His attention to the buildings of the temple, or predicting that not one stone should be left upon another, but be broken down. Nor is it the chief disciples coming privately to Him on Olivet and asking, When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy presence, and of the consummation of the age? Here we breathe a wholly different atmosphere; and the Lord by deed and word leads on His own to unprecedented dealings of grace soon to dawn on them, in proper Christian privilege and responsibility, for which the cross as seen in the light of God laid the basis.

Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus (knowing that his hour had come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father,) having loved his own that were in the world, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his upper garments, and took a linen towel and girded himself; then he poureth water into the basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the linen towel wherewith he was girded. He cometh therefore unto Simon Peter. He saith to him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said to him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know afterwards. Peter saith to him, Never shalt thou wash my feet. Jesus answered him, Unless I wash thee, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not to wash save his feet, but is wholly clean: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew his betrayer: on this account he said, Ye are not all clean (John 13:1-11).

What could be more impressive? and all the more, if Peter who expressed what all felt had but known that the Lord’s washing their feet was in view of His departure, to be with the Father in heavenly glory. This was the truth they had all to learn, the earth being henceforth left behind for things above; not of course absolutely, but now for the Christian, as for Christ. Thus to stoop was a wholly unexpected exercise of His love; and how far was it from being realized yet! He was conscious that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that as He came out from God He was going back to be with God, the unsullied but rejected Holy One of God. From the earth and the earthly people, about to consummate to their own ruin that rejection which their state had implied, He was passing to the Father who ever loved the Son, and now all the more because the evil was only the occasion of proving His entire devotedness at all cost to the Father’s will and glory.

1. {Boldface headings have been added for this edition.}
If He thus left this world, He would demonstrate His love to His own that were in it, after a sort beyond all thought even of those who had been learning it in every form they then needed and could bear. Associating them while here with Himself for that glory into which He was going, He must and would counteract every defilement of their way inconsistent with that association. Such stains were incompatible with heaven, whither He was going as their forerunner. Of the kingdom they had learned not a little from the O.T., and yet more from Him who added so much that was new to the old things. But the Lord here provides for them a fellowship with Him on high, transcending all previous thoughts, when He should ascend where He was before; and His love would carry them through every need, obstacle, and danger. No wonder that Peter who had confessed His personal glory, revealed to him by the Father that is in the heavens, was lost in astonishment at Christ going down so low to clear away their soils as saints. Yet was he to learn soon afterwards that the reality in heaven would enhance the wonder beyond measure.

The Lord on earth sets forth by His action on the disciples what He was about to do for them in heaven. We have an Advocate with the Father if one sin. It is expressly not for the unclean as such, but for those already washed if the feet get defiled. It is untrue that those washed all over do not need to have any subsequent impurity removed; or that, if defiled after the washing of the person, they need this to be renewed. The washing of regeneration abides in all its value, but demands the cleansing of the soiled feet.

It is the glorified Jesus who assures His own of His persistent and all-efficacious love in carrying on this most needful work at God’s right hand, acting on His own here below by His Spirit and word; as it is said in Eph. 5:26, purifying by the washing of water by the word, consequent on giving Himself for the church on the cross. The restoration of our communion when interrupted by sin is as essential as the new birth or as justification. He has set Himself down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, having made the purification of sins; but this finished and accepted and abiding work, instead of dispensing with further call, makes Him the more solicitous to clear away every inconsistency that would otherwise sully its luster, dispel our Father, and leave ourselves in unavailing shame and grief. It is His action of grace on high which gives us to confess the sin and prove how faithful is the God of all grace. “He that is bathed needeth not to wash except his feet.” The blessed relationship of the Christian abides intact; but the Lord, even in the glories of heaven, occupies Himself with every failure to efface it holily, turning it to our needed humiliation but to fresh blessing in His infinite love.

Why is this wondrous grace here enlarged on? It is part of the characteristic blessedness of the Christian, as it was wholly new to the disciples when the Lord set forth its type before their eyes so vividly. It was a necessary provision for them during His absence, which they would soon learn is fraught with far higher privilege than could be possessed or known during the days of His flesh. It would endear Him yet more when they knew it shortly afterwards, as they did not and could not know it then. They were aware of His exceeding condescension, and deeply moved that He should do the work of the meanest slave on their behalf; but only after His death, resurrection, and ascension would they learn by the Holy Spirit what His mystic washing of their feet really meant.

But there is another and still more stupendous communication which the Lord made in this chapter. It also is part of our Christian heritage, going far beyond any prophetic account of our Lord’s atoning death in the OT such as Isa. 53, precious and bright as it is in itself, and as it will be to the generation to come of Israel. The going out of Judas (after Satan entered in) on his awful errand of perfidy gave the occasion. “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” If God be glorified in him, God also shall glorify him in himself, and straightway shall glorify him” (John 13:31, 32). No more pregnant revelation of the Savior’s death as made sin on the cross is anywhere found, nor one so distinctly lit up with Christian light and result for God’s glory now that it is fulfilled.

As Son of God He had glorified His Father in a life of unwavering and absolute obedience: a savor of rest such as had never before risen up to heaven from man on the earth, though all in Him here below was a perfect meal offering. But the exit of Judas was the signal of death on the cross. Would the Holy One of God bow to the bearing of sin, whatever it might cost at God’s hand? He had vanquished the living temptations of Satan by obeying the written word. Was He willing through death to annul him that has the might of death, and deliver all those that through fear of death were all their life subject to bondage? Would He take upon Himself the sins and iniquities of God’s people, the most loathsome of burdens, to make propitiation for them? Would He by the grace of God taste death for everything, and thus break the yoke of bondage under which all the creation groaned, as well as bring many sons to glory as the author, or leader, of their salvation perfected through sufferings?

The Lord here reveals the deepest and most marvelous contest ever engaged on, wherein the otherwise impossible was achieved, and the insoluble as plainly solved to God’s glory and the everlasting deliverance of those that lay under guilt and judgment. Good and evil here strove for decision; and where evil seemed to have all its way, good triumphed to all eternity. Man was seen at his worst, hating the Father and the Son, hating without a cause God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Satan here swayed, not the heathen only but most fatally God’s people and above all their religious leaders, scribes, doctors of the law, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, chief priests, and the high priest himself. Roman justice proved shamelessly unjust. Jesus was condemned for His good confession, and for the truth counted imposture and blasphemy. The disciples forsook their Master and fled, one betraying Him for the price of a slave, another and not the least denying Him repeatedly and with oaths. And in the shame and agony of the cross, God, His God, hid His face and forsook Him: the bitterest of all His sorrows, the most intolerable of His sufferings. But so it must be, if He were
made sin, and bowed to what it deserved at God’s hand, that the divine majesty and holiness might be perfectly vindicated, and salvation come to sinners through their judgment falling on Him, and grace issue in God’s righteousness justifying the ungodly who now believed. There and thus only all the attributes of God are brought into mutual harmony. Elsewhere if love pleaded, justice opposed: sin is not canceled so. But here mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other; and this not for earth only but for heaven and all eternity. In the Lord’s own words, the Son of man was glorified, and God was glorified in Him, where unbelief saw nothing but failure and ignominy. And what was the result? God shall glorify Him in Himself and shall straightway glorify Him. It is Christ’s work seen in God’s light, estimated and honored by God Himself on high.

On this Christianity is based, while Israel passes into its long eclipse. Hence flows the gospel of grace to the lost; hence, according to God’s secret purpose, the call of the church for union with Christ by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven, and baptizing the saints, Jew or Gentile matters not, into one body, Christ’s body. Even the apostles were then and afterwards full of the earthly hope, and restoring the kingdom to Israel. Not so; instead of the unintelligent confusion of theology also, instead of the throne of David or even the dominion of the Son of man over all the peoples, nations, and languages, Christ was to be glorified, not only in heaven entirely separated from the world, but in God Himself, and this “straightway,” in emphatic contrast with the future kingdom which He will by-and-by receive, and return to put down all adversaries in power and glory. Christianity has heavenly and eternal things revealed to faith now.

With this the hope revealed in John 14:1-3 is in perfect keeping. Here the land and the city, the people and the temple, vanish into nothingness. Not a word about misleaders, false Christs, or false prophets. We hear not of wars or rumors of wars, of nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, of famine, of earthquakes in places; nor yet of tribulation and murder, or of hatred from all the nations for Christ’s name, nor of internal discord and treachery and hatred, as the love of the many decayed, while some would endure throughout, and God would see to it that the glad tidings of the kingdom should be preached in the whole inhabited earth for a testimony unto all the nations. Still less is there room here for the special and awful sign, according to Daniel’s prophecy, of an idol standing in the sanctuary, the harbinger of speedy desolation when the godly in Judea must flee immediately to save their lives or yet worse. Not a hint here of the tribulation beyond parallel to fall at the close on a nation of meting on meting and of treading down, whose land the rivers have spoiled.

In our chapter we have a wholly different state; we see souls about to be severed from such anxieties, and elevated by incomparably higher associations, who have no fears of flight in winter or on sabbath, and are in no way warned for themselves against the cry of Messiah here or there, or the great signs and wonders which Satan will be let work in the hour when God retributively sends an energy of error that they all might be judged who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

**Distinctive Features of the Heavenly Hope**

**CONTRAST WITH MATT. 24**

Still more complete and manifest is the difference of the Christian hope in John 14 from the Presence of the Son of man in Matt. 24. “As the lightning goeth forth from the east and shineth to the west,” especially with the accompanying words, “wherever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered.” Beyond mistake this is the Lord coming in the accomplishment of His judgment, not of His love; for the earth, not for the Father’s home above. The figures employed point only to His judicial dealings, with which sun, moon, and stars sympathize. For “immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land (or earth) lament, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Here is no gathering of saints to Christ in heavenly glory, but the Son of man to whom all judgment is committed; and His appearing is as sudden as the lightning flash: where the carcass is, there the birds of prey flock. The governing powers, supreme, derivative, and subordinate, no more do their office; all shall be shaken. The sign is not as before of apostate religion for the godly to flee and escape, but of their Deliverer to destroy those that destroy the earth. The Son of man appearing in heaven is the sign of His speedily coming to the earth to judge the quick and the dead. Hence it is no longer those in Judea, but “all the tribes of the land” (or earth) that lament, and see Him coming; whereas when Christians are concerned, they are manifested, neither after nor before, but in glory with Him. While He is hidden, so are they; when He is manifested, so are they, having been previously caught up. It is His elect of Israel accordingly who are gathered together when He sends forth His angels with a great sound of trumpet and comes in His kingdom.

It is plain that when the Lord presents Himself for the earth and the earthly people, these traits characterize the solemn event: the apostasy, and the man of sin [2 Thess. 2] usurping God’s prerogatives even in His temple; the desolation and the tribulation that ensue beyond all that ever had been, or that is to be; and the Son of man appearing to take vengeance on the portentous and blasphemous lawlessness, and to deliver Israel by the destruction of their enemies.
THE FATHER’S HOUSE

Ours is the wholly distinct lot of His coming to receive us to Himself for the place which He is gone to prepare for us in the Father’s house, that where He is (and what Christian doubts it?) we may be also. It is the consummation of the sovereign grace which has associated us with Him, so that we are risen with Him even now, one spirit with the Lord, and can say with the beloved apostle that “as he is, so are we in this world.” But we await His coming to be caught up together with the dead in Christ risen first, in clouds to meet the Lord, into the air, and thus to be ever with the Lord. We are not of the world as He is not, and we look for Him to make it good by being taken up to heaven, as He Himself ascended there, not by judicial dealing with our enemies to make the earth the scene of His righteous rule, but by giving us part with Himself in His joy and glory on high, though we shall also reign over the earth when He takes His great power and reigns.

These are the words of the Lord and they are worthy of all heed. “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe on (ἐπὶ) God, believe also on (ἐπὶ ὃ) me. In my Father’s house are many abiding-places; were it not so, I would have told you; because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye also may be.” (John 14:1-3). Simpler words there could hardly be; but what depth of feeling, and height of glory! Jesus was departing, despised of Israel; their beloved Lord, yet one apostle the traitor, another His denier; who could wonder if all the eleven were troubled? Let them be assured that grace would turn all for good and to God’s glory. “Let not your heart be troubled. Ye believe on God” though ye never saw Him. “Believe on me when I depart unto the Father, and ye cease to see Me. Let your faith rise from its Jewish form to its Christian character and fullness. Compare John 20:29.

Even My earthly people shall yet say, Blessed is He that cometh in Jehovah’s name. Meanwhile I am re-entering heaven to give you who have forehoped in Me the Christ a better portion, even a part with Me on high. Instead of abandoning you, I will as your divine Savior both prepare you for the place as already set before you, and prepare the place for you by going to the Father’s house. But My heart is fixed, as is the Father’s will, on bringing you there. “In my Father’s house are many abiding-places.” No doubt you have never aspired to such a home. You have expected Me to abide for ever with you in your house, when I have purged it of all adversaries and evils by the power which I have even to subdue all things to Myself. But there is ample room for you as well as Me in that intimate home of divine love and heavenly glory. “If it were not so, I would have told you, because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go, and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye also may be.”

This is a hope far beyond that of the fathers; though they waited for the city that has foundations whose artificer and demiurge is God, and were eager for a better country than Canaan, that is, a heavenly, wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. But to Christians, or saints now being called, He is not ashamed to be Christ’s Father and our Father, His God and our God. Such since redemption is our association with Christ. And our hope rises proportionately, however unbelieving may try to level down, and contend for a monotonous unity which is at total variance with scripture, and God’s ways, and above all His counsels.

No truth more sure or important than the love the Father bears the Son, and all the more, when for the glory of God He became man, and died atoning that the salvation of the lost might be not only of grace but righteous, God’s righteousness; and that the same death of Christ might be the basis for all blessing and glory for ever in His universe, His unbelieving enemies alone excepted. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I found my complacency” (Matt. 3:17, &c.). “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things [to be] in his hand” (John 3:35). But the Son Himself tells the Father later before the disciples that He loved the saints as He loved the Son (John 17:23). It is this accounts for their future display in the same glory. But it also accounts for that which was in His hidden purposes still deeper, more tender and intimate, the hope of Christ’s coming for the Father’s house, and fetching us into the place He prepared for us there, that where He is, we too might be. Thence He passed, out of this world which crucified Him, unto the Father. There God, who was glorified in Him here at infinite cost, glorified Him in Himself. There our life is hid with Him in God. There shall we be introduced when He comes and takes us unto Himself. How bright the glimpse of it we have in John 17:24! “Father, I will (desire) that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the world’s foundation.” To those that love Him this far transcends the glory that He gives us and that we share along with Him before every wondering eye of man; when the very world shall know by the then display that the Father sent the Son [for how else could we be thus blessed?], and that He loved us as He loved the Lord; for we appear in the same glory as its standing demonstration.

Indeed the facts, that He deigns to prepare a place for us in the Father’s house, so much above the hopes of saints and prophets, and that He personally comes into the air for the wondrous meeting there to fetch us into His heavenly house, bespeak love unmeasured. We know how to show honor to our friends, when we do not let them come to us as best they can, but send some trusty person to conduct them, or it may be a member of the family. If greater attention were called for, the wife of the busy head might go. But if the utmost were intended, the head of the family would set aside every hindrance and come to meet the beloved and honored object. O how wondrous, that for us the Son comes thus, as we think of Himself and of ourselves! But it is here love beyond all thought or comparison for this supreme moment, and all that follows is in keeping with it. Sovereign grace, known as far as it can be revealed, in its depths for us, lays the ground.
Unfailing grace in its faithfulness, notwithstanding every strain through our weakness and unwatchfulness, exposed to the profound spite and the sleepless malice of our great enemy, guards and preserves us all the way through. Triumphant grace, in its heavenly height, at length consummates the love of Christ. “I am coming again, and will receive you unto myself, that where I am, ye also may be.”

THE SPIRIT INDWELLING WHILE WE WAIT

Besides, there is the context which follows the hope, and confirms the essentially Christian character of these communications the Lord was then giving. For He proceeds to explain to His disciples that gift of the Spirit which is peculiar to the individual and the assembly, as says another apostle: the distinguishing privilege and power since His redemption and ascension to heaven. “For the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Nowhere is the redemption and ascension to heaven. “For the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” Nowhere is the divine personality of that gift more clearly asserted or implied than in these chapters 14, 15 and 16 of this Gospel. It is the other Advocate whom the Father would give and send in His name, whom He Himself would send from the Father to be with them for ever and in them; the Advocate who was to come, because Jesus went away to heaven and sent Him unto them to be abidingly with us and in us.

It is extreme prejudice which alone hinders the believer from apprehending that such is the new and characteristic provision for the Christian and the church while the Lord Jesus is at the right hand of God. It is in the Spirit that we cry Abba, Father, and are each guided in right dependence. By Him one enjoys the deep things of God, otherwise beyond all comprehension. By Him we walk, witness, and worship. So it is that one is enabled to preach the gospel or teach the truth. Through Him we by faith wait for, not righteousness which we have in Christ, but the hope of righteousness in the coming glory. Again, it is by, or in virtue of, one Spirit that we were all baptized into one body; as we are also builded together for God’s habitation in Spirit.

Only a part of what we now owe to the presence and action of the Holy Spirit is here passingly alluded to; for in truth He covers and gives a new and divine character to every exercise of the new creation, through the word revealing and glorifying Christ to us. To put honor on Him was the Spirit now sent forth from heaven. Hence it was expedient for us that Christ should go away, great as the loss seemed to the sorrowing and troubled disciples. For if He went not away, the Advocate who was to be expressly our helper in every exigency (and this in the recall of all Jesus had said and been and done, as well as in the revelation of all His glory on high) should not come unto us. But Christ went {into glory}, and sent Him unto us: the pillars of Christianity.

When the Spirit came, it was the demonstration to the world of its sin in not believing on Jesus; of righteousness, because He is gone to the Father, rejected by the world that sees Him no more as He was, but as the Judge; and of judgment, because this world’s ruler who led to His rejection has been judged. The Spirit’s presence, outside this world which beholds and knows Him not, can (now that redemption is made) guide the believers into all the truth, taking of Christ’s things and reporting them to us, and also the things that are to come.

Now all this wondrous manifestation of the truth to the Christian depends on three things: the period of the Son as come in manhood here below; the accomplishment of His work of reconciliation on the cross; and His ascension as the risen accepted Man according to divine counsels, who has sent the Spirit that we might have this divine Person dwelling with and in us for ever to make good subjectively what we behold by faith objectively in the Lord, the blessed image of the invisible God. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; and now that, dead and risen, He is gone on high, we have not only the unique hope beyond all others of His coming again to receive us unto Himself, to be in the Father’s house where He is, but we have by the Spirit unfailling power of communion with the Father and the Son, a fountain of blessing within, fresh and perennial, and rivers of living water flowing out, through that Savior living above for them, as they live because He lives.

All is new and Christian truth; the foundation as here made, not merely in view of our need met, but of God glorified as such to our immeasurable blessing; the necessary purifying from every defilement in our walk which Christ effects all the way through for us associated with Him for heaven; the heavenly hope for us destined to be with Him where He is, altogether outside and above the world, whatever else we may share; and meanwhile all the gracious help and power suitable for those so blessed and with such a hope, while we wait for Him in the world which with its ruler is already judged.

It may be added that the allusions to Judas Iscariot in the middle and to Peter at the end of ch. 13 were not without importance for the Christianity about to replace Judaism, as well as to strengthen and comfort those who were to labor, suffer, and share its privileges. The Lord made known to them, in presence of the traitor not yet indicated, the awful course he was about to take, that their faith in Himself might be more established, instead of being shaken, and followed it up with His very solemn deliverance: “Verily, verily, I say to you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me” (v. 20). No mistake was made either in His sending the guilty man or in others receiving him. He was an apostle sent by the Lord. It was a divine message heard from his lips; though he himself had neither saving faith nor life eternal, but was the son of perdition: the sad witness that the greatest external and official nearness to Christ, where that life is not, only exposes to the worst sin and ruin. And John could add at a later day, “Even now are there many antichrists.”

But there was another lesson yet more widely needed by the Christian in Peter’s case, not so fatal but most humbling.
The Lord, in view of His going soon whether they could not as yet come, presses that new commandment which was an old commandment that they had from the beginning, and was to become true in them as it was in Him, love, love one to another, the love not of a neighbor only, but the deeper love of God's family. Then Peter, confiding in his love, expresses his readiness to follow the Lord into the unknown, to follow Him now, to lay down his life for the Lord's sake, however others might hang back. Was it that he did not truly love Him? He loved Him well; but he was utterly wrong to confide in his love: self-confidence is the feeblest of reeds. And this he was soon after to learn, and to walk entirely dependent on Christ as a Christian. But now he must prove that flesh is no better in a saint than in a sinner. "Verily, verily, I say to thee, A cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice." And so it was that night, not for his profit only but for every Christian's.

Let us turn to other scriptures, and see whether the Holy Spirit does not present the heavenly apart from earthly admixture, and distinct from the events of prophecy: a hope dependent on nothing but the secret of the Father's purpose, and the Son's faithfulness to His word and love to us. In 1 Cor. 15:51, 52 is "Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in an eye's twinkling, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

It is not that the resurrection of the dead is "a mystery," nor even the resurrection of the righteous as a distinct act from that of men generally. Of the latter we read in Job 14:1-12. "Man born of woman is of few days and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bringest me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass; turn from him that he may rest, till he shall accomplish as a hireling his day. For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. But man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? The waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up; so man lieth down and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

Now the more familiar a believer may be with God's final revelation of things to come unto eternity itself, the more will he see the exact agreement of this early disclosure of resurrection with that latest one of the unjust. It is man, the prey of sorrow, decay, and death, without one ray of divine light till all ends in utter gloom, but not of actual extinction. Yet it is a sleep only broken when "the heavens are no more." How striking the coincidence with Rev. 20:11! For it is not only after the resurrection of the blessed and holy to reign with Christ, but when the thousand years of their reigning are over, after the last insurrection of released Satan's deceit shall have ended in total destruction. Then is the great white throne for the judgment of guilty unbelieving man. For the portion of men is to die, and after this judgment; in contrast with the believers' portion, which is Christ, once offered to bear the sins of many, appearing a second time apart from sin to those that look for Him unto salvation. For He is the Savior of the body also.

THE FIRST RESURRECTION

But the resurrection of the saints, which at the last is called "the first resurrection" {Rev. 20:4} was not in those early days unknown to the much enduring elder. "O that my words were now written! O that they were inscribed in a roll! That with an iron pen and lead they were graven in the rock for ever. For I know that my Redeemer (or kinsman-vindicator) liveth, and that he shall stand up at the last upon the earth (or dust) [while the earth and still more the heavens continue]; and after my skin hath been destroyed, yet from (or in) my flesh shall I see God, whom mine eyes shall behold and not another" (Job 19:23-27). Nor can it be denied that the orthodox Jews in NT times did confess that there is to be a resurrection both of just and unjust (Acts 24:15).

As this was commonly believed save by the skeptical Sadducees, we may observe how properly the apostle does not speak of a mystery when he discusses the resurrection of the faithful in the earlier part of the chapter, and proves it to be the complement of Christ's own rising from among the dead. He tells them a secret or "mystery," a NT truth now revealed, when be speaks of our being changed, without dying, at Christ's coming. "We shall not all be put to sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in an eye's twinkling, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." No intimation of this change of the living saints had ever been made, though now that it is, we can see a gleam preparing the way for it in the translation of Enoch in the ante-diluvian world, and in that of Elijah in the world that is now. And we, can also read the words of the Lord in the days of His flesh, which were only written down in John 11:25, 26, after the Epistles of Paul. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he have died, shall live; and everyone that liveth and believeth on me shall never die." Here we have the grand result at His coming, the dead saints raised, the living believers changed without dying; as the Lord then enunciated, but left to be written and understood at a later day.

It is observable how completely earthly objects are outside the description in 1 Cor. 15. Nothing is named but the resurrection of those that are Christ's, besides the living Christians who are changed if possible more gloriously at the same time. This last it is which involves "the mystery." It is a superficial mistake to think that the last trump has any
reference to the seven trumpets of the Revelation, which are the loud warnings of divine judgments in providence, after the seven seals of more reserved dealings have been opened. At length are poured out the last vials of God’s wrath before the Savior appears in personal display of judgment.

“The last trump” seems a figure drawn like others here and elsewhere from the familiar facts of an army at the moment of leaving its encampment. Previous soundings were the known and necessary signals usual among the military. But the Spirit of God avoids more here and concentrates anything answering to them in the “last trump,” when the instant arrives for those that are Christ’s to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren. Nor has earth the least place in the scene of heavenly glory, but the gracious power of His resurrection distinctly now proved as the resurrection of the dead saints and the life of those alive on a scale and of His resurrection distinctly now proved as the resurrection of Lazarus or any other during the days of His flesh, to a life in the flesh. The unclothed will be clothed as never before, and the surviving saints clothed upon, that mortality, the mortal in them, might be swallowed up of life (2 Cor. 5:1-4). There is therefore an evident contrast with the awful sound of the trumpet at Sinai, and but one plain link of connection with “the great trumpet” of Isa. 27:13, Matt. 24:31; in that the loud sound accompanies the gathering together His chosen people on the earth, “the holy mount at Jerusalem,” as the trump of God is to gather the changed to the Lord for heaven. One readily understands that the aim, when God was about to speak His ten words to Israel, was to fill sinful trembling man with overwhelming awe, not only by thunders and lightning and thick cloud, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, but Sinai altogether on a smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire with blackness and darkness and tempest and a voice more terrible than all. But here it is exclusively the one fashioned, even in the body, in accordance with the likeness of Christ’s glory, loved of God as He was loved, and about to be with Him in the Father’s house. Solemn grandeur will be there, but not an atom of fear before His perfect love as befits God’s glory.

Magnificent results will follow for the earth, for Israel, for all the nations, when Jehovah will destroy “in this mountain” the face of the covering cast over all the people and the vail that is spread over all the Gentiles. But the resurrection of the just, the glorification of the family of God for the heavens, must precede even the taking away the rebuke of His people from off all the earth. Then indeed Jehovah’s hand will accomplish what His mouth promised. A woman may forget her sucking child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb; yet will not Jehovah forget Zion. Behold, He has graven her upon the palms of His hands; and her walls are continually before Him. And kings shall be Zion’s nursing fathers, and princesses her nursing mothers; they shall how down to her with face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of her feet.

But the heirs of God and the joint-heirs with Christ have a place as elevated in the heavens as Israel will surely have on the earth. And this everlasting purpose of His must be made good in sight of the principalities and powers in the heavenlies, before the dealings of God begin to awaken and lead on into blessing the nucleus of His firstborn for the earth, and to put down their Gentile foes in every form and degree. For the secret of His will, now made known to the Christian (never before), according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Himself is that, for the administration of the fullness of the seasons He will sum, or head, up together in one all things in Christ, both those in the heavens, and those on earth, in Him in whom we were also allotted our inheritance. This we are to share with the Heir of all things; and the final touch He will put to fitting His joint-heirs will be done when He receives them to Himself on high for the Father’s house, before the judicial measures begin to chastise the usurpers of the inheritance, and the gracious measures concurrently to prepare a people for the Lord when He with His heavenly ones appears in glory to possess Himself of the earth and fill it with the blessings of His reign.

JUDAIZING THE HOPE

Before entering on the examination of other testimony, I take the opportunity of noticing the blighting effect of the earthly or Jewish side of the Lord’s coming on those who would thereby swamp the heavenly. A dear brother in the Lord from a distant land (whom I have no reason to consider heterodox, only one-sided and enthusiastic and exclusive in seeing nothing higher than the kingdom) broached, when pressed with the hope as set before us in John 14, that there is no future whatever in the opening verses of this chapter. He would have it that it reveals nothing to come, but only what we now enjoy as part of our Christian privilege. He laid stress on “many mansions,” or abiding places, and argued that we have all that is there adduced by our Lord to comfort the disciples fulfilled in the precious fact that we are already in Christ in the heavenlies.

To this one wholly demurs, insisting that the Lord spoke of their being with Him, “that where I am, ye also may be,” not at all here of being in Him. Of this we do hear in the quite different intimation of v. 20 where, as He said, “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” This beyond question is realized today; nor need anyone contest that so it is in the context both before and after, where the Lord says, “I will not leave you orphans (or desolate), I am coming unto you” (v. 18), and, “If one love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (v. 23). But in v. 3 there is distinctive care to preclude the confusion, as the word is “I am coming again, and will receive you unto myself.” It is not the spiritual coming of the Father and the Son to abide with the obedient saint here, but Christ’s personal coming again, to receive us unto Himself, that where He is (that is, in His Father’s house of many mansions, in which He even then speaks of Himself, as in John 17:11), we also may be.
Can one conceive of greater havoc done through Judaizing the hope than such an effect on one who sincerely and earnestly loves Christ's appearing? In an experience by no means short and with a heart I trust far from narrow toward the saints, poor or rich, lowly or noble, learned or unlettered in many lands, never have I known anything as to which the least taught had more hearty communion with the most deeply instructed than in looking onward to be with Christ on high according to this promise of our Lord. What makes its denial more startling is that it came from an active partisan, though neither extreme nor virulent, of a prophetic school which more than most pleads the voice of early tradition for its shade of premillennialism, and certainly with more reason than the historicalists, such as even the late E. B. Elliott. But tradition is an echo of uncertain sound for the more reason than the historicalists, such as even the late E. B. Elliott. But tradition is an echo of uncertain sound for the truth, and sure to betray its advocates into more or less of human accretion and divine loss. Both the OT and the NT revelations of God solemnly warn against the danger; as the human accretion and divine loss. Both the OT and the NT truths, and sure to betray its advocates into more or less of human accretion and divine loss. Both the OT and the NT

But did the mischief end with unbelief as to John 14:1-3. It was equally marked when Zech. 14:5 was cited to show that the OT recognizes the coming of all the saints at Jehovah's advent and day. But, admitting that the holy angels will be there, it seems strange to question what is so distinctly taught in 1 Thess. 3:13, 4:14, 2 Thess. 1:10, Jude 14, Rev. 17:14, 19:14, in some of which texts the accompanying terms exclude angels, though elsewhere these may really be meant. Is it not sad to see how a partial apprehension of the truth works to obliturate what is heavenly? Yet Daniel the prophet does not fail to discriminate the saints of the high or heavenly places (Dan. 7:18, 22, 25, to whom judgment was given as in Rev. 20:4), from their "people," who have the greatness of the kingdom given them "under the whole heaven."

PRETERISM

It would however be altogether unfair to put this great defect on a level with a horrid delusion which has lately come to light in a work called Parousia, by Dr. J. Scott Russell, and cried up in the late Dr. R. Weymouth's Version of the NT in Common Speech, as well as in a volume of discourses entitled Maranatha, by the Rev. F. B. Proctor. Whether such strange doctrine prevails beyond a small admiring circle is not known. Mr. P.'s volume fell under my eyes quite recently, and the version named still more so. But they are evidence enough, that the supposed "great book" of Dr. R. is in truth a mischievous blunder, the revival in spirit of that early imposture of which the apostle speaks in 2 Tim. 2:11 that "the resurrection is passed already." The assumption of these dreamers is: Christ came finally and so fully at the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, that all scripture about His parousia was then exhausted (Preterism).

None need wonder that in this as in other systems of error, not a little truth, generally overlooked, is interspersed, so as to give a fair color to the lie. These men, like Hymenaeus and Philetus of old, overthrow the faith of some; for no lie is of the truth. And this lie denies necessarily the resurrection of the body, the triumphant rapture of the saints to Christ, our future abiding place in the Father's house, no less than the awful judgment of the quick in the day of the Lord, when the Satanic trio condignly suffer, and the displayed world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ shall come in power and glory, to the deliverance of the still groaning creation. Then the purpose of God shall be fulfilled for the administration of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and those on the earth; in Him in whom also we were given inheritance as His joint-heirs.

Take this sample from p. 116.

We believe that a great wrong is done -- because it misleads -- when we speak of the church of Christ as a Bride mourning her absent Lord; as is done in some of our hymns. The fact is that He is not absent; He has come "and is here" -- a Real Presence abiding with His church for ever. We are bound to believe that the Lord did come in or about the year 70, and then fulfilled all His predictions and promises concerning the second coming.

Again, in p. 119, G. A. Smith on Isa. 7:14 is cited.

God with us is the one great fact in life, (with the comment) We may add, it is the greatest fact in history.

For what else, has ever happened to be put in comparison with it?

Yet the volume opens most inconsistently, with the admission that, not the Incarnation, but the atoning death on the cross, is the true central point, whereon all turns for God's glory, man's salvation, and the reconciliation of all things, though the last needs His future revelation with His saints to give it effect. For in the cross, not before, was sin judged by God on the holy and divine Savior.

But if so much can be said of His first advent (which was but temporary!), how much is the fact intensified when we apply it to His second coming and abiding Presence, which took place within the life-time of a generation of people who heard Him speak? Which also the apostles constantly recurred to as to a point in history at which a new era would commence.

The error comes out plainly in the remarks on John 11:25, 26 (p. 153, &c.).

Now, this great saying does not mean that resurrection is a matter of course, nor does it speak of a distinct resurrection at some indefinite last day [the very thing our Lord taught unmistakably and four times over in John 6:39, 40, 44, 54!]; least of all does it allude to a graveyard resurrection such as is commonly believed in. But His words mean what they say: Jesus is Himself the resurrection and the life. They are only inherent in the race as in Him.

But this show of truth is as false as Satan can make it. For the real bearing is that Christ is the power of resurrection and life in His person, as being the Son and God; He was therefore able to raise Lazarus there and then to life in the
flesh, as He will at the due time raise the dead believers AND change the living ones: had Martha this faith?  In order to do so, at the last day, consistently with God's nature and our sins, He must Himself die and be raised again. For as John 12:24 tells us, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth AND die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." Life in resurrection power is to have life abundantly. Hence since He rose believers are now quickened, who were dead in offences and sins, yea, quickened together with Christ, and raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Him.

This in no way supersedes but is rather the ground of our being changed, even our body of humiliation transformed into conformity with His body of glory, when He comes from the heavens as Savior in full, not of the soul only as now, but of the body also at that glorious hour. Life and resurrection are not inherent in the race. The believer has life, but it is in the Son. All depends on Him. We live because He lives; and the life as a believer now live in flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20). But though heavenly as of the Heavenly One, we still bear the image of Adam, the man of dust; when the body is raised in incorruption, glory, and power at His still future coming, we shall bear the image of the Second man, the last Adam.

Thus the notion, that the second coming of Christ is come, {preterism} is a dream which avails itself of truth unknown in the great or the small denominations, to destroy the truth of His next advent and of the resurrection from the dead, which flows from Christ's rising as the foundation of Christianity, and looks on to that bright consummation. The blessed hope is annulled. The kingdom no doubt is already set up in mystery; but their fond fancy, which makes what we now have to be all, annuls what we await. Satan shall then be crushed under our feet, and the power of the Lord so established that not an idol shall remain, nor a blade of grass that shall not flourish under His glory. For then God heads up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth; and we shall share with Him all the inheritance, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. It is a cruel cheat of the enemy, that the day of manifested power and glory is begun, or never to be. Though the Lord is received up in glory, He is hid in God; whereas then He will be manifested, and we too in glory. The world to come is not come, but is surely coming.

It is all well to quote John 5:25, "Verily, verily I say to you, The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live." This is not what He wanted for Martha; but it is the faith that must be now, if souls are to be quickened and not perish. But why is not the further truth added of verses 28, 29? "Wonder not at this; for an hour is coming [which now is not] in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice and shall come forth: those that have done ill unto a resurrection of life; and those that have done good unto a resurrection of judgment." Here in the same context is the truth to which the Lord attaches the same solemn mark of divine truth; He affirms the absolute certainty of that which this spurious Parousia school audaciously denies.

It is not that any rise again independently of Christ; for as He is the giver of life eternal, God also gives the prerogative of all judgment to Him as the despised but glorious Son of man. It is His voice that expressly calls for what is here sneeringly called "a graveyard resurrection"; for "all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice," just or unjust, well-doers or evil-doers. Hence there are to be two resurrections bodily, as we read in the prophecy of Rev. 20:4-6, and 11-15: a resurrection of life and reigning with Christ; and a resurrection of judgment and endless woe. We need not wonder at the quickening of the spiritually dead, when the Lord will call from their tombs the actually dead to come forth, the godly and believing who have life in Him now unto a resurrection of life, and the worthless unbelievers unto a resurrection of judgment issuing in the lake of fire.

No wonder that for free thinkers "a translation of translations" should be sometimes preferred to a faithful and close version. No wonder that the Christian's belief in the apostle's warning of ever-growing failure and ruin, till Christ personally arrive for heavenly glory and earthly judgment, is treated as "Pessimism," and as "the Christian's worst enemy." Christ is not on His own throne to reign {Rev. 3:21} yet, but as the world's despised and crucified on the Father's throne. "In the world ye have tribulation," said the Lord; not a special one, as retributively for Jews and Gentiles at the end of the age, but ever and anon in our pilgrimage, the very apostles the last, though in the church the first, a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. It was the volatile and worldly-minded Corinthian brethren who took the place of filled, and rich, and reigning "without us" (the apostles): "and would that ye did reign, that we might reign with you," said the large-hearted Paul. But it was a mere delusion.

If we died together with Christ, we shall also live together; if we endure (or suffer patiently), we shall also reign together. As Christians we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him. "For I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory about to be revealed to usward." Christ is not reigning yet, still less is He administering the affairs of the world. It is a falsehood which these theorizers share with the Papacy on the one hand, and the Mormons on the other, who both seek, and not they only, present power and glory. Even the last time or hour (1 John 2:18-27) is marked by the prevalence, not of Christ but of many antichrists, the sad harbingers of the Antichrist, whom the Lord Jesus shall appear to destroy, as 2 Thess. 2:8 tells us. The Father's kingdom will not arrive for the heavens, nor the Son of man's for the earth, till He shall come to judge the quick, and all lawless ones be cast out of His kingdom into the furnace of fire, and the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.
One may not value the tradition through Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustine, and must incomparably prefer the living and gracious light of the inspired scriptures. But those western chiefs did not destroy either the foundations, or the hope, like these strange fanatics of the misbelieved and perverted “Parousia.” For theirs is an utter misuse of precious truth which leaves nothing but decomposed fruit, the ashes of death, instead of the life, of which they write so glibly and unspiritually and unholy, without a single atom of truth rightly understood or applied. Unbelief of the truth is blind and bad; but how much worse is faith in a lie of truth rightly understood or applied. Unbelief of the truth is blind and bad; but how much worse is faith in a lie of truth rightly understood or applied. Unbelief of the truth is blind and bad; but how much worse is faith in a lie of Satan that supplants God’s mind for faith and hope?

This may suffice here on so unsavory a theme. Let us turn for one’s refreshment, and it may be for the profit of others, to the Lord’s words in Luke 12:35-39.

**Expectancy**

**WATCHING AND WAITING**

It is not here bridesmaids outside with their torches going forth to meet the bridegroom, but servants within the house with their lamps alight. “Let your loins be girded about, and lamps burning, and yourselves like men waiting for their own lord whenever he may leave (or return from) the wedding, that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open to him. Blessed those bondmen whom the Lord on coming shall find on the watch. Verily I say to you, that he will gird himself about, and make these recline, and coming up will serve them.” Believing merely in His second coming in no way meets what our Lord here impresses on His bondmen, but their hearts fixed on His return as the first of their duties. Watching on their part His heart craves. Servants are not unused to seek their pleasure when their lord is away for ever so little, some without, others in distant parts of a great house. But He in the most earnest way lays it on them to be as men that wait for their own master whenever he may return from the nuptial feast, that when he comes and knocks they may without delay open to him. No delay, no hurry to reach this post, but on the look-out, by the door as it were, that, when His knock is heard, they may forthwith open to Him. “Ye,” yourselves, waiting for Him, characterizes their whole outlook.

On all sides it is eminently in keeping with the place assigned by the Spirit to Luke; who, as he conveys the grace in Christ, demands also the becoming answer of the heart in the saints. The return from the wedding-feast was the best possible figure on the Lord’s part, the sympathetic occasion of festive joy, yet when the night might be more or less spent. His return from the wedding as a prophetic event suits parts of a great house. But He in the most earnest way lays it on them to be as men that wait for their own master whenever he may return from the nuptial feast, that when he comes and knocks they may without delay open to him. No delay, no hurry to reach this post, but on the look-out, by the door as it were, that, when His knock is heard, they may forthwith open to Him. “Ye,” yourselves, waiting for Him, characterizes their whole outlook.

Nor was it less on Paul’s side (1 Thess. 2), who, as he wished no selfish advantage nor present power nor worldly honor, but to be the ready servant of Christ’s love and will, into the constancy of waiting for the coming of Christ, surely none could more powerfully set that hope as the proximate and immediate object before their hearts.

But there is more. What could strengthen it so much as the wondrous grace in the assurance He solemnly adds, what no other lord would think of? He shall gird Himself about -- yes, in the glory of heaven, and make them recline at its feast, and come up and serve them. It was the humiliation of love we only conceive faintly, that He, who subsisting in God’s form deemed it no object of seizure to be on equality with God, emptied Himself when He took a slave’s form and came in likeness of men (Phil. 2:5, 6). Yet He went farther, as love’s need required; and when found in fashion as man, He humbled Himself in becoming obedient as far as death (and what must it have been to Him?) yea, death of the cross. It was in that divine love which would secure God’s glory and man’s blessing at all cost. Now glorified in heaven He continues the work of a slave in the intercession for us, which was symbolized by the washing of the defiled feet of the disciples. But here again His love is to assume a renewed form when we are there glorified when, as His mark of honor for His bondmen that have watched for Him, He will cause them to recline at the heavenly feast, and come up to serve them.

And then let us consider the joy it is, that this the apostolic hope is ours now no less than the apostolic faith and fellowship, if one has ears to hear. “And if he shall come in the second watch, and if in the third, and find [them] so, blessed are those.” It is thus evident that expecting the Lord certainly at a distant and defined moment is not in the least what He impresses. A prophecy has its own definite character, if not at a fixed time like the Seventy Weeks, and many others of less moment, yet marked by distinct circumstances which shut it up to a well understood time or season. Here it is expressly otherwise. Of purpose it is as uncertain when, as it certainly is to be; and the object is that His bondmen should be always on the watch.

**THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES**

If now the teaching of the apostles is sought, none can find a more direct supply than in the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. From 1 Thess. 1 we learn that the great apostle of the Gentiles instructed those saints from their conversion to God, not only to serve Him as a living and true God, but to await His Son from the heavens whom He raised from out of the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath. This waiting is no doubt quite general; and it was wisely so as a first outline for souls just brought out of heathenism. Enough it was for them from the start to be put into this happy condition of waiting for Him who so loved them and had wrought so efficaciously for them now and for ever. Details they would have in due time; and not a little in these early letters.

Nor was it less on Paul’s side (1 Thess. 2), who, as he wished no selfish advantage nor present power nor worldly honor, but to be the ready servant of Christ’s love and will,
looked for his reward in no object of earth’s vain glory.
“For what is our hope or joy, or crown of boasting? Are not
ye, too, before our Lord Jesus at His coming? for ye are our
glory and joy.” But he also most carefully (1 Thess. 3) urged
them to love toward one another and toward all, as was his
own affection toward them; in order to confirm their hearts
unblamable in holiness before our God and Father at the
coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints. The proud
unbelieving fancy of any members of Christ being absent
then he would thus efface from every heart.

Disallowing another old fancy, that a saint’s death is
Christ’s coming for him, the apostle seals on the scene of
bereavement the joyful certainty (1 Thess. 4), that God will
bring with Christ those put to sleep through Jesus. And he
explains, as a new revelation, that the Lord Himself will
come for His saints, the dead in Christ, and ourselves then
alive and remaining, in order to be all thenceforth for ever
with Him. He also points out (1 Thess. 5) the awful character
of His day, when sudden destruction comes on the sons of
night and darkness whom that day shall overtake as a thief.
Every Christian ought to see the distinctness of the Lord’s
coming to gather His own unto Himself above, from His day
of judicial dealing with His and their adversaries: the one a
quite fresh revelation of sovereign grace in its triumphant
close, the other a well-known theme of all prophecy.

The second Epistle follows up the same truth, but
particularly to guard from the delusion, which some palpied
on the saints, that the day of the Lord had actually come.
Hence it is shown them that the persecution, which seems to
have been thus perverted, is not at all the feature of that day.
For then the Lord shall be revealed from heaven, awarding
both tribulation to their troubleurs, and rest to His saints. It
will be His vengeance in flaming fire on the evil; while He
shall have come, not to receive the saints to Himself for the
Father’s house, but to be glorified in His saints and
wondered at in all that believed, before the world. Therefore
in 2 Thess. 2 he begs them, for the sake of (or by) His
coming and their gathering together to Him, not to be shaken
by the false cry that the day of the Lord was present. For
before that day (not before His coming for us) two fearful
evils must be: the apostasy, and the man of sin revealed who
is to be annullled by the appearing of His coming in that day.
Lastly, in 2 Thess 3 he prays the Lord to direct their hearts
into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ. He
waits patiently; and so should we, instead of the idle selfish
folly of some.

We may see how the blessed hope is meant to cheer,
elevate, and strengthen all the practical life; as the other
Epistles still more apply it! No wonder Satan labors
incessantly to dim, weaken, and destroy its light and power.
Take 1 Corinthians as an instance. Thus in 1 Cor. 1:7 we
have in strict propriety not exactly the “coming” but the
revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in ver. 8 “the day”;
because only then will be manifested how the saints acquitted
themselves as to the use of each gift of grace entrusted to
their charge. Whereas in the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:26)
they were to announce his death until He come, bringing the
affections into the deepest play between the termini of
Christian existence and pilgrimage, Christ’s death, and His
coming.

Nor should we omit to note the words of another apostle,
bearing on our theme, especially as they are generally and
utterly misunderstood. The scene on the holy mount Peter
counts as confirming “the prophetic word, to which ye do
well in taking heed, as to a lamp shining in a squalid place,
until day dawn and [the] day-star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet.
1:19). “Ye” were the same Christian Jews of the dispersion
whom he had addressed in his first Epistle, already familiar
with the law. They did well in paying attention to the
prophetic word, which he compares to a lamp shining in a
squalid place (as this world truly is), over which hang the
unsparing judgments of God soon to fall. Like the Hebrews
to whom Paul wrote, they were slow in appropriating the
fuller light and better hope of Christianity. Who can wonder
that can intelligently estimate the less excusable shortcoming
of Christians in this respect among (not Romanists, Greeks,
Lutherans and Anglicans only, but) the boastful “Free
Churches” of Protestants in Britain or the U. S. of America?

The Morning Star

2 PETER 1:19, 20

How few know of themselves, that the worshipers once
purged have no more conscience of sins!” How many
premillennialists feel, as the late distinguished E. B. Elliott
wrote to me a little before his death, that, if he believed the
Lord was coming tomorrow, he himself would be much tried
tonight. Where then the constant joyful hope? How fallen
from grace and truth are even such leaders as that evangelical
man! The apostle accordingly adds, “until day dawn and the
day-star arise in your hearts”; i.e. till in your hearts shall
have dawned heavenly gospel light, and Christ as morning
star arisen there in hope, as now made known by the apostles
{2 Pet. 1:19}.

The believing Jews were prone to rest satisfied with “the
word of the beginning of Christ” -- that Jesus in truth was the
Messiah, God’s Anointed. They believed the fact of His
death, resurrection, ascension, and return; but they feebly
apprehended the blessed results both for God and man, and
especially for the saints. They were truly born of God and
converted; but how little they entered, if at all, by the new
and living way into their own nearness, far beyond that even
of the Aaronic priesthood! How slow also to cry Abba,
Father! With the light of day in the gospel goes also the hope
of Christ as morning-star; it is not merely His rising in the
day of Jehovah with healing in His wings for Israel, and with
treading down as ashes for the wicked.

Here it is the hearts of the saints receiving fully heavenly
light as well as the proper Christian hope. But men, and none
more than Israelites, were proud of the old wine and
unwilling to believe in the superior value of the new; they
said, “The old is good.” Hence (as this was a serious wrong
to Him who was infinitely more than Messiah, and fresh grace was henceforth brought into the view of faith after His people’s rejection of Him) the painstaking by the apostles to lead them onward from the elements into the depths of God now revealed; by Paul elaborately in the Epistle to the Hebrews; by John in the mystic way of his Gospel and the Revelation; and by Peter in the fervent appeals of both his Epistles.

Many dear Christians unconsciously betray their total misapprehension of the apostle’s drift by stopping short of what he says, and quoting only “until the day dawn, and the day-star arise,” as if the words “in our hearts” had never been written {2 Pet. 1:19}, or had no meaning, whereas they are essential to the true sense. For the apostle does not here speak of the day of glory come for the earth, and especially Zion’s light arrived. On the contrary he desires for the believing remnant of Jews to whom he writes again, that they should not rest content with the lamp of prophecy, good as it is for the murky place of a world under judgment with divine wrath impending, but have gospel daylight dawning, and the morning-star arising, in their hearts. For this is the special Christian privilege, as to which they might be quite unexercised, like too many saints in our day and for many centuries, who never rise in their anticipations beyond the kingdom and reigning with Christ. It is the realization in their hearts of what Christ entitles to, both as regards present standing and the hope of His coming, which he could not take for granted, but urges on them. If any were possessed of this privilege already, they would know the vantage ground it gave them; if not, he would have them seek it from Him who blesses by faith according to the word of His grace.

It was the lack of understanding the apostle, which led two men of learning in our day to subject his language to a violence repudiated by all the versions ancient and modern of any worth at all known. Both boldly strove to cut the connection of the words which have been specified as giving the true force, but each in a different way: one, by a parenthesis, so as to bring “ye take heed” into line with “in your hearts”; the other, by joining “in your hearts” with “knowing this first” {2 Pet. 1:20}. There is no need to expose particularly the absurdity of either device, which most readers of intelligence will not fail to judge as equally unfounded, as they are due to inability in their authors to enter into the mind of the Spirit in the passage. Nor was that inability confined to those who invented their respective beds of Procrustes for torturing the text into the sense of their preference. One has only to glance over the conflict of opinion among the commentators of note to convince any enquirer that the key was quickly lost; and that neither hoary tradition nor modern pretension offers any satisfactory solution. Loss of the distinctive hope of the Christian was yet wider and more rapid than of the faith; and who can wonder at this who knows the heart, so easily slipping from the marvelous light of God, so dull to suspect its loss, so slow to return with humiliation of spirit to the unfailing
proud and the wicked as stubble, and to leave them neither root nor branch. This honor in a certain sense have all His saints, the risen reigning with Him, those on earth reigned over.

But for the overcomer that keeps His works to the end there is another privilege yet more precious, if not such a display of power. “And I will give to him the morning star” (Rev. 2:28). It is actual association with Himself on high before that day. What else renders definite the meaning of His giving to His own the morning star? It is quite an advance on what the apostle desired in his second Epistle (2 Pet. 1:19) for the Christian Jews of the Dispersion. There he distinguishes the lamp of prophecy shining in the world’s squalid place, over which judgments impend, from the superior day-light of the gospel, and the morning star of Christ as the heavenly hope arising within. It was well to heed that lamp; but they should not rest satisfied till they had what was far better even now in their hearts. In Rev. 2 it is not merely realizing the Christian hope as in 2 Peter 1, but the positively imparted promise, when Christ will “give” the morning star. Then shall we that watch be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is; and so also shall it be manifested in due time. But as yet the world will slumber and sleep, for it shall see Him as He is; and so also shall it be manifested in due time. But as yet the world will slumber and sleep, for it is still night; and they that sleep sleep by night, and they that drink drink by night. But we being of day, let us watch and be sober.

REVELATION 21

In the last chapter {of Revelation} is another application of the same figure when a similar distinction reappears with great power and plainness in the closing words of our Lord. “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the churches.” For it is our privilege to have the Spirit reporting to us what is coming, as well as what glorifies Christ now both here and on high, guiding us in short into all the truth. “I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.” Here we have the witness of His twofold glory. The OT bears clear witness as in Isa. 9, 11, &c., that He is the Root and the Offspring of David, the Mighty God, and the Child born, the Son given. The NT alone tells us of Him, whether in hope or in possession, as the Morning Star. It is not the sun rising and calling the sons of men to their functions, in the day when all shall be ordered aright under the great King, Israel at the head of the nations, and they in their place of subjection as Jehovah ordains for the world to come whereof we speak; no more men that know not God or His designs for peace, and righteousness, and glory here below.

But the passage conveys much more, and of surpassing interest. It is not only the all-important distinction of heavenly glory as well as of earthly attached to the divine Person of our Lord. The declaration from His lips that He is the bright, the “Morning Star,” elicits the prompt answer of the bride, the Lamb’s wife in title; and not here only, but that of the Holy Spirit who had anointed and sealed, and here fittingly guides her. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.”

Evangelicalism, 2 afraid of going too far and disposed to humanize the truth, and thus enfeebling its intrinsic force, would address this cry to man, that he might be brought to Christ for new birth and the remission of his sins. But this is to misapply, darken, and lose what the scripture here imports. For it is Christ announcing Himself as the Morning Star which draws out the heart’s answer. His bride, the church animated and directed by the Spirit, thus responds to His love, and bids Him come according to His promise. Long had she waited for Him, and watched earnestly more than those that long for the morning. This in nature is indeed but a passing relief; whereas His coming will be the crowning joy of love and the instant change into glory for ever, though not yet the appearing before the world.

At the beginning He had said, I am coming again, and will receive you unto Myself, that where I am, ye also shall be. For He departed, crucified by the world, but on the cross glorifying God as He never had been and never so needs again, glorifying God even as to sin, and thus furnishing to Him, as this only could inaugurate, a new glory. He was therefore glorified by God and in God, and this straightway, as the basis of the gospel at its fullest as well as of the church of God, Christ’s body. In order to do this with other purposes pertaining to the heavenly and new state of things, He departed out of this world unto the Father. But far from abandoning the feeble objects of His grace, it is there and then strenuously declared (John 13:1) that having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end. His love was out-and-out. Besides, the Father sends, and He too sends, the Advocate meanwhile, the Holy Spirit of truth, to abide with and in them for ever. But be also assures them of His own coming again to fetch them into the Father’s house: there and no less; that they may be with Himself in those many mansions.

When the Lord predicates of Himself “the bright, the morning Star,” it is no mere wish or enthusiastic emotion of nature that bursts forth. The Spirit Himself takes the initiative in the heart of the church. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” The earthly bride does not receive the Spirit till the Lord shall have appeared in glory. There will be true conversion in a godly remnant of Jews long before in days of sore trial and ever growing evil and danger, some slain for righteousness’ sake, and for truth as far as known, others preserved to be the nucleus of the generation to come. But the great privilege of the out-poured Spirit from on high is when the King is come, and the wilderness becomes a

2. See the confusion of dear E. B. Elliott’s Horae Apoc. 4:273 (fifth edition):

The voice of mercy and love is also yet to be heard, inviting sinners to salvation: -- “The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that is athirst come” &c.

The vagueness is so great that the solemn announcement of the time when we are fixed for judgment or blessing is taken with Vitringa to import the prolonging of probation; and the Morning Star is passed over without a thought, it would seem. The late Mr. {Isaac} Newton seems no less in a muddle in his Thoughts on the Apocalypse, in applying it to the call of grace from us, “when standing in our glory.” Not so; it is, now and here, in grace.
garden, and a garden is counted a forest. It is the day of Israel’s full blessing and of the restitution of all things concurrently. But here every solid reason points to that heavenly bride, who alone has the privilege of the indwelling Spirit 3 to give her present communion with Christ in all things before He comes, and here in His coming for her. The form simple as it is has striking beauty, and is characteristically suitable as full of grace. For He speaks, and she replies intelligently in the love that at once answers to His love.

First there is the normal relation recognized, and the Spirit as competent and graciously prompting the bride. But next many a child of God is quite uninformed and unconscious of his proper association with Christ after this intimate pattern. Yet he does hear His voice, and knows not the voice of strangers. The reality of his divine birth is thus fully owned, while ignorance of the bridal relation is graciously provided against up to (we may say) the last moment that intervenes: “and let him that heareth say, Come.” What is there to fear in His coming, Who for us died and rose and comes again? What love, joy, and honor are couched in His coming again to receive us unto Himself, and set us with and like Himself now in the Father’s house! Therefore “let him that heareth say, Come.” Is there not everything possible to preclude fear, to fill with delight and confidence?

But to the last the outflow of divinely given compassion for the wretched and lost has its place. The gospel has its glad and urgent message for souls, after Christ and His coming as the nearest of all to the church and to the Christian. Hence the quite distinct turn in the closing half of the verse. The difference is made clear by the necessary and plain omission of “say.” It would be out of the question for any but the bride and the Christian to bid Christ come; those who know Him by faith and are assured of His love can and are called to say so. But it would be madness for any others to join in such a call. Because of their ruin and for their sins they need Him first to save their souls. Till they believe, He could only be their judge. But it is still the day of grace. The word for such accordingly is, “And let him that is athirst come”; nor this only, but “let him that will take life’s water freely.”

The thirsty one is indeed invited to come. The church has the spring within, and rivers flowing without; but she calls to Christ. It is His name that avails for all the sinner’s need before God. There is no obstacle on His side in the way: God gave and sent His Son for this express purpose. His death, however wicked and destructive might be man’s part, only the more he met his wants in God’s surpassing grace. Let him in all his need “come,” not say, “Come.” Yea “he that will,” however feebly he as yet feels his evil state, shall the more truly feel it, as he by faith apprehends divine love; “let him take life’s water freely.” God’s grace gives it to him that is only willing, to him that comes just as he is. Is it not indeed a wondrous verse? And it emphatically applies till Christ comes.

B. W. NEWTON CONCERNING THE MORNING STAR

It has already been pointed out how ill 2 Pet. 1:19 has fared at the hands of the erudite, and how the only real sense is lost by those who either unconsciously or wilfully sever “in your heart” from the immediate context. “The morning star” in Rev. 2:28, 22:16, has been put to like torture, through ignorance of the heavenly hope which it figures, and by none more strangely than by the author of Thoughts on the Apocalypse (pp. 150, 151).

The glory of the star belongs to distant and unknown worlds; but the sun is a part of our own system, and is set specially to nourish and enlighten it. Consequently when Christ first appears in the fullness of divine glory, in the glory of the Father, His own glory, and the glory of the holy angels, He is symbolized by the star. “I am the bright and morning star.” To him that overcometh I will give the morning star, i.e. association with Himself in this high character of glory. It is to flesh and blood terrible glory and in it He will exercise the destructive judgment whereby the day of the Lord will be ushered in. But when He brings in that gracious and benign display of glory, whereby Israel and the earth is to be abidingly blessed, we find Him symbolized by the sun.

Can one conceive more entire surrender to speculation without an attempt at scriptural proof? It is allowed that the morning star (not “the star” as he puts the case) differs from the sun; but where in the Bible is it ever represented as belonging to distant and unknown worlds?” Where is Christ symbolized by the star when He “first appears in the fullness of divine glory,” and of His other glories? When Christ in Rev. 2:28 associates the overcomer with Himself in that high character of glory, what ground is there to assume that it is “to flesh and blood terrible glory?” or that “in it He will exercise the destructive judgments whereby the day of the Lord will be ushered in?” If “the star” distinctively points to “distant and unknown worlds,” is it consistent to make it the emblem of glory to flesh and blood? is it not incongruous with his own definition to say that in the star glory Christ will exercise “the destructive judgment whereby the day of the Lord will be ushered in”? And while the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings for those that fear His name, is he entitled to omit that they shall tread down the wicked as ashes under the soles of their feet in that day, for it to burn as a furnace; and the proud and all that work wickedness shall be as stubble; and that day shall leave them neither root nor branch. This is hardly “gracious and benign,” though He will fully be so for His own.

3. Hence we see in the parable of the ten bridesmaids that the five wise who represent the faithful in contrast with the foolish or mere professors) have oil in their vessels, the possession of the Holy Spirit given to them and indwelling. In the Spirit they live, walk, worship, and wait for the Bridegroom. The Spirit in them is a spirit of communion. The godly Jewish remnant till the Lord appears do not rise beyond the Spirit of prophecy. Power inward and outward is in prospect only.
Nor is it a casual slip, but deliberate and systematic error. For in pp. 322, 323, the author returns to the same mischievous absurdity on Rev. 22:16.

He has other essential glories of His own. “Before Abraham was, I AM.” He is the root and offspring of David, AND the bright and morning star. I have already spoken of the star, as the symbol of distant and unearthly glories derived from high and unknown spheres, into which the eye of man, as man, can never penetrate. It is in such glory, strictly and divine, that Jesus will come. It will be the true light of God’s own glory and holiness Arising suddenly on the deep darkness of the world’s night. It will not be at first the sun arising with healing on His wings (for the day-star precedes the sun), but it will be the sudden visitation of strange and distant glory, suddenly breaking upon the abyss of darkness beneath. He will come as the Son of God in His own glory and in His Father’s glory, and in the glory of the holy angels, and it is into such glory that they who are His at His coming are to be taken; for His promise is, “To him that overcometh will I give the morning star.”

Now the simple fact is that the sole use scripture makes of the morning or day star is as the figure of Christ Himself coming for us to make good the heavenly blessedness with Himself promised to the overcomer (as in Rev. 2:28); and the heart getting hold of this hope (as in 2 Pet. 1:19). There is not the faintest token of “distant and unknown worlds,” any more than of “destructive judgment” associated with it. The truth of God is as plain as the fiction of Mr. N.’s prophetic system; and even he was compelled, and not here only, to allow that “the day-star precedes the sun,” as of course it does, and that it means taking those that are His at His coming into a glory divine and heavenly far above the earth.

But it may surprise some enamored with this incoherent scheme, that its author has elsewhere to allow that somehow the risen saints “are evidently recognized in the commencement of this chapter [Rev 19] as being with the Lord in glory.” This witness is true, but incompatible with his most cherished views. He seems to connect it with Rev. 16:15; yet this has no relation with the saints’ translation to heaven, but with the Lord’scoming judicially [at the appearing in glory]. His idea is that there are two distinct acts of Christ’s coming for judgment! the unearthly star-like one, in which He deals with the tares and gathers up to heaven the wheat; and the earthly one, when the saints follow Him out of heaven, and He destroys the Beast, the False Prophet, and the apostate hosts.

The whole idea is utterly false. For 2 Thess. 2:8 is sure and plain that when the Lord appears with His saints, His first act is to destroy the lawless one and of course his followers; which Rev. 19:19-21 confirms as well as Rev. 17:14.

Oh the darkness which fails to see that the bright morning star is His coming in fullness of grace to associate the heavenly saints with Himself, without the smallest sign of judgment if we accept the word of God! How sweet a hope now to arise in our hearts! How glorious and what joy of love when He thus comes to receive us unto Himself for the Father’s house! Yes, He announces Himself as the bright, the morning star; and the Spirit and the bride say, Come. Destructive judgments! unknown worlds! Nay, but the consummation of His love and ours as one with Him; and this realized in the Father’s house: were it not so, He had never raised our hope so high. Did He not say that the Father Himself dearly loves us, because we have dearly loved the Son and have believed that He came from God, yea the Father?

He will do more than display us before every eye in the same glory with our Lord, that the world may know that He loved us as He loved Him; He will gratify His own desire that we shall be with Him, and above the world where no earthly eye can penetrate, that we may behold Christ’s glory, for the Father loved Him before the world’s foundation. Is not this so bright a thing to many saints that they never hear or speak of it? Yet is its spiritual joy far beyond any manifestation before the world however glorious. Weigh it, brethren, that you may learn how much your earthly preoccupation robs you of what should be your proper portion in fellowship with Him above.

The Rapture:
Is it Visible or Invisible?

Nothing has been said here as yet of what is a great bugbear to certain minds. They regard the “secret rapture” as enough without further proof to condemn the notion when stated. Those who have learnt its truth and its importance are content to speak of the rapture of the saints without further adjunct. Yet the morning star, unseen save by those who spiritually watch, lends itself in the readiest way to what other scriptures point. Let us consider these a little more.

In John 14:1-3 it is implied in our Lord’s coming again and receiving us unto Himself. Neither time nor season, neither contingent change nor prophetic date, neither general state of the earth nor specific sign of any sort, finds the least place. Infinite love of the Son in communion with the Father elevates us above all such thoughts into an incomparable blessedness above with Christ. Is it conceivable that any Christian mind could doubt that the very manner of it is what the apostle Paul was given to announce in 1 Thess. 4:16, 17, and 2 Thess. 2:1, and 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, with details as to the dead saints and the living ones? Phil. 3:20, 21, and Jude 24 sustain the same heavenly truth. In all it is the same translation of the saints to be with the Lord.

Not one word in these different scriptures teaches visibility to the world. It is the full making good of that sovereign grace which without a displayed signal to the saints, still less to those who are not concerned, has given us the promise of heavenly association with Christ. Here we shall have the hope blessedly accomplished. In all these intimations there is the most marked absence of others then beholding what the Lord is effecting. It flows from that...
special love of His for His own, which excludes strangers from intermeddling with His joy. But the day of the Lord duly follows when the world shall see both Him and them appearing in glory (John 17:24).

What has misled people is the confounding of the revelation with the rapture. That as distinctly calls for “every eye” to see it, as this excludes it. The Lord will come for His own, will raise those that were put to sleep through Him, will change us the living that remain until then, both in an eye’s twinkling at the last trumpet, and thus gather us together to Him, not only into the air to meet Him, but so received to set us in the Father’s house before the presence of His glory with exultation. All this is quite above and apart from the ken of man. But the public vindication of Christ and His own before the universe is when He will come forth after the bridal of the Lamb on high, as well as the final judgment on earth of the lake of fire and brimstone {Rev. 19:20}. Thus does God give the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath (Rev. 17, 19).

Then and not till then is the visible display of the Lord and of the glorified saints that follow Him out of the opened heavens, when He smites the nations, shepherds them with iron rod, and treads the winepress of His wrath. It is fittingly impressive as they undoubtedly are? Why foist in that which appeals to the senses of outside mankind or of the world, when the language employed avoids it? It fully bespeaks the personal and gracious intervention of the Lord Jesus for His own, the faithful summons of God, the acclaim of the heavenly saints. For His appearing to Israel is bound up with the infliction of judgments on the apostates, Jewish and Gentile, and the punishment of the enemies of His people and of the wicked in general. As with His own ascension, our Lord’s descent for us with Ex. 19, but with singular infelicity. For thunder and lightnings were then, and the voice of a trumpet “exceeding loud,” so that all the people trembled. And Mount Sinai was altogether quaked greatly. And the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder. All thus was of set purpose minatory, alarming, and awful, as became the ministry of destruction.

Men have compared the Lord’s descent for us with Ex. 19, but with singular infelicity. For thunder and lightnings were then, and the voice of a trumpet “exceeding loud,” so that all the people trembled. And Mount Sinai was altogether quaked greatly. And the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder. All thus was of set purpose minatory, alarming, and awful, as became the ministry of destruction.

Even when the Lord comes in restoring mercy for Israel by-and-by, we read in the prophet that in that day a “great” trumpet shall be blown, and in the evangelist His angels will be sent with a great trumpet, or a great sound of trumpet. This does express what is wholly absent, where scripture tells of His coming in love and majesty to make good His love to the heavenly saints. For His appearing to Israel is bound up with the infliction of judgments on the apostates, Jewish and Gentile, and the punishment of the enemies of His people and of the wicked in general. As with His own ascension, our rapture will be the triumph of grace which leaves the world unmolested for the moment, though the providential inflictions of God soon begin to follow in measured order and increasing degree, till all culminates in the day of the Lord at His close, as detailed in the Book of Revelation.
The Coming -- and the Book of Revelation

We have seen that one of the most able and accepted and determined to refuse to discriminate between the Lord’s coming for us and our coming with Him, between His presence and the appearing of His presence, was compelled to own that the glorified saints must be caught up to heaven for some time before they with Him emerge from it. For they follow the King of kings who descends to smite the nations with a sharp sword and to shepherd them with iron rod, as well as to tread the winepress of God’s exceeding wrath. By B. W. N. {Newton} they are allowed to have been there from the destruction of Babylon under the seventh vial. This however clashes with his fundamental principle, that God acts for Christ till He appears in person. Now, as all God’s vials precede Christ’s appearing, He cannot appear before they are poured out. If therefore Christ destroys Babylon and takes up the saints then or before its destruction, so that God is praised above for His judgment of the great Harlot, He must have come for them before the day of His revelation from heaven in Rev. 19 for His more awful judgment of the Beast, &c. This clearly overthrows the system du fond en comble; not only the arguments of others, but his own long considered statement and published defense.

The main question for those who value the truth is, Where or when according to scripture are the saints translated to heaven? Now it is beyond just question that the book of Revelation opens with the Lord seen in the prophet’s vision judging the seven churches in Asia (proconsular). This {Rev. 1:19} (1) was what John saw; then (2) “the things which are,” a very notable description of the seven churches as judged by the Lord in His letters to each respectively; and lastly, (3) “the things about to be after these,” or the visions of the future to follow up even into eternity itself.

The third division is the strict prophecy, consisting of two portions (chs. 4-11 and chs. 12-22:5); for each opens with a prefatory introduction, and goes on to the end.

Here then may be found adequate evidence, before each series of prophetic visions, when the rapture of the saints takes place. The church-state is adumbrated in the seven churches, “the things that are”: not the actual Asiatic assemblies only, but what they prefigured successively as the things would be to the hearing ear by what the Spirit says. In Rev. 4, 5 are indicated the glorified saints already symbolized as in heaven, twenty-four elders, chief-priests of the fully numbered courses, crowned and enthroned around God’s central throne. This is definite; and they are no longer souls disembodied but changed. Any saints, Jewish or Gentile, called afterwards as very many are, add nothing to them: they are complete. During the period that follows no church-state is seen.

In ch. 7 is a numbered complement out of the twelve tribes of Israel, and after that a countless crowd of Gentiles, objects of divine choice and blessing; but they are separate. There is no fusion into one, as the nature of the church requires. God keeps each distinct throughout from first to last. So far it resembles His work in the OT Only grace largely works outside Israel and so far like the NT But church-state is closed. It is a new condition with abundant mercy; and in the face of idolatry, apostasy, persecution, tribulation, and divine judgments, a people is prepared for the earth under the reign of the Lord personally present and His glorified saints: a reign of righteousness and peace, Satan wholly excluded, and the Holy Spirit poured on all flesh for 1000 years.

That the existing church-state closes on earth at the end of Rev. 3 on the protracted view {historicism} is as demonstrable, as that the overcomers out of it, with all that were Christ’s before them, are thenceforth seen as glorified in heaven from Rev. 4, 5. Nothing but the coming of Christ to gather those that believed to Himself can account for the new company above, the disappearance of recognized churches here below, and the formation of separate companies out of Israel, and the Gentiles thenceforward for the earthly purposes of God during the crisis of evil and His judgments, till the Lord comes from heaven to put down Satan and his agents, and to establish His world-kingdom. It is therefore between Rev. 3 and 4 that the true epoch for the saints’ translation best suits; and a transition period ensues, when the church disappears (as named), and grace works, in presence of solemn chastenings of men, to get ready a nucleus for the Lord’s appearing and for the millennial earth, as well as for martyrdom meanwhile.

This conveys the general prefiguration of the steps God takes in judgment, though with dealings of concurrent mercy, to chastise the world, and especially its more favored parts, and to pave the way for investing the Lamb at the fitting time with its direct and supreme government. This ends with Rev. 11:18 for the earthly and the eternal kingdom.

In the fresh section it is not a central throne with enthroned heirs of God and Christ’s joint-heirs around, but the temple of God in heaven is opened, and the ark of His covenant seen, not on earth but still above, and yet with added signs of present displeasure. The first great sign seen there is of God’s sure promise for Israel’s glory. It is not the bride, but the travailing mother of Him who is to tend all the nations with iron rod, arrayed with the sun, the moon under feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. Supreme authority is to be her’s, the sun that rules the day; the changing and reflected light of the old covenant, no longer guiding but under her feet; but also the fullness of human subordinate authority. Meanwhile the child that was born, the Son of might, was caught up to God and to His throne {Rev. 12:5}. For the great dragon, another sign, was seen there, having seven beads and ten horns, emblematic of the Roman empire, in deadly opposition to both. War in heaven ensues. The dragon, the devil, is cast out with his angels; woe to the earth and to the sea, if the heavens and those that dwell there (for so it will then be) rejoice greatly! The devil has great rage, knowing he has a short time; and he vents it against the woman and the rest of her seed, the godly remnant.
But these conflicts are regarded in a far deeper way than in the earlier visions. For there are brought to view the counsels of God centering in His Son, and the hostility of Satan in his last efforts during the half-week which has still to run out, before the Lord in person crushes him and his lawless instruments as in Rev. 19, 20. It is the import of the woman’s seed caught up on high that is insinuated. For in the manner of the prophetic word the apostle intimates in mystic style the translation to heaven of the saints before the dates begin.

We are thus viewed as in Christ who was caught up there, while the woman and the remnant of her seed are objects, not only of Satan’s hate, but of God’s providential care on the earth. As we shall share Christ’s authority when He takes His great power and reigns (Rev. 2:26, 27), so we are symbolically wrapped up in Him in His being caught up out of Satan’s way. We are one with Him in this foreseen rapture, as the apostle Paul in Rom. 8:33, 34, applies to the Christian what Isa. 50:8, 9, says of Christ. Thus we again, and in a very different form suited to this part of the prophecy, come round to the still higher promise in Rev. 2:28. We are associated with Christ as the morning Star before the Sun of righteousness {Mal. 4} introduces the day for all the world, and we too share the glorious reign with Him. If, instead of groundless fancy, we listen to scripture, the bright, the morning star shines not for the slumbering world, but for those who watch during the dark night. It is essentially spiritual, visible to saints only, not to the world which will have to do rather with the Sun of righteousness.

No sober person of intelligence doubts that the Holy Spirit had first to be poured out, and the gospel to be preached to all the creation. But the NT attests that this was done during that first generation, and that the saints were then taught by the apostles to wait for Christ habitually and constantly with no revealed event between to precede or intercept. This is what some daring men venture to ridicule as “any-momentism.”

The misapprehension of ἡ κυριακὴ ἡμέρα in Rev. 1:10 is nothing but a senseless incubus, with the still worse absurdity that the seven churches of Rev. 2, 3, “the things that are,” are seven future groups of a Jewish character. They are alike a fanatical folly without a shred of truth. But no trick of controversy can to any effect legitimately attach such nonsense to the heavenly hope of the NT, or get rid of the undeniable facts, that churches thenceforward in the book of Revelation disappear from the earth; that a new sight of glorified saints was given in heaven; and that the fresh action of God follows, concurrently here below, of a secured complement of Israel, and a blessed and far larger crowd out of all the nations; and this keeping them apart, instead of being baptised in the power of the Spirit into one body as we are, and as the nature of God’s church characteristically demands.

Rev. 22:16 is no exception: only an ignoramus could argue so. For from v. 6 to the end we have simply appeals to John and the churches that then existed, however permanent the profit might be, as the suited conclusion to the visions previously revealed, as well as its introduction. The Lord would have all that preceded testified in the churches, which was soon utterly forgotten and is generally to our day. But this affords no ground for imagining “churches” in the NT sense during the entire period of the crisis, or any part of it, from Rev. 6 to 19, or indeed any longer as on the earth.

I presume that in the strange error of the Rev. James Kelly and of Dr. Bullinger, which they got from the Tractarian Drs. Maitland and J. H. Todd, (as they perhaps from the blunder of the famous critic, J. C. Wetstein, in his NT Gr. 2:750) they wanted Jewish churches for the days of the great tribulation, as their opponents, like Dr. West and a crowd of others, interpolate churches during that period by a still more groundless error, if this be possible. At any rate, if we bow to “the words of the book of this prophecy,” there is no basis of revelation for either. Those who contend on scripture alone for the heavenly hope have ever rejected such notions; nor have these errors any real connection with that truth. But the closing words of the last chapter of the book are to the last degree impressive, as they corroborate the essential difference between the Christian hope, and the wondrous communication that comprises the unfolded visions of what is to befall the earth in judgment as well as mercy from Rev. 6 to 19 inclusively. This latter is in the richest way the prophetic word, as became in God’s wisdom and goodness the winding up of the NT. But, as elsewhere, so the Lord here carefully guards His own from the mistake of confounding it with what is so distinct.

There are to be two successive series of judgment, of a general and of a special character, as in the seven seals, and the seven trumpets. A general securing to Himself out of Israel, and from among all the nations, accompanies the one; and if the Jews in unbelief seek to establish their policy and religion, God begins within the other to recognize a godly remnant during those days of sin and sorrow, with an adequate testimony like that of Moses and Elijah, which none can hinder till their work is done. And the Beast is first seen in his deadly antagonism. Martyrdom ensues; and the merry triumph of the enemy is answered, not only by His power in raising the slain and taking them up to heaven in view of their foes, but by a defined overthrow of man’s pride on earth. Then follows the end of man left to himself, and the world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ is come.

Next, we go back, to let in details of the deepest moment, of which enough has been said. And the kingdom of glory follows, the great white throne, and the eternal scene.

Now none can be so prejudiced as to think that all this can unroll into facts before the Lord comes, though the unbelief of man approaches such an extreme. Yet many saints contend, as we know, for a certain part to intervene before He comes for us. This, however, is what none can show on any legitimate grounds of scriptural evidence. Proof on the contrary has already been given, that the only
consistent point for the removal of the saints to heaven is when the churches are no longer seen or heard of on earth, and a new symbolic company is presented in heaven {the 24 elders}. After this the steps are revealed by which God chastises the guilty world. In the midst of the great tribulation He calls and forms, not in one body as now, but separately, a twofold nucleus of blessed men, Jews and Gentiles, for the earth under the Lord’s future reign; as He had already taken to Himself on high those destined to reign with Him when that glorious time arrives, as we see in Rev. 20:22:5.

The fulfillment of the prophecy awaits its sure and varied application when the time arrives for the earthly question to be answered. Now the Lord is occupied with a heavenly work, wherein is not Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is the all, and in all, quite independently of earthly change, because the end of that work is to be with Him where He is. And thus He concludes, “He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I come quickly. Amen, come, Lord Jesus,” is the divinely supplied reply. The constant waiting, apart from times and seasons, is kept up to the last for him that has an ear to hear.

It is striking to see how careful the Lord is to exclude prophetic events from mingling with our proper portion in His coming for us; and all the more, because the Revelation is in the main the great Christian book of prophecy. Hence, while giving solemn warnings in these concluding appeals, He fixes our hearts on His coming in sovereign grace without a revealed earthly event to intercept it. He precludes any delay on the score of governmental dealings with men on the earth. He allows no room for confusion with intervening changes in the world. “He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I come quickly,” to which our graciously provided answer is, “Amen, come, Lord Jesus.” Can any words be simpler, or more effective, for the heart?

No intelligent believer denies that the hopes prevalent in Christendom are baseless, vain, and presumptuous. The gospel was sent to save sinners, and to associate them when saved with Christ, the glorified Head, and thus to constitute them a heavenly body, His body. Its aim is not to gather into one the world, but the children of God that were scattered abroad {John 11:52}. The gospel was to be preached everywhere as a testimony, but with no such thought as winning all Israel or the nations while He is on high. It is reserved for the Lord, not for the church, in judicial authority, to take His great power and reign, when His world-kingdom is come: a future and total change from His present seat on His Father’s throne {Rev. 3:21}. That, not this, coalesces with His appearing and His kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1). It is “the blessed hope” of what God will do for man and the world; and we rejoice anticipatively. There will be no general amelioration for the race till then; and we await it with assurance, love it as redounding not to the blessing of man only but to the glory of our Savior God, and in our measure and place testify to its truth and solemnity. In the

Pastoral Epistles, His appearing alone is pressed, because responsibility all round is the point, rather than distinctive privilege; and then, not before, “in that day,” will the issues appear of fidelity or of failure. This in its own time the blessed and only Potentate shall show, the King of those that reign, and Lord of those that exercise lordship.

Before that day of manifestation must be the awful apostasy, and the audacious uprising against God of the man of sin, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy by His appearing, as in 2 Thess. 2:8. Before that day, as is made evident in Rev. 19, must be fulfilled the predicted blows of divine chastisement, as revealed from the seals of Rev. 6 to the last vials of God’s wrath in Rev. 16, of which the judgment of Babylon in the descriptive appendix of Rev. 17, 18 is a concluding part and explanation. Then follows the day of the Lord in Rev. 19, when the glorified follow Him out of heaven to the destruction of His enemies, the binding of Satan, and the thousand years’ reign of Christ and the risen saints over the earth, as in Rev. 20. All this is as clear as God’s word makes it, whatever be the doubts and difficulties of the learned, or the unbelief of worldly-minded men.

But the still more intimate and proper hope of the Christian is His coming for those that love Him and watch during the night with eyes undimmed by hope deferred, for Him the Morning Star, before the day. And as the apostle corrected the errors of the Thessalonian saints, yet confirmed the constant waiting for Him, carefully joining himself with them and all saints in the same attitude, so here does the Lord guard us all from confounding His Coming with that day, and God’s necessary antecedent dealings of infliction or of mercy on Israel or the nations.

Meanwhile may “the grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.”

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The Christian Calling and Hope, as distinguished from the Portions of the Jew and of the Gentile, in the Great Prophecy of the Lord Jesus Matthew 24, 25

Introduction

I have taken this portion of the Word of God to set forth “The Christian calling and hope,” as distinct from that of a Jew or a Gentile. There may be some who might demur to this. They are not convinced that it is a question of Christians, for example, in the parable of the Virgins.

There are those, on the one hand, who have been disposed to exaggerate, maintaining that even the foolish virgins are really Christians. There are some, on the other hand, who deny that the parable speaks of Christians at all. These will have it that not only the foolish virgins are not Christians -- which I believe to be quite true -- but that the wise are not either, but what is commonly called the Jewish remnant. Now, I am of opinion that they are both mistaken; that in this Scripture we have positive evidence, of a clear and cogent kind, which ought to remove the doubts of any, dispassionate mind and to give with certainty the Conviction that the Lord had real Christians in view in the wise virgins, and professing Christians in the foolish virgins. In order to demonstrate this more clearly, I will first draw your attention to the context, and then to the contents of the parable.

It is plain that from these two sources must be drawn the main evidence that the Lord Jesus has given by which we may form a sound judgment. That is to say, the Lord has given, in the surroundings of the parable, not a little to help us to understand its bearing and application. Then, again, what the general evidence of the context would lead to we shall find, I trust, entirely borne out by the specific contents of the parable. The language, the drift, the circumstances, the design all converge on Christendom; all point to the calling and hopes of the Christian; for alas! not only the parable instructs us, but it is a fact that we see now around us many who bear the Christian name with no reality.

Part 1: The Jew
Matt. 24:1-44

THE END OF THE AGE

First of all, then, we have the Lord’s discourse, founded on the disciples pointing out, with not a little complacency, the grand buildings of the Temple.

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple; and His disciples came to Him for to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them: See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down (Matt. 24:1, 2).

The Jewish system was tottering to its ruin; the temple, where the glory of God had once been, was itself about to be destroyed.

And, as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us when these things be? And Jesus said unto them: See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down (Matt. 24:3).

They were disturbed and distressed by such a thought. Was not He the Messiah? Was not He going to establish Israel? Was not He about to restore the tribes -- which had been so long waiting -- to the nationality of God’s chosen people? What, then, would be the meaning of such solemn words as that all was to be razed to the ground? Jesus meets the questions, When these things should be, and What should be the sign of His coming, and of the end of the age -- not of the world.

The Jews were not so ignorant on this head as many who have less excuse in the present day; they did not confound the end of the age with the end of the world. They knew well that God meant to bless this earth -- to bless it as a whole, not merely His children passing through it, but the nations and the earth itself; to overthrow Satan’s usurped dominion, and to deliver from the thraldom of the curse the whole creation. The disciples, who as Jews held all the hopes of their nation founded on prophetic testimony, were therefore anxious to know what should be the sign of His
coming or presence, and of the end of the intervening time of sorrow and distress; for they were aware that it is only when He comes in power and glory that there can be an end of desolation. So the Lord explains that the time was not yet come; that they would be liable to be deceived about the time when the restoration of their people, and all this introduction of divine power to bless the earth, was nigh at hand.

Take heed,” said He, “that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”

And ye shall hear of wars, and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom (Matt. 24:6, 7).

It is the reverse of the glowing picture of the age of the Messiah’s reign.

He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more (Isa. 2).

The new age is not yet come, nor can it while the Lord Jesus is away. Whatever may be the promises and hopes of men, all their scheming will not avail; all their expectations must be falsified. “Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom”; that is to say, a state quite contrary to what is held out for the kingdom. The prophets glowed as they looked forward in the Spirit to the time when the mountain of Jehovah’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow into it. And out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2, 3).

But the Lord intimates that the time is not yet at hand. There must still be the sorrows that belong to this age.

THE NEW AGE

The new age would be characterized, not by the destruction of the earth, but by its renovation; not by the great White Throne, where the dead will be judged, but by the Lord coming to reign and govern the living. “For he shall come to judge the quick and the dead” (Acts 10:42; 2 Tim. 4:1) not the quick and the dead at the same time, but the quick first, the dead afterwards. The judgment of the quick (or, the living) traverses over a considerable tract of time; the judgment of the dead is at the close of all, before the eternal scene where all judgment will be ended, when nothing will remain but the blessing of those that are of God, such as are of the enemy having been judged for ever. The Lord explains that there must be an earthly time of manifold sorrow during this age before the blessed time begins for the earth in the new age. Whether it be the present era of sorrow, or the future dispensation of blessedness for the world, the end of “the world,” as popularly held, is a false notion; the end of “the age” is the true thought. Man’s day will close with the end of this age.

The new age will be under the government of the Lord Jesus. The fact that power will be exercised in rule supposes flesh and liability to disobedience. Evil will be put down; it may be kept thoroughly in check; but it needs the reign of the Lord to effect it. The eternal state differs essentially from this age. It will have no evil to be kept in check, but will display the peaceful dwelling of good in the presence of God, when evil has been judged, removed, and punished.

The Lord then pursues His sketch of what the disciples must expect.

Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My Name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come (Matt. 24:7-13).

This, again, is beyond controversy the close of what is going on now; not the end of the world in a physical sense, but of the period or dispensation which terminates with the appearing of the Lord Jesus in power and glory. His return to reign will open the new age.

JEWISH DISCIPLES

Then the Lord proceeds to give some indications of the closing scene of the age a little more definitely:

When ye therefore shall see the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains (Matt. 24:15).

Nothing can be more distinct than this. The Lord Jesus is not here giving us the calling and hope of the Christian, but addressing the disciples in their then Jewish state and circumstances.

Now this is an immense help for the understanding of the prophecy. For many persons now as of old have taken the whole discourse as if it were addressed to Christians as such; they imagine that it all describes the position of Christians at one time or another. But this is a fallacious idea. The Lord begins with the Jewish disciples before Christianity, properly speaking, was revealed. For Christianity supposes the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord: these are the pillars of Christianity. Without them you have the Lord Jesus still connected with Israel. The essential features of Christianity display themselves on the basis of redemption, and in the gift of the Holy Ghost consequent upon it.
Now, in all we have heard thus far, there is nothing that is essentially Christian. We have disciples: I doubt not believers, but believers looking for the Lord’s return to reign over Israel. They are disciples whose expectations are in connection with the land of Palestine and the Temple; whose hopes embrace Israelitish ascendancy; whose fears are based upon the troubles or tribulations predicted for Israel by the prophets. Hence we see the Lord Himself deigns to refer to the prophecy of “Daniel the prophet.” Does not this show that He was speaking of the same time, place, people, and circumstances as Daniel? Nothing can be clearer than that He is not describing Christians as such. What have Christians to do with Jerusalem or Judaea? What have Christians to do with the Temple? They have no personal interest [as if involved] in those storms; they have no special connection with the grandeur of those buildings. The destruction of the Temple leaves Christianity unaffected, and where it was, in point of fact. We quite understand the connection with the land of Palestine and the Temple; whose believers, but believers looking for the Lord’s return to reign over Israel and their Temple should be in ruins soon, if not one hand that God saw fit that during Christianity the Jewish destruction of the Temple leaves Christianity unaffected, and over Israel. They are disciples whose expectations are in that Christianity should derive its force from God while the Temple had still an outward appearance.

JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE

It was no mere concurrence of circumstances which gave birth to Christianity. It might have been said that Christianity grew up as a natural development after Judaism had actually disappeared; that there had been an old religion in Jerusalem, and when this perished, then Christianity sprung up. But God took care that the Temple and the Jewish system should still remain, and where it was, in point of fact. We quite understand on the one hand that God saw fit that during Christianity the Jewish people and their Temple should be in ruins soon, if not immediately; as we know it was important on the other hand that Christianity should derive its force from God while the Temple had still an outward appearance.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

There will, then, be disciples -- Jewish believers -- keeping to the words of the Lord Jesus in the latter days of this age, for the Lord is clearly carrying on His thought to that time, this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached to all the nations, and then shall the end come. We know the end has not come yet. We are aware that this gospel of the kingdom needs yet to be preached as a witness in all the world to all the nations. But how far it will take effect is not said: there may be few believers, but there will be witnesses of the gospel of the kingdom sent out, like the disciples when He was here. It is not telling the people that He died and rose and went to heaven. They preached the kingdom of heaven was at hand before the end of the age. There will be Jewish disciples and believers who will preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand, who will take up the testimony which the disciples were rendering in His day and will proclaim this to all nations at the very time that Satan will be prompting the Beast and the False Prophet to bring in the infernal kingdom -- when there will be that base usurpation on the earth which Satan cannot longer continue in the heavens.

For a little while he will attempt to secure the sovereignty of the earth, and have a kingdom of his own. Then will be found the voices of faithful men, holding fast the old testimony, and proclaiming it unto all the nations when Christendom shall have gone into apostasy. These kingdoms may have their science and civilization; but they will fall into the deepest depths of deceit and strong delusion. The mass of the Jews, too, will fall into the dreadful snare that the kingdom of God is come, when it is only the kingdom of the Beast and the Antichrist. Then will be heard those faithful Jews, going forth with power to proclaim that the true kingdom -- the kingdom of heaven, not of the Beast that rises up out of the pit, but the kingdom of the heavens -- is at hand, the kingdom that comes down from above, and of which the Lord Jesus is King.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ON THE EARTH

When that kingdom is at hand, when the Lord is going to accomplish His word which was interrupted by His death and resurrection -- for He is now, manifestly, out of the world -- what He will then establish will be the kingdom of heaven on the earth. This is the true hope that God has given as far as the world is concerned. But the only One who can accomplish the work, and the only One, too, who deserves the glory, is Jesus: all other men require to be saved and purified. He is the only One who has both a divine and a human claim. He is the Savior available for all; He alone will have the dominion as of right. Thus, then, these faithful Jews -- these disciples -- when the mass of their nation are apostate, and when Christendom, too, is apostate, will renew the testimony in the latter day. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world to all nations, a final testimony of the true kingdom, while the false kingdom is set up in Satan’s power.

This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached everywhere, and then shall the end come. This is not the character of the teaching that is given to us as Christians. If we look at the Epistles of Paul, where does he ever give us anything of this kind of warning? How could an idol in the Temple be a sign to you or me, if we were Christians in England, France, Germany, or in any part of America?
How could it be a sign to us if anything new were set up in Jerusalem? But we can perfectly understand that if an idol should be set up to be worshiped in the Temple in Jerusalem, it must be a most solemn sign of Satan’s power over that people. And so the righteous will take warning and flee. It applies only to such as shall at that time be living in Jerusalem; but how could it be a sign to those scattered over all lands thousands of miles away?

It is no use saying that the thing may be communicated rapidly nowadays, for the whole thing is represented by our Lord as a signal for flight to those who saw it.

It is not that others may hear, but “when ye shall see the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet” (Matt. 24:15). Then they are to flee.

It is not then an announcement by wireless that there are these dismal doings in Jerusalem, but persons on the spot, who see evident tokens of the power that Satan is wielding, and that their nation is damnable guilty, who are at once to retire.

The Lord, it is plain by His call to the reader to understand, supposes that some would not understand. He supposes that there would be a very great tendency to mistake about it, and calls their special heed to the word. It is what concerned the Jew, as put down for a season by the Gentile; for Daniel speaks about these facts and not about the church. “When ye shall SEE” this, “then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” Clearly this is no sign to the Christians scattered in all countries.

Take it as the Lord gives it, for there is no need to put in any words of our own. I am expounding what no believer can deny; and who can affirm that what I am deducing is not the plain meaning of the Lord’s words, or that they will bear any other construction?

THEN LET THEM WHICH BE IN JUDEA FLEE TO THE MOUNTAINS

It is to be an instantaneous flight. There is no time to communicate with others. It is as much as can be done to save themselves. “Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house {Matt. 24:16, 17}; “it is too late to think about doing this.

“Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes” {Matt. 24:18}. Immediate flight is the only hope of safety. What sort of safety? It is the saving of flesh -- of natural life. Is this what the Christian is expecting? Not so. The Christian is looking for the coming of Christ, not to save his life, but to change and take him up to Heaven.

The point here is escape, for it is not safe to remain. There is unprecedented trouble coming; those who refuse to worship the idol will be put to death, and those who worship will be besieged and led into captivity largely. Therefore the Lord warns His disciples to flee in order that they may not be so troubled. It has nothing at all to do with the Christian’s expectation of going up to heaven to meet the Lord “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” {1 Cor. 15:52}. For, where would be the propriety of telling the Christian not to come down from the housetop at that time? Would it matter whether at the top or the bottom of the house? Thus it is perfectly plain that the Lord is here speaking simply of the Jew who sees this most startling sign of Satan’s power, and is ordered at the peril of his life to make his escape. It is much more like Lot and his family going out of Sodom, than Abraham from a distance with the Lord.

CHRIST THE KEY TO THE BIBLE

There is one thing to which I would call your attention regarding the Word of God: there is not a book in the world that has fared so hardly as the Bible. When other books are read men strive to understand them, but when they read the Bible they shut their eyes and give up its interpretation as hopeless. This is due to the blinding power of Satan: he does not wish it to be understood, only read as a task. This is not the way to treat the Word of God. I grant you we need a power above our own. To this end we cannot understand the Bible by forcing the lock; what we want is the key. But if you have Christ, you already have the key. In faith apply Christ to the Bible, and you can understand it. It is not a question of a superior mind or of great learning; -- for the most learned have been the most foolish in their mistakes. The simple man who understands but his mother tongue understands the Bible, if he with true simplicity submits himself to the Lord and has confidence in His love. This is produced by the Spirit of God: it is this only that makes men humble, that gives confidence in God and in His Word by taking away objects which overpower his own mind.

Suppose I am a red-hot Calvinist: I cannot understand the word which calls one to preach the gospel to every creature. Suppose I am a rather violent Arminian: I cannot understand the Scriptures which speak of “being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world” {Eph. 1:4}. Assuredly then the wisdom of the Christian is to be neither the one nor the other. He should take all the Scriptures simply as they stand.

Those who read the Scriptures carefully but believingly will understand what is infinitely better than anything found in the various schemes of men. It is just the same as regards the interpretation of prophecy as in doctrine. No man should assert that one part of the Word of God is sealed up and the other open. There was a time when it was so: when Daniel was called to have those very communications which we have been reading, he was told to seal up the book; John was called to have the same communications and yet greater ones, he was told NOT to seal up the book. Do you not see the difference and the reason of it? The principle was this -- the Jews were incapable of entering into the true and full meaning of the future till Christ came, at least until the end comes. It will only be then, when the last days of this age are come, that the godly remnant will understand (Dan. 12:10). The wicked shall not understand. You cannot separate moral condition from real intelligence of the Word.
of God. But the Christian already has, not Christ only, but the Spirit in virtue of redemption; and hence he is called and qualified to search all things, yea the deep things of God.

**FURTHER JEWISH SIGNS**

It has been clearly shown that in all that the Lord Jesus had been teaching in His great Olivet discourse, He was speaking of disciples connected with the Temple, with Judea, with Jerusalem, and not of Christians. Take these further proofs of it.

He says, “Pray that your flight be not on the Sabbath Day” {Matt. 24:20}. The Lord’s Day is our day, the first day of the week. The Jew rightly and properly keep’s Jehovah’s Sabbaths. As to this, there are languages in Europe more correct than what we hear more commonly spoken around us. The Pope’s tongue, the Italian, keeps up the right distinction; it always speaks of Saturday as the Sabbath Day, and Sunday as the Lord’s day. How curious that it should be so, where such blind darkness reigns on almost everything else!

But these Jewish disciples contemplated here are told to pray that the time for their precipitate flight should not be in the winter nor on the Sabbath Day; for the one would be inconvenient from its inclemency, and on the other they could not go farther than a Sabbath-day’s journey. But how could this affect us as Christians? Even if once Jews, we are not any longer under such restrictions. The Lord is speaking not of Christians but of future Jewish disciples, connected with Jewish ritual, and filled with Jewish hopes.

Further, it is said,

There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved (Matt. 24:21, 22).

All this is plain enough. It is not a question of the soul but of the salvation of the body. They should then live and be the subjects of the blessed reign and glory when the Lord comes. It is earthly glory here, not in heaven. For the elect’s sake those days should be shortened.

Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not (Matt. 24:23-26).

It is clear and certain that the elect here are Jewish. What would be the effect of such sayings on your mind, suppose one were to tell you that the Lord was in London or Vienna? You would pity the poor fellow; you would feel that he could not be in his right senses unless he were an impostor. You, as a Christian, could not be deceived by such rumors for an instant.

But it is clear that the Lord Jesus supposes considerable danger for the disciples here. In fact, being Jewish, not Christian, they might be deceived by the cry that He was here or there on earth; whereas no Christian could be in such danger. But the Jewish disciples were exposed to it. They were looking for the Lord’s coming to the earth; they knew that the Lord’s feet should stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives.

**JERUSALEM AND JUDEA**

It is clear, then, that the Jews might be taken in by such deceit. Not so the Christian. He knows that he will meet the Lord in the heavens, and that he will be taken up from the earth into the air to meet the Lord on high. But the deceits in question are addressed to such only as expected to meet the Lord on the earth. The whole of the scene thus far consists of the Lord’s instructions to disciples connected with Jerusalem and Judea, and has nothing at all to do with the Christians looking to join the Lord above. But here again is the reason why they are not to listen to false Christs.

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be (Matt 24:27).

Learned men have applied all this to the Roman conquest. But the Roman army did not come out of the east, as the lightning is said to do here, nor did it shine unto the west: the very reverse would be a more apt figure, had the Romans been meant. So correctly has the Lord Jesus guarded against the misinterpretations of men.

I deny that the prophecy is obscure or ambiguous. There is no uncertain sound in the Bible. I grant you that there is no book so profound as the Word of God, but this does not hinder its clearness for the simplest. It is meant for the highest as well as the lowest. If it were of use only for one class, to the exclusion of the other, it could not be the Word of God; for what is of God must suit men in all conditions. I speak, of course, of believers: but still, even if the soul were in the densest natural ignorance, there is everything in the Bible to enlighten and establish such an one. If he be one who dives ever so much into the depths of God’s mind, like the Apostle Paul, the Bible is still beyond him.

“Now we know in part,” said this very man, one of the greatest of its inspired writers. How truly divine is all this! Is it really so with any other book? If you are a man of ability, you may soon fathom another man’s measure, but never the depths of the Bible, though free to search all. The fact is, you only begin to find out how little you know of the Bible when you are really advancing in the knowledge of it.

There is no discipline so wholesome as this, because, on the one hand, you are strengthened and encouraged, on the other hand you are humbled. This is exactly what the soul needs.

The Lord, then, has given these firm standing points, these landmarks, as it were, in the prophecy, which hinder us from being carried away by every wind of theory. We
can see clearly what the Lord has set before us. I have not knowingly passed over anything material. There is no violence done to a word here. I wish to give nothing, but a clear, distinct, and positive impression of the mind of the Lord as given in His Own words.

THE EAGLES AND THE CARCASS

It is next said,

Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together (Matt. 24:28).

Now, if you apply this to the church -- to the Christian -- what will you be able to make of it? Is the church the carcass? I have heard something still more dreadful. Men have not been wanting who say that the Lord is the reference! Such are the ideas expressed by such an attempt to interpret the prophecy on false grounds. Learned men, including some of the Fathers, taught this; and a great many of the moderns follow in their wake. The last notion I must beg to consider as very great irreverence as well as grossly unfair upon any of them, but it appears to me a crude and unworthy interpretation, no matter how (according to the moderns) they take the carcass, whether applying it to the church or to the Lord. Is the church a corpse? I believe it to be a living body. And the Lord is not regarded as a body dead or even alive, but as the Head. But the Lord a carcass! What are they dreaming about?

The whole effort is false. There is no getting a consistent meaning out of the passage when interpreted of the church: the moment you apply it to the Jewish people, it becomes strikingly true. For the mass of the Jews will then be apostate, and the eagles or vultures who come together are figures of the divine judgments executed on the guilty people by the nations of the earth; but whatever may be the instruments, they are judgments of God executed by Him. If the Christians be the carcass, they are the object of the judgment, and there the eagles, or the executors of judgment, are gathered together. But this is not at all the relation of the Lord’s coming to the Christian. Nor can the Christians be the eagles or instruments of divine vengeance, any more than the carcass, without abandoning all the truth and character of their calling. The changed saints undoubtedly will go up to meet the Lord; but is He then to be the carcass, and is the church the eagles? Thus, in such a scheme, you have only the choice of one evil less or greater than another; and it is generally thus with an erroneous interpretation. Apply it to the object the Lord had in view, and all is clear. This is the test of Scriptural truth: whenever you press a false interpretation, the general testimony of Scripture is dislocated.

Then the Lord adds,

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn (Matt. 24:29, 30).

It is not here the believers with joy going up to meet the Lord, but the tribes of the earth mourning.

And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt. 24:29-31).

WHO ARE THE ELECT?

Here many lay great stress upon gathering His elect. But the “elect” do not necessarily mean Christians. If you speak of elect now, it is so; but had God no “elect” before there were Christians? There were elect Gentiles. Take Job for one, and his friends, probably, also the same; were they not elect men? Melchizedek and others, were not they elect? Need I enumerate the elect of Israel in the past? We find clearly elect Gentiles as well as Jews and Christians. When we read about Christians, then the elect must be so explained; if we read about Jews, then the phrase applies to a Jewish election; and so with the nations. We must be governed by the context. As the Lord here is clearly speaking about Israel, the sense should not be ambiguous. When we have “His elect” named, He means the elect of those described, that is, of Israel. This is not at all to bring in arbitrary rules, but in fact a very plain and necessary principle.

Let us suppose a case in common life. If you go into a crockery shop, and choose out some of the things there, everybody understands how far the choice extends: to the seed shop next door it would not apply. Your choice or the chosen cannot be fairly said to be uncertain because you speak of it in two different places. The word applies equally to the things chosen in both shops. It is all simple enough in everyday matters; and so it is with Scripture.

The Lord, I repeat, in all this context is speaking about Israel and their hopes. Consequently “his elect” must be interpreted according to the object in view. These elect ones are to be gathered “from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt. 24:31), not for blessing in heaven, but on earth. (Compare Isa. 27).

THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

Then “learn the parable of the fig tree” (Matt. 24:32). The fig tree is a well known symbol of Israel as a nation. This confirms what has been already said. In the Gospel of Luke, where the Lord takes a view of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, He reverts to this very symbol, but enlarged remarkably. He says the fig tree, and all the trees” (Luke 21:29). He does not speak of the latter in Matthew, because He is only in this part looking at the Jew; but in Luke He is looking at the Gentile as well as the Jew, and hence adds, “and all the trees.” (Compare Luke 21 as the authority for this statement.)

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When its branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these
things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled (Matt. 24:32-34; Luke 21:29).

THIS GENERATION

Now mark the phrase “all these things” -- namely, from the first troubles down to the last, and the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Clearly “this generation” [Matt. 24:34] does not mean, what some impute to it, a mere period of thirty years, or a man’s life. The phrase means, what it frequently does in Scripture, a line continued by certain moral features entirely independent of length of time. Hence we find in the Psalms very particularly this use of “generation.” I will give you one text which proves it in the most convincing manner. In Psa. 12:7 we read:

Thou shalt keep them, O Jehovah, Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.

This generation is supposed to go on, and it is an evil generation, a generation which has no faith, a stubborn Christ-rejecting generation. “This generation,” the Christ-rejecting race of the Jews, is not to pass away till all these things be fulfilled. Hence the same generation which crucified the Lord of glory is going on still, and will till He comes again in the clouds of heaven.

A GENERATION TO COME

But the grace of God will make them anew, “a generation to come” (Psa. 78). The Lord will judge the unbelievers at last, dealing with them righteous after His immense longsuffering, but delivering a godly remnant in His grace. The Lord has great things in store for Israel. There will be this double action -- that is to say, the mass of them filling up the cup of iniquity which their fathers began to fill; and the remnant, who will be the holy seed, the Israel of the millennial day. Of the former He speaks when He says that “this generation” shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled . . . Of that day knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matt. 24:34-36).

The next comparison (Matt:24:36-42) is not to the fig tree nor anything else taken from the physical world. A figure is taken from the dealings of God in the Old Testament,

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left.

TAKEN OR LEFT?

Instead of being an indiscriminate slaughter or captivity such as the Jews had executed upon them by the Romans, there is a direct contrast to this. Here there is discrimination: one man shall be taken and the other left; one woman taken and another left. The Lord will deal with perfect discernment in each case: not so did the Romans, not so any army that ever took a city. We know there is no time, no thought, no desire for discrimination. It is wholesale bloodshed or slavery. Thus it was when Titus took the city; so alas! it too often is unto this day. But when the Lord Jesus comes, it will not be so.

Then the Lord winds up this part of His prophecy by saying,

Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh (Matt. 24:42-44).

There, I believe, closes the portion of this prophecy which refers to the Jews. He began by referring to the Jewish disciples, because the disciples were really Jews then, though believers. He took them up just as they were; and we know they subsequently became Christians. They passed into a new relationship. Not that they had not faith before; but when Christ rose from the dead, and went up to heaven, a new state of things was founded in connection with Him then and there.

Part 2:

Christian Profession

Matt. 24:45- 25:30

THE CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH HOPE CONTRASTED

Hence the same disciples merged into a new form and power of relationship with God. They were brought no longer to expect the Lord’s restoration of the kingdom to Israel as their proper hope, but, contrariwise, that the Lord would come to receive them to Himself, and take them to the Father’s home in heaven. This is the Christians’ hope; this is what they wait for. The Lord is calling them out from the earth to Himself. They had been expecting the Lord to come and establish them on the earth up to the day when the Lord Jesus went up and sent down the Holy Ghost. Christianity comes in as an entirely new thing. It is the calling of the Christians out of the world, waiting till Christ comes to take them up to heaven. The Lord Jesus, having accomplished redemption, has Himself first taken His seat in heaven; then the disciples become heavenly, and are being transformed spiritually: finally, at His coming, the Lord Jesus will take them completely out of their natural condition, conformed to His Own glorious body. The state of things on earth since redemption wrought at Calvary till He come to take us to be with Him on high, is truly to be called Christianity.

I do not deny that the saints of old, before Christianity came in, will share in the resurrection, when they, too, are to shine in the likeness of Christ. Only there is this enormous difference meanwhile. We are brought, since His cross, into conscious salvation and new relationships.

From this point the Lord begins to open out a new thing,
namely, what the disciples were going to become. And evidently this is the proper order. The Lord had begun with them as they were, and then He leads on to what they were to become, with the new relationships of Christ dead and risen, when also fresh power was given by the Holy Ghost. As a mark of this, you will see that the Lord drops all allusion to Judea, and all reference to the temple, prophets, and sabbath. The Lord opens out now into parables of a general and comprehensive nature which would be equally as true at Timbuctoo as at Jerusalem -- it does not matter where. They belong to Christianity; to that which Christ died and rose to idolatry and all kinds of wickedness, always persecuting the enormous unbelieving mass in former times getting into forme r times getting into

in relation with the Lord, not with Israel as before.

They are not made over to Christians, but they embrace all the true disciples, wherever they might be in this world, at any time till He comes. Hence we find three parables which apply to this.

THE FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT
The first parable {Matt. 24:45-51} is the wise servant contrasted with the evil one. It is a question of faithful service in the house, the duty of the highest and the duty of the lowest, not of intelligent activity in trading with goods given as in the parable of the talents, Matt. 25. The form is very striking. We have, as you see, a double profession; and this in relation with the Lord, not with Israel as before.

This was not the case in Judaism. There was an enormous unbelieving mass in former times getting into idolatry and all kinds of wickedness, always persecuting the believer. But one of the characteristic marks of Christendom is that all are professors of Christ, whether truly or falsely. The Lord in the parable says the faithful and wise servant is to be made ruler over all his goods. But the evil servant says in his heart, “My lord delayeth his coming” {Matt. 24:48}; it is not a mere notion. One may always have his notions; and one is none the better for them. But the Lord refers to what was deep and real, the heart’s indifference to the appearing of Jesus. The evil servant says in his heart, “My lord delayeth his coming”; he believes what he likes, and what he likes is that the Lord should delay His coming. If you love anyone, you want to see him. The absence of the person you love is trying to you. There may be the wisest reasons for delay, but the delay taxes your patience; and your hope of the speedy return of the one you love is the greatest joy to your heart.

ALL THAT LOVE HIS APPEARING
The Lord gives this feeling and strengthens it. Granted, that it may be hindered by false prophetic notions; yet there is in the heart of all true Christians a desire for the coming of Christ: only, when the soul is not in peace through a full gospel, it is afraid. And those who give them this kind of gospel are responsible for it; those who keep souls in fear do the greatest possible injury to the Church of God. I am not speaking of such as set forth Christ or His work falsely, but even of those who do not preach it fully, who fear to set forth the full value of the sacrifice of Christ, and the perfect deliverance which His death and resurrection have wrought for the believer. The result of this defect in teaching is that Christians are apt to be alarmed instead of rejoicing at the thought of the coming of Christ.

They do not own that the acceptance of Christ means the acceptance of the believer; they do not believe that the Lord by His death has not only put away their sins but also dealt with their sinful nature completely; and this in order to their walking now in the Spirit, to be followed by a perfect conformity to Christ’s image in resurrection at His coming.

You cannot exaggerate what Christ has wrought for the believer; if you are resting on His redemption, all difficulties Godward are taken away. Then there is nothing left but the duty of serving Him now, and the delight of seeing Him then, as also of worshiping both now and for ever.

He has done all for you to bring you to God, and to take you out of every evil. How can the believer not rejoice in this? I believe with my heart that all Christians, I care not where or who they are, have joy and delight in the prospect of His coming.

Notwithstanding all their imperfect notions, I am sure all Christians love Christ here, and are waiting for Him too. I may shock some of my zealous premillennialist friends; but I believe this hope belongs to every Christian.

There may be false prophetic views which hinder; but as the new nature does go out towards Christ, so it longs for the day when it will be ever with Christ. Speaking generally, waiting for Christ supposes longing for His coming; but if put in certain forms and propositions, this may never be found out. If you want to show that men do not look for Christ’s coming, you can have abundant grounds for working on. On the other hand, I think God will give you sufficient evidence that all who are His really look and long for His coming.

Only let the children of God get clear of those clouds of noxious and wholesome vapors that are constantly rising up between the Lord and them.

If you bring in a millennium at the present time, it is hard to see Christ’s coming clearly; it acts as a cloud, which dulls the hope of that day. It may not destroy the hope, but one thus looks for the Lord’s coming in an imperfect manner.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION JEWISH
If you bring in a great tribulation first, this would enfeeble the hope greatly; it tends to produce a depressing effect, and to fill the heart with trouble.

The one puts a mistaken Hope between you and the coming of the Lord, giving meanwhile a dreamy excitement in waiting for that day. The other case gives you a sort of spiritual nightmare, an oppressive feeling in the thought that you must go through so dreadful a crisis.

I believe, my friends, that the Scriptures deliver us from both the dream and the nightmare. I believe they entitle the believer to wait for Christ as simply as a child, being perfectly certain that God is true and our hope blessed.
Again, I believe there is a tribulation to come, but not for the Christian. When He is speaking about the Jew, you can understand it well: for why does this great tribulation come upon him? Because of his idolatry; it is for him a moral retribution, with which the Christian has nothing at all to do. It is the judgment of God on the Jewish people; they who were called to be witnesses against idolatry at last fall into the dreadful snare of allowing the “Abomination of Desolation” to be put into the sanctuary of God {Matt. 24:15}: then the tribulation comes upon them. There is no connection between this and the Christian looking for Christ; and here the prophecy of the blessed Lord drops all allusion to anything of the kind. What He presents is, that when He returns, it is as Son of man, a title which is always used in reference to His coming in judgment, as in John 5:27:

The Father hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. When He comes as judge, He deals with the evil servant, cuts him asunder, and assigns him his portion with hypocrites.

**THE TEN VIRGINS**

Then comes the parable read tonight {Matt. 25:1-13}. I call your attention particularly to it. I have been long in coming to the ten virgins; but it is only right to disengage the Christian from the thought that the early part of this prophecy refers to him: such an idea completely perverts his judgment.

But we have also in our day to do with another and opposite error, an error that takes away the parable of the virgins from properly applying to the Christian. Now I suggest, on the contrary, that it has nothing to do with the Jewish remnant directly, who, are not called to go out to meet the bridegroom, and will not be exposed to the temptation of going to sleep. But many an one might have been a Jewish disciple and then have ceased to be one; practically such became Christians, in the true sense of the term, as Peter uses the word in his First Epistle, and Luke in Acts (11:26).

In this parable, then, the Lord shows the kingdom of heaven to be likened unto ten virgins. They all went forth to bear their testimony to Christ; the lamp was to give light. They were to shine as lights in the world; each taking her lamp went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

**THE TEN VIRGINS CHRISTIAN NOT JEWISH**

Now this is characteristic of the Christian. The Israelite did not separate from the world of which he was head. The Christian goes forth to meet Christ, who is gone to heaven. If he be a Jew, he leaves his ancient glories behind. Whether the greatest grandee in the Gentile world, or of the poorest condition, he alike abandons his old obscurity or his old grandeur. He willingly forgets all that is of the world. He is called out of every snare which can fascinate or arrest the heart of man. He has got a new and all-absorbing object in Christ; and Christ in joy and blessedness. It is not the judge coming to deal with the wicked. If a Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom, does such a parable fitly bring images of terror? The Christian knows well that the same Jesus who is the Bridegroom is the Judge; he knows well that Jesus will be the judge of those who oppose Him: but He is not the Judge and the Bridegroom in the same associations, or to the same persons. Where would be the sense of such confusion? The Lord purposely brings in the bright figure of the Bridegroom to those who are waiting for Him.

But there are other elements of moment. Here are persons true and false. They are not presented as one object: consequently the idea of the Bride is not the thought. When we talk about Christians, real or professing, we do not fix our mind on unity: we think of individuals who go forth. He was about to show profession, and so brings in foolish as well as wise virgins. It is Christ looking at Christians professing the Lord truly or falsely, not as the Bride of Christ. The Christians are all characterized by quitting every object on earth to meet the Bridegroom. Even the Jew, attached as he was to the old religion (and they had a religion which could boast an antiquity before which all others grow pale) -- the Jew leaves all to go forth unto Him, as says the Apostle in Heb. 13, “hearing His reproach.”

Here you have the same principle. As the Christian, even though a Jew, was called to leave all the old things behind, so here they went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps but no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

**THE OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT**

Is it true that the Jewish remnant at the end of the age are to have oil in their vessels? They will never have oil in their vessels till the Lord Jesus comes and pours the Spirit on them. We must remember oil symbolically means the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not merely the washing by the Spirit -- even were it vitally: I grant you the Jewish remnant will have that. They will be really cleansed by the Word in the heart. The disciples who will be found at the end of the age will not receive the outpouring of the Spirit till the Lord appears; they wait for that day. It is only when the kingdom appears that the outpouring of the Spirit will be for them. They will go through a very serious process first. When they see the Lord Jesus, they will mourn as for an only child. They will have a fountain opened in Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness; but the power of the Holy Ghost will be given only when they have seen the Lord. So far it is quite different with the Christian, who, as you know, receives the oil or unction from the Holy One while the Lord is away. The Jewish remnant will only receive it when the Lord comes back. Again, they will not go forth from Jerusalem until the tribulation is at hand. It is a fleeing from the enemy’s power and its consequences. It is a flight from the sore scourge in retribution and judgment for their iniquity; it is no going forth to meet in joy.

For the Christian has another course and hope altogether. Whether it be light or dark, the Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. What is the original hope of the Christian? It is our object and calling revealed from heaven. That object is Christ, the blessed One Whose coming he waits: hence he goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. Not
so the Jewish remnant; they expect to see the Lord coming to deliver them by the putting down of their enemies. The Christian waits to be called up out of the world; the Jew waits for the Lord to come into the world. It is a totally different expectation. The parable speaks solely of the Christian. It does not refer to the Jewish remnant.

THE FOOLISH VIRGINS

We shall see more proof of this. It is said that the wise took oil in their vessels: the foolish took no oil. This meets another error. It has been supposed that the foolish virgins mean Christians who are not premillennarians, which gives a very undue value to correct notions of prophecy. I grant you entirely that those who look for the Lord to come before that reign are in my judgment right; and I am quite sure that those who put the millennium before the Lord’s coming are mistaken. But I can never sympathize with those who put a slight upon such Christians as have not been taught as you and I. These are self-flattering delusions, and are mere manifestations that bear the brand of sect or school written on them. I am persuaded that the best blessings we have are those which God confers on the body of Christ. That is to say, all those in whom the Holy Ghost dwells -- those who rest on Christ and redemption. These are the men spoken of here. The Holy Ghost is a divine spring for sustaining testimony, as well as a divine power of understanding the Word of God.

The foolish virgins never had oil {Matt. 25:3}. Some ask how can they have had their lamps burning. The answer is easy. They could burn the wick: there is no mystery about that. The foolish virgins were not real Christians. The weakest Christian has the oil, as well as the strongest. The apostle John so tells not the fathers, nor the young men, but the babes, the little children. He tells the feeblest they have the unction from the Holy One (1 John 2:20). For those who had no oil could not be Christians. Hence a deeper evil is in question than denying the millennium to be after Christ’s second coming or before it. The heart was wrong as to the Lord -- a thing more momentous than right notions about prophecy.

If you have Christ, if you know the blood of sprinkling, if you rest on a crucified and risen Savior, you surely have the oil in your vessels. You are not one of the foolish virgins. Their folly consisted in something much more than in a right or wrong prophetic scheme. The foolish lived despising God and His grace; and, consequently, not having the Spirit of Christ, they were none of His. The foolish virgins have not the Holy Spirit; so the Lord says and deals with them.

We often think of the early Christians with their great advantages, we see that, many of the Scriptures applying to them fully -- we can only get the principle of them. But I will call your attention to the fact here that there are other Scriptures which apply more emphatically to us now. There is thus what I may call a divine compensation. We can only take the general spirit of what was said to the Corinthians. For instance, they had tongues; they had miraculous powers among them. You know that we have them not. There are certain persons who pretend to have them: wherever there are pretensions to such gifts, their falsity is soon found out.

The fact is that God, for the wisest reasons, has not been pleased to continue these miraculous powers. The present condition of the church would make it to be a moral impossibility that God should bestow any of these miraculous virtues. For if the Lord were to restore them now, I should like to ask where? Most people would begin with themselves. If the Lord were to restore them now on Christendom as a whole it would be to sanction, as if all right, a rationalistic Protestantism and an idolatrous Romanism.

The Lord could not thus sanction the broken fragments of His house, or put this honor upon its actual condition. We are ready to be high enough, we are prone enough to think more highly of ourselves than we ought, and the Lord will not help us to be more so.

But He has left what is infinitely better -- He continues everything -- due to Christ and good for the soul which walks with God. He has taken away nothing needful for edification. He still gives peace and joy in believing. Now as of old He puts this inward power in the church; but He marked it of old with a brilliant signature, as it were, before the world. Those who look for the restoration of these powers are not alive to the fallen condition of the church. I hold it to be most important to the Christian to know what the church was and what it is, and to grieve before God for the difference. I have no sympathy with the Christian now who is not a mourner because of the state of the church. It is well to have joy in the Lord, but we should be humbled about ourselves and the church. You ought to feel deeply this condition for the Lord’s sake. In this parable, you will observe, the Lord marks the failure from the original calling, “While the Bridegroom tarried, then all slumbered and slept” {Matt. 25:5}. There is a state of forgetfulness of the Lord’s return.

THE MIDNIGHT CRY

But now mark another thing: it is midnight, and there was a cry made, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go forth to meet Him” {Matt. 25:6}. Has that been fulfilled? I believe it has, or rather that it is being fulfilled now. The Lord has interposed to break the present slumbering condition of Christendom, doing so not only for the wise, but for the foolish.

Once more come the foolish virgins to the wise, saying, “Give us of your oil” {Matt. 25:8}; but this is beyond the Christian, and the wise bid them “Go buy for yourselves.” There is One Who sells, but freely, without money and without price: to buy even from an apostle is fatal.

There is only one means of procuring the oil. It is solely through Christ Himself, without money and without price. As the cry goes forth, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh,” many realize that they are not in a fit state to meet the Lord. They are troubled with the rumor of they know not what. The consequence, then, of this midnight cry is that a double
activity is going on. For the Lord is awakening those who know Himself, who are wise by His grace, to go forth and meet the Bridegroom. The others, if indirectly, are none the less powerfully affected by the cry and its effects.

**THE SHUT DOOR**

At length the Bridegroom comes, and “they hat were ready went in to the marriage, and the door was shut {Matt. 25:10}!”

Afterwards come the foolish virgins. Now they cry, but it is with horror and despair. In an agony they cry, “Lord, Lord, open to us” {Matt. 25:12}. But the Lord of peace, the Giver of life and glory, has only to tell them, “I know you not.” 2 Do not tell me this is said about real believers. It is said of the foolish virgins who had no oil; of those who bore the name of the Lord, but had not the Holy Ghost. Of and to them it was said that the Lord knew them not. “Watch, therefore,” says He, “for ye know neither the day nor the hour.”

There is no {true textual} authority for what follows (“wherein the Son of man cometh” {Matt. 25:13}). You have heard the names of Griesbach, Scholz, Lachman, Tischendorf; of Dean Alford, Bishop Wordsworth, and Dr. Tregelles in this country. I am not giving you a peculiar thought in the least, for all biblical critics worthy of the name agree in this omission as required by the best authorities. Copyists added the clause from Matt. 24, bringing in the sense of the coming Judge. But this is quite different from what the Lord here urges, which is the delight of meeting, yea, the going forth to meet Him, the Bridegroom. Man, as such, must be judged; all tribes of the earth mourn before the Son of man. But the calling and hope of the Christian is fraught with other and joyous expectations; and this spite of their unfaithfulness during the night whilst He tarried.

If the faithful and wise servant, contrasted with “that evil servant,” set forth the general place of the servant of the Lord, faithful or the contrary, the parable of the talents shows us those who trade with the goods of Christ, and that goodness in this work turns on confidence in Him and His grace (Matt. 25:14-30).

**Part Three:**

**Judgment of the Living Nations**

**Matt 25:31-46**

Then, from Matt 25:31-46, we have the judgment of the Gentiles, or all the nations, by the Son of man when He returns and reigns. Those who treated well or ill His messengers, “His brethren,” who proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom before the end, are severed to His right hand or left respectively, as the sheep or the goats. It is the judgment of the quick at the beginning of the millennial reign, as far as, the nations are concerned. But that judgment is final. It is not the judgment of the dead, or of the secrets of the heart. The one question for decision is their conduct towards His brethren, or the Jewish preachers of the kingdom after the Christians are gone from the scene. Faith only will enable any Gentile to deal with them kindly in that day; and those who do so inherit the kingdom. It is no question here of heaven or resurrection.

This last scene is clearly the third part of our Lord’s prophecy, the principle and nature of His procedure towards all the nations (as distinct from Israel, and, of course, from Christians) after He enters on “the kingdom.” At the beginning, when the Lord was here of old, as well as just before the end of this age, there will be an active testimony to the kingdom: only the final preaching will be in all the habitable world to all the nations, not as at first restricted to the land of Israel. Now the King is come and judgment of the quick proceeds accordingly. Mix this up with the judgment of the dead (the wicked dead, of course; for the righteous dead are supposed in Rev. 20:4 to be received long before, and the righteous living of the millennium do not die), and all is chaos. You lose the specific teaching both of Matt. 25:31-46, and of Rev. 20:12-15, the one being the Lord’s judgment of the Gentiles living on the earth (good and bad), when He comes to reign over the world, the other His judgment of the wicked dead raised after the millennial reign is concluded before the Eternal State.

The true view of the King, judging all the nations in Matt. 25, it will be observed, alone explains, first, why the King’s brethren should be regarded as a company distinct from the sheep; secondly, why there should be no scrutiny into all work, or ways of those who stand before the throne, but only the question how they behave to His brethren who are to carry the gospel of the kingdom among all the nations before the end comes.

These envoys being either slighted in hate or honored in love, the King now repays with interest the astonished Gentiles. Who does not see the contrast with the righteous and the unrighteous in the resurrection state? As the wicked will then feel in all its horrors their just and everlasting condemnation, so for the saints the perfect state will have come, and they shall know even as they are known.


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2. {This cannot refer to persons who were lost again, because in Matt 7:23 He says, “I never knew you.” Of His sheep He says, “I know them” (John 10:27). So those who come before Him for judgment He never knew.}
Jewish and Christian Expectation of Christ Contrasted

I am not without hope that, under the gracious teaching of the Spirit, the simple statement of the distinction we are going briefly to examine may be blessed to souls. Happy is it when we are brought to ponder on the riches of grace which God has lavished on us; and this in the spirit of children, not desiring to prove our own notions, but to learn the thoughts, purposes, and ways of God. Happier still when, in the communion of Him Who dwells in us, our delight is to be shown the various glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to adore.

His various glory, I repeat; for this the natural mind relishes not, but it is exactly what the Spirit loves and leads into (John 16:13-15). Hence it is that unbelief the scripture is a blank without heights and without depths. The purity of its sentiments, and the simple grandeur of its style, may be allowed and admired. But there are no land-marks, no chart, no star of Bethlehem to direct and cheer the believer’s way. His conscience is not in the presence of God, and therefore there is no true Christ in his heart. The Bible to him may be a very wonderful book, but that is all.

For professors of Christ is another snare. If it seem to be owned practically as that which reveals the divine way of salvation, almost every thing in it is made to bear on this one point. Warnings, threatenings, exhortations, invitations, instructions, commands, prayers, ordinances -- nearly all that Old and New Testaments utter is made to converge on what, to the flesh, really amounts to this, God helping us by His Son and Spirit to save ourselves. From this quagmire God would mercifully extricate His people; has He not taught all His children with more or less intelligence to rest upon the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ? Then it is that the vast field of the written word opens apace: the different displays which God has made of His character; and the effect of these dealings upon believers and unbelievers in the several dispensations, summed up in the person of Christ, whether viewed once here below, now in heaven, or by-and-by returning again. Thus His child, led of the Spirit, grows in knowledge, and begins to see the revealed past, present, and future, in their just proportions, because he begins to learn all in Christ, Whose mind he has (1 Cor. 2). In other words, he is learning to prove the things which differ.

Now, it may be a narrow, but certainly it is an important, part of the things which differ, that is suggested by the title to this paper. Nor would I pretend to sketch minutely the ways in which the estimate formed by a godly Jew respecting Christ’s advent is distinguishable from the hope set before the church in His future presence. Let us content ourselves with certain broad essential differences, which are nevertheless often confounded by Christians to the obscuring of their proper portion, and so far to the detriment of their souls. The testimony of scripture is so full and distinct that little reasoning is necessary; still its importance may well demand ample quotations.

The advent of a glorious Messiah to the earth was characteristically a Jewish hope. I speak not of traditional fables, but of the truths which the Jews saw and held fast in their scriptures. To such believing Jews, Messiah was the center and security of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; He was the accomplisher of all righteousness, blessing and peace in their land, Immanuel’s land. By Him they expected to be saved from their enemies and from the hand of all those that hated them, that so they might serve the Lord without fear all the days of their life. He was to cut off all the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the righteous; to save Zion and build the cities of Judah, that they might dwell there and have it in possession, and thus the seed of His servants should inherit it, and they that love His name dwell therein.

This is plain in the Psalms as the character of deliverance pleaded by the Jewish remnant -- not a rapture out of the earth, but a destruction of their enemies in it; a divine vengeance upon their enemies on earth, not a gathering to Jehovah for heaven. They looked, and will look, for Jehovah to go forth and fight against the nations He will gather at the latter end against Jerusalem; they will look for His feet to stand upon the Mount of Olives, and Jehovah shall be King over all the earth. Then, with David their king over Israel, restored as it were, from the grave and Ephraim and Judah united perfectly and for ever under the rule of the true Beloved, they expect to dwell in their land, and the heathen shall know that God Jehovah sanctifies Israel when His sanctuary shall be in their midst for evermore. They might read of a Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, but their hope was the presence and reign of the Messiah here below, in special connection with the Jewish nation and land. The following texts will still more plainly show the truth we have been stating.

Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I
shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession; Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Psa. 2:6-9).

For Jehovah the Most High is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet” (Psa. 47:2, 3).

Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion; on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge” (Psa. 48:1-3; 45; 47; 48.).

He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised. There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be Jehovah Elohim the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory.

Amen (Psa. 72:4-19).

I need not go more minutely through the Psalms, beyond directing attention to Psa. 128., as evidently in accordance with the remarks already made. So also Psa. 132:13-18. The inspired praises of Psalms 146-150 will then have their literal fulfilment. It is earthly joy under Messiah’s dominion, and all is in unison with the thoughts, feelings, associations, hopes, and triumphs of His people Israel.

The prophets are equally explicit.

In that day shall the branch of Jehovah be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when Jehovah shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And Jehovah will create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain (Isa. 4:2-6).

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given. And the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this (Isa. 9:6, 7).

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the nations; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And Jehovah shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt (Isa. 11:4-16).

And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones upon high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered
together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously” (Isa. 24:21-23). “And in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall he take from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of Jehovah rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill” (Isa. 25:6-10). “He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in Israel. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah (Isa. 65:17-25).

Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her; that ye may suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As o ne whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of Jehovah and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there:

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah (Isa. 66:1).”

And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith Jehovah, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of Jehovah; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers (Jer. 3:16-18).
Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that they shall no more say, Jehovah liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, Jehovah liveth, who brought up and who led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land (Jer. 23:5-8).

To this we may add as most express, chaps. 31, 32, 33.

In Ezekiel, the reader may consult chaps. 16, 20, 36, 37, 39, 40-48; also Dan. 7, 8, 9, 12; Hosea 1, 2, 3; Joel 2, 3; Amos 9: Obad.; Micah 4, 5; Hab. 3; Zeph. 3; Hag. 2; Zech. 2, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14; and Mal. 3, 4.

Another distinction which may be briefly noticed is that the Jews had the revelation of outward circumstances and ordered dates whereby to regulate their expectations. We need do little more than refer to the communications of God made to Abraham in Gen. 15, as well as others subsequently, for illustrations of this.

Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve, will I judge; and afterwards shall they come out with great substance (Gen. 15:13, 14).

Now it will not be disputed that the father of the faithful rejoiced to see Christ’s day, and he saw it and was glad (John 9:56); but it was through, and at the end of, a long course of years and trying vicissitudes as regarded his seed. Abraham was in no way waiting for that day as if it might happen in his own life or shortly after. He was perfectly certain that the day of Christ could not come for some centuries at least.

Full well he counted upon that day bringing in deliverance to his family, and hence, his joy. (See Gen. 49:10). Again, passing over intermediate predictions, the word brought by Gabriel to Daniel is even more detailed and with chronological points of a very defined character.

Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and shall have nothing. And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined” (Dan. 9:25, 26).

Hence it is plain that, if we suppose a godly Jew of that age to have understood the prophecy of the seventy weeks, he could not expect Messiah to come and be cut off till the expiry of nearly five hundred years. Ignorance might seek the living among the dead, but no believer with intelligence of this divine prediction could possibly look for the arrival and cutting off of the Christ previously to the revealed epoch. It would have been faith in him to have said, “I expect the Messiah after so many years, not before; for so hath the mouth of Jehovah spoken.”

With the church, on the contrary, the case is wholly different. Her hope is not the times of restitution of all things, but to be with the Christ in heaven as His bride; and as her hope is unearthly, so is it wholly unconnected with the times and seasons which characterized the expectations of Israel. Not that we are ignorant of these dates and epochs; but we know perfectly that the day of Jehovah so comes as a thief in the night -- a day of destruction whence there is no escape. But we are not in darkness that that day should overtake us as a thief. We are already children of the day, and when the day arrives, we shall come with the Sun of righteousness Who ushers it in. We shall have been with Him before the day breaks; for we know Him as the bright, the Morning Star, and the morning star He will give to him that overcomes.

Certain times and seasons, as we all are quite aware, must precede the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1). Thus we know that one week remains out of the seventy of Dan. 9, when the prince that shall come -- a Roman prince -- shall confirm covenant with the mass of the Jews for seven years. But, like another traitor and son of perdition, he shall put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him; he shall break his covenant (Psa. 55:20). The covenant with death shall be disannulled (Isa.28). “In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” This is followed by the abomination of desolation for its allowed term, “even until the consummation.” (Compare with Dan. 9; ch. 7:19-26). “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21). “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble: but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:7). “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Dan. 12:1).

The church knows these revealed periods, but knows them as connected, not with herself, but with Jerusalem and the Jewish people, Daniel’s people. The church does not wait to be gathered under a Messiah on earth, but to be caught up to meet Him in the air, and be ever with the Lord (1 Thess. 4): with Him in His Father’s house; with Him when the successive judgments (symbolized by the seals, trumpets, and vials) are falling on the earth; with Him when the marriage-supper of the Lamb is celebrated above; with Him when He wars with the beast and the false prophet; with Him, when we reign together for a thousand years; and with Him in the subsequent eternal state. “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” Surely, it is a blessed hope that the appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ is to
set to rights all things here below which are now out of course. Creation shall be delivered into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, and Israel be no longer blind but seeing. All Israel shall be saved, when the Redeemer comes out of Zion, and turns away ungodliness from Jacob. And if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles: how much more their fulness? If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?

If we look above, the long usurped possession of the air (Eph. 2:2; 6:12) shall be rescued from Satan and his angels; no longer shall he be permitted on high to accuse the brethren of Christ in the presence of God (Rev. 12): no longer will there be conflict with wicked spirits above. That old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, shall be bound and cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, before the last vain struggle when he is thrown into the lake of fire.

But it is important to see that not any {any of these things} nor all these things are our proper hope, which is to be translated, and meet the Lord Himself in the clouds. As it is said in John 14:3 “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” Is this on earth, or in heaven? Is it merely the honors of a displayed kingdom? or is it not the nearer and higher intimacy of the Son of God in the home of the Father on high? The disciples did not ask, nor did the Lord indicate, dates or signs when their rapture should be.

But in the prophecy of Matt. 24 He does give the sign of His coming and of the consummation of the age. In then meeting the enquiries of the disciples from their own Jewish point of view, He enters into the general facts respecting Jerusalem and Judea, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, &c., which were but the beginning of sorrows. The end was not yet, which should not come before the gospel of the kingdom was preached in all the habitable earth for a witness to all the nations. From Matt. 24:14 he describes the particular marks of the closing crisis up to His manifestation to all the tribes of the earth, and the complete ingathering of His elect (Jews) from the four winds. Of His elect earthly people this gathering must be, because when Christ, our life, appears, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. Thus the church and Christ are manifested at the same time in glory; whereas the elect described in Matt. 24 are only gathered after the Son of man’s appearing, and cannot therefore be the church. All the context, the more it is examined, proclaims them to be Jewish disciples, who at the signal of the setting up of the abomination flee, and so escape the unparalleled tribulation of those lawless scenes of the end; for their simple trust is in the Man of God’s right hand, “the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself.” (Compare Psa. 79, 80.)

But, as we have seen before, the passage in John’s Gospel has nothing to do with Jerusalem, or the earth, or earthly circumstances. John never speaks of a special tribulation for Jewish disciples at a particular time and place, but of the general tribulation we should count upon in the world at any time (John 16:33). So His coming is not merely deliverance to a persecuted Jewish remnant on earth, but to receive us to Himself in heaven, without one hint of time, place, or circumstances, that we might ever wait for Him as our hope.

Doubtless the church is to reign over the earth, the bright witness of the Father’s love; for the world shall then know that He loved her as He loved His Son, both being displayed in the same glory. And how blessed the ministry of the church in that day, serving the gladsome earth according to the grace which has called, kept, and glorified herself on high, the Bride, the Lamb’s wife! We shall inherit the earth; we shall judge the world and angels too in that administration of the fulness of times, when all things shall be gathered together in one in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him in whom we also thus obtained an inheritance. Joint heirs with Him, we shall share all He will rule as the exalted Man. And God hath put all things under His feet. Though we do not yet see all things put under Him, we do see Himself exalted; and when the day arrives for Him to take the dominion, it will be manifested that He is head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

The Old Testament prophecies, it cannot be denied, are full of the earthly glory. In the New Testament we have the mystery of God’s will made known to us, involving the inheritance of things in heaven as well as things on earth, and the church co-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ, as His body (Eph. 1:9-14). No prophets of ancient times had ever uttered such thoughts. It is not merely that such a portion was not understood; but it was not even revealed. It was kept hid in God, and is now revealed, we are told, to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. The old prophets had spoken of times of refreshing from the presence of Jehovah, when Israel, or at least a Jewish remnant, repent and are converted; they had largely depicted the times of the restitution of all things, when Messiah comes from the heavens which now receive Him (Acts 3). No doubt they foretold the rule of the heavens (Dan. 4), and anticipated the joy and peace of the world under that kingdom.

But the old prophets, however inspired, never predicted, much less did any know, that Christ will have her who is His body and spouse associated with Him, and enjoying all His love and glory in the heavenly places; though they did celebrate the time when the land shall be married, and Jehovah shall make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. The bride they sing of, in the Canticles and the Psalms, is an earthly bride. Very different is the church of which Paul speaks in Eph. 5. Very different the marriage of the Lamb, of which John tells in Rev. 19, as far above the espousal of the Old Testament as the heavenly glory of Christ exceeds His earthly, though all be perfect in its place.

Further, be it noted that, whether it be deliverance in
mount Zion and Jerusalem (Joel 2), whether it be judgment of the Gentiles in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3), with both we find wonders displayed in the heavens, and in the earth blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke; the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. Nothing of the kind is ever connected in scripture with the catching up of the church, whose only sign is the descent of the Lord Jesus to summon her into His presence in the air. His descent, and the saints’ consequent rapture, are nowhere described as events which the world is to behold. To them that look for Him Christ appears, but to none else, so far as scripture shows, until He is revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. His public revelation, in order to judge, is called "the day of the Lord," "the appearing," &c.; and it is certain that many signs will precede that day, and His "manifestation" to every eye. The apostasy must be ripe, and the lawless one be without hindrance; and the great tribulation be, out of which comes the innumerable Gentile multitude of Rev. 7, as well as the future unparalleled tribulation in Judea. But this is not all.

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet: and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt. 24:29-31).

But I would not dwell further upon these points of contrast, only praying that we may remember day by day, that our place, the church’s only right and befitting place, is to wait for Christ from heaven. It is not judgments that we expect to be in; it is not the hour of temptation we have to dread for ourselves (Rev. 3:10). Our business is to wait, as a heavenly Bride, for our heavenly Bridegroom. Those who link the church with earthly circumstances must be miserably disappointed: not so the hearts which the Spirit directs, animates, and sustains in the longing cry, Come, Lord Jesus. May it be so with us, brethren, increasingly as the moment, unknown to us, draws nearer! Amen.

*The Bible Treasury, New Series*, vol. 2.
There are few simple-minded Christian who, in searching into the prophetic word, have not felt the difficulty of reconciling the undoubtedly normal posture of the church in daily waiting for Jesus with the long train of successive events presented, e.g. in the Revelation. The principle, if not the measure, of the difficulty is the same, whether you understand the Revelation to be fulfilled in a brief eventful crisis, or to extend over a course of many hundred years {Historicism}. In either way, can one truthfully expect the Lord from heaven from day to day, if one is looking out for a series of numerous, and some, of them unprecedented, and all of them solemn, incidents to occur on earth, the gradual and accumulative evidence of His approach.

But it is certain that in the apostolic times, when the grace of God was proclaimed in its real power and freshness, when His word was most prized and best understood, and produced its loveliest effects, the saints were habitually expecting the Lord to come. In Him they had redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins; and they knew it. They were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Were they, therefore, satisfied? Was not the Spirit Himself, blessed divine Advocate though He be, yet was not He the earnest of glorious things to come? Doubtless they received Him as the Spirit of sonship, and not as a spirit of bondage unto fear (Rom. 8). Yet far from His leading them into rest and contentedness here below in the absence of Jesus, in the same chapter it is said, “Ourselves also, [besides the groaning creation,] which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” {Rom. 8:23}. It is the groaning of those who are justified by faith and have peace with God. It is the groaning of those who have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, and bearing witness with their spirit that they are children of God. It is the groaning of the adopted earnestly yearning for the full results of adoption; of those who, because they have known God’s grace in redemption forgiving their sins, look for more, for all, -- for the redemption of the body in the actual presence of the Savior, that they may be like Him and with Him for ever.

The aim, however, of these remarks is not to prove that the personal coming of the Lord is the hope of the church -- proofs easily found elsewhere. My desire is rather to convince those who know what is and was meant to be the hope of the church, that God, by no concurrent or subsequent revelation, ever interfered with the practical power of that hope. That He might give fuller details as to the growing iniquity of man, of the Jew, and especially of the outward professing body, and as to His own judgments upon each before the millennial reign; that He might describe in greater minuteness the circumstances of that reign and the events that succeed it, is not only possible, but that which He has done. But that He, on this or any other theme, corrects in one part of His word what is affirmed in another, is that which every Christian ought surely to repudiate from the bottom of his soul, in whatever modified form it may be insinuated.

The word of our God needs no apologies from man. Unhesitatingly believed, every part of it will be found to be perfectly true, though (from narrowness and imperfection in our apprehension) patient waiting on God is needed to avoid the systematizing of the human intellect, and to discover in what order God puts things together. Haste in deciding such questions only leads to forcing scripture, which will not yield; and hence the danger of framing one-sided hypotheses, which are only tenable by shutting the eye to the plainest scripture that contradicts them as hypotheses, though there may be elements of truth in them.

To apply this to the matter in hand, it is undeniable that the apostle Paul (to say nothing of others) invariably speaks of the coming of the Lord to take the church to Himself as that which might be at any moment, however He might tarry. But no necessary detention -- no chain of occurrences involving a period virtually -- no certain lapse of time -- is ever presented to the church as keeping Him in heaven. On the contrary, if he writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:51), it is “Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” Admitting that “we” is a representative word, not the persons addressed literally, but those standing in the same privilege; still will any one say that the apostle or the Corinthian saints knew that the moment would be deferred till they had fallen asleep? 1 Was it not calculated, beyond all cavil, to keep them in simple, constant expectancy of the Lord?

The Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:10), who were trained, from their birth to God, in looking for their Deliverer, were they mistaken enthusiasts? Or, did not the blessed work of the Spirit in their case consist not only in turning them from idols to serve a living and true God, but to wait for His Son from heaven? Did that wise and faithful servant, who knew

1. Nothing, it has been observed, more strongly proves the church’s constant expectation of the presence of the Lord for it, uncertain when this was to be, than the fact that it needed a particular revelation to individuals (such as to Paul and Peter), about their departure first, which so far modified their individual apprehensions. The general expectation of the church was not affected thereby.
what it was to mingle the service of a nurse with the affectionate care of a father, -- did he consider that blessed hope to be unsuited food for such babes? So far from it, that when he writes to them supplying some things that were lacking, the Holy Ghost impresses this great doctrine in such repeated and different modes as to demonstrate how cardinal a truth it was in the mind of God, and how influential as regards the communion and walk of His saints. It ramifies both Epistles, being not only found at least once in every chapter, but in some chapters occupying the most conspicuous place. (See 1 Thess. 1:3, 10; 2:19, 20; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-10, 23, 24; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 2:1-12; 3:5.)

Let us weigh the facts more. They had rejoiced in this hope of our Lord Jesus Christ from their earliest Christian career; they had patiently continued it through the Spirit; and the blessedness of such patience was sweet to the absent apostle, even as their work of faith and labor of love. True, they needed further light as to its circumstances, aid the Lord granted it. So immediately were they awaiting the Lord, that the decease of some of their number plunged them into deep sorrow. Not, I apprehend, that they for a moment doubted of the salvation of those who were gone. One no one that had the gospel in word only (much less knowing it in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as it came to them) could have such a doubt. But they feared that death had severed their departed brethren from the glorious hope, which they had so brightly burning before them, of being caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. They were gone and doubtless were happy; but would they not be absent from that crowning joy for which they themselves were waiting?

Here was the place (may we not venture to say?), if they had been mistaken in so waiting, to have corrected it. Here was the place for the apostle to write: -- We have been all had been mistaken in so waiting, to have corrected it. Here them in the same attitude of waiting which He had previously exact reverse is the fact. The Holy Spirit deliberately keeps signs yet; you must wait for them, and not for His Son. The now adds more, signs of His advent. You have not seen these that crowning joy for which they themselves were waiting? to meet the Lord in the air. They were gone and could have such a doubt. But they feared that death had the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as it came to them) gospel in word only (much less knowing it in power, and in the salvation of those who were gone. No one that had the sorrow. Not, I apprehend, that they for a moment doubted of the decease of some of their number plunged them into deep sorrow. So immediately were they awaiting the Lord, that the Lord cannot come before the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin arrive, which are to be judged in that day, yet is there a serious error in the English rendering of the last clause of v. 2, “is at hand.” The word usually rendered “at hand,” “near,” or “nigh,” is ἐγγύς, or ἐγγύς “come near,” as is known to scholars. The word ἑνδοτιμάτων, on the other hand, is never so rendered in the New Testament, save in the passage before us. On the contrary, occurring several times, it is used invariably in a way which excludes the possibility of such a rendering (more especially when it is, as here, in the perfect tense). The first occurrence is in Rom. 8:38. It is evident that here ἑνδοτιμάτως cannot mean things at hand. It is contrasted with μελλόντα, i.e. “things to come.” It signifies only and emphatically “things present,”

2. So all the critical editors such as Alford, Bengel, Griesbach, Knapp, Scholz, Lachmann, Tischendorf, &c.; and this only upon external evidence.
and is so rendered in the common Bible. See the same words and the same contrast. In 1 Cor. 3:22, again, in 1 Cor. 7:26, τήν ἐνοπτότητα τῆς ἀνάγκης is properly translated “for the present distress.” A distress not actually come, but only at hand or coming, would spoil the meaning. The next is Gal. 1:4, “this present evil world,” the only possible meaning of the word here. The next world, or age, will not be evil, and therefore “at hand,” or “imminent,” is shut out. Compare also Heb. 9:9, εἰς τὸν καιρὸν ἐνεστηκότα “for the time then present” (not “at hand,” which cannot be the true force).

All these, notice, are instances of the same tense as 2 Thess. 2:2. The only other occurrence is 2 Tim. 3:1, ἔνοπτητος, in the future middle. Here the English version renders it, “shall come.” Still, the meaning indubitably is not “shall be at hand,” which could have no point, but “shall be there.” To be impending merely was little: the grave thing was, that perilous times should be actually present. It may be concluded therefore, from an induction thus complete, that in all the other instances the authorized version is right, but in 2 Thess. 2:2 it is wrong. It is not conceivable to uphold both; so that, if right in 2 Thess. 2:2, the version must be wrong everywhere else. But we have seen, from the intrinsic meaning of the word, as well as from the sense imperatively demanded by the context, that in all the other cases the translators are justified. They were therefore mistaken here, and the proper rendering, in conformity with their own translation of the word in the same tense elsewhere, ought to be, “as that the day of the Lord is present.” So the Revisers give, “As that the day of the Lord is now present,” adding in italics the adverb, which is needless emphasis. The sense is strong and clear without “now.”

The Thessalonian saints had from the first known much affliction. They had notoriously suffered from their own countrymen, and this to such a degree that the apostle, in his earnest and watchful interest about them, sent Timothy to establish and to comfort them concerning their faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions. They knew that “we are appointed thereunto.” Nevertheless they needed comfort. The apostle had warned them before, that “we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know.” “For this cause when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labor be in vain.” But Timothy brought good tidings of their faith and love, and the apostle could break out into thanks and joy for their sakes before God, and he lets them know it in his first Epistle (ch. 3).

The tempter, however, was not to be discouraged, nor diverted from his wiles. They had been already taught that the Lord Himself was to come, and the saints, sleeping or living, were all to be changed, and to be caught up together to meet Him in the air, and so be ever with Him (ch. 4). They also knew that the day of the Lord was one of destruction and terror, unlooked for by the world: Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” (ch. 5).

Accordingly, Satan appears to have distracted the saints by the harassing statement that the day of the Lord was actually there, thus seeking to rob them of all profit and joy in the persecutions and tribulations which they were then enduring. Nor let any think it strange if, in a time of perplexity for the world and persecution of the church, the fears of saints might be wrought upon; particularly as they know that the day of Jehovah in the Old Testament by no means necessarily implies the personal presence of the Lord, though it looks onward to that anticipatively. Compare, for instance, Isa. 13, where God’s judgment of Babylon and the Chaldeans is so designated: “Howl ye, for the day of Jehovah is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty,” &c. (See also Joel 1:15, 2:1-11; Amos. 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:7, 14, 15, &c.)

In the second Epistle the Holy Ghost conveys the needed instruction. We ourselves,” says the apostle, glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and on them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” (2 Thess. 1:4-10).

The time of retribution is not when Jesus comes, but when He is revealed. For though at His coming the church is caught up, there is nothing yet of rettributive character. It is favor, not a process of judgment; whereas the revelation and the day of the Lord are, as is manifest, associated with judgment, and hence there is the public award of God then for the first time manifested to the world;

seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed.

Doubtless there is a tribulation, and even the great tribulation in the time of Antichrist, previous to the revelation of Jesus; as obviously there is rest to those who sleep in Jesus now; and there will be rest in a fuller sense when our bodies are changed, and we are caught up to be with Him. But both are wholly distinct from the public or retributive tribulation and rest here spoken of. It is the day of punishment with everlasting destruction to the adversaries, as it is the day when Christ comes, not to present the Church to Himself, nor

3. The words in the LXX. are ἐγγὺς γὰρ ἡμέρα Κυρίου. Will men defend a version of 2 Thess. 2:2 which make the Holy Spirit contradict there what He has unequivocally affirmed in Isa. 13:6-7? The Septuagint and the Greek Testament are in harmony here. It is the English version which is at fault.
to take them to mansions in the Father’s house, but to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed. For “when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” {Col. 3:4}. It is the open judicial dealing (not the hidden joy or blessedness, before, then, or afterwards,) which here enters into the scene.

Next, the apostle turns to the source of their agitation.

We beseech you, brethren, by “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled {2 Thess. 2:1}.

Assuredly the consolation administered here is not that Christ’s coming was a distant thing! Can it be that theologian upon theologian has desired to make of this fancied long and far off absence of the Lord a balm for the tried and fearful? Can it be that the poor church has but too willingly sipped the cup, and, heedless of His words, cheers herself on the delirious career of worldliness, and folly, and faithlessness to Him? “Lord, how long?”

Not so the Thessalonians. Full well they knew that His coming was to end their sorrow; and crown their joy. Under apostolic guidance they had looked, and the Holy Ghost had commended their looking, for Christ. Was it not the part of the evil servant to say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming {Matt. 24:48}? But Paul was a blessed and faithful servant, who never says anything of the sort. He uses the fact of the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him as a comfort against the anxiety created by the idea that the day of the world’s coming was a distant thing! Can it be that theologian after theologian has already worked: only [there is] one that now disturbeth him until he be out of the way. And then shall that lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and shall annul by the appearing of His coming {2 Thess. 2:6-9}.

No! the Thessalonian believers were not mistaken in waiting for the Son of God. It is not wrong to believe that “the Lord is at hand” (ἔγγυς), as the apostle pressed upon the Philippians when drawing to the close of his career. It is not wrong to establish our hearts because the coming of the Lord is drawn nigh (ἡγγικε, James 5:8). Nor does the language of the Spirit, in the passage before us, depict excitement from a too eager anticipation of this glorious event -- alas! that Christians should suppose we could too earnestly desire it. The expressions in v. 2 denote fright and agitation. The enemy sought to instill the idea that the day of the world’s judgment was come, and themselves obnoxious to its terrors. Where then was their hope to be caught up to the Lord and to come along with Him? Would it have been sorrow and fear, if Christ had come and they had been translated to meet Him in the air? Rather would it have been the object nearest their heart since their conversion. Their faith was growing exceedingly, and the love of every one of them all toward each other abounded. Nay, far from weakening that which he had already taught, the apostle prays for them in the last chapter of the Second Epistle, that the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ. That is, he confirms them in their expectancy of the Lord.

But the deceiver had afflicted them, not of course by presenting the coming of the Lord as an imminent thing, which was what the Holy Ghost had done, and which is for the church a hope of unmingled comfort, but by the report that the day of the Lord was actually present, -- “a day of darkness and gloomines, a day of clouds and thick darkness.” The apostle had already told them {1 Thess. 5} that they were not in darkness that the day should overtake

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4. The authorized version appears to be substantially right in thus translating ὑπὲρ, when we bear the context in mind. Such is the rendering of the Vulgate, as well as of Luther. Professor Schleiermacher also, though choosing the sense “concerning,” because of his interpretation, admits the sense “by” to be “an unquestionable one.” The fact cannot be disputed that “on account of,” “for the sake of,” are quite common renderings: which sense of the word, connected with expressions of prayer and entreaty, is pretty nearly equivalent to our “by.” None of the passages, such as Rom. 9:27; 2 Cor. 7:4, 9:8; Phil. 1:7, cited by Rosenmüller, Schleusner, Macknight, Whitby, or Elliott, is apposite, because not one occurs after such a verb as ἐρωτάω. Let an instance be, produced of ὑπὲρ after a word of beseeching, where it can be rendered in any other way. In certain cases, it is used, as Phærimum sait, ὑπέρ της πρε βηλοντους, but not, I believe, in a connection parallel to the present, where it assimilates to πρός, as Stephanus observes, and translates it “per: ut Greg. ὑπὲρ Χριστου διώσιοι τον τον Χριστου, καὶ τέκεος,”

5. There is a link of importance missed by the English translators between the mystery of lawlessness already working and the lawless one who is yet to be revealed. The germ was there in the midst of professing Christianity, which was at last to issue in so portentous a conclusion. Again, “wickedness” expresses the old and prevalent evil of man in all ages from the beginning. “Lawlessness” is the word used by the apostle, and exactly appropriate to the yet worse and special enormity, when the gospel is denied and the restraint of the law defied.
them as a thief. The tempter disturbs and confounds them with the thought that, as a thief, it was already come upon them; using, it would seem, some false spirit, or word, or letter [2 Thess. 2:2], to give to it the color of the authority of Paul himself. And how does the apostle defend them from such assaults of others, and fears of their own! For, let it be repeated, it was not high-wrought feeling as though Christ were at hand, but terror arising from their giving heed to the false representation that the day of the Lord was present, and they in tribulation on earth instead of being caught up to Jesus above.

The apostle at once brings them back to the “coming of the Lord” and their gathering together unto Him [2 Thess. 2:1] as their ground of comfort and protection against the alarms of the “day of the Lord.” As if he had said, The Lord Himself is coming, and you will be gathered to Him. When His day comes, you will be with him. You are already children of the day: and will come along with it, for you are to come to meet Him Who ushers it in. You therefore need not be troubled. Rejoice always. That day is not come. You will go to meet Him Whom the bride knows as “the bright, the morning Star” (Rev. 22:16, compared with 2:28); so that when the day breaks and the Lord appears, you too will appear with Him in glory. He and you introduce the day together -- that day of retribution when those who trouble you shall have trouble, and you, the troubled, shall have rest with us, when our Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance.

In harmony with this it is written in v. 8 that the lawless one will be destroyed, not simply by the coming of the Lora, but by a further step of it, by the appearing or manifestation of His coming.† This scene is given at length in Rev. 19:11-21, where the seer beholds, in the prospective vision, the heaven opened, and the rider, the Word of God, upon the white horse, issuing to judge and make war.

And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean the righteousness not of angels, but of saints (cp. v. 8). The saints are already with Him. They follow Him out of heaven, as His army. Christ, therefore, must have come before this to take them to Himself; for they have been with Him in heaven and leave it together, preparatory to the battle with the Beast and the kings of the earth and their armies. This then is not merely the coming of Christ, it is Christ appearing, and we with Him in glory. It is His revelation from heaven, taking vengeance. It is the day of the Lord, when sudden destruction comes. It is the shining forth of the presence of the Lord Jesus, or the brightness of His coming, which destroys that lawless one. 7

Matt. 24:23-31 falls in with this view.

For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be [Matt. 24:27].

It is His coming in connection with His earthly rights. Rejected of this generation as the Christ, He comes as Son of man (in which capacity He is never presented as coming to take the church).

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds [Matt. 24:29-31].

These are demonstrably not the church, because they are gathered subsequent to His appearing. The church, on the other hand, will have been translated before. For “when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory {Col. 3:4}. Our manifestation in glory cannot be after His manifestation. Christ and the church are to be manifested together.

Hence the signs specified in this chapter are demonstrably indices to elect Jewish disciples of His appearing. They are not to be regarded, therefore, as interfering with the posture of the church continually waiting for the Lord from heaven. They are signs for a remnant in special relation with Judaea, who will be awaiting the coming of the Son of man. No signs of this or of any other description were ever put before the church, as such, whereby to Judaea of the near approach of 7. If the reader is disposed to investigate further a subject so full of interest, he may derive much instruction, through the grace of God, by examining carefully the following Scriptures:

First as to ἀποκάλυψις, Rom. 8:19; 1 Cor. 1:77; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7, 13, and 4:13, compared with the cognate verb, Luke 17:30; 1 Cor. 3:13; 1 Pet. 1:5, and 5:1. Next, as to ἐμφανισθήσεται, 2 Thess. 2:8; 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:1, 8; Titus 2:13. Lastly, as to φανερωθή, Col. 3:4; 1 Peter 5:4; 1 John 2:28, and 3:2.

It is only needful to remark that, though (as already proved) we are not here below until the appearing of Christ, it is only then, and not before, that the result of faithfulness, or the want of it, will be manifested. The laborer is to work patiently, and it may be hiddenly, in view of that day. Though still the παρουσία, it is more than the presence of the Lord; it is the revelation, appearing, or manifestation, as the case may be. Be it noted, further, that the appearing of Christ is still His coming, although His coming does not necessarily mean His appearing. Thus, when Christ comes to take the church first of all, it is His coming, but not His appearing, save to them that look for Him. But when afterwards He is revealed in view of the world, vindicating the ways of God both as to His enemies and His friends, it is still His coming, while, as a distinctive thing, it is His day, or the epiphany of His presence, as it is termed in 2 Thess. 2:8. The recent Swiss version renders the entire verse thus: “Et alors sera r´eleve l’unique, lui que le Seigneur destruira par l’esprit de sa bouche, et rendra impuissant par l’apparition de son arrivee (ou presence).”
Christ to take her to Himself. On the contrary, what the Holy Ghost taught the church is, to a simple mind, inconsistent with such indications: she was to be expecting always, because she knew not the moment of His coming.

The apostle (1 John 2:18) would have even the babes to know that it is the last time; and this, not from the spread of the Spirit of Christ, but from the presence of many antichrists. But, although they had heard that the Antichrist should come, no signs to be seen, no evils to reach the climax, no specific tribulations, are ever put before them, as events necessarily retarding the coming of the Lord to take the church. For the Bride the one heavenly sign is the presence of the Bridegroom Himself. But for a converted remnant of Jews, of whom the Lord has graciously thought in the instructions of Matt. 24, there are signs which will be assuredly given in due time before the coming of the Son of man.

Now, it is precisely here that the Revelation affords so distinct a light, showing us the position of the glorified in heaven, Christ having come and taken them to Himself; and afterwards, during the interval of our absence in heaven before we appear along with Him, God’s dealings, testimonies, judgments, and deliverance on earth. The Epistles gave as simply the fact of the rapture of those saints but did not inform as to the length of the interval before the appearing and the kingdom. That such an interval existed might have been gathered: but whether long or short, or how filled up, does not appear in the Epistles. The Revelation furnishes that which was lacking upon the subject, and connects, without confounding, the church caught up to the Lord on high, with certain witnesses to be raised up during the closing term of the age on earth before He appears in judgment.

As for the relative bearings of the different portions of the New Testament, it may be said in general, that the Gospels have a character peculiar to themselves. Certainly it is not an exclusively Jewish condition, neither is it a proper church condition, but a gradual slide, in John more marked than in the others, from the one to the other. The Lord Jesus, rejected, was with His disciples here below. The Holy Ghost, Who of course was then as ever the faith-giving, quickening agent, was not yet given, i.e. in the new unprecedented way of personal presence as sent down from heaven, because that Jesus was not yet glorified {John 7:39}. Hence the disciples, although possessing faith and life eternal (John 6:35, 47, 68, 69), were not yet baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body. (Compare Acts 1:5 with 1 Cor. 12:13). In a word, the church was not yet built nor begun to be built: “Upon this rock,” says the Lord, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18).

On the other hand the Acts historically, and the Epistles doctrinally, describe a different state of things as then existing: Jesus absent and glorified in heaven; the Holy Ghost present and dwelling on earth in the saints, who were thereby constituted one body, the church. Christ had taken His place as Head of the body above, and the Holy Ghost sent down was gathering into oneness with Him there, into membership of His body, Who is Head over all things. Such is the mystery of Christ, which it was emphatically given to the apostle Paul fully to make known. And as the Gospels may be regarded as the preparatory transition out of Jewish relations to the blessed elevation on which the church rests, the Revelation answers as the corresponding transition from the church one with Christ in heavenly places, by various steps or stages, down to those Jewish relations which for time dropped out of sight in consequence of the calling of that heavenly body.

The doctrine of the church is clearly concurrent with the one hope, which is found in the intermediate part of the New Testament. For along with the truth of the peculiar calling of the church, as the body commenced by the descent and indwelling of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and thenceforward guided and perpetuated by Him -- along with this truth, it will be found that the peculiar aspect of the coming of the Lord, for which I am here contending, stands or falls. None of the school of interpreters commonly called “the Protestant school” understood by the church anything more, at best, than the Augustinian notion of an invisible company from the beginning to the end of time. None of them, therefore, has an adequate idea of the new and heavenly work which God began at Pentecost by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The consequence is that, if they read of saints in Daniel, in the Psalms, or in the Revelation, they are at once set down as of the church. If they read of “this gospel of the kingdom” in Matt. 24:14, or of “the everlasting gospel,” it is to their minds the same thing as what Paul calls “my gospel,” the gospel of the grace of God preached now. Hence follows, and quite fairly too, a denial of any speciality in the walk and conversation of the saints since Pentecost, and a general Judaizing in doctrine, standing, conduct, and hopes. It is also a simple and natural result of this, that all Protestant interpreters, if they admit a personal advent at all to introduce the millennial reign, present as the hope of the church that which is, in fact, the proper expectation of the converted Jewish remnant; viz. the day of the Lord, the Son of man seen by all the tribes of the earth, and coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Nor is the truth of the church unknown to the Protestant interpreters only; it is equally an object of dislike to most of the Futurist school. And it is my conviction that the two baleful heresies, which have brought such shame upon the revival of prophetic study towards the beginning and the close of the years 1830 to 1850, are intimately connected with the rejection of this grand truth. For an error touching the church cannot but affect Him Whose personal presence is what is so essential to it; and that which dishonors the Spirit goes far, in the long run, to disfigure or deny the person and work of Him of Whom the Spirit is the vicar.

In the Epistles, it is beyond doubt that the church is continually addressed, as if there were no understood,
The prophecy of Daniel had already revealed the leading features of the interval during which “the prince that shall come” plays his terrible role. “And he shall confirm a covenant” [see margin and cp. Isa. 28:15] “with the many” (i.e. of Daniel’s people, the Jews) for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on account of the protection of abominations a desolator shall be, even until the consummation (or gathering) of the saints on high; His day will judge the world here below. The prophecy of Daniel had already revealed the leading features of the interval during which “the prince that shall come” plays his terrible role. “And he shall confirm a covenant” [see margin and cp. Isa. 28:15] “with the many” (i.e. of Daniel’s people, the Jews) for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on account of the protection of abominations a desolator shall be, even until the consummation (or gathering) of the saints on high; His day will judge the world here below. The prophecy of Daniel had already revealed the leading features of the interval during which “the prince that shall come” plays his terrible role. “And he shall confirm a covenant” [see margin and cp. Isa. 28:15] “with the many” (i.e. of Daniel’s people, the Jews) for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on account of the protection of abominations a desolator shall be, even until the consummation (or gathering) of the saints on high; His day will judge the world here below. The prophecy of Daniel had already revealed the leading features of the interval during which “the prince that shall come” plays his terrible role. “And he shall confirm a covenant” [see margin and cp. Isa. 28:15] “with the many” (i.e. of Daniel’s people, the Jews) for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on account of the protection of abominations a desolator shall be, even until the consummation (or gathering) of the saints on high; His day will judge the world here below. The prophecy of Daniel had already revealed the leading features of the interval during which “the prince that shall come” plays his terrible role. “And he shall confirm a covenant” [see margin and cp. Isa. 28:15] “with the many” (i.e. of Daniel’s people, the Jews) for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on account of the protection of abominations a desolator shall be, even until the consummation (or gathering) of the saints on high; His day will judge the world here below. The prophecy of Daniel had already revealed the leading features of the interval during which “the prince that shall come” plays his terrible role. “And he shall confirm a covenant” [see margin and cp. Isa. 28:15] “with the many” (i.e. of Daniel’s people, the Jews) for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and on account of the protection of abominations a desolator shall be, even until the consummation (or gathering) of the saints on high; His day will judge the world here below.
represented emblematically is totally different from what is revealed as connected with either, when the moment comes to leave heaven for the purpose of judgment upon the beast, &c.; or from what is revealed touching the reign for a thousand years subsequent to that judgment: that is, in Rev. 19:11, and in 20:4-6. For can the scene in Rev. 4, 5 be interpreted consistently with any view, save that of the church being actually caught up and completed in the presence of God? It is a quite distinct thing from our sitting in heavenly places in Christ. Such is the subject of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Neither is it the same thing as the boldness which the partakers of the heavenly calling have even now to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. Such is the subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the high-priesthood of Jesus is dwelt on at length, and the liberty which we have in consequence to draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith. For it is still faith, and not actual possession, however it may be, through the power of the Holy Ghost, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

But quite distinctly the purpose of the Revelation is to disclose the dealings of God (whether the facts be expressed or understood), -- but dealings which involve a certain condition of things that was future, if considered in relation to the circumstances looked at in the seven Epistles, "the things" in short "which must be after" those actually subsisting at this time. Nor can Rev. 4, 5 be supposed to describe the blessedness of the spirits of the saints previous to the coming of Christ for the church. How could the departed who are with Christ be in fairness symbolized by twenty-four elders? that is, by an image evidently borrowed from the full courses of Jewish priesthood. The whole church, and not a part only, is comprehended in the symbol. But this can only be after the dead in Christ rise first, then we which are alive and remain are caught up together with them in the clouds, and so to be ever with the Lord. Accordingly, here they are represented as in heaven, the Lord being also there; and although made kings and priests even when on earth, still the time is not yet come for the exercise of government.

In beautiful harmony, therefore, with this peculiar and transitional period during which they are removed from the world, they worship above. But the saints below are not forgotten. Those above have golden harps and golden vials full of odors, "which are the prayers of saints." And they sing a new song, celebrating the worthiness of the Lamb to take the book and open the seals, not only because He was slain and had redeemed themselves, but had made them, i.e. these saints, to their God, kings and priests. And they should reign over the earth. The fulfillment is seen in Rev. 20:4-6: the reigning with Christ not merely of those symbolized by the elders, but also of the Apocalyptic suffers after that on earth.

Moreover, it is clear on the one hand, that the lightnings, thunderings, &c., suit neither the day of grace nor, the millennial state. Earth is certainly not then brought under the power of the blood of Christ, when these symbols will find their accomplishment. On the other hand, it is equally clear that there are saints on earth, while the twenty-four elders are before the throne above. That is, it is neither the millennial nor the present state; but an intermediate period of a peculiar nature, in which we have the throne, not of grace as now, nor of displayed glory as by-and-by, but clothed with what has been justly termed a Sinai character of awful majesty attached to it. It is judicial. But those above exercise their priesthood in the presence of God as the full completed chief-priests. Hence the symbol of twenty-four elders round the throne, at the time when, as all confess, earth is still unreconciled, however there may be, in the next chapter, the anticipative song of every creature. If this be true, it follows that the Lord's coming to meet the saints takes place between Rev. 3 and 4 (if the thought be pursued, which I doubt not, that csp. 6-19 will be fulfilled in a rapid crisis, room being left there for His coming described in 1 Thess. 4 and elsewhere.

Then the proper prophetic part begins, when of course the main action of the book goes on subsequently to the removal of the church. It is plain that another character of testimony from that of the church properly is announced. For God Himself is revealed in ways different from those which He is displaying now; that is to say, not as showing the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus, but in the chastening judgments of the seals, trumpets, and vials, preparatory to the great day of the Lord which Rev. 19:11 ushers in.

On this coming state of things Daniel compared with the Revelation will be found to cast and to receive much light. For it seems plain that the saints of the Most High or heavenlies, of whom we read in Dan. 7, identify themselves with the saints who suffer under the beast, after the rapture of the church and before the Lord's appearing. They keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. This, be it noted, is the Spirit of prophecy. Yet, though they are not of the twenty-four elders, they will have their blessed and holy part in "the first resurrection."

Let it be remarked, that this term has nothing to do with the question whether all are raised at the same time. It simply describes the condition of those who rise and reign during the thousand years, as distinguished from those who do not rise till that period is ended. The truth of this seems manifest from the fact that Christ has part in the first resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20); yet He nevertheless rose before the church more than 1800 years at least. Hence the thought is not forbidden of certain saints being raised who stand and suffer after the church is gone.

The symbol of the twenty-four elders continues unchanged throughout the course of the book, till Rev. 19. They enter into God's ways and judgments, as interested in whatever affected His glory, as may be seen in Rev. 4, 5, 7, 11, 14,

9. In the text preferred by some critics which omits ἄρα ὧν ἤξοκος, "them," the sense is general, laying stress on the Lamb's having redeemed "out of every tribe," &c. It is the blessed fact so glorious to Him, rather than bringing its objects into prominence. But as most accept the pronoun, the observation founded on it is left.
19. But in ch. 19 there is a striking change. After the opening scene of the rejoicings over Babylon the elders no longer appear. The time for the marriage being come (and how evidently the church therefore is still viewed in the Revelation as unmarried), the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, is only then announced as made ready.

The heavenly joy and the Bridegroom and His bride being thus incidentally glanced at, He takes a new aspect, for the day is about to break upon the world; and so do we, for we will have gone long before to be ever with the Lord, and if He is about to appear, so are we along with Him in glory. Hence, in the eleventh verse {Rev. 19:11}, the prophet sees heaven opened, and a white horse, and He that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. In unison, therefore, as He thus comes to smite and rule, the armies which are in heaven follow the Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful. These expressions are sufficiently clear to determine who are meant by “the armies,” if any one should have a doubt. It is the glorified who were in heaven following Christ, in the capacity of His hosts, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Contrasted with the marriage supper of the Lamb, all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven are invited to the great supper of God. The prophet sees the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and His army. The result all know, as it ought never to be doubted (vv. 17-21).

In Rev. 20 follows the angelic binding of the dragon for a thousand years, and the parenthetical revelation of the sitting on thrones, or, at least, of the living and reigning with Christ, during that period, of such as had part in the first resurrection. They will not cease to be priests of God, though their office may be discharged in a different way from the resurrection. They will not cease to be priests of God, in the capacity of His hosts, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

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It is a prominent feature of the book, that in it is traced the sovereignty of God, not only in His purposes regarding the church property so called, but in His gracious ways with an election from among Jews and Gentiles subsequently. Thus, after the glorified are seen in completeness in heaven, under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned elders (chs. 4, 5), we hear in Rev. 6:9-11 of saints suffering, yet crying for vengeance. The announcement to them is that they should rest yet for a little, until their fellow-servants and brethren, doomed to be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. Vengeance should not arrive till then. These are evidently not the church, but saints on earth after the glorified are in heaven, their sufferings and cries to the Lord accord much with the experience detailed in the Psalms. Still, whether Jewish or Gentile saints, it is not named here.

In Rev. 7 we have a numbered company out of all the tribes of Israel, sealed with the seal of the living God; and after this an innumerable crowd out of all nations, &c., who are characterized as coming out of the great tribulation, and as having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. These groups are evidently distinguished from, if not contrasted with, each other; and they are still more markedly shown to be different from the glorified. For we have the facts not only of a certain defined tribulation out of which these said Gentiles come, but of the elders (i.e. the confessed symbol of the glorified) still represented as a separate party in the scene (Rev. 7:11).

Under the trumpets again it, is that we find the prayers of “all the saints” alluded to, who are of course supposed to be still on earth (compare Rev. 8:3, 4, with v. 8), and an implication of the sealed Jewish remnant being in the sphere, though saved from the effects of the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:4).

Further, in Rev. 11 are seen the two witnesses, prophesying in sackcloth, and killed; in Rev. 12, the woman persecuted by the dragon, who wars with the remnant of her seed that keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus. This evidently is accomplished by the Beast of Rev. 13, which makes war with the saints and overcomes them.

Rev. 14 consists of a sevenfold sketch of the dealings of God, which brings the crisis to a conclusion: the hundred forty and four thousand associated with the Lamb on Mount Sion; the everlasting gospel summoning all to fear and worship God because of the proximity of His judgment; the fall of Babylon; the declaration of torment for the Beastial worshippers; the blessedness henceforth of those dying in the Lord; the harvest of the earth (out of which were redeemed the one hundred and forty-four thousand, as the first-fruits to God and the Lamb); and lastly, the vintage of the same. The reader has only to weigh vv. 12, 13, in order to have the foregoing remarks confirmed. Even here we have the patience of saints described just before the harvest, the portion too, not of the glorified (for we shall not all sleep), but of a special class of sufferers here below, while the glorified are hidden above.

In Rev. 15 (preparatory to Rev. 16, i.e. the seven
outpoured bowls of the wrath of God) is heard the song of the conquerors over the Beast, celebrating the works of the Lord God Almighty and the ways of the King of the nations. Compare also Rev. 16:5, 6, 15; 17:6; 18:4-6.

Now it will not be forgotten that to those who kept the word of Christ’s patience (Rev. 3:10) the promise was to be kept (not in, or during, but “from” the hour of trial, out of the [hour of the] fearful tribulation which is in store for the dwellers upon earth. But in the preceding scriptures it is clear that after Christ has fulfilled His promise in the translation of the glorified to heaven, there are, saints on earth, both from among Jews and Gentiles, who suffer throughout the tribulation. And these Apocalyptic sufferers are described in Rev. 20:4 as having part, equally with those glorified, in the first resurrection. For that text discloses, first, the general place of the glorified in the millennial reign, “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.” Next come those killed in the earlier persecution of the book (Rev. 6:9-11), “And I saw the souls of those that were beheaded because of the witness of Jesus, and because of the word of God.” Thirdly are the later witnesses for God, “and those who had not worshipped the beast,” &c. (Rev. 15:2). Those saints, who were called and suffered after the rapture of the glorified are emphatically mentioned, because it might have appeared that they had lost all by their death. Not members of Christ’s body before He comes for His own, they share not in the rapture; not protected from death during the prevalence of the Beast, they cannot be the living nucleus of Jews, or of Gentiles, saved to be the holy seed on earth during the reign of Christ. The two later classes suffer, are cut off, but are not forgotten. “They lived and reigned with Christ the thousand years,” as well as the first general class.

Thus the truth, brought to light in the Epistles to the Thessalonians, is assumed in the view which the apostle John was the honored servant to enunciate -- viz., the blessed condition and holy employ of the glorified round the throne and the Lamb, after their removal from earth, but previous to their appearing with Christ in glory.

The central part of the Revelation then appears to corroborate, on an irreproachable basis, the truth that the glorified will be taken away and fulfil the symbols we have been noticing, previous to the day of the Lord. Daring that same time other saints are still groaning and shedding their blood like water here below (Psa. 74, 79).

Such seems to be the main key which unlocks an important portion of the book, and confirms the view, so bright to the renewed mind, of going to meet the Lord, without one earthly obstacle between. Thus is kept unblunted the point and energy of a truth only revealed in the New Testament. For the Old Testament spoke of His coming with all His saints, not for them; of His appearing in glory to the confusion of His enemies; not of His descending to meet His friends, when we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed and caught up together in the clouds. And hence, it would seem, the emphatic language of the apostle, conscious that God was by him revealing a new thing to faith. For in 1 Cor. 15 he says, “Behold I show you a mystery,” and in 1 Thess. 4 “This we say unto you by the word of the Lord.” How sweetly do the closing appeals tell upon the heart of him who has an ear to hear!

I am the Root and the Offspring of David; the bright, the morning Star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come.

It would be to lose or at least to misuse the prophetic sayings of this book, were we to have any other hope than that Jesus is coming quickly (Rev. 22:7). It is well to read in their light the signs of the times: knowing the awful end, we can thus detect the principles now at work.

But it is a mistake to construe of such signs obstacles to the coming of the Lord; to say, until I know the arrival of this or that precursor, I cannot in my heart expect Jesus. Blessed be God! such is not the language of the Spirit. The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Are these the words of mere feeling, unguided by spiritual understanding of the mind of God? As a fact, we know that the Lord has delayed; but He is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness. He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But who will say that it is conceivable to be looking for the Lord, wholly uncertain of the time of His advent, and at the same time to have the revealed certainty of a number of events which determine the year, or, it may be, the day?

That Jesus will arise, the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings (Mal. 4), is clear; and we know that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13). But “this same Jesus” is far more than the supreme power of righteous government on earth. He is known to the church, at any rate, as the bright, the morning Star. Blessed light of grace, ere the day breaks, to them who watch for Him from heaven during the dark and lonely night! “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” The weakest Christian too can join: “and let him that heareth say, Come.”

“He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I am coming quickly. Amen; come, Lord Jesus.”

The Bible Treasury, New Series, vols. 1 and 2.
The Coming and the Day of the Lord Viewed Morally

2 Thess. 2:1, 2

My object tonight is not so much to prove the certainty of the Lord’s return as to endeavor to set forth its value, and to show how it connects itself with all that is most precious morally in God Himself, and therefore, like all other truths, bound up with Christ. I therefore shall not so much speak to souls that have never heard -- or have not in some measure received -- the general testimony of scripture to the coming of the Lord Jesus, as take a somewhat comprehensive glance, assuming that those who are now present have already to a certain extent made this truth their own.

One difficulty from which souls have suffered is this, that they confound two distinct parts of the Lord’s coming. We have them both brought before us in the two verses just read. “We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him” (2 Thess. 2:1). Here it is scarcely possible to avoid some perception of the object of the Spirit of God in what He is applying to the brethren. He beseeches the brethren by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and their reunion with Him on high, that “ye be not soon shaken in mind.” It is clear that the Holy Ghost used the presence of Christ and its effect in gathering the saints to Him as a motive of comfort and stay to their souls in the face of agitating rumors. They were therefore not to be “soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is present” (or “come”).

It seems superfluous to dwell particularly on what has been often done before. I need not now stop to prove that the reading is the day of “the Lord” rather than “Christ,” or that the version is not “at hand,” but “present,” or actually arrived. I am entitled to both points as already ruled. No doubt this may be somewhat startling to those who have not examined the subject fully, but it is now conceded by competent scholars everywhere; even the last point is generally admitted by persons who were themselves originally and strongly opposed. It is simply a question in fact, first, of the actual title that the Spirit of God wrote, and next of our giving the last word its true and regular force. No critic of weight any longer hesitates to receive Κυρίου for the vulgar Χριστοῦ. The meaning of ἐνεστήκεν has been more questioned. Certain however it is that what is translated here being “at hand” never means this in scripture, if indeed it ever means so anywhere else; but it is sufficient for my purpose to say that the Spirit of God never employs it in that sense. When He means “at hand,” He uses a different expression.

Deceivers

The report spread was that the well-known day of trouble was already come. Of course those who spread abroad such a rumor must have taken the day of the Lord in some spiritual way, because it was very evident that the world at large abode much as before, and that judgment-day in a literal sense was not as yet. There were trials, persecutions, and troubles of various kinds at that time, which were taken hold of in order to make out that the day of the Lord in some sort was already arrived. Nor is this by any means an uncommon thing in the history of souls or of Christendom. There have been several epochs before in the world when people pretended that the last day was come. And we may find something that may help you in this point of view in the second Epistle to Timothy, where we learn those were not wanting who propagated the notion that the resurrection was past already {Preterism now}. Clearly they must have taken the resurrection in some figurative way to set up such a pretension. But, understand it as they might, their doctrine is certain. However we may explain, or try to explain, the character and grounds of the errors which the Spirit of God guards against in both passages, we must own the fact and the plain meaning of the words. The false teachers in the one place insisted that the day of the Lord was arrived, and in the other they said that the resurrection was already past, or had actually come. The truth is that neither one nor other could be till Christ Himself had come; and this is what the Spirit of God pre-supposes more particularly in the very verse before. “We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is present.” Do not believe that it is set in. Do you not know that the Lord Jesus is coming to gather you to Himself first?

Now the Thessalonian saints were feebly aware of this, not at all clear as to it. They had been lately led to expect that the day of the Lord might somehow fall with its troubles before the Lord Jesus came -- the blessed object of hope for the believer. That is, they did not know the right mutual relation between the day of the Lord and the coming of the Lord. They had seen in the Old Testament, where the day of
Jehovah is frequently spoken of, that a special time of disaster on any nation is called “the day of the LORD,” as for instance with Egypt, or Babylon. So here it would appear from the first Epistle to the Thessalonians that the believers were going through considerable trouble; for the apostle was afraid that Satan might tempt them because of their tribulation. The enemy did take advantage of this by a misuse of the Old Testament, and false teachers pretended that the day of terror and trial, of clouds and darkness, was already come. No, says the apostle, we beseech you by the coming of our Lord Jesus, and our gathering together unto him, that ye be not troubled by anything of the sort. That day is not come.

These false teachers, it is plain from what follows, were not merely deceived; some at least were deceivers. This is certain from the fact that they pretended to have a letter written by the apostle Paul to the effect that the day of the Lord was actually come. There are, or have been, Christians who apply this to the first epistle. They are mistaken. The language will not bear a reference to that epistle. If the apostle had meant his first epistle, he would have said, “By letter from us,” or “by our letter.” He on the contrary speaks after another sort, “by letter as from us”; that is, “by letter purporting to be through us.” “As from us” does not mean that it really was, but that they said it was. In short, therefore, it was not a misunderstanding of the inspired Epistle to the Thessalonians, though they may have sought to extract some support from it; but what the apostle here warns against is, that they had gone so far as to present a pretended letter from the apostle to the effect that the day of the Lord was already come.

**Apostasy and the Man of Sin Arrive Before the Day of the Lord**

Then in the remaining part of the chapter, from the third verse, the apostle gives them another ground against this thought. In short, he says that the day of the Lord cannot come until there is the falling away or the apostasy, and the man of sin is revealed -- two great stages of evil which must be fulfilled before the day of the Lord comes. For this there is a very simple reason. The day of the Lord supposes divine judgment executed on an evil state of things on the earth. In the Old Testament we find it also in a preparatory or providential way; but the New Testament only speaks of it in its complete form, when our Lord Jesus will Himself be the executor of that judgment. Now there was the point in which these deceivers were mistaken (for very possibly they were deceived while at the same time they were deceivers): the New Testament only points to the day of the Lord in its final and full sense. The attempts, therefore, to apply the scriptures of the New Testament in a preparatory or providential way were altogether erroneous. That day could not come, he says, “except there come the falling away first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.” Then he develops the dreadful character of the man of sin, and explains that the ripe and manifest evil which is to be judged when our Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire is to be the result of what was already secretly at work. He says “the mystery of iniquity” (or lawlessness) “doth already work; only there is one who now letteth” (or hindereth) “until he be taken out of the way, and then shall the lawless one be revealed.” I prefer the word “lawlessness” instead of “iniquity” in v. 7, and “lawless one” instead of “wicked” in v. 8, because the apostle means not so much the general evil that is in the world as a very special consummation both of the principle and of the practice of lawlessness, and then of a certain lawless personage that is singled out in the scripture as the object of divine judgment at the close.

**The Antichrist**

Thus it is seen we have the connection of the mystery or secret of lawlessness which was already at work with that result. It was going on when the apostle wrote; and the hidden leaven of evil, the mystery of lawlessness, will continue to work until it issues in this person, the lawless one, when it will be no longer secret but an open manifestation, defying God and trampling on all truth in the world -- a complete abandonment of all revelation, and a rising up in personal pride and antagonism against the Lord Himself. This is the lawless one or the Antichrist of St. John. I do not mean antichrists, but the Antichrist who is spoken of as the great object of divine dealing when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven. So he says here, “Then shall that lawless one be revealed whom the Lord Jesus” -- for so it is written, the word “Jesus” having dropped out of the common Bible, “whom the Lord Jesus” -- “Shall consume by the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness” (or rather shining forth, ειςφωνειω，“of his coming.”

**The Coming and Day**

Now I have read this because it makes plain a very important point for those who have not seen it before. “The coming” of the Lord Jesus is the general expression; “the day” of the Lord is a particular part of it. When the Lord is revealed in His “day,” it is still His “coming”; but the Lord might come for purposes of grace before the arrival of what scripture calls His day, for this simple reason, that the day, as can be shown from various scriptures, always involves two things -- manifestation and (if it be the world that is in question) judgment, which the coming of the Lord Jesus does not. The day of the Lord implies manifestation and judgment; but this is not all the Lord will do. The coming of the Lord Jesus therefore is what we may call the generic term; it is the broader and more general form of expressing the great truth; whereas the day of the Lord in the full sense is that particular phase of His presence in which He deals with what is

2. [The Coming therefore has two parts: the rapture; and the appearing in glory which brings the day of the Lord.]
opposed to God, and displays Him righteously before man. Thus in 2 Thess. 2:8 it is the day, though not expressly so designated; but the shining forth of His presence is clearly judicial, as the context shows, and manifest by the force of the phrase itself, and hence means the day of the Lord. So does the presence or coming of “the Son of man,” as in Matt. 24, where the phrase conjoined, being the παρουσία of the Lord as judge, modifies the sense and necessarily implies that day.

It is too often assumed that the coming of our Lord and His day are all one and the same thing; but where this is done, it is impossible to understand the proper force of scripture. Take this place, where the apostle beseeches them by the one that they be not troubled about the other. How could he beseech them by any thing [2 Thess. 2:1] that they should not be disturbed by the same thing? Where the sense or propriety of this? But we can perfectly understand that the day of the Lord is to be the time when evil must be put down, when there is beyond measure trouble and confusion among men, when solemn judgments press on and the Lord’s hand is stretched out till the result is complete, that it is associated with images of human terror, and indeed with reality of divine judgment executed on the earth. The saints then are by the apostle besought, by that bright hope of Christ’s presence which was full of comfort and blessedness to themselves, not to be troubled about the tremendous intervention of the Lord in His day, which was full of anxiety and trouble to those settled down in the earth.

Nor does this of course depend on a single particular scripture. I shall draw your attention to several parts of the word of God, and then show, as I trust, the immense moral principles of truth that are underneath this difference, so as to make it evident that we have no mere verbal distinction, but real and grave truths, which flow out of God’s own nature and run through His word.

Here, however, it is easy to point out in the same passage the evident difference, and even contrast, between the two things. Before leaving the passage, you will observe that the latter part of 2 Thess. 2:8 speaks of “the brightness of his coming.” It is the very same word that is rendered elsewhere “the appearing,” and hence would here mean “the appearing of his coming.” If His coming always implied brightness or appearing, there would be no particular point, but tautology rather, in saying “the appearing of his coming.” If on the other hand the coming of the Lord does not necessarily or of itself imply manifestation, then it would require “the appearing of his coming,” to define that the Lord will then be made manifest to the world. And this I believe to be the simple truth.

Hence, therefore, we might affirm that it would not be correct to say “by the appearing (or the day) of the Lord and our gathering together then.” On the other hand to say, “whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with his coming,” would scarcely be according to the exactitude of scripture. In order to give precision to the thought, the Spirit of God was pleased to say that He shall destroy him with “the appearing of his coming.” This no doubt is substantially the same thing as “the day of the Lord”; that is, it is not merely His coming, but His coming made manifest; it is the coming or presence of the Son of man when every eye shall see Him. Now, if He always be manifest when He comes, where would be the reason for saying “the appearing of his coming?” but if He can come and accomplish very important objects by His presence without appearing, then we can understand that it is necessary where there is also manifestation to say so.

This, then, I believe is what we really ought to gather from the expression of the Holy Spirit here. In short, in the first verse the Spirit of God speaks of His coming without a word about the appearing. In the eighth verse He speaks about not the coming only but the appearing -- the manifestation of His coming. Now observe the difference. When the coming alone is spoken of, what is the connection? What the revealed effect of His coming? “We beseech you, brethren, by the coming of the Lord Jesus and our gathering together unto him.” The effect of the Lord’s coming or presence (for such is the strict meaning of παρουσία), is that the saints are gathered to be with the Lord. Whether found sleeping or awake -- in other words, whether alive or dead -- the saints are gathered to be with Christ.” We beseech you by the coming of our Lord Jesus and our gathering unto him.” The moment the Lord Jesus comes -- not when He appears, but when He comes and instead of being absent is present -- the saints at once are assembled to be with Him above. But the lawless one is not judged until the Lord not merely comes but appears. Therefore it is said, “whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the appearance of his coming.” The manifested presence of the Lord is appointed and said in the word to deal with the adversary.

Hence therefore the coming of the Lord, and the appearing of His coming, or His day, are two distinct facts. He can come and receive His saints, and afterwards He will appear and put down the adversary. Perhaps the objection might be raised, and it is well to meet it at once, “But why should He not come and deal with the adversary first, and then gather the saints to Himself?” The answer is best met by the question, What saith the scripture? On such matters we can have no light but the Bible. But it would seem that this is in part the error the apostle combats. The false teachers were alarming the saints with the notion that the day of the Lord was already come. I grant you that they could only in this have meant the day in a kind of figurative way, perhaps believing that the day ultimately would be still more tremendous. Some, however, use figures to destroy realities. Otherwise if only a figurative day of the Lord filled them with trouble, surely the final day of the Lord would be still more tremendous if it could happen without their being gathered to the Lord first. Certain it is that by their sense of “the day of the Lord” before His presence to gather them to be with Him, they were shaken in mind and troubled: how
much more if they had looked for that day in all its force with the saints left on the earth when the Lord will crush this kingdom and humble that, destroying the beast, the false prophet, as well as households, with his saints mixed up in so fearful a hurly-burly of this world! I need not say how unlike all this would be to the ways of the Lord with those whom He loves.

But we do not need to come to mere inferences. To tell you the truth, I always distrust any doctrine on any subject that depends on mere illative reasoning. If you cannot give me scripture for what you say, do not say it; and I would advise you, if I may so do, to beware of it yourselves. How can anything be of faith that is merely inferential or a development? You ought to have scripture; and these are times when we cannot afford to have anything less than the plain word of God. God, who is ever considerate of the simple, and graciously thinks of the wants of souls that do not know much, does give His revealed mind for whatever is to be believed, and therefore it is not a mere theory we want -- a consequence drawn from something else -- perhaps a theory built upon theory. Nothing of the sort is here, but the plain word of God for the believer.

We Shall be Manifested With Him from Heaven

In another Epistle the apostle lays it down as a doctrine bound up with most important consequences, that “when Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory” {Col. 3:4}. This is the more important as he is contrasting two different states of Christ. He says that “our life is hid with Christ in God.” Christ is now hidden. So long as He is thus, our life too is hidden.” When Christ who is our life shall appear,” in contrast with being hidden, “then we shall also appear.” If you give this full force, it would be thus: “When Christ who is our life shall be manifested” (which is really the full and proper word), “then shall we also” (then, not before, and not after, but at that time) “be manifested with him in glory.” It is seen at once that the moment of the Lord’s appearing is the moment of the church’s appearing along with Him. The Lord, therefore, cannot appear a second before the glorified saints appear along with Him. When the Lord is manifested, the saints are so also, being already with Him. And this entirely agrees with the plain statement of symbolic scripture, where we have the times and the seasons more fully than anywhere else in the New Testament. If there is any book in the apostolic writings where we should expect to have prophetic measures, it is certainly in the Revelation. Now in that chain of predictions -- the most important book of prophecy for the Christian -- the day of the Lord of course has its place. We find the full statement of the Lord’s appearing from heaven in judgment. It is given in detail in Rev. 19. And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire;” and so on. In Rev. 19:14 we read, “And the armies which were in the heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” Now there it is most evident that when the heavens open for the appearing in glory, they open not merely for Christ, but for those that are Christ’s. “The armies which were in heaven,” (the heavenly saints are no longer on the earth) “followed him on white horses clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” I grant you that this retinue and dress might be supposed to be angelic; and it is not denied that angels follow the Lord. But it is plain that those who are described here are not angels, for this simple reason, that they are said to be “clothed in fine linen, white and clean”; and in the very same chapter (v. 8) the fine linen is said to be “the righteousness of saints” -- not of angels. We know nothing at all about the righteousness of angels. They are never in the Bible spoken of as righteous. They are without sin, being sustained as in their original integrity and purity; but this is not the meaning of righteousness.

Consistency with our relationship is ever spoken of, as far as the creature is concerned, as either conferred by the Lord Jesus Christ, or as the fruit of the Holy Spirit’s practical action in the soul. Righteousness therefore may be either that which we are accounted in Christ -- what is commonly called imputed righteousness -- when by faith the believer though unrighteous in himself is accounted righteous in the Lord, which is perfectly true, and a very important truth; or, on the other hand, it is that which the Spirit of God exercises us in practically day by day. I have not the slightest doubt that in this case the reference is to the latter. “The fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” For this reason the word really means here “righteousnesses.” It is a different form of word, and plural. If it were a question of what we are made in Christ, neither would be the case. The righteousness which we are made in Christ is the same righteousness for every one that is made it. As in sin, so in righteousness -- there is “no difference.” Here John is speaking about the righteousnesses of each saint, and the more we find the saints spoken of as a whole. “Righteousnesses” is a phrase impossible to apply to what we are made in Christ; because, if this were the case, the result would be, one made one measure and another made another measure, which would be inconsistent with the revealed doctrine of divine righteousness. But when we come to look at the practical display of righteousness, of course there are differences. The exact meaning of the word is “righteousnesses of the saints” as in any accurate translation by such as profess to give the precise sense you will find it to be what I am here stating; for we are not now entering on disputed points. There are proper seasons for discussing delicate shades of meaning; but I am speaking now of what is commonly allowed by all fair inquirers, whatever their system may be.

This then seems a very decisive scripture. For thus the Lord Jesus, followed by the risen saints, comes from heaven for the execution of judgment on earth. It is the day of the
Lord, the brightness or appearing of His coming when He destroys the lawless one. But when He so comes He is not alone. Others beyond angels are with Him -- faithful, called, and chosen (Rev. 17:14). He is followed by the armies that are in heaven. Of course these saintly hosts must have been caught up there before. The scene does not suit the separate spirits of the saints. They are never so described. They would not be seen mounted on white horses any more than on thrones: both, I grant, symbols of course; but not of saints in the separate state. They are saints already glorified. In short therefore we learn another fact -- not only that the Lord Jesus comes and receives the saints, but that He takes them up to heaven; so that when the wickedness of the world completely develops, which may follow the translation in a very short time, then the heaven opens, and the Lord comes with the glorified saints attending Him. Any one who is acquainted with the structure of the book of Revelation will see that what I am now stating is only a reproduction of what the Spirit of God clearly reveals there.

For, only to say a few words more, what is it we find in the book? I should say this. First of all are the seven churches, -- a complete view of the church state. After this we have churches no more. When the last of these Apocalyptic assemblies has been brought before us -- the seven churches of Asia, though as I believe looking out prophetically -- there is not a word more about churches on the earth. The true way of accounting for the fact so pictured here is, that the Lord comes and takes away those who are now in a church condition, waiting for Him according to His promise. For how is that state to close otherwise? It was not man that began the church at Pentecost, it was God; and He only will put an end to that condition; and this He will do by receiving to the Lord Jesus those that belong to Him, and are waiting for Him. Accordingly heaven is opened immediately after, or at any rate a door is opened in heaven, and the prophet sees a body never before seen in heaven -- the twenty-four elders. Angels had been seen, seraphim and cherubim, the Son of man, and even the Ancient of days; but who had ever heard of elders in heaven before? How came they there? They were the saints caught up to be with the Lord. He had taken them to Himself on high. And this is entirely confirmed by the fact, that the elders are seen to be crowned and throned (Rev. 4). As they are invested with royal dignity, they further have vials full of odors or incense. Thus they are both kings and priests. There can be no doubt therefore that these elders are not angels but glorified saints. For there is another thing to take notice of; that is, they are complete, they are twenty-four. Now that number most evidently answers to the courses of priesthood -- the only twenty-four that I am aware of which is given in scripture. They are the heads of the priesthood; for afterwards we know there were others made priests, but there were no more heads of the priesthood. They were the chief priests, so to speak, of the heavenly hierarchy. These are no other, in my judgment, than the Old Testament and the New Testament saints caught up at the coming of the Lord Jesus to be with Himself. Afterwards others are seen in the vision put to death, martyrs at the end of the age during the time of unparalleled trouble, who become not elders but priests, not chiefs, if one may so speak, but simply priests. How blessed to be so! Yet they do not arrive at the dignity of the twenty-four. Thus the elders have a very special place; and accordingly there is never an addition to their number. Others may be called and blessed; but the elders remain twenty-four as before from beginning to end. It confirms this to see that from Rev. 19, to which I have already referred, we do not hear a word more about the elders. They disappear. Why? Because the Lord Jesus will have come from heaven, whither He will have taken them up, and when afterwards spoken of, it is as His armies or hosts. Then comes the question of making war on a guilty world. Elders do not make war; but hosts do. Consequently the figure of the elders is dropped, and that of armies is taken up. There can be no solution, it appears to me, of the case other than this -- at least I am not aware of any other that has even an appearance of meeting the conditions of the problem.

Further, all this is precisely in accordance with what we have seen to be the doctrine of the Apostle Paul. He urges on the saints to be always expecting the coming of the Lord. He teaches them that, while the Lord is hidden, they too must be; that when the Lord is manifested, they shall be manifested along with Him in glory. Consequently the coming of the Lord cannot at first be manifest, because if the Lord Jesus appeared when He came to receive the saints, He would appear in heaven and they would be still on the earth: He would be appearing in glory without the saints; whereas the doctrine of scripture is that when the Lord shall be manifested, they shall be manifested along with Him in glory (Col. 3:4).

Thus, putting together what we have seen, nothing can be more simple. He will come again. Instead of being absent, He comes and the saints at once rise to meet Him in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. He takes them to heaven, to the presence of the Father. Afterwards the right moment comes for the Lord Jesus to appear; and when He appears, they appear along with Him in glory. Thus you see these various statements of scripture perfectly harmonize when the two different steps or stages of the Lord’s coming are understood; whereas when they are not taken account of, many and serious difficulties rise up: one part of the word does not agree with another, which is always the effect wherever we have not before us the full and simple truth of God. Whenever you have only part of the truth, still more if you accredit a mistake, there is some other portion that will not agree. When you have received the truth in simplicity, then the different parts which seemed disconnected and opposed all fall into their proper places. When it is seen accordingly that the coming of the Lord first is brought before us gathering the saints to be with Him, and then that He not only comes but appears in glory, and the saints follow Him out of heaven and appear in glory too, all
is made plain.

Further, the interval between the coming of the Lord and the appearing of His coming is the time that Satan busily employs to bring forward his great plot of the apostasy and man of sin. It is the time when the mystery of lawlessness ceases to be a mystery, when the lawlessness that was working secretly issues up into its full development and the lawless one shall be revealed; and the revolt is so direct and complete that God, as it were, acts on the impossibility of tolerating it more. The Lord Jesus, therefore, as the Word of God then as ever, comes forth and judges this excessive and destructive rebellion against God where men boast most here below. But then His own glorified saints are with Him; and this, it will be seen, puts the whole case in a clear light as to the scriptures. Nor is this the only result. There is another remark or two to be made which will be found of importance.

**God's Grace and His Righteous Government**

We know that in God Himself there are two qualities that especially display themselves in dealing with His people. The first is His grace, the second His righteousness. In the cross of Christ the grace of God and the righteousness of God meet in perfect concord and join in the blessing of the believer. So in our daily walk with God, who does not find that His grace brings us into a certain position of blessing where, if we fail, the Lord has a righteous government in which He chastises us? This is the reason why you may find such an one so much more troubled, so much more in sorrow, affliction, and humiliation, because he is a child of God, if he have failed as a servant of God and grieved the Spirit. The Lord does not abandon His love -- His grace abides, as does its fruit also. Grace has brought that soul to God out of the world. Does God repent of His grace because the soul needs to repent, as having fallen into what is evil, grievous, and humbling? Not so. Does God then say, As he is my child, I pass all over? No, He never passes over the faults of the Christian. There is where we learn the faithful yet holy provision of His love. His grace shall never be given up. On the other hand, His righteous government must always take its way. Hence it was with the Corinthians, who really were believers, as the apostle was told when he went to the city -- that city of corruption and vileness. The Lord had much people there; though if there was a spot in the world where the holy apostle might have been afraid to put his foot and to live, it was Corinth. It was notoriously the vilest of the vile. But the Lord had much people there. At Athens He had comparatively few people. But at Corinth the apostle had learned what he could not have gathered otherwise, and therefore went on; and even when many of them went sadly astray, falling into grievous disorder and sin, he did not give up his confidence that the Lord owned them as His people. But he told them, and told them in the most solemn manner, that if they did not judge themselves, they would be judged of the Lord; and that, when they were judged, they were chastened of Him that they should not be condemned with the world. For with the Lord sin must be judged; sin can never be tolerated where He is named. If we, therefore, through carelessness allow sin, one of two things is evident. If we have no portion in Christ, we must ourselves be judged for it everlastingly; and, if so, how can we be but lost? But if the grace of God has really brought us to Himself by Jesus Christ our Lord, He deals with us, sends affliction on us, and perhaps even takes away natural life (1 John 5), that we should not be condemned with the world. Thus the righteous government of God must take its course and do its work; and this no less in mercy to us than in vindication of His own glory.

**God Displayed in the Cross**

As this is true even in our ordinary walk, as these two principles are most clearly united in the cross, are they absent from the coming of the Lord? Not so. Grace or righteousness is always found. How then can they be applied to the future according to God? As the coming of the Lord consists of the two parts already distinguished, it will be found on examination that, where scripture simply speaks of the coming of the Lord as such without any reference to manifestation or judgment, it is invariably the answer to the grace of God. And this may be seen readily by the simplest believer. For, let me ask, why does the Lord Jesus come again? and why are the saints gathered up to be with Him above? Because of His absolute grace. If it were not for grace, do you suppose that the Lord Jesus would leave the glory of heaven and the presence of His Father? Certainly not. And if the Lord Jesus could leave that glory to come, how could He gather up such as you and me to be with Him at once? How could we be taken into the presence of God in light and blessedness, in peace and joy and rest for ever? From no other principle than His grace. It is grace and nothing but grace that can adequately account for the coming of the Lord for us and our gathering to be with Him. Therefore we understand that this is the richest and fullest motive of comfort that the apostle Paul could bring to bear on the souls of the saints to dispel the injurious notions which the instruments of Satan were spreading.

**Heterodoxy Falsifies God so Displayed**

For let me explain further, that there are two ways, in one or other of which you will find heterodoxy to indulge, and you may know teachers to be false by their indulgence in them. One of these ways of error is the effort to give a spurious, groundless comfort to those who rather need warning and conviction. The other feature of false doctrine is, that it seeks to rob of comfort those whom God fills with peace and joy in believing. In short, false teachers either strive to comfort those that are of the world as such while they still remain worldly, and are really unbelievers and unquickened by the
Spirit of God; or, on the other hand, they endeavor to alarm and shake the confidence of those that have unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus. It is for you to make the application; but to you it will soon appear, unless I am greatly mistaken, and the more it is examined with the fuller evidence, that into one or other of these two ditches false teachers habitually fall. Thus there never is the distinctness of revealed truth; there never is the sense of the authority of the Lord over the soul; there never is confidence in God for eternal life. Uncertainty Godward there is, and this on principle, which makes it so mischievous. There is the endeavor that, on the one hand, the believer should not be confident, happy, or thoroughly at rest in the Lord, which is surely of the devil. On the other hand, there is the endeavor that the worldly person should not be too much cast down, or really alarmed about his soul. “We must have charity. You do not know but that the Lord is dealing with that soul. Perhaps, after all he may be a Christian: how can you tell? Be not presumptuous in believing yourself or in doubting him.” Now all such thoughts flow from the same kind of deceivers as the apostle Paul was dealing with in his day; and the truth of God is clean contrary to the ways of the enemy in both respects.

God’s Way With the Thessalonians

Applying this to the present subject, we think of the believers at Thessalonica: What was the way of the Holy Ghost with them? To keep their minds bright, fervent, and happy in the constant expectation of the Lord Jesus. You cannot be too happy in Christ; you cannot too much confide in the truth and grace of God. You may be too confident in yourself; and there is the great and frequent mistake. You may be careless in your ways, but this you do not owe to Jesus. On the contrary, because you are a Christian, your heart should be exercised every day, whether you are growing in the Lord, whether you are advancing in the knowledge of Him, whether you are serving and glorifying Him according to what you know today, not excusing failure according to what was not known yesterday. We must not allow ignorance in the past to hinder us in the present. Our responsibility is always according to what the Lord has shown in our souls now. These Thessalonian believers then were assailed by false teachers whose great object was to take them away from their stable ground of comfort and rest in the grace of God, and to fill them with alarm because of the terrible day of trouble and judgment that is coming upon the earth, insisting that in some sort or measure it had already begun. “Not at all,” says the apostle Paul, “you hold fast your bright hope. Do you not know that the Lord Jesus is coming Himself for you, and that then you are going to be gathered up to Him? Do not be troubled by all this talk about the day of the Lord. You are going to be with Christ. Granted that His day is to come; but it cannot come till the worst evil is fully ripe.” The object of the day of the Lord is not the saints at all, but to judge the evil that is in the world, the lawlessness which is already at work secretly, and which is going to issue in the most open and appalling opposition to God. When that development has reached its height, then the day of the Lord will come upon it, the brightness or appearing of His coming.

Thus we see how this at once restores the balance of truth. The “coming” of the Lord Jesus is the display of perfect grace. The “day” of the Lord is the execution of righteousness; it is the dealing of the Lord with what is contrary to Himself. And I add, further, it is not merely that the world will be the object of righteous dealing, but even the saints themselves; and for this reason: not that they will be judged like the world -- if they were, they must be lost too; but the Lord gives scope for His righteous ways, while at the same time He does not mix up the believer and the unbeliever in judgment. The believer shall not come into judgment. It is not merely that he shall not come into condemnation, but that he does not come into judgment, such is the express teaching of the Lord Jesus in John 5. How then does the Lord reconcile this? Perfectly. When the believers are caught up to be with Christ, they will be manifested before His judgment seat; they will give to the Lord an account of everything done by the body. The Lord accordingly will vindicate His own ways with them, and they will appreciate all His dealings as perfectly as they will judge their own. Hence, therefore, when the Lord Jesus appears in glory, the saints that are already with Him -- the glorified saints -- will be displayed according to either their service rendered or their faithfulness under trial. There will be different positions in glory. And on what does difference of position depend? Upon the grace of God? Not so. If it were the grace of God, all would be in the same position. It is nothing but the absolute grace of God that could save a single soul; it is precisely the same grace of God that saves you and the apostle. There is no difference. If there could be a shade of difference in the grace, you could not get to heaven at all. The fact is there is only One who could bring you there, and that is Christ; but even Christ Himself -- with reverence be it spoken -- even the Saviour could not bring you there worthily of God, except by redemption. It is not the spotlessness and the perfectness of Christ -- it is not Christ even perfect in all His ways here below -- that brings you to heaven, though you cannot get there without all; but it is Christ suffering for you, “the just for the unjust,” that brings you to God; and He suffered in the fullest way for every soul that is brought to God. In fact, it is the very same suffering of Christ on the cross that is applied to every soul that needs it.

Thus, then, we see that it is precisely the same grace displayed in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that it is only by His suffering as the crucified Christ that souls are brought to God. But when brought to God, then the Lord takes account of every difference. Certainly neither you nor I will have the same place in glory as the apostle Paul. For Christians in general have a sort of feeling -- some may be a little more confused than others, but generally they have a just feeling -- that there will be differences: only sometimes they confound things together, and often do not well...
distinguish between the grace that brings to God and His righteous government that arranges among those brought to God according to a just estimate of their service and suffering.

Hence, too, it is that failure will appear then. I do not at all mean by this that any one in the presence of God will not be thoroughly happy. I am persuaded that in heaven, and in the kingdom too, there will be perfect happiness for every soul that is brought to God; only the Lord will know how to reconcile the two things. The Lord will know how to maintain every glorified one in perfect enjoyment of Him, and at the same time to display each according to his faithfulness or his lack of it. All this, doubtless, will be ordered according to the unfailing righteousness of the Lord in the kingdom; only we must remember that we shall feel them perfectly according to God. We shall delight in another’s having a better place, than ourselves. There will be no envy, nor jealousy whatever. All will thoroughly overflow with divine joy, and each bow in submission, delighting in it, to the will of the Lord.

This seems to connect itself very manifestly with the great subject of which I am treating. All goes to show that the difference between the coming of the Lord and the day of the Lord is not in the least arbitrary, but necessary if our future is to reflect the ways and nature of God. Who can say that it merely depends on a text here or a word there, though this is to reflect the ways and nature of God. Who can say that the Lord is not in the least arbitrary, but necessary if our future is to reflect the ways and nature of God. Who can say that the Lord is not in the least arbitrary, but necessary if our future is to reflect the ways and nature of God.

It may interest some to know that the parable really closes with the words, “Watch, therefore, for, ye know neither the day nor the hour.” The words “wherein the Son of man cometh” are an unauthorized addition to the parable {Matt. 25:13}. The words were no doubt put in because they occurred elsewhere in the discourse; but it is perfectly well known to those acquainted with these matters that the clause has no sufficient title to be there. Be it noted that there is not a word about the Son of man in the parable unless there. A spiritual mind would see that “Son of man” does not agree with the tone of the parable. The Lord is presented not as Son of man, in which capacity judgment is given to Him, but as Bridegroom. What has a bridegroom to do with judgment? It is plain that the whole scope of the passage is a certain scene of joy and blessedness into which the Lord will introduce those that wait for Him. He has called them from this world to wait for Himself; but while He tarrys all prove unfaithful. The Lord, however, in His love causes a warning to go forth in time to them all; but those that had not the oil of the Spirit, the unction from the Holy One, lost themselves in vainly seeking it, and in fact were shut out. Those who had the unction were ready, and went in to the marriage. It is clearly Christians as distinct from those who were merely nominal professors; for if they had been true believers, they would not have wanted the oil. Can we rightly think of a Christian that has not the Holy Ghost? Is it not the distinctive privilege of all such? It might be needless to say so, but for those who have speculated about it, and argued that the foolish ones must have had oil. Why reason thus? The scripture says, not that they had a little oil, but that they had none {Matt. 25:3}. The teaching is perfectly plain, and it is only when men have a troublesome theory of their own that they find these difficulties. But you say that their lamps had been burning. True, the wick burned a little while, but it did not burn long without oil. There is really no difficulty if we believe what the Lord says, that they took no oil. Thus, taking the oil as always in the language of scripture for the Spirit, they had not the Spirit.

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

Let me take you first of all to the first Gospel, and we shall find there somewhat that bears on the subject. In Matt. 25 we have the parable of what is called “The Ten Virgins”; and there we are told that they took their lamps and went forth to meet the bridegroom. “And at midnight,” while the bridegroom tarried, and they had all slumbered and slept, “there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.” The foolish wanted oil: the wise had no oil to give them as they said, “lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage.” And what is its character morally? Is it the display of righteousness? Certainly not, but of grace. Thus it is no question at all of faithfulness being manifested to the world; it is merely the intimate privilege of being with the Bridegroom. It is not the virgins appearing with Him; for they are not so shown. It is an inner scene. They go forth to meet the Bridegroom; the Bridegroom comes; and they go in with Him to the marriage.

It may interest some to know that the parable really closes with the words, “Watch, therefore, for, ye know neither the day nor the hour.” The words “wherein the Son of man cometh” are an unauthorized addition to the parable {Matt. 25:13}. The words were no doubt put in because they occurred elsewhere in the discourse; but it is perfectly well known to those acquainted with these matters that the clause has no sufficient title to be there. Be it noted that there is not a word about the Son of man in the parable unless there. A spiritual mind would see that “Son of man” does not agree with the tone of the parable. The Lord is presented not as Son of man, in which capacity judgment is given to Him, but as Bridegroom. What has a bridegroom to do with judgment? It is plain that the whole scope of the passage is a certain scene of joy and blessedness into which the Lord will introduce those that wait for Him. He has called them from this world to wait for Himself; but while He tarrys all prove unfaithful. The Lord, however, in His love causes a warning to go forth in time to them all; but those that had not the oil of the Spirit, the unction from the Holy One, lost themselves in vainly seeking it, and in fact were shut out. Those who had the unction were ready, and went in to the marriage. It is clearly Christians as distinct from those who were merely nominal professors; for if they had been true believers, they would not have wanted the oil. Can we rightly think of a Christian that has not the Holy Ghost? Is it not the distinctive privilege of all such? It might be needless to say so, but for those who have speculated about it, and argued that the foolish ones must have had oil. Why reason thus? The scripture says, not that they had a little oil, but that they had none {Matt. 25:3}. The teaching is perfectly plain, and it is only when men have a troublesome theory of their own that they find these difficulties. But you say that their lamps had been burning. True, the wick burned a little while, but it did not burn long without oil. There is really no difficulty if we believe what the Lord says, that they took no oil. Thus, taking the oil as always in the language of scripture for the Spirit, they had not the Spirit.

“Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS
But in the connection we have another view. Take the very next parable, where we have the different servants who are weighed and approved by the Lord Jesus according to their success or not in trading with the talents given them {Matt. 25:14-30}. There we find government, righteous government, taking account of the differences among them. Accordingly we find that one has made two talents, and another five. Differences are found here, no difference on the part of the virgins. All five wise virgins, all those that had oil, go in one as much as another. There was no difference among them: when you are on the ground of grace, difference is not the point; but when you enter that of righteous government, difference instantly appears. Then, we readily observe, there are differences not only between the faithful as compared with the unfaithful, but between the faithful as compared with one another. Thus scripture is perfectly harmonious.

Other Parables

Without wishing to notice every passage, let us look at the Gospel of Luke. In ch. 12:35 we read, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” What is this? Righteous government? Not in the least. It is grace and nothing else. The Lord come forth and serve us! Have we any claim to this? We! Certainly not. It is a deeper blessedness, even that of such as we, to have the Lord the Son of God serving them in the fullness of His grace. “Blessed are those servants, then, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.”

But let us look a little farther on in the chapter at the reply of our Lord to Peter, who asked, “Speakest thou this parable to us, or even unto all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom the lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom the lord when he cometh shall find so doing.” The moment you come to our “doing,” you involve righteous government, which estimates conduct displayed in practical facts. Of course differences are seen here; and there the lord makes the faithful servant ruler over his household. He gives one a position of rule here, another of rule there, and these are not the same; as we find in ch. 19 of the same Gospel, one is made a ruler over five cities, another is made a ruler over ten cities, speaking now parabolically, according to the language of the Lord.

Thus the first is the ground of grace, the effect of which is that you are found watching for Christ. Here it is not what you are to be; it is Christ Himself that fills the heart. You love Him, and therefore watch for Him. You do not even consider what position you are going to be placed in, which is another thought altogether, when every man receives according to his work. Here it is simply the heart fixed on an object that is dearer to it than all others, the effect of which is that you watch for Him; you delight in the Lord Jesus; and “blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching.” For then is the fullness of His own grace: He comes forth and serves them, as we have seen.

But if I am found faithfully doing whatever the Lord calls me to here, this is not forgotten. If you are a faithful servant, the Lord will make you an honored ruler. If you have been faithful in a little, He will exalt you over much. Such is the order given, and such the manner of His dealing with us. But it is clear that here we are come to righteous government.

These Principles Run Through Scripture

Thus we see then that these principles run through scripture, that it is not a capricious theory which first supposes a thing and then endeavors to squeeze other things into fit. Here we have what God Himself has written; here we have what does not depend on a mere word or two, but what is firmly rooted in the truth of scripture and in the moral principles of God Himself.

We come now to another scripture, to the Gospel of John. What do we find there? Righteous government? Not at all. It is not so that the coming of the Lord is ever presented -- as far as I know, never -- in his Gospel. “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions” {John 14:1, 2}. What has this to do with righteous government? What claim have I to be in the Father’s house? None but what grace has given me. I have never done anything, I have never deserved anything, which would give me even the smallest plea why the Father should put me in the same house with the Son. How is it then that any could be brought into such unspeakable nearness and intimacy with the Father? Simply because of His own grace. “In my Father’s house,” says our blessed Lord, “there are many mansions.” He would not have us think that all the scene of goodness was for Him alone. “In my Father’s house are many mansions.” There is room for us as well as for Christ. “If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself” {John 14:2, 3}. It is not to make us rulers: there is no allusion to government or its awards here. It is purely the heavenly ground of divine grace, where all other considerations vanish.

No doubt when the saints come forth from the Father’s house, and are brought before the world, then comes the question of showing how they have acted and labored, how they have endured for His sake from a Christ-rejecting world. And the Lord Jesus will put down the thoughts of the
world, and will vindicate what was of Himself in His own that suffered here below; for if we suffer, we shall reign; and if we have served Him, every man will have reward according as his own work is, as the apostle Paul teaches.

But the Father’s house where Christ takes us raises no question of service, nor is there the reward of suffering here. There is not a question of anything but the grace of God shown us by and with His Son. There was only One in the universe that had a right to be there, and this was the Son of God; but sovereign grace shares the place of Christ with those that deserve nothing but hell. Thus therefore what we find here is the fullness of the grace of the Son of God that will bring us into the selfsame place that He enjoys Himself. This can be no other than simply grace. I am not aware that those that deserve nothing but hell. Thus therefore what we find here is the fullness of the grace of the Son of God that will bring us into the selfsame place that He enjoys Himself. This can be no other than simply grace. I am not aware that we never find anywhere anything about the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. We never find here His sending forth His angels to purge His kingdom. In the Apocalypse we do, because there we again enter the arena of righteous government. “Behold, he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” But here is nothing of the kind: His word is, “Let not your heart be troubled.” On the earth their hearts will I be troubled indeed. Thus the difference between the Gospel and the Revelation is complete.

We come now to a few scriptures in the epistles, in which I shall show that the difference is one that runs through the word of God. In the Epistle to the Romans -- just to take the first that comes to hand -- “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” We see that the day is for the decision and reward of righteous conduct. Those that look for that day are to walk suitably to it now, so that the ground of righteousness is maintained in the exhortation quite in consonance with the day that is brought before us.

Again, in 1 Cor. 1:7 we read, “Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” “Ah!” I can conceive some one saying, “there you see it is His coming.” And I grant you, if it were the “coming,” it would be a great difficulty; but it is not. Looking at your margin you will find it is “the revelation of our Lord.” What a remarkable instance of the perfect accuracy of scripture! Further it shows that the excellent men who made our version were loose as to the Lord’s coming, and never departed from it without impairing the word of God. I say, then, that the text is wrong, the margin right, and this without the smallest doubt on the matter. If it were the coming of the Lord Jesus, it would be a question of grace, which would not suit the context. But we observe that he is speaking here of their being faithful in the use of their gifts, which they were certainly far from. Hence the words are, “Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,” -- corrected in the margin, as it should be, to “the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Such is the real meaning of the term. It is {the Greek word} never translated “coming,” except here. It is always translated “revelation” elsewhere. There can be no doubt therefore what it ought to be. And mark what confirms it in the next verse: “Who shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now “the day,” “the revelation,” “the appearing,” are all of a kindred character. They are distinguished from “the coming.” Where it is simply the coming, I repeat, it is regularly the action of grace. Where it is the day of the Lord’s revelation, or the appearing of the Lord, it always brings in the ground of righteousness, and not simply of grace. Here it is plain that it is a question of faithful conduct, and accordingly “the day” and “revelation” are the true words, and not His presence or coming.

And so again in the other parts of this same epistle you will find the same principle. Thus in 1 Cor. 15:23 it is said, “Every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s.” When? In His day? Not at all. “At his coming.” Why? It is the resurrection, which is not at all a question of righteousness, and could not be a reward for faithful conduct. We are not to be raised from the dead because we have been good servants, but because we are Christ’s. It is pure grace that gives us such a portion with Him. We in no way deserve it. Hence, therefore, when it is a question of the display of grace towards us, it is the coming of the Lord -- “they that are Christ’s at his coming.”

On the other hand, where the day is, spoken of, as for instance, in the Epistle to the Philippians, we shall find that faithful conduct or endurance is always before the mind of the Spirit of God. He says there, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it (or carry it on) until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all.” So afterwards in v. 10, “That ye may be sincere and without offence, till the day of Christ”; again, in the next chapter (Phil. 2:16) he says, “Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ”; again, in the next chapter (Phil. 2:16) he says, “Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.” It is a question of faithful service. The day, we see, is connected with the display of how far an apostle or any other has been faithfully serving the Lord. The coming of the Lord will not do this. The effect of it is not to display us before the world, but to take us clean out to be with Christ. When the Lord returns and appears before the world, then He will display how far we have been faithful. The day therefore is bound up with the display of faithfulness. The coming of the Lord is the taking us out of the world to be with the Lord Jesus before His Father in undeserved and infinite grace.

Nothing therefore can be more distinct, as it appears to me, than the moral truth in this matter. Hence if we examine the pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus, we shall find exactly the same thing. There the apostle exhorts his faithful fellow-laborer, and tells him: “I give thee charge in the sight...
of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, till" -- the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ? No; but "the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the coming of our Lord will not prove how far Timothy has been faithful or not; His appearing will do so thoroughly. The appearing of the Lord Jesus therefore is the right and proper word, and none other. Still more plainly do we see in 2 Timothy the connection between the responsibility of the servant with the Lord's appearing. Thus the apostle charges in 2 Tim. 4:1, before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom, closing this part of his exhortation with his own service and its results: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing." Comment here is needless, once the principle is stated and understood. The coming of the Lord as such to receive His own would be out of place in this connection.

So again we shall find His day in the Epistle to Titus 2:12, 13. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Now there it would seem that both are introduced. I think it is not merely the one but the other, the "blessed hope" being more particularly the accomplishment of our joy in being caught up to be with Christ, and the "appearing of the glory" being our manifestation before the world. This therefore is a remarkably full and rich scripture, if, as I suppose, it embraces both these truths.

Again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we have the day spoken of in view of responsibility. The Epistle of James presents the coming of the Lord in a rather general way. This we have seen is thoroughly correct. It is when the special side of responsibility and its results are pressed that we need and find "the day," "appearing," or some equivalent phrase for that side of the truth; as here "the judge standeth before the door."

Again 1 Pet. 1:7, 13, as well as ch. 5:4, falls under the usual rule: the manifestation of Christ connects itself with the exhibition of fidelity in trial, and service general or special. And 2 Pet. 3 seems to my mind as exquisitely exact as any other, though to a superficial glance the terms might seem there interchangeable. But it is not so. The scoffers of the last days say, Where is the promise of His coming? Unbelief is as sure of a stable unchanged world as of man's progress. What is the answer of faith? Not the presence of the Lord but His day will come as a thief in the night. If they taunt as to the Lord's coming with its bright hope, the Holy Spirit threatens them with the solemn affirmation that His day will come with a power which will dissolve, not merely the works of busy man, but the heavens and earth before it closes.

It is obvious that, in 1 John 2:28, 3:2, 3, the appearing or manifestation of the Lord is intended to deal with conscience.

Jude 14, again, is no more an exception than 1 Thess. 3:13; for His coming with His saints, or His presence with all His saints, is not His presence when He comes to receive them, but really coalesces with His manifestation or day, and hence links itself with their responsibility rather than with His pure and simple grace toward them.

But we need not now dwell more on this subject. What has been shown will set out, I trust, plainly and distinctly, and without too much heaping one scripture on another, the two lines of divine truth that meet in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, each having its own proper sphere and moral aim. The coming or the presence of the Lord is His grace towards us when it will have its full way. The same Jesus that died for us will come again and receive us unto Himself. He that is the object of our faith is no less of our hope. If He was the only One we could trust our souls to, He is the One that God would have us to be always expecting. It is due to Him: He deserves it at our hands; and our God would make none other than Christ Himself the proper, the worthy, the only, object of hope. But the same blessed Lord Jesus will take notice of all our works. There is no suffering for Him now which will not be remembered then. There is no service now that will not all be set in the light then. The day of the Lord Jesus, the day of Christ, will display the saints according to His own divine judgment of our ways.

Thus all the truth assuredly harmonizes in this great theme, and we see this when we see the two sides in their distinctness and their combination.

May our gracious God bless His own truth to His own children for Jesus' sake!

Taken from W. Kelly, Pamphlets
Such is the title of a tract in defense of the late R. Govett’s endeavor to prove that many who receive life eternal fail to reign with Christ, and are kept in Hades all the thousand years of the kingdom, because they were not immersed and rose not up to the requisite mark of good works. “It is of great importance,” says the author in his opening sentence, “to distinguish between (1) eternal life as the gift; and (2) the prize as a reward according to works.”

What saith the scripture? Does not the Lord identify what this theory distinguishes? Take Luke 18:29, 30: “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left home, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this present time and in the age to come life everlasting.” Do not both coalesce here? Only the Gospel of John among the Four treats of eternal life as a present gift of grace, the special known and enjoyed privilege of him who receives and follows the rejected Christ. So in Matt. 18 to “enter into life” is when saints inherit the kingdom; which surely overthrows the alleged distinction.

The alternative again is not a punitive or purgatorial Hades for so many years, but “to be cast into everlasting fire.” Scripture nowhere anticipates for believers such a lot as Mr. G. [Govett] imagined. The sheep on the King’s right hand, or saved of all the nations at the end of the age (Matt. 25:31-46), were very defective in knowledge, but practically honored the King in His messengers. Those who will not are consigned to everlasting punishment, not to temporary suffering. So in Mark 9:42-50 it is either entering into the kingdom at whatever cost, or to be cast into hell-fire. There is no middle position between the kingdom and irretrievable ruin. Scripture nowhere speaks of crownless kings. The foolish virgins without oil in their vessels were but empty professors, who cry too late, Lord, Lord, open to us, whom He answers in the solemn words, “Verily I say unto you, I know you not.” Without doubt the Lord knows those that are His (2 Tim. 2:19). These virgins were not His, save externally and therefore for responsibility and judgment, not for life.

It is in John’s Gospel we hear Christ opening the Christian privilege of present known life eternal, far beyond the hope of the kingdom which was revealed in the OT and enjoyed by all saints. What lack of spiritual intelligence to treat the kingdom as the grand prize and life in the Son as the common portion, even of the unfaithful to be in Hades while the rest reign with Christ for the thousand years! Not so does the Lord anywhere speak. In John 5:19-28 He lays down that one of two things awaits men now that He the Eternal is the Rejected here: life everlasting as a present possession, of which no OT saint ever thought; or judgment executed by Him as Son of man. To hear the voice of the Son of God made the dead even now to live of His life; to despise and reject Him as but man was to be left in death for dread and sure judgment. For there are two resurrections of wholly distinct character: one of life for those who have life already for their souls in Him, and do good according to that new nature, as none else do; another and later at the close of the kingdom when they that have done evil according to their sinful nature come forth for inevitable and endless judgment. But not the least hint is here, or in Rev. 20 where the prophetic vision of both is given, of a class who had life eternal raised to be judged according to their works, and yet to enjoy a blissful eternity in God’s presence, after being in Hades for a thousand years as the penalty of non-immersion and a careless walk. The dead raised in the resurrection of judgment are cast into the lake of fire.

Indeed an OT saint knew better than this strange dream. It is due to the blind unbelief of Christendom which talks of universal judgment for sinner and saint, though Mr. G. [Govett] cleared himself in part from that error. But the psalmist knew better, saying (Psalm 143:2), “Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.” Were God to enter into judgment even of His servant, there could be no justification for him; for judgment must deal inflexibly with sins. And what servant of His has not sinned since his confession of the Savior? No, salvation is by grace through faith, but impossible on the ground of judgment according to works, which is reserved for those who refused the Lord and rejected His “so great salvation.” Only of the wicked Rev. 20:11-15 speaks. “The dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works.” With this condemnation of each and all the book of life agrees. For therein was the record of the objects of saving grace. “And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire.”
Not a word is here found of one written in that book. The books condemned them; the book of life had no such names written for grace.

Where then is there room for the distinction here thought of great importance? Where the intimation that any possessed of eternal life miss the prize of our high calling? Rom. 11:6 does not contradict Rom. 2. God will render to each according to his works: to those who, in patient continuance of good works, seek for glory and honor and incorruption, life eternal (that is, in God’s kingdom as well as for all eternity too in God’s grace: so little is the distinction found in scripture); but to those that are contentious and are disobedient to the truth, wrath and indignation [shall be], &c. But why set this against “grace”? For grace alone gave a new nature through faith of Christ, and works meanwhile in obedience and good fruit, so as to inherit life eternal for the body in the day of glory. Error dislocates the truth, puts one scripture into collision with another, and thus unwittingly makes a chaos.

No Christian doubts that 1 Cor. 9:25 tells us of an incorruptible crown as the prize. But the “disapproved” one at Christ’s judgment-seat here spoken of is a worthless professor, and not a child of God. The apostle feared for some of the Corinthians in the church. Some were fleshly and party-spirited, making contentious badges, not merely of Paul, Apollos, and Cephas, but of Christ. They were morally loose, and so worldly-minded as to sue their brethren at law-courts. They sought ease and honor among men, and made light of heathen temples and sacrifices. Levity and shame had clouded even the Lord’s table in their midst, and gross vanity their misuse of spiritual gifts. Nay some questioned (not the soul’s immortality, but) the resurrection of the dead. Who can wonder that the apostle was deeply concerned? Yet in his delicate consideration he applies the danger to his own case (cp. 1 Cor. 4:6); as if he said, Supposing I were to walk without conscience and self-judgment before God, what must be the end of it? “I therefore thus run, as not uncertainly; so I combat, as not beating the air [as many there were doing]. But I buffet my body and lead it captive [his was no easy-going walk]; lest having preached to others I should be myself rejected.”

The preaching might be zealous, powerful, and blessed; but if the preacher indulged his lusts instead of mortifying them, God is not mocked, and he himself must be “reprobate.” The word which is softened down to “disapproved” is never used in the NT in any sense but the worst. If said of “land” (Heb. 6), it means “worthless,” bearing thorns and briars, but no acceptable fruit. So it is employed in 2 Cor. 13:5, 6, 7, never for what is good though failing. Lack of perception that the apostle had no real fear as to himself, but was transferring the case to himself to make it all the stronger if he were to walk so wickedly, misled not a few to imagine that he meant works rejected but the preacher saved. It is precisely the contrary here. The preaching might be all right, but the preacher’s life was offensive to God, and himself therefore rejected or as the A.V. says, “a castaway,” which is quite sound, though it is a pity to multiply needlessly the rendering of the Greek word.

As to 2 Cor. 5:10, the true force is that “we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ.” It is not the same as the “we all” in 2 Cor. 3:18. A different form distinguishes them. In the latter “we all” means all and only Christians; in the former it is so framed as to take in not only all saints but all sinners too. Hence it does not say “judged,” but “manifested.” For the believer does not come into judgment, as the Lord ruled in John 5:24. We shall be fully manifested and give account and receive accordingly. But how will it be with the ungodly? Their manifestation must be “judgment”; for they believe not on Christ, and went on in unremoved sins till death. The believer did repent and believe the gospel and was justified by faith. Nor will God reverse but stand to it; for “it is God that justifieth”; whereas His wrath abides on him who disowns the Son of God. And is not this truly righteous, however awful? The manifestation is therefore at different times, of distinct character, and with opposite results for those manifested. But it remains that we, the whole of us, shall be manifested, that each may receive the things in (or, through) the body according to those he did whether good or evil. Nothing more sweeping or precise; not a word to countenance failing believers shut out of the Kingdom, and judged with the wicked at the end according to their works.

It is ever wholesome and cheering to hear our Lord say, “I am coming quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown” (Rev. 3:11). But this is far from implying that there will be crownless kings in Hades; and though we shall share the authority He will give us over the nations with Him who shall shepherd them with iron scepter, we shall be associated with Him who is the Morning Star which is far higher and better. This is before He dawns on the world as Sun of righteousness in both judgment and healing (Rev. 2:26-28; Mal. 4:2).

Christendom seeks to reign now, a heartless reign hollow and faithless. This, with error of all sorts, is what has been “garnered” during the centuries of insubjection to the word and Spirit of God. The only true place of the bride is to suffer here and now where He suffered to the utmost, awaiting the day when we shall be glorified on high and reign together with Him. Some of the Corinthians in their light-heartedness forgot the truth, and as the apostle said “reigned without us.” But with his large heart he added, “I would that ye did reign [for as yet it was a delusion and a wrong to Christ], that we also might reign with you.” He was far from menacing them with being kept away in Hades, though he did not hide the apostolic path of present reproach and shame for Christ’s sake in which so few are ambitious to be their successors. They prefer to be enthroned as bishops and archbishops, patriarchs or popes, from which earthly glory the apostles were wholly apart. Nor are the so-called Free Churches a whit less covetous of money, ease, and honor, as far as they can compass it. But in Luke 17, the
Lord points two aspects of the kingdom: one present in the midst of men, which does not come with observation but is known in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit; whilst we await a quite different one {one manifested in power}. “For as the lightning shines which lighteneth from the [one end under] heaven to the [other end] under heaven, thus shall the Son of man be in his day.” “Every eye shall see him”; and “where the body is, there shall the eagles be gathered together.” God’s judgments shall not fail to light upon the objects of His displeasure.

Yet the apostle did not put off the spirit of the kingdom till that day. He sought and exercised it not in word but in power by the Spirit, even now and here.

To speak of “imputed sanctification” is to diverge from scriptural truth. But sanctification is not merely in practice, which is always imperfect and admits of varying degrees. 

Mr. G. (Govett) and his defender were not aware that the word of God speaks of a sanctification by a new nature coincident with being born anew, and antecedent not only to practical holiness but even to justification, of which popular theology is wholly ignorant. It is identical with sainthood. This is meant in 1 Cor. 6:11: “But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” The order stated is exact, but it perplexes all who draw their doctrines from man instead of from scripture. 1 Peter 1:2 may make this truth clear to those that doubt: “elect according to foreknowledge instead of from scripture. 1 Peter 1:2 may make this truth clear to those that doubt: “elect according to foreknowledge of a Father God, by (or, in) sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and blood-sprinkling of Jesus Christ.” Here too the ordinary teaching is at sea. Yet the truth revealed is certain and plain. Election as God’s children is shown in sanctification by a new nature coincident with being born anew, and antecedent not only to practical holiness but even to justification, of which popular theology is wholly ignorant. It is identical with sainthood. This is meant in 1 Cor. 6:11: “But ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” The order stated is exact, but it perplexes all who draw their doctrines from man instead of from scripture.

No serious person doubts that real Christians may be “carnal, walking as men,” as many Corinthian saints were; but those with whom they were not even to eat were under discipline and put away from among them, as “wicked” persons, no longer in the assembly, nor called a brother though he had been, and might be again if or when restored.

But to be regarded as at the same time a saint and a wicked person is merely human theory, unscriptural and pernicious. The old leaven was to be purged out, that they might be a new lump, according as they were unleavened. Therefore, Christ having been sacrificed, we are to celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth. If leaven enters, the church is bound to cast it out when seen, never to sanction its presence, being directly inconsistent; as the form was in Israel, so its reality is in us. Some in the church might turn out unjust, but they were not to be tolerated but put away, and should not inherit God’s kingdom, any more than they had life eternal. None were to be deceived, as they had been. They had been baptized and eaten the Lord’s supper, and were none the better but the worse, as ch. 10 warns. Evils such as these involve everlasting ruin no less than loss of the kingdom, though 1 Cor. 5, 11 leave room for repentance in the wondrous grace of God, and if restored, not only for renewed fellowship but for inheriting the kingdom; contrary to this singular theory.

The remark under 4 (p. 3) is quite inept, as far as Rev. 20:4 is concerned; and it is decisive on the point. “Notice the Church is not spoken of as reigning with Christ; but blessed and holy (practical sanctification) is he that hath part in the first resurrection. Unholiness excludes from the first resurrection.” Now it is certain that of no class of believers is holiness so strongly predicated as of the church in Eph. 5:25-27: “The Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for it that he might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the word, that he might present the church to himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things, but that it might be holy and blameless.” Where is anything said so deep and full of any other object of grace?

The real bearing of Rev. 20:4 is most comprehensive; for three classes are included. “And I saw thrones; and they sat upon them, and [instead of being judged according to their works] judgment was given to them.” These are the saints of the O.T. as well as of the church caught up to meet the Lord at His coming (1 Cor. 15:23, 51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 2 Thess. 2:1 {Heb. 11:40}), and seen glorified above from Rev. 4 onward. Secondly, the early martyrs of the Apocalyptic time, Rev. 6:9-11. Thirdly, those later and more severely persecuted by the Beast and the False Prophet before the Lord appears in glory. These two are distinguished in the subsequent clause, as “the souls of those beheaded on account of the testimony of Jesus and on account of the word of God”; and “those that did not worship the beast or his image, and received not the mark on their forehead and hand.”

As these witnesses for God were only raised after the translation to heaven of the first general class, and suffered to death for the truth as far as they knew it, they are here clearly described as seen by the apostle in their disembodied state, and raised from the dead to join the first great class after the Lord appears for the destruction of the Beast, the False prophet, and their armies, as well as for consignment of Satan to the abyss. Hence the announcement of the first resurrection here, in order to include in it these two classes of Apocalyptic sufferers, who might have been hastily thought too late to share the thousand years’ reign with the Christ, as well as perhaps spiritually inferior, because their intelligence was small as the Rev. shows. But “Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection”; and as they were slain by hostile authority, it is said “over these the second death hath no power.” But to infer that any living members of Christ’s body, the church, do not share the rising to reign is wholly incongruous, unintelligent, and wild to the
highest degree.

An attempt however is made to find a basis in Phil. 3, a chapter specially setting aside every dependence and boast but Christ, on whose account, says the apostle, "I suffered the loss of all, and count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ, and that I may be found in him, not having my righteousness which is [or, would be] of law, but that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness that is of God through faith; to know him, and the power of his sufferings, being conformed to his death if any how I arrive at the resurrection from among the dead. Not that I already obtained the prize or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession, since also I have been possessed by Christ. Brethren, I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing -- forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to those before, I pursue toward the goal for the prize of the calling above of God in Christ Jesus." It is really the power of life in faith of Christ glorified which fills the apostle's heart to run the race with that prize in view; as far as possible from the notion of a reward according to works, which is essentially law, sterile and deadly. He utterly repudiates his own righteousness for that which is by faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

This agrees with what the Lord made of the resurrection of His own in John 5, the issue of what He gives the believer now -- life eternal, which loves good, hates evil, and produces good fruit, according to (not law, but) sovereign grace, its opposite. Hence we hear of those that are counted worthy to have part in that age, which is the reverse of the present evil age, and the resurrection that is from among the dead. But He nowhere speaks of it as a reward of our good works (though good works there surely are), but the fruit of His life in power according to divine grace and its counsels.

No doubt it is a manifest token of God's righteous judgment that the saints should be counted worthy of His kingdom, as their wicked troublers deserve the penalty which awaits them. But this strange doctrine looks at the surface of things, overlooking the spring of grace and the power of the Spirit working in the heart by faith. Yet even while page 4 says that the incorruptible crown, the resurrection from among the dead, and the kingdom of God are different aspects of the prize, it adds that thus all may be lost through disobedience and consequent unholliness, and concludes that none of these is a question of pure grace. Yet the very next paragraph owns that grace is indeed needed every hour to insure them. Is not this to say and unsay? It is to confound those begotten of God with such as are not, in order to countenance the fable of saints left to unholliness, and hence to punishment for the thousand years when other saints shall reign. The simple truth is that the Lord prepares us for unreal professors, for those that say and do not, whom He declines to own, while Mr. Govett and his followers declare that they are His to the great dishonor of His word, the grief of the faithful, and the false hope of the fruitless.

As to failure and sin on the part of true saints through unwatchfulness, there is the plain duty of the church to exercise discipline; and the Lord acts as we read in 1 Cor. 11, dealing even to death of the body; just as the Father judges in loving care, as 1 Pet. 1:17 says no less than John 15. They are thus chastened in this life. Nowhere is there a hint of saints detained in Hades while their brethren reign. Saints by call are disciplined now that they may be saints practically. If all these fail, they are not of God, and only false professors.

It is not exact to say that "all saints will share in the Kingdom" or the millennial reign with Christ, but for a plain reason wholly different from the misteaching. The fact is that there will be a harvest of saints possessed of life eternal during the kingdom, who are (whether Israel or the nations) reigned over instead of reigning. These, like all those glorified before them, reign in life through the one Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:17); they and we shall reign to the ages of the ages (Rev. 22:5). This will be the eternal state to the exclusion of time or any other characteristic of a dispensation. But that saints by call are not saints by practice also is not apostolic doctrine; for the notion is directly denied in Rom. 8:30 and many other scriptures. When our Lord tells us that many are called but few chosen, it is clearly the public call in the kingdom of heaven, and distinct from the work of grace according to His counsels, whereby all that have life in Him are described as having done good, and rise to a resurrection of life, in contrast with a resurrection of judgment which is only for the unbelieving, unholy and unblessed.

But we come next to what in the same page 4 are called proof-texts, and first John 17:22. This is said to "refer to present union with Christ." Its terms declare the contrary. "And the glory which Thou hast given me I have given them, that they also may be one even as we [are] one; I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that Thou didst send Me and lovedst them as Thou lovedst Me." It is clear that the glory is not actually ours till He comes again, and that there can be no perfecting for us into one till then. But it is now for the world to "believe," as in v. 21. When the glory is revealed, and not before, the world shall "know"; because it is a fact before their eyes and impossible to deny; and such is the distinction of vs. 22, 23 from what had been already presented by our Lord. The oneness "perfected" will be in the day of glory (as the oneness in v. 21 is during the day of grace in order to act on faith now), and will only be matter of fact when the Lord appears and we with Him in the same glory (Col. 3:4; 2 Thess. 1:13).

We have already shown that Rev. 20:13 is the resurrection of judgment, in contrast with that of life, the one of the unjust only as the "first" is of none but the just. Neither Eph. 1:21 nor Eph. 2:6 applies save to our portion as in Christ. Thus the "age to come" is the millennial one, and our state is everlasting, as reigning in life (Rom. 5:17) is unlimited.
Then too Luke 22:29, 30 is no less misunderstood and misapplied. The Lord speaks of His own in a grace which secures from all their slips and follies. To construe His words here or anywhere else as a reward of their righteousness is distressing error and real self-righteousness. As a fact, they grievously failed, and Peter in particular. How can saints be so blind as to argue the contrary? Besides, glorious as “the kingdom” may be, it is not so deep or precious, as life eternal or union with Christ. The kingdom will be a magnificent display of honor; but eternal life and union with Christ suppose communion with God and enjoyment of His love which is intrinsic and far beyond any display. The scheme spiritually is thus a total fallacy.

Again, Rom. 8:17 draws out the mistaken comment that the Greek particles “always signify contrast.” They may mean no more than distinction, like our “on the hand” and “on the other.” All depends on the nature of the case intrinsically. Thus in 1 Cor. 12:8 to one (μὴν) a word of wisdom to another (ὅδε) a word of knowledge, though here of different persons, were varieties rather than contrasts; and in Eph. 4:11 (μὴν) apostles, and those (ὅδε) prophets, were so far from being in contrast that they form a joint class in Eph. 2:20 and 3:5. But we need not go so far from here. Take for instance Rom. 6:11, “dead indeed to sin (Eph. 2:20 and 3:5). But we need not go so far from here. so far from being in contrast that they form a joint class in grace, and the other conditional, is not only error but (or, but) (as in Phil. 1:29) to suffer for Him as well as with Him. He who does not suffer with Him now has not His Spirit and is none of His. It is perversion to make such a contrast in Rom. 8:17, and 2 Tim. 2:11, 12. The contrast, if any such thing were intended, would be with the millennial saints who enjoy entire exemption from such suffering, and therefore do not reign with Christ during the thousand years. But to make this of works is utterly unscriptural; for good works characterize all saints as born of God.

So with James 2:5. Loving God and one’s brother is shown in 1 John 5:1 to be inseparable from being begotten of God. It is essential to the new nature. How dreadful to conceive a saint without loving God or obeying Him! Extremes meet when those who profess sovereign grace can thus talk like the lowest latitudinarians. It is precious to know that God has chosen the poor as to the world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom; but when it is added “which He promised to those that love Him,” who but the legal would confine the latter clause to the poor and refuse it to a Nicodemus or a Joseph of Arimathea? This not to read the scriptures in the Spirit; nor should we deny practical holiness to any one born of God, though he may fail here or there through lack of intelligence. Not a few who are correct in outward points easily apprehended by the mind may be far behind in the faith that worketh by love, which is characteristic of all who have passed from death into life, and will assuredly share the resurrection of life. One can believe in utterly “disobedient” profession of Christ, but hardly in a “most disobedient child of God.” Every true Christian is watched over by our God and Father in order to the partaking of His holiness. Does He not scourge every son whom He receiveth? (Heb. 12:5-11). See also 1 Cor. 11:31, 32. Why overlook such plain scriptures as preclude and deny the extravagant theory before us? Gal. 6:8 is quite in harmony with the truth generally. But the word is akin everywhere.

The rapture of the saints is the crowning act of sovereign grace instead of being when the day of grace is past. The throne of judgment only comes into view when the heavenly saints are seated on their thrones around it above. And “who is worthy?” is answered by the Lamb alone, not by them (Rev. 4, 5). Can anything be more certain?

It is impossible to allow the correctness of the thoughts on the two letters to the Thessalonians, as not touching on the standing and privileges of the church, but on faithful service in waiting for Christ. The opening words refute this. What grace can be plainer than addressing them in both as “the church of Thessalonians in God the (or, our) Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”? and in the first saying, “Knowing, brethren beloved by God, your election”? Their awaiting His Son from the heavens in 1 Thess. 1:10 the apostle treats as part of their conversion to God from idols, no less than serving a living and true God. “The church in God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ” {2 Thess. 1:1} is a unique expression of the grace in which that infant assembly stood, conveying the strongest assurance of divine security in love, just because they were so young and had to face persecution from the first. Nor is such a beginning more than a sample of the privileges of grace of which these two Epistles are full, though no doubt there is not the unfolding of the body as in that to the Ephesians or of the Head as to the Colossians, written when the apostle was a prisoner of Christ in Rome so many years after. But they are the Epistles wherein is found the brightest communication of our heavenly hope, and the triumph of grace in our association with Christ far more intimately and profoundly than in the display of the kingdom in which He vindicates us before the world, and rewards some specially.

To say as p. 7 does, that “some of the Church will not be accounted worthy of the kingdom at the judgment-seat of Christ,” is to assert the strange doctrine without one word of proof. The exhortation to walk worthily is valid; the deduction of harsh dealing with failing saints is a fable. The idea that the question of reigning is decided at the judgment-seat is inconsistent with the likeness to Christ consummated in a moment at His coming to present the church glorious to Himself (not a part but the whole), and then bringing us into the Father’s house, is a monstrous one. So in the Revelation the glorified are seen as at home in heaven from ch. 4 which gives the first view of them there after their translation. And very striking it is that grace so deals: for we naturally might have thought of a judicial inquiry first of all. But nothing of the kind is implied till the close of their presence before the Lamb’s marriage and the world-kingdom of our Lord is
about to begin, when He and the glorified appear in glory and judgments. Only then is it said that His wife made herself ready; and I know nothing else that answers to such a phrase but our each giving account to Him of the things done through the body when we shall know as we are known. For we must all be manifested before His tribunal that we may each receive according to what He shall have done whether good or evil. This affects his particular place in the kingdom, but all reign without doubt if scripture decide.

What a solemn but withal joyful fact to those taught of God that we are already reconciled, justified, saved by the grace as fully as God could through and in Christ our Lord, and for the Father’s house being as evident for the one, as His appearing and kingdom will manifest the other. Nor can one conceive a sadder wound to this harmony, for all the suffering righteous, and trouble for their troublers, was the nicest righteousness, His coming to receive us to Himself in His kingdom where our particular place will depend on that which shall have been manifested of fidelity and devotedness, or lack of it (Luke 19:15-26; 1 Cor. 3:8; 1 Thess. 2:19, &c.).

Hence it is not with His “coming” to take us on high, but with His “appearing and kingdom” that scripture connects the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award in that day; but this, says the blessed apostle, not only to me but also to all that have loved and do love His appearing. Thus in sovereign grace reconciled with the nicest righteousness, His coming to receive us to Himself and for the Father’s house being as evident for the one, as His appearing and kingdom will manifest the other. Nor can one conceive a sadder wound to this harmony, for all the elect children of God whom He justifies, than the notion without any solid ground for it, that the great mass of saints are to be shut up away in Hades for a thousand years, say for not being duly immersed or some other point of difference, which multitudes glory in without the least fellowship with the Father and with His Son. Can there be a dream more distant from the general analogy of the faith? or more decidedly set aside by revealed statements as here shown?

It is a fundamental mistake, then, to conceive the rapture of the saints “to be when this day of grace is past, and the throne of judgment set up” (p.6). On the contrary, that the once lost sinners and children of wrath should be caught up and set before the Father, in the closest association with Christ above, is the highest expression of sovereign grace. Instead of being display when this day is past, it is its triumph without an atom of judgment in it any more than in our Lord’s ascension which did not touch a single sinner in this world. “The appearing” on the contrary is the beginning of the Lord’s action in personal judgment after God’s providential inflictions close.

Again, how short and shallow is the view this system imposes on “worthiness of walk for the Kingdom of glory” (p.7)! It supplants the love and holiness proper to every Christian for a rather mercenary motive. The apostle comforts the Thessalonian saints in their endurance of persecution as a manifest token of God’s righteous judgment, “to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer” {2 Thess. 1:5}. Christ was the object and spring of power; the kingdom, as the glorious day when the tables should be for ever turned into rest for the suffering righteous, and trouble for their troublers, was but the consoling recompense. And this is so true, that every discerning eye can see how these very scriptures are stripped of their fullness by this narrow and withering hypothesis. “That ye would walk worthily of God that calleth you unto His own kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12). How incomparably richer and holier His word than reducing it to the millenial kingdom, true as this may be! But why overlook that this is but one of three such appeals? “To walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the right knowledge {ἐπιγνώσει} of God.” Here is yet more than the young Thessalonian saints had put before them. And Eph. 4:1 is larger and higher still than Col. 1:10, “Walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye are called”": a calling which embraces God’s dwelling-place, and Christ’s body in union with the Head over all things, immeasurably beyond the kingdom.

Thus we are throughout on the ground of grace which alone produces an answer in practical righteousness, which it does in those begotten of God, as 1 John elaborately states. Undoubtedly the difficulties are so great that to unbelief they seem insurmountable; but faith is entitled to count on being guarded by God’s power for salvation complete, and is in no way disturbed by judgment beginning, now as of old, from God’s house (1 Pet. 4:17). But the apostle gives no hint of believers suffering as an example, only “those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus”; as it is in 2 Thess. 1:8, 9. The second sight of Hades which the scheme claims as a delusion.

So it is to deny “that all the dead in Christ will have part in the first resurrection.” Take Rom. 5-8. All points from “reigning in life” (Rom. 5:17); “so also we (not some only) shall be of His resurrection” (Rom. 6:5); “to be conformed to the image of His Son,” and if justified, also glorified (Rom. 8:29, 30). How preposterous not to be raised and glorified but kept in Hades even then!

Take again 1 Cor. 15, the capital seat of the resurrection: “For since through man death, through man also resurrection of dead. For as in the Adam all die, so also in the Christ all shall be made alive” (that is, simply Adam family in its universality, and the Christ family in its completeness) (vs. 21, 22). Is not this last categorically all the dead sharing Christ’s resurrection? So it is repeated in v. 23, “But each in his own order (or, rank): “Christ, first-fruits; after that, those of Christ at His presence” (or, coming). Can any scholarly question that of Χριστοῦ comprehends all the dead
The Prize of Our High Calling

in Christ thus to rise? “Then the end” at once carries us, not to the resurrection of the unjust (for the chapter is occupied with that of Christ and His own), but to His giving up the conferred kingdom to Him that is God and Father after all such government is over. Again in vs. 49, 50, as we bore the image of the dusty man, we shall bear also the image of the Heavenly One; and this in connection with inheriting the kingdom with Christ, while those converted then in their natural bodies enjoy its blessed effects, as in both O and NT. But not a hint of some of the sons of the resurrection (Luke 20:36) falling short of their inheritance! And when from v. 51 he opens the “mystery” of the living saints changed without death, the modern legend of excluding many real saints, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells (else they are not properly Christian), is itself excluded as an unscriptural invention. For though we shall not all die, “we shall all be changed.” For (v. 52) “the trumpet shall sound: and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (the then living saints) shall be changed.” Had the ἀναρθοῦν been anarthrous, it might have left room for exceptions; but the article denotes the whole class, as the “we” does the survivors of God’s family without exception, with a destiny as far from Hades as can be.

It is exactly similar with 1 Thess. 4:14-17. And 1 Thess. 3:13 is the more striking, as we are therein assured, not merely of the raising of all that are Christ’s for the first resurrection and reign with Him when He comes for them, but here we read of His coming “with all His saints,” which is when He appears in His kingdom. Can one ask a more overwhelming disproof of this strange doctrine? No less destructive is Rev. 20:4-6. “The first resurrection” here is for the purpose of supplementing the earlier and later martyrs of the Apocalyptic times. They were witnesses after the rapture of the saints generally who were already seen seated on thrones; and those two classes are raised after the Lord appears to the destruction of both the Beasts, etc., and added to the enthroned. This is styled “the first resurrection,” embracing all who have part in it, in contrast with that of the unjust before “the end” for “the second death.” But here is not a whisper of one emerging from Hades to join the rest of the risen saints when the thousand years are over.

We may add, that nowhere does scripture teach that the first resurrection is a judicial question; or as is said in the tract, “This will depend on the decision of the ‘Righteous Judge.’” It exclusively depends for us on the grace which has given the Christian life eternal in Christ. Such a one cometh not into judgment, but has already passed from death unto life; and He will raise him up at the last day, as He repeatedly declared (John 6). It is decided already by grace; and the believer will have been glorified before he stands before the Bema of Christ to give account of all done in the body: a process of solemn interest for the saint and affecting his particular position in the kingdom. Only perdition awaits the unbeliever when he is raised for judgment before the end. These things essentially distinct are here confused.

Further, as it is admitted (p. 8) that “all the church are called to this glory of the first resurrection,” let it not be forgotten that “ye were also called in hope of your calling” (Eph. 4:4) is not declarative merely or dispensational but of effectual grace, like “one body and one Spirit” with which it is bound up. “One baptism” attaches to “one Lord” and “one faith” too, which belong to the sphere of profession, and might fail of effect in one way or another. “One God and Father of all” is wider than either, but expresses that closest intimacy in the case of all Christians -- “in us all.”

Holiness, we all agree, as divine life goes with the word, is so imperative that without it no one shall see the Lord; and the professing Christian who does not pursue it only deceives himself. It is false and misleading to let people fancy that they may be real saints, yet unholy. “Every one” that has the grace-given hope resting on Him purifies himself as He is pure; others that have not are self-deceived. Because of iniquities the wrath of God cometh upon the sons of disobedience; but believers are essentially sons of obedience, and His love rests on them. If one sin, it is a grievous inconsistency. But grace does not fail to awaken self-judgment through our blessed Advocate with the Father, and restoration ensues. Those who do the wicked works of the flesh, and abide impenitent and indifferent have no part or lot with Christ, shall not inherit the kingdom of God, and in no way share the portion of the saints in light.

The Bible Treasury, New Series, vol. 5.
The Administration of the Fullness of the Seasons:
Ephesians 1:10

Christ is the true and only center of the purposes of God, as it is only by Him the Holy Ghost reveals them. Hence it is, and must be in the proportion of our Spirit-taught acquaintance with Christ, that the divine plans are understood and appreciated. When He is not steadily kept before the soul, what becomes of the study of scripture itself? It is no longer truth which sanctifies, but barren theology which puffs up. And why has prophecy been perverted to unfruitful and injurious speculation? Because God’s grand object has been lost sight of (“that in all things he might have the preeminence” one might perhaps apply here); and thereby the Spirit has been grieved, and has blown upon the busy exercises of man’s mind. “He shall glorify me,” said the Lord, “for He shall take of mine and show it unto you” (John 6:14). The moment the view of the glory of Christ is supplanted by researches into providence for instance, important as this may be in its place, the temple of prophecy degenerates into a countinghouse of human intellect; and the tables of those traffic in mere erudition crowd its courts, until by the just judgment of God it is left desolate. But by His grace a better sanctuary is opened for those who have ears to hear and eyes to see Jesus crowned with glory and honor in the heavens. May we have grace to draw near through the rent veil, and there by our Master’s side, with unshod feet and worshiping hearts, follow His eye and finger as they rest upon the spheres of His varied but harmonious glory!

“Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, besides Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.” There the Jewish prophet necessarily stopped. “But,” says the apostle (1 Cor. 2) taking up the words, “God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.” “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world (or, the ages) unto our glory.” How often we hear a member of the body of Christ quoting the words, “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard it,” to justify an ignorance which the Spirit of God takes pains to show us is no longer excusable. The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him are now disclosed. Our position is the contrast of that of the Jews. God did reveal them to us through His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. True, these depths are not the things of man, and are therefore undiscoverable by human ken. But a Christian is called no longer to walk nor to think κατὰ τὴν θρόνον: if he seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. “The things of God knoweth no one except the Spirit of God.” And what is that to the Christian? Everything. “For we received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” “We have the mind (νομίζετε) of Christ.”

So in Ephesians, God caused grace
to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for the administration of the fullness of the seasons, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which. are in the heavens, and which are on the earth, in Him in whom also we obtained inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose, etc. (Eph. 1:9-11).

The great and precious revelations of the Old Testament, as Moses told the Jews (Deut. 30:29), belong, in an emphatic sense, unto them and their children. Jehovah their God had reserved these secret things unto Himself. Hence the force and importance of the verses just cited from this epistle. His grace He caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. He has made known unto us the secret of His will, according to the good pleasure which He purposed in Himself for an administration of the accomplishment of the set times. And what is this purpose of God? It is in one head, Christ, to sum up the universe, the things in heaven, and the things on the earth; in Him in whom also we were allotted inheritance. That is, the mystery of God’s will consists of two great parts: first, Christ is to be the Head of all things heavenly and earthly; and secondly, the church is to be associated with Him in that inheritance. And so the apostle, having treated of the design of God to re-head all things in Christ, turns also at once to the collateral purpose of joining the church as heir with Him, first alluding to the Jewish saints brought into this relationship, and then to the Ephesians themselves, the Gentile saints whom he was actually addressing: “that we [i.e. the Jews now believing] should be to the praise of His glory who are pre-trusters in Christ; in whom ye also, i.e. Gentile believers], &c. When they heard, they believed the gospel. For they had no previous revelation or hope like the Jews.

In the closing verses of this chapter we have the same twofold truth, with this difference, that it is not in connection with God’s future purpose respecting the heading up of all things in Christ when the appointed times are completed, but with Christ’s present exaltation at the right hand of God. Nevertheless, here as before, is seen the double glory of Christ. God hath given Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. And thereupon Eph. 2 enters into the manner of God’s display of His grace in His kindness towards Jew and Gentile in Christ Jesus.

If we turn to Acts 3 it is clear, that the times of refreshing and the restoring of all things were no secret of God’s will. Peter speaks of this restitution of all things as the familiar hope of the Jewish nation. God had spoken of this by the mouth of
His holy prophets since the world began. It therefore must be a distinct thing from, however closely connected with, the mystery of Eph. 1:9-11. Let us take one of these prophetic testimonies, and the difference will be plain.

Therefore say unto the house of Israel, thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name’s sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am Jehovah, saith the Lord Jehovah, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will also save you from all your uncleanesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord Jehovah, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be filled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that pass by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I Jehovah build the ruined places, and plant that which was desolate: I Jehovah have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am Jehovah (Ezek. 36:22-38).

This citation is the more observable, because it seems the one the Lord had chiefly in view in His conversation with Nicodemus (John 3). Jesus had laid down the necessity of being born afresh as the condition of seeing the kingdom of God; and to the question of the Jewish ruler, He answered, that except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter that kingdom. Flesh and Spirit admit of no modification in the nature of each, which remains distinct and unchanged. Hence Nicodemus was not to marvel if Jews must be born again in order to have part in God’s kingdom; for the question is about the kingdom, and not salvation merely. When then Nicodemus still inquires, “How can these things be?” the Lord says,

Art thou the teacher of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

Thus it is clear, that when the Lord spoke of the need of the new birth, the Jewish teacher ought to have understood; for so had the prophet Ezekiel shown.

Before Israel enjoys the earthly blessings in the promised land, Israel will be born again. Israel will be sprinkled with clean water, and will have a new spirit put within them. It is afterwards they have the earthly things of the kingdom of God.

“I will also save you from all your uncleannesses; and I will call for the corn, and will increase it,” etc. “And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden.” The important thing to notice, is, that in all this the Lord had not gone beyond the earthly things, or that which was essential to their enjoyment, i.e. the new birth. Of course, to have blessings in heavenly places a man must a fortiori be born again; but even the Jewish people, as we have seen, must be born afresh to have the earthly promises in God’s kingdom. In speaking of the new birth, He had not gone beyond the range of earthly things and what a Jew ought to have learned from the prophets.

If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?

On the latter, the Lord does not touch further than to intimate the lifting up of the Son of man, and the gift of the Son of God in God’s love not to the Jews on but to the world: which things involve, as we know, the exaltation of the Lord into glory on high, and the union of the church with Him there, as the fullness of that heavenly Man. The lifting up of the Son of man was, so far as man’s responsibility is concerned, the demolition (though in God’s wisdom and grace the ultimate security) of all the earthly hopes of the Jews. For in Christ all the promises of God found their meeting-place; and if He had been received, they would have been made good to His earthly people. But He was rejected. Wherefore God also highly exalted Him. The promises remain to be accomplished, based as they are upon the blood of the Mediator; but before that accomplishment takes place, a new and extraordinary work goes on; namely, the formation of the body to share the glory of Christ above, when God’s purpose is fulfilled of gathering all things, heavenly and earthly, under the headship of Christ, for the church shares that inheritance with Him. This, then, was the mystery of the will of God: not the kingdom of God, nor the new birth, indispensable as it is for its earthly promises. Of these the Prophets had spoken; but they were silent on the purpose of God which destined Christ and the church to rule over all things in the heavens and on the earth. The restitution of all things was not in any sense a mystery; but that was.

Be it observed by the way, that 1 Pet. 1:10-12 does not at all refer to this mystery, but to other privileges which formed
the burden of many a prophetic strain. The salvation of souls was certainly no hidden secret: “of which salvation the prophets,” etc. They searched, no doubt what, or what manner of, time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify; but it is manifest that the sufferings of Christ and the glories which should follow, testified beforehand by the ancient prophets, cannot be the mystery which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3). Here were things testified beforehand, ministered unto us and not unto themselves; for it was so revealed to them.

But clearly these previously revealed privileges totally differ from another sphere of blessing which from the beginning of the world was kept hid in God (Eph. 3:9). Nor do the Epistles of Peter once allude to our fellowship with Christ as His body. The mystery is nowhere introduced. We are regarded “as begotten again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled . . . kept by the power of God” etc. We are exhorted to diligence, sobriety, confident hope, obedience in holiness, and withal to pass the time of our sojourning in fear, knowing our redemption with the precious blood of Christ. It is not doubted that the persons whom Peter addressed were members of Christ’s body; but it is certain, that the Spirit here dwells upon the blessings which spring from the resurrection of Christ; our incorruptible life in power, holy and royal priesthood, pilgrim calling, and the like. He speaks not of our union with Christ in heaven. Hence also, when the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven is referred to, it is as the power of preaching the gospel unto us, never as the One Who constituted us, Jew and Gentile, God’s habitation (Eph. 2), or Who baptized us into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). In other words, the mystery is not treated in the Epistles of Peter, whereas it is the main subject to the Ephesians and also to the Colossians.

The administration, we have seen, awaits “the fullness of times,” or the expiry of the various periods appointed by divine wisdom. All things are out of course, and waxing worse and worse, until Christ takes the reins. The only Righteous One is still an outcast from the world, though known to the church as crowned with glory and honor in heaven, while those who love the Lord of glory suffer here below. God’s favored earthly people are a proverb and a byword among all nations, and driven out from a country of which God delighted to be the landlord. And what has been, what is, the history of that people and land? Their oppressors, the Gentiles, have they walked in abasement or in pride? Have they honored the King of heaven? And how fares creation? Does not the whole of it groan and travail in pain together until now? And where is Satan? Is it on earth merely that he walks about, or is there spiritual wickedness in heavenly places? Well, there is a set time for each of these things; and these seasons shall have a full term. Satan shall lose his way over the air and the earth; creation shall be delivered into the liberty of the glory of God’s children; the smitten Gentile image shall give place to an everlasting kingdom; Israel shall blossom and bad, and fill the face of the world with fruit; the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and Christ shall appear and we with Him in glory. This will be the fullness of the seasons spoken of.

When the destined fullness arrives, how great our joy, beloved, to see Him, not only as the Melchizedek blessing God and blessing man, but actual Possessor of heaven and earth, all things therein being beaded up in Him Who, though He be the most High God, administers as the exalted Man; to be too ourselves so near Him and so truly one with Him, that then we shall at length forget all save His love and His glory. And yet (O wondrous grace!) is it not so now, as regards His love? Are we not here and now members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones? Yet surely we may long for the day when, seeing Him, we shall be for ever like Him, according to that working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

Yes, all things in heaven and earth shall be headed up in Him, not things under the earth [infernal beings]; but every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Worthily has He won such a place, that blessed One. And how true the word!

Who, subsisting in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied himself, having taken upon him the form of a bondman, having come in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also highly exalted him, and freely gave him the name which is above every name (Phil. 2:6-9).

It is false, utterly false, that Jesus took this place when He was born. It is true, that then was the fullness of the time come for God to send forth His Son. The very children were enslaved under the rudiments of the world, and all were shut up under sin. Man had proved himself competent to ruin himself under the law of God, only the more readily because it was good and he was bad. But was God’s business done when the Son was here, come of a woman, come under the law? By no means. The Incarnation was but the means, not the end. Redemption was the grand point to which God turned. Therefore the Son was thus sent and come to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye [the Gentiles, who had not been under the law] are sons, &c. (Gal. 4:4-6).

Turning to the higher and larger sphere of Colossians, we hear the same truth. In the Son of God’s love we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins; “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” Is this His highest title? Is this His Divine glory? No; but founded upon it. He is the firstborn of every creature, not because He partook of flesh, nor because He was the holy Man Who triumphed over all the consequences of the first Adam’s sin, and conquered him that led the first man captive at his will: in a word, not because He was here below, be it the most faithful and glorious, but because He was the Creator. He is the firstborn of every creature, for by (or, in virtue of) Him were all things created. Here is His right to the supremacy in question.

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created through him, and for him: he is before all things, and by (or, in virtue of) him all things consist (Col. 1:16, 17).
His primacy over all creation flows from His Divine creative power. He asserts it as man; but His title flows from another and higher source. But He is more than firstborn of all creation. “He is head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.” This, as we have seen, is the glory especially dwelt on in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

Sin was here below. Man, who ought to have been the first, was the lowest morally; and creation itself, by reason of him, was steeped in the bondage of corruption. And those whom God was about to bring into the church, what were they? Alienated and enemies in their mind by wicked works. Hence, though the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, though all the fulness was pleased to dwell in Him, even this could not meet the evil and misery of man, nor the holiness and the heart of God. The light of God was there, His love was there; in Him was life, and the Life was the light of men. Alas! it was manifest that the Jews, that all, were irreparably blind, yea, dead.

If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other hath done, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father (John 15:22-24).

What was to be done? “Verily, verily,” saith the Lord, “except a corn of wheat fail into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” His death could alone deliver. But this was ever before the soul of our blessed Master.

I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?” “This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood” (1 John 5).

Hence in the Epistle to the Colossians, ch. 1:20-22, we read.

And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens. And you, that were once alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now did he reconcile, in the body of his flesh through death; to present you holy and unblamable and unreprovable in his sight.

The church is reconciled even now. To the living members of Christ it can be said, You did He reconcile.” Creation is not so yet, though the blood of the cross is shed on which the reconciliation is grounded; it will be so in the fullness of the seasons.

At present no such administration takes place, though we here learn God’s purpose that it shall. Christ is, no doubt, head of angels, of Jews, of men, of creation. But is He exercising these rights? Now it is of the administration when the periods are ripe that our verses speak. But none of these things are being yet gathered. On the contrary, there is yet to be a deeper crisis of rebellion than ever. It is now the time when all things are severed from Christ, or, if gathered, gathered only in the ruin and the wretchedness which the guile and power of Satan have introduced. It is also the time of another gathering, the gathering of the joint-heirs who shall be glorified with Christ.

But this is the gathering of Eph. 2, 3 not of Eph. 1. It is the gathering of the members of His body, not of the subjects of His rule.

Some, I know, have conceived that by “all things in heaven and earth” is meant the church. But first of all the expression “all things,” etc., forbids the thought. The church never was and never will be, “all things.” And though now the calling is being effected on earth, it is not a gathering there, but out of it; and, even when complete, it is in heaven; whereas the gathering in Eph. 1:10 is a gathering, at the same time, of all things that are in the heavens and that are on the earth under the headship of Christ. Again, not only is the church an elect body, but in v. 11 we have members of it referred to as an additional thing to the heading up all things in Christ, “in whom also we obtained” etc. Further, in v. 22 we have “all things” again spoken of as put by God under Christ’s feet. Who is given as head over all things to the church; which therefore, far from being merged in all things, enjoys and shares His supremacy, as His body and glorious bride.

This is entirely confirmed by the verses immediately before and after v. 10: in the one case where the mystery of God’s will is made known touching all things in heaven and on earth; and in the other, because we are spoken of as having the Holy Spirit of promise, Who is the earnest of our inheritance. Such is what we have in the mean time: not the possession which comes at the fullness of the seasons and not before, but the Spirit meanwhile, as the earnest until, the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory. For when that fullness arrives, it will be glory, His glory, and not as now the dealings and riches of His grace. The Lord hasten that glorious day!

The Bible Treasury, New Series, vol. 2.

2. It is almost needless to say that these set times are not yet completed, and that Christ has not yet all things in the heavens and on the earth headed up in Him, and that the church is not yet reigning joint-heir with Him. The translation, which has been supposed to involve one, and which to be consistent ought to involve all, of these consequences is a mistake. “That for the dispensation of the fullness of seasons, He hath headed up for the heading up all things in Christ,” is a version founded upon a misconception of the force of the aorist infinitive being abstract ἀνέμειναι. What is “capable of referring to the future as to the past. You cannot gather the time of actual occurrence from that word in itself. It seems that the Authorized Version gives the sense here correctly. The purpose of God was, “that He (continued...)

2. (…continued)
A brief survey will suffice to test the worth of these scanty remains of Christian antiquity for the truth in question. The marvel is that any man of spiritual judgment who has read them with care should count them of the least weight, especially on such a matter. They have indeed a sorrowful interest, as they attest the rapid departure and profound downfall from apostolic teaching. Can anything be conceived more evident or striking than the immeasurable distance which severs these earliest writings from the scriptures? The Apocrypha, merely human as it is, does not so startlingly differ from the OT as do Barnabas, Clemens Rom., and Hermas from the apostles Paul, Peter, and John. Yet these productions were read like the scriptures to Christian congregations in early days; and Clemens Alex. quotes the most heterodox and nonsensical of the three as scripture! Even the Sinaite Uncial has appended to the NT Barnabas and Hermas, as the Alexandrian has Clemens Rom. What a contrast these and all the rest from the dignity, holiness, love, and authority of the inspired Epistles! These early relics are merely the word of man, betraying not only weakness but trumpery. If able and learned men have lauded them to the skies, it only proves that tradition has blinding power, and that all have not faith.

Yet a pious man of our day ventures to say that “in God’s gracious providence we possess such early writings.” To what can one attribute infatuation like this in an evangelical clergyman but to his passionate zeal for the Jewish hope against the Christian one? Judaising in any form tends always to strife and bitterness. How strange to be directed first to the “Didache” or “Teaching of the twelve Apostles”? Here then are the editio princeps of Bryennius (Constantinople, 1883), that of Hitchcock and Brown (New York, 1884), moreover that of H. de Roumestin (Parker and Co., Oxford and London, 1884), and Dr. C. Bigg’s little volume with at least equal discernment critically as any.

The fuller title is daring enough, “The Lord’s Teaching through the twelve Apostles to the nations.”

But it is a meager compilation, beginning with the Two Ways of life and of death, which occupy six chapters, or nearly half of the little treatise, without one word to show how life is given or guilt removed.

Then follows an inept chapter on baptism, prescribing a fast to precede; and another chapter on fasting in general. The great difference from “the hypocrites” seems to be that they fast on the second and the fifth days of the week, whereas the right fast is on the fourth and sixth (or preparation)!

The So-called Apostolic Fathers
On the Lord’s Second Coming

but as the Lord commanded, and thrice a day! In chapter 9 about the Eucharist, take the following flight:

As this broken [bread] was scattered over the hills and gathered together became one, so let thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom.

Can any thought be poorer?

The notable fact is that the Twelve apostles are made to forget the all-importance of Christ’s death in both baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Again, the name of David figures strangely in 9 1 and 10 where we have “the four winds.” After eccentric talk in 11-13 we have in 14 Mal. 1:10, 14 utterly perverted, as do the Papists notoriously to the mass. It is the old unbelief of substituting the Church for Israel. Does our brother fancy that from east to west the name of Jehovah is yet great among the nations, or ever will be till the Lord returns in glory? Is he not as assured as those to whom he foolishly ascribes “the modern theory,” that only then, never before, “in every place incense shall be offered to My name, and a pure oblation; for My name shall be great among the nations, saith Jehovah of hosts” {Mal. 1:11}.

Hence no apostle ever applied this prediction to Christianity in the NT It is the misinterpretation of the spurious Didache; for the true Twelve never really sanctioned it. But it suited the pride and the ignorance of the Catholic church even before Popery. Matthew Henry perhaps well skipped the verse, for the nonconformists give scant heed to prophecy; but W. Lowth, T. Scott, and perhaps all other commentators boldly follow the antiquated delusion in full chorus. The late Dr. Pusey of course labored to prove it, looking only at the Jews of the past and present. But his argument defeats itself; for the prophet speaks of no new revelation of Himself, but rather of the old promise made good in grace and power, not for Jews only but among the nations, when Jehovah shall be king over all the earth, one Jehovah and His Name one in that day. There is no excuse for misreading this bright prospect, still future, into the truly new and deeper revelation of His name as Father, which the Lord Jesus made known (John 4:21-23) for the hour that “now is,” when the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and truth.

1. The equivalent appears in Clem. Alex. and Origen, all referring, as Dr. Bigg judges, not to the Lord, but to the Eucharistic cup! It really seems so; but how incongruous the mixture of Jewish figure with a strictly Christian institution!
But let us turn to the last chapter of the Didache, “still more apposite” it is said. No one can doubt that Matt. 24 is therein mixed up with other scriptures which speak of the Lord’s coming, whether to mankind invisible or visible.

And then shall appear the signs of the truth (!): first a sign of an opening in heaven; then a sign of trumpet’s voice (or, sound); and the third, resurrection of the dead. Yet not of all, but as it was said, The Lord will come, and all the saints with him.

Now Matt. 24:30 speaks, not of the sign of “an opening in heaven” appearing, but of the Son of man in the heaven as a sign of His coming to the earth, which causes all the tribes of the earth (land) to lament. But even the Didache cites Zech. 14:5 for all the saints coming with Him at this very epoch. Now this is our thesis, and it necessarily implies their previous change in order to come suitably to His appearing in glory. The mission of His angels (Matt. 24:31) with a great sound of trumpet cannot be for the gathering together unto Him of the glorified who all come with Him, but for the subsequent act of gathering together, after He appears, the elect of Israel from the four winds, scattered till then all over the earth. There is not a trace here of “the last trumpet” [1 Cor. 15:52] when the dead saints shall rise and we are changed, in order to come with Him in due time to gather the elect of Israel to the great King in Zion. For we must have been caught up before, that when He shall be manifested in glory, we too may then be manifested together with Him in it [Col. 3:4]. There is no catching up in Matt. 24. Nor does it speak of the third sign of the resurrection of the saintly dead. Indeed no scripture treats it as “a sign.” They were raised to appear with Him when He appears and “the world sees the Lord coming on the clouds of heaven.”

If it be argued that Rev. 20:4 speaks of the First Resurrection (after His appearing and the judgment of the Beast and the False Prophet with the kings of the earth and their armies, as well as the binding of Satan), not only is this admitted but its importance is insisted on. For it proves that there are stages in that resurrection as well as in Christ’s presence. We learn from that verse that the general company of the glorified (all the saints of OT and New, till Christ come for them) compose those who emerge from heaven as the Lamb’s followers. They were seen now seated on thrones, and judgment given to them; thereon two special classes of saints succeed, martyred in the earlier and later periods of the Apocalyptic crisis, who, as yet disembodied, were made to live in order to reign with Christ for the thousand years, no less than the general company already enthroned. These all make up the First Resurrection. It is false and directly contradictory to this scripture (Rev. 20:4) that those Apocalyptic sufferers rose at the same time, with the first company.

Is it too much to say that of the truth here revealed, as the Didache, so Christians at large are still wholly ignorant? Why should that be incredible which the Revelation makes known in the clearest terms? These early writings are most defective and, through ignorance of the scriptures, often opposed to the truth; and so are moderns. Scripture alone is the standard; and the Christian is not left without a divine Guide dwelling in him to lead into all the truth. Let us believe God’s word as a whole, and not accept one part while we omit another.

But what we thus learn scatters into thin air the assumption that there were not to be distinct and different objects, both for blessing and for judgment, which unpracticed eyes merge in one. Matt. 24 of course practically coalesces with 1 Thess. 5 and 2 Thess. 1 and many other intimations of the day of the Lord i.e. His coming judicially. But no one is entitled therefore to take for granted that the promised comfort and heavenly joy of the saints in John 14 and in 1 Thess. 4:15-17 will be at that same time, any more than that the Lord’s “Parousia” in 2 Thess. 2:1 synchronizes with “the appearing of His Parousia” in v. 8. If these be equally seen by man, where would be the propriety of the change of phrase? The connection too is so different that the Parousia in v. 1 is with sovereign grace, the epiphany of His Parousia {v. 8} is with signal vengeance. It is equally His presence in either case, but absurd to assume that they must happen together.

As the Lord’s character of Son of man in that day will be judicial (John 5:22), the Parousia of the Son of man goes with His appearing. Thus He comes for Israel and the nations (Matt. 24:30, 25:31), but not so receives us to Himself for the Father’s house {John 14:1-3}. It is not that we deny in a general way what these brethren advance about “that day.” In 2 Thess. 1 we have, as simultaneous effects of the Lord’s revelation from heaven, the relief and vindication of the troubled saints, and the trouble and punishment of the wicked. But these are alike the exercise of righteous judgment, and not of sovereign grace; and hence neither can be till He appears in glory. Why should any be so absorbed in the earthly side of the Lord’s Parousia as to be bitter against such as see and firmly hold the heavenly side also? We believe the heavenly hope {John 14:1-3} to be an immense gain for the Christian, having already known what it is to be ignorant of it, as almost all thus begin. But growth in the truth, or elevation above the visible sphere, if sound and spiritual, is a boon beyond price; yet God’s word and Spirit alone can safely lead on.

The Didache then may have interest as being rather ancient, though of no doctrinal importance. It departs from the truth, even as to the saints choosing bishops (ch. 15); whereas scripture speaks only of apostles, or their delegate, choosing elders for them {Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5}. This was a radical change. Yet we need not suppose that it purposely left out elders, but (like Clem. Rom.) identified them with bishops, as scripture does: compare Acts 20:17 with 28; Phil, 1:1; and Titus 1:5, 7.

But with the earliest age how strange to hear of the “Apostolic Constitutions,” betraying as it does internal evidence of being centuries later? What evidence can it afford of “the first century belief”? The Didache just lets us
see the growing decay a little earlier; the Apostolic Constitutions came after that. Both misapplied Matt. 24 to Christendom.

The Epistle of Barnabas was long before those spurious "Apostolic Constitutions." Who this Barnabas was we know not. It dishonors the apostle’s early friend and fellow-laborer, “a good man and full of the Holy Spirit and faith,” to attribute to him a document so childish in its mystical reveries. Yet it stands favorably contrasted with the probably interpolated Epistles of Ignatius, which too evidently evince the desire to cry up the clerical order. The Barnabas before us appears to have had at heart to counteract the judaising of that early day. But a mighty chasm separates his work from the Epistle to the Hebrews, which with divine energy really translates the Levitical types as the figures of heavenly things. Tertullian, &c. show lack of discernment by assigning the inspired Epistle to the companion of the apostle (himself too without doubt the man whom the Holy Spirit calls an apostle). Yet this author sets up no such pretension, but had a due sense of his humble position. The true hope of the Christian is nowhere seen. All is vague and earthly, as with others far abler down to our own day. Spiritual intelligence in this respect is of the rarest.

Again, it is surprising that anyone who has the least regard for orthodoxy or even decency should cite from “The Shepherd” of Hermas. Besides, the Muratorian Canon has convinced all scholars, that this Hermas lived at about the middle of the second century, a brother of Pope Pius the first, and not therefore “the brother” mentioned by the apostle. Far be it from my wish to expose the mere trash of a weak and fanciful mind in its Visions, Commands, and Similitudes. But it is a far graver case, when Hermas talks of God’s holy angel filling a man with the blessed Spirit! of men’s having all their offences blotted out because they suffered death for the name of the Son of God! and, worse still if possible, of the Holy Spirit being created first of all! Think of citing such a one on the question of our having to pass through the great tribulation! and of the comment on all this worse than nonsense, “Such was the belief of the Apostolic Christian.” But let us draw a veil over the addendum on the false prophets who branded Jeremiah, and on Ahab, Zedekiah, and Shemaiah. Such vituperation must injure those that indulge in so acrimonious a spirit on a question that needs the quiet and holy guidance of the Spirit of God.

It is singular that the Epistle from the Church in Rome to that in Corinth (assigned to Clement, perhaps the earliest of these extra-scriptural remains) is passed by; for it is comparatively sober and grave, earnest and affectionate. Yet it seems inconceivable that the Clement (a name then of frequent occurrence), to whom the apostle alludes as “my fellow-laborer,” could have written, as this Epistle does, of Danaides and Dirces (chap. 6), or of the fabulous phoenix. This last first appears in the Fragments of Hesiod (Loesner, p. 450), and swells into the legend that Herodotus relates in his garrulous way (2:73). See also Tacitus (Ann. 6:28), and the elder Pliny (Hist. Nat. 10:2). Is it not humbling that what the old pagan historian found incredible was accepted by Clement of Rome, with a whole cluster of later Fathers assenting, such as the Latins, Tertullian and Ambrose, and the Greeks, Origen, Epiphanius, Cyril Hier., Greg. Naz., &c.? Archbp. Wake and Mr. Chevallier were influenced by P. Young (Junius) to omit the heathen reference in chap. 6 as an interpolation; but the discovery since, of added MS. evidence corroborates the insertion, however discreditale it must be to those who drew up the letter to Corinth. For Clement does not claim the Epistle as his own. It was probably a composite communication, like the letter from the apostles and elder brethren to the brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch and elsewhere (Acts 15). Clement taking the part in Rome that James had done before in Jerusalem. But what a wide difference between the brief and authoritative wisdom divine in the one, and the prolix elaboration, with faulty and compromising details, in the other!

How again could Christian saints of intelligence cite Isa. 64:44, and 1 Cor. 2:9, and stop short, as ignorant souls do today, of the apostolic addition, “But unto us God revealed [them] through the Spirit”? (See chap. 34.) For this is just the wondrous favor we enjoy above the OT saints by Christ’s redemption, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It means unwittingly, that one ignores the vantage ground of Christianity in the presence of the Spirit, that we are no better off as to this than Israel of old.

This Epistle is also exceedingly reticent as to the Lord’s return, and hence precarious in its quotation of prophecy. Take that from Isa. 60:17 in chap. 43. This is the application.

Preaching therefore through countries and cities, they [the apostles] used to appoint their first-fruits [a hazardous statement] to be bishops and deacons over those who should believe, after having proved them by the Spirit. Nor this in any new way; for in truth it had in long past times been written concerning bishops and deacons! For the scripture somewhere saith, I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith.

Now a Christian has only to read the prophet in order to be convinced of the outrageous mistake. The chapter as a whole supposes the day of glory come for earthly Jerusalem, the city of Jehovah, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel; when the afflicted but spared people shall become a strong nation, and, what is better still, shall all be righteous. It is a picture quite different from the glorified church, the holy Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from God. The force of v.

2. To say that those heathen women “attained the firm center of faith” and that they “weak in body received a noble reward” is to surrender the gospel, unconsciously but really. It is inexcusable error, not to say downright folly.
17 is that in the day of restored Israel Jehovah will make their rulers peace, and their officers righteousness. Neither war nor exaction shall be any more. Is this fulfilled as yet?

There is here absolutely no room for an allusion to bishops and deacons in the churches; it is pure hallucination. But it is worse by far. It indicates, like the Epistle of Barnabas, that which soon overran Christendom like a flood, the sprouting of the Gentile conceit, of which the apostle warned the saints in Rome {Rom. 11}. The promises abide for Israel, who are yet to be blessed as a people under Messiah and the new covenant. Branches of the olive-tree by their unbelief which were broken off, and Gentiles meanwhile grafted in; but the Gentile tenure is by faith, and contingent on their continuance in goodness: otherwise they also shall be cut off. Nothing is more certain than that the professing Gentiles have utterly failed, are unbelieving to excess, and must end in the apostasy as the apostle predicted.

Equally certain is it (even from this chapter and all the prophets) that Israel will not continue in their present unbelief, but shall be grafted in again. Their hardening is only till the fullness of the Gentiles be come in; “and so all Israel shall be saved” {Rom. 11:26}. These are enemies in the gospel days which will soon end. God has not forgotten His promises, or His election of the fathers; He only awaits the right moment, when the Gentile complement is made up, to prove His faithful love to Israel. For His gifts and calling do not admit of change of mind {Rom. 11:29}. Christendom from early days assumed on the contrary that He had cast off Israel, and given the church an indefeasible title: a false, proud and ruinous delusion. Here in these apostolic fathers the germ grows and spreads apace as it were flag-weed, till judgment destroys it for ever.

Are these the men or the writings to produce as of value to interpret the scriptures which reveal truth incompatible with this vain conceit? For their denial of Israel’s hopes led to the transfer of earthly glory to the church now, and the consequent refusal of present suffering, forgetful of future glory on high: the abandonment of the true portion of God’s church. These early fathers had lost the truth of our calling individually and congregationally were fully stated to guide the church in Corinth (with all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, theirs and ours {1 Cor. 1:1}) from their aberrations. There were internal divisions and carnal strifes; clashing schools of thought with chiefs (however themselves unwilling) dragged in to accentuate the rival parties. What more opposed to the one Head and the one body? They were puffed up, instead of mourning at the horrible leaven unjudged in their midst. They were not ashamed that anyone of them should prosecute his suit before the world, and not before the saints as the Lord had laid down. They were loose as to personal purity, the known prevalent immorality of the place. They needed to have the marriage relation &c. cleared and defined. They were admonished against their levity as to heathen temples and sacrifices. They were reminded authoritatively that those who labor in the gospel are entitled to live of the gospel, whilst it was the apostle’s own joy to make it without charge, in the Spirit of Christ not using his right. They were warned that preaching to others without personal self-abnegation is an awful peril. Nor is it only preachers that need to take heed; but any Christian if unwary will fall, as is seen in the wilderness history of Israel, types of us. Open disorders too are reproved, not only in women forgetting their place of subjection, but in scandalous dishonor to the Lord, even at His supper, it would seem through mixing the love-feast with it, but really through their bad state of soul. Further, the principle and practice flowing from the Spirit’s action individually and congregationally were fully stated to guide them and us, in 1 Cor. 12-14 with the deeply needed intervening chapter calling for love to enforce, and characterize both. Most pointed too in the bearing on our subject is 1 Cor. 15, which proves how little “early Christian
belief” can be trusted; for some among them questioned a resurrection, though it does not seem that they doubted the immortality of the soul.

It is the scripture that we accept, not only as the source of divinely given truth but as its criterion. The Holy Spirit is the sole unfailing interpreter, just so far as we look to Christ’s glory. If we seek our own things, calling them perhaps the church’s glory or right, we have no promise from God and no security for ourselves; but on the contrary we shall have to learn our folly. One might similarly apply several more of the Epistles, besides the greatest for general Christian doctrine, and the no less great for ecclesiastical truth and order.

Notably again the Epistle to the Galatians calls for a few words in proof that what the early Christians held is not the smallest guarantee for the truth. For the apostle writes to the assemblies of that considerable region in Asia Minor, where he had himself planted the gospel, to reproach them sadly and solemnly with having so quickly changed from him that called them in Christ’s grace to a different gospel which is not another. It was truly a perversion of the gospel of Christ. If saints, after the best of all preaching in that early day, could so soon follow judaizers, and fall from grace into legalism as the apostle affirms, can any thoughtful mind be surprised that they might soon slip into defective views and even error about the Second Advent?

But we need not assume this. The Epistles to the Thessalonians prove doubly the fact, and not the danger only. For the apostle, in instructing them more on that glorious truth, had in the First to correct, at least as soon, their mistake about their deceased brethren, and in the Second to expose a still wider and worse error about the day of the Lord for living saints. How plainly the mystery of lawlessness was already at work!

It is not for any one to minimise the incalculable moment of the proper hope of the Christian. But nothing is easier to understand than the difficulty it presented to the Jews that became Christians, accustomed only to the Lord’s coming as predicted in the OT to deliver the godly remnant of Jews at the last gasp, as it were, from the apostate mass of their fellow-Jews with the Antichrist at their head and the Roman Beast his patron and ally, and from the vast assemblage of the Eastern nations, their embattled or besieging enemies under the King of the North, and the Russian Gog behind the latter. The remnant justly look for Christ’s advent in displayed power and glory to overwhelm both their internal and external foes, and thus deliver themselves on the earth. Also Gentile believers, again, were slow to enter into the blessed wonder of Christ’s coming to translate on high all real Christians, in its grandeur far beyond what Enoch or Elijah experienced of old: so completely was it beyond even saintly men’s expectation or conception. Only Christ’s promise and God’s new revelation could account to our souls for such surpassing glory. Hence to the inspired word of the NT we confidently appeal, as it only is here entitled to convince any.

But we specially invite the attention of our opposing brethren to a consideration which escaped all the Patristic remains, and every theologian till our day. For we love them, and mind not overmuch froth and fury signifying nothing, due also to their little which fills their vision, having most of us passed through similar objections and prejudices. Scripture we found far larger and higher than a scheme based on the OT hope, confirmed as it is by NT revelation. For we frankly acknowledge its truth and its importance, if rightly applied. Yet the NT also reveals what was of old hidden but now manifested, that Christ, on His total rejection by Jew and Gentile, was to sit raised from the dead at God’s right hand; and this, not merely to be Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, as He interceded too for His friends, and by-and-by to strike through kings in the day of His wrath when His enemies are made His footstool. He was to be there now for a new order of things, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. For God put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1) This is the great secret now revealed.

It is not my aim to trace the means which the apostle unfolds, in pursuance of the exalted Head, that we may know God’s operation in associating us who now believe with Christ in the heavenlies, as we read in Eph. 2-4, but to direct renewed and closer attention to the counsels of God who made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him (or, Himself) for administration of the fullness of the seasons. These seasons will only be full when Christ comes again, to carry out to God’s glory as the Second man all the trusts in which the first man has so conspicuously failed. In Christ will be then displayed the obedient Man, the Governor, the Depositary of the promises, the One to make the law great and glorious, the Priest, the Prophet, the King of Israel and Son of Man, Ruler of all peoples, nations, and languages, the Head over all things to the church. For Satan is still the prince of the world, and the god of this age. And the Lord, though crowned with the chaplet of victory and King of kings in title, is not yet seated on His own throne but His Father’s (Rev. 3:21), till He appears with His many diadems and establishes His world-kingdom. Then only will all things be summed up in Christ as the center of the universe in the day of manifested glory, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth, in Him in whom we also were given (or, obtained) inheritance, being predestined according to His purpose that works all things according to the counsel of His own will.

The heading up of the universe in Christ as in Eph. 1:10 must be carefully distinguished from the gathering together into one of the scattered children of God, of which John 11:52 speaks. For Christ died that there might be now the holy gathering into one of God’s children, for which He also
made request in John 17:20, 21. But that heading up is of all things in God’s creation, “the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth,” now so long severed, and the earthly at least made subject to vanity through man’s fall. But all things groaning below shall be freed from the bondage of corruption when the coming glory is revealed, with Christ the Heir of all things at its head. At present it is an operation of divine grace to call out and together from Jews and Gentiles God’s children (and if children, heirs also: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ), if indeed we suffer with [Him], that we may also be glorified with [Him]. This is the day of grace, and an indisputably elective process; that, a gathering of the whole creation both heavenly and earthly; which is so far from meaning the church either now or then, that we His members are expressly here distinguished from “all things.” The inheritance we, God’s heirs, are to share with Christ in that day. For this we have the Holy Spirit as earnest, who has also sealed us already for redemption’s day.

This then is the revealed purpose of God for the glory of Christ and the church, His body and bride. Tradition furnishes not an echo of it. Universal consent, if we can speak of such a thing in presence of the Babel of Christendom, rises not above the earth. First, such writers as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus looked for a glorious metamorphosis of nature, for a grander Jerusalem on earth, and vines bearing prodigiously, not for Israel, but for the glorified saints (c. Haer. v. 333, ed. Massuet)! Then later Eusebius (V. C. iii. 15, 33, iv. 40, &c) in a reaction from such grotesque stuff, treated the prophetic visions as fulfilled in Constantine’s victory over Paganism, with worldly ease and honor for the Christian profession! Along with this came in souls blessed after death as an alternative interpretation; so that the resurrection as well as Christ’s coming well nigh vanished, save for judgment; and the sheep and the goats were confounded with the great white-throne-judgment of the dead.

Yet the Lord had intimated even to Nicodemus that God’s kingdom has “heavenly things” as well as “earthly” {John 3:12}. Again He pointed out to the disciples the distinction of the Father’s kingdom on high for the glorified saints, from the Son of man’s kingdom below out of which are to be cleared those that practice lawlessness {Matt. 13}. These truths paved the way for the Spirit to reveal that purpose of God for the heavens and all the things in them, and for the earth and all the things on it, to be set under Christ as the Head over all things to the church. Had this truth been received, it would have guarded saints from setting the one against the other, the common source of manifold error and evil. Here our brethren, like ourselves, have to take heed and learn.

The Bible Treasury, New Series, vol. 4.
Part Four:
Postmillennialism Answered

The Second Advent of Christ
Premillennial

A Reply to the Rev. D. Brown, D.D.
by William Kelly
(from the 1868 edition)

Preface

The reader has before him an examination of a work long before the public. The author reviewed will not impute to me any lack of personal regard. We agree, too, in the importance of what is in question, doctrinally and practically. We agree in rejecting errors taught by many premillenarians. We agree in accepting truth seen by few postmillennialists. There remains much, however, and of wide, deep, and lasting moment, in which I have the firmest conviction that my Christian brother is wrong, and can only mislead the Church to the dishonor of the Lord and of the truth. I have therefore consented to the republication of my review of his book, with remarks added on the latter half of it, which was not originally taken up.

Dublin, July, 1868.


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Part 1: The Second Coming
and Kingdom of Christ

Part 1, Chapter 1:

The Hope of Christ’s Coming Again, and
Its Relation to the Question of Time

The battlefield is somewhat changed. The champion of
post-millennialism proclaims the second advent to be “THE
VERY POLESTAR OF THE CHURCH.”

That it is so held forth in the New Testament is beyond
dispute. Let any one do himself the justice to collect and
arrange the evidence on the subject, and he will be
surprised -- if the study be new to him -- at once at the
copiousness, the variety and the conclusiveness of it
(Brown, p. 15).

“Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me”; is
a sound dear to all that love His name. They “love His
appearing” because they love Himself. To put anything
in the place of it is not good. Nor will it succeed; for
those who preach Him bringing His reward with Him will
prevail, as indeed they ought. Nor is it in regard to the
personal appearing of the Savior that only
premillennialists will and ought to prevail against all who
keep it out of sight. There is a range of truth connected
with it, which necessarily sinks out of its scriptural
position and influence, whenever the coming of Christ is
put out of its due place. I refer to the RESURRECTION
as a coordinate object of the Church’s hope, and to all the
truths which circle around it, in which there is a power to
stir and to elevate, which nothing else, substituted for it,
can ever possess. The resurrection-life of the Head, as
now animating all his members, and at length quickening
them from the tomb, to be for ever with Him; these, and
such like, are truth in the presentation of which
premillennialists are cast, in the mold of Scripture, from
which it is as vain as it were undesirable to dislodge them
(Brown, p. 455).

For these and similar admissions we are thankful, and we are
confident that they will not stop there. Our adversaries had
long treated Christ’s coming unworthily. They confounded
it with the mission of the Holy Ghost, with the destruction
of Jerusalem, with the departure of the spirit at death, with the
judgment of the dead before the great white throne. They are
now compelled to own that

Premillennialists have done the Church a real service, by
calling attention to the place which the second advent
holds in the word of God and the scheme of divine truth.

More than this: the immense practical importance of the
question is frankly avowed. It was passing strange and most
trying to hear men of God, not combating Premillennialism
because of a supposed lack of Scriptural proof, but neglecting

it as a mere secondary, trivial notion, even if true. Such sentiments are deplorable: better to be “cold” than thus “lukewarm.” Here, again, Dr. Brown confesses the untenable ground of such of his partisans.

Some may think it of small consequence whether this system be true or false; but no one who intelligently surveys its nature and bearings can be of that opinion. Premillennialism is no barren speculation, useless though true, and innocuous though false. It is a school of Scripture interpretation; it impinges upon and affects some of the most commanding points of the Christian faith; and when suffered to work its unimpeded way, it stops not till it has pervaded with its own genius the entire system of one’s theology, and the whole tone of his spiritual character, constructing, I had almost said, a world of its own; so that, holding the same faith, and cherishing the same fundamental hopes as other Christians, he yet sees things through a medium of his own, and finds everything instinct with the life which this doctrine has generated within him (p. 8).

This witness is true. Evidence may be asked and weighed before the Lord; but the incalculable moment of the doctrine ought to be immediately and universally felt. An event which at once and definitively disposes of the saints who have slept in Jesus, or who may be alive, -- an event which subsequently deals with all mankind, Jew or Gentile, and even with the tempting as well as accusing power of Satan -- an event which brings the long-groaning creation out from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of glory, must obviously be one of the most solemn and impressive transactions which the world can behold, or the mind contemplate. To say, then, that it can be an immaterial consideration, really proves that those who so speak have never thought seriously about the matter.

It is indeed singular that a state of heart so healthful, and so according to the evident desire of the Lord, should predispose in favor of a scheme at variance with the word of God, crude in its principles, defective as a system, and perilous, in its results (p. 454). Nearly as strange, considering his own views, is Dr. Brown’s acknowledgment of the anti-premillennial tendencies, which require to be guarded against.

Under the influence of such tendencies, the inspired text, as such, presents no rich and exhaustless field of prayerful and delighted investigation; exegetical inquiries and discoveries are an uncongenial element; and whatever Scripture intimations, regarding the future destinies of the Church and of the world, involve events out of the usual range of human occurrences, or exceeding the anticipations of enlightened Christian sagacity, are almost instinctively overlooked or softened down. Such minds turn away from premillennialism (p. 10).

Undoubtedly true, but surely unaccountable, if, as Dr. B. thinks, premillennialism be false -- unaccountable, that the vigorous and spiritual, who burn with love to Christ, should be ready to embrace the doctrine, while the meager and sapless souls who search little into and expect less from God’s word, “have hardly patience to listen to it.” Let the dispassionate judge.

souls that burn with love to Christ, who, with the mother of Sisera, cry through the lattice “Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?” and with the spouse, “make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like to a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices.”
Part 1, Chapter 2

The Hope of Christ’s Coming Again, and It’s Relation to the Question of Time

The grand question begins in Chapter 2: Is habitual waiting for Christ compatible with the revelation of a millennium which must necessarily intervene first? Neither Dr. Brown nor ourselves attach any particular moment to the precise period of 1,000 years, though we believe, as he does, that there are good grounds for taking it definitely and literally. But when he says that no one is to suppose he expects the coming and end of this period to be discernible without a doubt on any mind, one can only lament the effects of a false system. A reign of Christ and his saints, coextensive with a restraint on Satan’s presence and seductions, preceded by the awful end of the Beast and the false Prophet, with the destruction of their adherents, and followed by the “little season,” during which Satan, let loose once more, shall marshal for his last battle the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth -- such a time one might expect to be of all others the most strongly defined in the history of this world, as it is characterized in the Bible by features which distinguish it in the clearest way from all preceding ages, and from the eternal state which is to succeed. If it were true, therefore, that past scripture dates follow Dr. B.’s law, (that is, the law of doubt and uncertainty as to their beginning and end,) it would not follow as to the millennium, because it is an unprecedented epoch. But we must be excused if we pronounce the alleged “law” to be a delusion, and the statement, that it is “the law of all scripture dates in this respect,” to be as unfounded in fact, as it is unsound in principle. The Seventy weeks of Daniel, and the 1260 days of anti-Christian rule, are the only instances which Dr. B. adduces -- those, doubtless, which he judged most in point. But he has no right to assume that uncertainty overhangs the seventy weeks: if the existence of controversy proves that, all certainty is gone as to God’s election, sovereignty, and faithfulness in keeping his own; for these truths, however clearly revealed, are keenly and constantly disputed by many true Christians. Yet Dr. B. would never allow the doubts of a large portion of Christendom to unsettle the truth in his own soul; much less would he affirm that these matters were intentionally shrouded in obscurity. If he, in spite of controversy has a fixed and clear judgment as to the five points of Calvinism, he must not be surprised if others do not share his hesitation as to Dan. 9 or Rev. 11. Many thousands of God’s people in our day have as much certainty touching these prophetic periods as he has touching any truths which have been debated in the church. The millennial period has signatures more peculiar and prominent than any past age, and therefore ought to be preeminently unambiguous. As to the picture which Dr. B. draws of its gradual introduction, and especially of its waning glory at the close, as if either or both could be dubious, it has but at most a shadowy support from the Word of God. There is no clearly recorded decay till after that day is over; then Satan is let loose, and this is the signal and the means of the apostasy that ensues.

Whoever examines the Lord’s discourse in Luke 12 and kindred Scriptures with a simple mind, can scarcely escape the conclusion that, besides giving the disciples a personal and a heavenly object of hope, He insists much upon their so waiting that, when He comes and knocks, they may open to him immediately. “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.”

Now the Lord himself founds the need of thus watching upon the fact, that he was coming in an hour when they thought not; and it will be shown that no after-communications of the Holy Ghost interfere with this habitual expectancy of the Lord. The Epistles confirm the saints in looking for him; and this, for aught they knew to the contrary, all Scripture is open, and John is told not to seal the sayings even of its most mysterious book, and including of course all the prophetic times whether days or years. But so far from hinting that the attitude was changed, the last chapter of the Revelation (22) more than any other in the book supposes the Christian and the church in constant waiting, without any known obstacle to the Lord’s return. Were this the mere hope of unintelligent love, we might hear the bride saying, Come; but “THE SPIRIT and the bride say, Come.” It is longing hope of love inspired and maintained by the full intelligence and power of the Holy Ghost, and not the mere sentimentalism of anon seeming long, and anon short, such as Dr. B. describes. It is fully conceded, that the knowledge of the pre-millennial
advent, and this holy bridal-waiting for Christ, are two distinct things. There are those who have the correct theory, and yet know little or nothing of that blessed hope as the expression of their hearts. There are those whose spiritual instincts are sound, in spite of views about our Lord’s return more or less erroneous. It has yet to be proved that Rollock and Rutherford shared the scheme adopted by Dr. Brown, as Wodrow did in substance. If they did, all that could be deduced fairly is that, where the heart is in the main true to Christ and fresh in his love, mistakes, serious though they may be in themselves, cannot stifle, but may hinder and obscure, what is of God. Nor is anything more common than language which goes beyond the narrowness of a wrong system. Who has not known the most rigid super-lapsarian sometimes overflowing with love and desire after the lost? Who has not heard the lowest Arminian now and then owning the full and sovereign grace of God that saved him?

It is not more surprising if spiritual men occasionally anticipate the coming of Christ, though, doctrinally putting it off for at least 1000 years. It may be an inconsistency, but it is a happy one, and quite useless to Dr. B. It proves simply that Scripture often asserts its supremacy in defiance of systems, where the heart is at all subject to scriptural language and thought.

Dr. Brown puts together Matt. 25:5, and Heb. 10:37, as if they indicated an oscillation of the heart between two very different and seemingly opposite views of the interval between its own day and the day of Christ’s appearing. It might have struck him as remarkable, however, that the “tarrying” is not spoken of in the later statement, where one could understand, on his principles, the tried and persecuted crying out, “But thou, O Lord, how long?” Now, the reverse is the fact. It is the parable of the virgins which discloses the tarrying of the bridegroom, and most certainly this revelation did not hinder the apostles, after the Pentecostal Spirit was given, and fuller light imparted, from increasingly expecting the Lord. It is the apostle Paul, towards the close of his career, who comforts the Hebrew believers with the assurance that yet a very little while and the Coming One will come, and will not tarry. “The very little while” in the one corresponds with the tarrying of the bridegroom in the other; that being over, he will come and “will not tarry.” Both are perfectly harmonious. At the time the Epistle was written, the Lord had tarried; the apostle knew not the hour of his return, and was inspired simply to announce that it would be sure and soon. It is the less reasonable to cite Matt. 25 in support of the notion that a long revealed delay is reconcilable with constantly waiting for Christ, seeing that not a word in the Virgins or the Talents protracts his return beyond the lifetime of those first watching or trading. There is nothing to imply even another generation to succeed the one addressed. Of course we are arguing solely from the Lord’s own words, and supposing the disciples to know nothing of the future, save what was fairly deductible thence. Ex post facto we know that the delay has been extended; but the question is: Could -- ought the apostles to have gathered a delay of eighteen centuries at least, from what the Lord uttered? On our view, all is simple. The calling of the faithful, as here presented, was to go forth in order to meet the bridegroom: their sin was that they all slumbered and slept. The delay, which should have proved their patience, gave occasion to their unfaithfulness; and when the cry was made at midnight, they have to resume their first position -- “Go ye out to meet him!” The course pursued by our Lord, we need scarcely say, was worthy of himself -- the wisest, tenderest, and best in every way. He showed the only right object for the virgins; he warned all of such a delay as should check impatience, but not such as should entitle those then (or at any time) alive to say, “The bridegroom is not coming in our day.” If He had wished His people to be continually expecting Him, but withal not to be stumbled if He tarried He could have done, it seems to us, no other than He has done.

But we are told that our view is founded “on a very narrow induction of Scripture passages, and stands opposed to the spirit of a large and very important class of divine testimonies”; that we hold up but one future event, (namely, Christ’s coming,) and even but one aspect of it, (namely, its nearness,) and the corresponding duty of watching for it; that other purposes had to be served besides these, which have drawn forth truths of quite another order; and if the one set of passages, taken by themselves, might seem to imply that Christ might come tomorrow, there are whole classes of passages which clearly show that the reverse of this was the mind of the Spirit.

I refer to those Scriptures which announce the work to be done, and the extensive changes to come over the face of the church and of society, between the two advents (Brown, p. 33).

The first class of passages includes the commission in Matt. 28:18-20, the parables (in Matt. 13) of the tares, mustard-seed, leaven and net, as well as those texts which announce the transfer of the kingdom from the Jews to the Gentiles, Matt. 21:43; Luke 21:24; Rom 11:25-26; and Acts 1:6-8. The question is, whether any intelligent Christian could look for all this in his own lifetime. Now, we do not hesitate to say that a true-hearted believer, after the day of Pentecost, had better grounds for expecting the world-wide diffusion of the gospel within the span of his own generation, than Dr. B. has for expecting it now, in ten centuries of such missionary efforts and successes as the world has witnessed since. We are aware that this judgment will be unpalatable to who those derive their thoughts from the strains of modern platforms and reports, and we shall be told that we are paralyzing their energies. We do rebuke their Laodiceanism; but God forbid that our belief in the increasing dangers and deceits of the present and future, and in the imminence of divine judgments, not on Rome only, but on universal Christendom, should not lead us to desire quickened zeal and redoubled exertions on the part of ourselves, and all the servants of the Lord, that at least a true testimony may be rendered everywhere. And this God will
Dr. B. exaggerates the results to be expected; such baseless expectations even of Christians. It is evident that he restricts it to that. So also St. Paul reminds us that “this gospel of the kingdom small be preached in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, &c. Again, the tares were sown during the earliest slumbers of Christ's servants. What else were the ungodly men who had even then crept in unawares, Jude 4, 16? What else the false teachers, with many who followed their pernicious ways, 2 Peter 2? These tares, like the wheat, were in the field (or world), and not merely in Israel; but there is nothing to imply a course of centuries, either for the good or the evil. The net presents, if possible, less difficulty still: all the fish of the sea are not enclosed, but the net is filled with some of every kind. No doubt the “end of the age” closes the scene, and judicially separates; but why, as far as the chapter teaches, might not this have been before the apostolic era had ceased? No solid reason for protracting the dispensation can be assigned, but the will of God. They are times and seasons which the Father has put in his own power. Nor is it true that the tree is said to overshadow the world, any more than the leaven is said to overspread all human society (p. 35). How long was to elapse before the end was in no way revealed. Doubtless the word left room for a prolonged scene; but certainly those parables do not per se disclose, much less necessitate, that prolongation. And this is the whole matter: for we are speaking of the expectation derived from the word. The tree might remain a long while, the leaven take some time leavening; but all this is left open. As to Matt. 21:43, Luke 21:24, and Rom. 11:25, 26, they have no dates or equivalent landmarks to render them precise. They are expressed in general terms, and therefore cannot be made to prove a delay of centuries, though room is left for it. Acts 1:6-8 speaks of no witnesses save those addressed and then living; it cannot, therefore, as an argument strengthen the position of a necessarily long delay. God’s testimony was borne faithfully in that very age to the utmost limits of the known world. And as for that which followed for more than 1000 years, the less that is said the better: the Lord does not sanction or notice it here.

Next, such passages as 1 Tim. 4:1-3, 2 Tim. 3: 1-5, 2 Peter 3:3, 4, even Dr. B. does not press; because (these germs of evil being at work) a primitive Christian, as he allows, might readily conceive of their full development in no long time. Taken in connection with the former chapter, he thinks them fitted to repress our idea. But we have only to examine the context of these and similar Scriptures, in order to see that, however the delay may have ripened the various forms of pravity, they were already there, and because they were, are warned against by the apostles. Hence it is impossible to say that these revelations necessarily involve a long future; especially as many who look for Christ’s coming, believe that between our removal to meet him in the air, and our appearing with him in judgment, there will be an interval, during which the darkest shadows of prophecy shall have their appalling accomplishment.

There is still a class of passages, greatly clearer to the same effect, of which one example may suffice for all. (Acts 3:20, 22, is then cited.) Would any Christian in apostolic times, though unable to tell what might be meant by this “restitution of all things,” be encouraged by it to expect the immediate or very speedy return of Christ to the earth”? (pp. 37).

To us this reasoning seems the more extraordinary, as it is in the face of the context itself. It is evident that the apostle calls on the Jews to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out, so that (not when) the times of refreshing might come from the presence of the Lord, and he might send Jesus Christ, &c., whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, &c. Unquestionably the work must be vast, but why should it not be a short one? To our mind the passage has a force directly and powerfully opposed to Dr. B.’s conclusion. We do not doubt that Peter then regarded the repentance of Israel as a possible if not probable contingency; and the passage itself shows that, on their repentance, the mission of Jesus from heaven would surely follow without delay. Not an allusion appears in the passage to the footing which the gospel had to get in the world; not a hint of blows to be afflicted on the heathenism of the empire (pp. 38). These notions imported into Acts 3 we consider clouds, not “light on this point”: they are interpolation, rather than interpretation.

In the parable of the pounds, Luke 19:11, 27, the Lord is correcting the mistake of those who thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. That is, they seem to have connected it with his next visit to Jerusalem. They forgot (alas, how often!) that first must He suffer many things and be rejected of this generation -- yea, that He must accomplish His decease at Jerusalem. This parable, accordingly, corrects this hasty notion of the disciples, and the form in which it is conveyed in Matt. 25 conveys the additional circumstance of the absence of the Lord for a long time. But it is equally obvious that the revealed delay was relative, not absolute: that, so far as the parable speaks, the return might be before the death of the servants who first
received and employed their master’s talents.

Of Dr. Urwicke’s remark [that the only errors mentioned in the New Testament respecting the time of our Lord’s coming, all consist in dating it too early] one can scarcely speak in too strong terms of censure. It is a worthy sequel of it, that his first example is the case of the servant who says, “My Lord delayeth his coming!!” When words expressly designed to show the evil state of heart, and the pernicious consequences of putting off the expectation of the Lord’s return, can be urged by Dr. U. and repeated by Dr. B. as an instance of the error of dating it too early, it is high time to suspend discussion and to pray that our brethren may be delivered from the influence of a scheme which turns light into darkness and calls darkness light. The process of assumption, whereby the Lord’s warning is thus perverted, is painfully instructive; but we have no further space to bestow on such a mode of dealing with the word of God.

A similar observation applies to, and may suffice for, the use made of the importunate widow in Luke 18:1-8. Besides, it is the Son of man’s coming in judgment: and this, as already remarked, leaves room for a great and rapid development of evil at the close of the age, instead of being spread over ten or fifteen centuries.

2 Thess. 2 is the only Scripture which remains. Though it is the one on which Dr. B. has dwelt longest and most confidently, it is perhaps of all others the least understood. He supposes that the corrupt Jewish element — “that the kingdom of God should immediately appear” — had taken a stirring form in the Thessalonian church.

Their inexperienced minds and warm hearts were plied with the thrilling proclamation, “that THE DAY OF CHRIST WAS AT HAND,” or “IMMINENT (ἐνδοτής).” And how does the apostle meet their expectation? He fearlessly crushes it . . . No such entreaty, we may safely affirm, would ever come from a premillennialist — at least of the modern school. He would be afraid of “destroying the possibility of watching” (pp. 42, 43).

Now we meet this, and what follows, by the twofold assertion,

first, that Dr. B.’s view requires us to confound the coming or presence of the Lord and His day, which we maintain to be here not only distinguished but contrasted; and

second, that it demands an indubitably wrong rendering of ἐνδοτής. What the Apostle really combats is the impression, that the day of the Lord was present or come, (not “at hand”). Nowhere is it denied that the day is at hand; nay, more, St. Paul himself afterwards tells the Roman saints that “the day is at hand.” Is it to be believed that he deliberately affirms to them what he had denied to the Thessalonians?

Such is the natural dilemma in which our version {KJV} of 2 Thess. 2:2 plunges those who accept it, if they will but compare Rom. 13:12. As the latter text is without doubt correct (for it is the simple, sure, and sole possible meaning of the Greek), he who believes that the Spirit could not contradict Himself would naturally sift the former. And what is the result? That in every other occurrence of the word in the New Testament we are compelled to assign a different meaning to the perfect of ἐνδοτής. Nay, our translators themselves give present, and never merely, “to be at hand,” or “imminent.” In several instances they exhibit, and with perfect accuracy, “present “ in contradistinction to “future,” or “coming.” (Compare Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 3:22; 7:26; Gal. 1:4; and Heb. 9:9; besides 2 Tim. 3:1.) Nor is it St. Paul only who presses that the day is nigh, for the same truth, substantially, reappears in 1 Peter 4:7, (“the end of all things is at hand,”) as well as in James 4: 7-9, not to speak of Rev. 1:3, 22:10. That is, the New Testament is, from first to last, positive and consistent in maintaining what 2 Thess. 2:2 appears to set aside {in the KJV}, but what we have seen is, beyond legitimate question, a mis-translation; and this mis-translation is the grand basis of Dr. B’s argument.

Hence, he entirely misconceives the drift of the delusion which the false teachers were seeking to foist in. For they were exciting fear, and not hope; whereas the apostle beseeches the brethren by their hope, even the presence of the Lord and His coming {2 Thess. 2:1} — an antidote as thoroughly premillennial as it is the last which our adversaries would think of; next, he explains to them that the day of the Lord presupposes not merely lawlessness working, as even then it was secretly, but, all restraint being removed, its rise to such a height and its manifestation in such a head, that the Lord must terminate all by His own appearing in decisive judgment.

It is allowed, then, that the apostle shows that the day of the Lord could not come before the apostasy, and the revelation of the man of sin, because that day is to judge it root and branch; but there is nothing to imply that the obstacle, then operating, might not be taken away in ever so short a time; and in that case the last evil or lawless one being revealed would bring on the day. There is no protracted system, but a mysterious evil then at work; and when a certain hindrance, then also existing, should be removed, that power of evil would appear without mystery,
which is to call down the Lord’s judgment.

We have now examined the use which Dr. B. has made of the various Scriptures to which he refers, in proof that the known interval of 1000 years, and more, is compatible with that watching for the Lord’s coming which the N. T. supposes and enjoins. We have proved his application in every instance to be ungrounded and fallacious. We have shown that the true position, in which the New Testament sets the church, is the looking for Christ’s return habitually, not knowing how soon it may be; whereas Dr. B.’s theory is the certainty that it cannot be till the millennium is past, and the absolute impossibility of our being alive and remaining till the Savior comes.

Can such an one be said, in a natural, unambiguous, and full sense, to wait for the Savior from heaven? He is really expecting first a millennium on earth, which, by the way, if true, would have been the obvious corrective to the false rumor that troubled the Thessalonians; but not a word of the sort is hinted by the apostle. Confessedly, premillennialists have been at a loss how to reconcile 2 Thess. 2:2, as it ordinarily stands, with the general testimony of the New Testament: but was not their difficulty more worthy of respect than Dr. B.’s shadowy triumph, founded, as it is, on a mere blunder, though we allow he shares it with many men on both sides? It ought to be a serious thing to his conscience when he discovers, as we trust he will on adequate examination, with prayer, that the delusion which alarmed the Thessalonians is, of the two, more conceivable on Dr. B.’s own hypothesis, pp. 426-432, than on the principles of premillennialism rightly understood: for it was probably built upon a figurative sense of the day of the Lord, and it assuredly consisted in its alleged presence there and then. On the other hand, the nearness of Christ’s coming, which Dr. B. characterizes as that delusion, and imputes to designing men, is, we are bold to say, the uniform presentation of the Holy Ghost.

The oscillation theory, with which Dr. Brown concludes his second chapter, may be passed over without further comment. Other topics of more importance we hope to discuss in due order, if the Lord will.
Part 1, Chapter 3

Premillennialism Consistent with the Completeness of the Church at Christ’s Coming Again

Dr. Brown arranges his evidence against the premillennial advent under a series of propositions, the first of which is, *the church will be absolutely complete at Christ’s coming.*

If this can be established, the whole system falls to the ground. If all that are to be saved, will be brought in before Christ comes, of course there can be none to come in after his advent, and in that case, the lower department of the expected kingdom disappears.

Now, the fact is, that the mass of premillenarians hold the unbroken completeness of the church at the second advent, no less strenuously than Dr. B. How then comes it, that they and their adversary appear to hold the same thing? Because “the church” has a different sense in their lips and in his. *They* hold that Scripture limits the term, in its proper application, to the saints that are now being gathered by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Dr. B. extends it equally to “all that are to be saved,” the millennial saints included. Were this true, the question would be at an end: for it is admitted on all hands, that, when Christ comes, His body, the bride, is complete. If Scripture proved on the other hand, that the church of God is exclusive of the millennial saints, that others, after the church is formed, may be and shall be saved, who stand in quite different relationships, the reasoning is at least good for nothing.

Our Lord, in Matt. 16:18, decides the question. Salvation was not a new thing, though the work which procured it had still to be accomplished. But His church was not yet built. “Upon this rock I WILL build my church.” It was not even building. The foundation had to be laid in his own death and resurrection, Himself, the revealed and confessed Son of the living God, its rock. Accordingly, for this new building -- the Lord prescribed, in Matt. 18, an order of discipline equally new -- not Jewish law and ordinance, but grace, practical grace, reigning through righteousness, acting after the pattern of the Father’s will, and the Son’s work. Accordingly for the first time, we have in Acts 2:47, this body, the church, historically spoken of. It supposes two things:

**first**, Christ crucified, risen and ascended; and **second**, the Holy Ghost, “the promise of the Father,” sent down from heaven.

It is of all importance to understand this last point; for confusion is here fatal to real intelligence as to this subject. It is not the regeneration of the Spirit; for that was true from the first, and will always be true of those who see, or enter the kingdom of God. It is the gift, the personal presence of the Spirit, sealing the believers, now that there was not promise only, but accomplishment in Christ, the earnest of the inheritance, and above all baptizing them, whether Jew or Gentile into one body, an altogether unprecedented work.

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3. (...continued)

nation, because the ancient fathers were generally wont to distinguish between the synagogue and the church, therefore I think it necessary to restrain this motion to Christianity. Thirdly, therefore, I observe that the only way to attain unto this knowledge of the true notion of the church, is to search into the New Testament, and from the places there which mention it, to conclude what is the nature of it. To which purpose it will be necessary to take notice that our Savior, first speaking of it, mentioned it as that which then was not, but afterwards was to be; as when He speaks unto the great apostle, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church”; but when He ascended into heaven, and the Holy Ghost came down, when Peter had converted 3,000 souls, which were added to the 120 disciples, then was there a church (and that built upon Peter [but cp. 1 Cor.3:11], according to our Savior’s promise); for after that we read, “The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.” A church, then, our Savior promised, should be built, and by a promise made before his death; after His ascension, and upon the preaching of St. Peter, we find a church built or constituted, and that of a nature capable of a daily increase. We cannot then take a better occasion to search into the true notion of the church of Christ {God}, than by looking into the origination and increase thereof, without which it is impossible to have a right conception of it. *Exposition of the Creed*, Art. ix., Vol. I., pp. 505, 506.
Previous to the cross, such an union did not exist, and was contrary to God’s command [cp. Eph. 2:14, 15]. Our Savior, during his earthly ministry, bound the disciples to seek Jews only, not Gentiles or Samaritans. Risen from the dead, He sends them expressly to disciple all nations. But this is not all. The Holy Ghost, given by the ascended Lord, brings all the disciples, Jew or Gentile, into one body or corporation on earth. When we say “one body” we do not mean that all the members of the church necessarily assembled in a single locality, but that, whether they met in one chamber or in twenty, in one city or over the world, they formed a united society in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, of which the Holy Ghost, dwelling in and with them, was the bond. To this body, all the believers, all the saved since Pentecost, belong; but it would be a false inference that God can never terminate its existence here below, and introduce a totally different thing for the display of his own ways and glory. As there were saved persons in the Old Testament times, who were not, and could not be members of a society then future, so there is no reason why there should not be a fresh class of witnesses raised up by and by, and called to a different work. Nay, we can go further. Scripture is explicit, that Jewish and Gentile distinctions are to reappear in the Millennium. The Psalms and prophets which reveal this glorious time, reveal as plainly, that it essentially differs from the present dispensation, because God will not then be gathering Jew and Gentile into one. Jews and Gentiles are to be blessed richly, but in unequal measure; the former being nearest to the Lord, and enjoying His presence and honor most, the grand link between Him and the Gentiles. This we need scarcely say, is as different as possible from the present time, when, in Christ, all earthly and fleshly distinctions disappear: all is of grace and above nature, and as free, consequently, to the Gentile as to the Jew.

These differences of dispensation are so patent in the Old and New Testaments, as to render the citation of particular proof-texts a work of supererogation. We defy any Christian to produce a single passage to the contrary. Nevertheless Dr. B. ignores all. To him, “all the saved” are the church; to produce a single passage to the contrary. Nevertheless proof-texts a work of supererogation. We defy any Christian and New Testaments, as to render the citation of particular

It is not to be confounded with the miraculous powers which were its external vouchers; for before He was given, the Lord said that this other Paraclete should abide with the disciples for ever, which was never said of the sign-gifts. For indeed, this baptism of the Spirit is the formative and perpetual power of the church’s existence; so that where He was not thus given, the church would not be; and so long as the church exists here below, so does this baptism of the Spirit last. “For by one Spirit,” says St. Paul (1 Cor. 12:13), “are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

Undoubtedly then, as all agree, there were saints, saved persons born of the Spirit, before Pentecost, so all agree there shall be during the Millennium. But Scripture is plain and decisive that the baptism of the Spirit, gathering believing Jews and Gentiles into one body on earth, was not the state of things which existed before Pentecost. It is equally clear that it will not exist after the Millennium begins. Jews and Gentiles were saved before Christ, as they will be on a still grander scale in the Millennium; but there is no such thing described as union in one body, where all distinctions in the flesh vanish away.

These principles will enable the reader to judge how far the following passages decide the matter.

From 1 Cor. 15:23, Dr. B. deduces that “they that are Christ’s,” means the whole federal offspring of the second Adam. But he forgets that the question is one of resurrection. This is so true that a special added revelation comes in, towards the close of the chapter, so as to meet the case of the saints whom Christ will find living when he comes. Thus the previous statement (in v. 23) which Dr. B. alleges to be so universal as to embrace all the saved of every dispensation, is in reality so restricted as not to admit all the saints of the present dispensation. Hence, it was needful for the Holy Ghost to supplement the general argument of the chapter, with a particular unfolding of what, in the Old Testament, was a secret. “Behold, I show you a mystery. We shall not ALL sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a
moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Dr. B. says quite correctly, as opposed to Mr. Birks, that the burden of this chapter as a whole, and of v. 23 especially, is the RESURRECTION of believers: but, for that reason, it does not include in its general scope, the saints who survive at the second advent; and accordingly another statement, as to their portion as connected with those who rise from the dead is furnished by the Spirit from v. 51 et seq. But the same principle still more emphatically excludes the Millennial Saints; for it has never been shown that they, as a class, are to die at all. Nay, Isa. 65 seems to us decisive, not that death is destroyed, but that saints will not die during the millennium, that none will die save those judicially accursed of God. Hence, 1 Cor. 15:23, could not apply to these saints; for it speaks solely of those who die and rise again, whereas the saved of the millennium, it would appear, shall never see death. 1 Cor. 15:51 proves that the text on which the chief stress is laid, so far from comprehending "the whole saving fruit of Christ's work," leaves out all the members of the church who shall be alive and remaining when the Lord comes. The argument of Dr. B. is then absolutely null and clearly refuted by the chapter itself.

Still less need such texts as Eph. 5:25-27; 2 Thess. 1:10; Jude 24; Col. 1:21, 22; and 1 Thess. 3:13, perplex any one. How do statements of the church's glory and purity, any more than its completeness, prove that none else are to be blessed? Doubtless the church will be to the praise and admiration of Christ at his revelation from heaven; doubtless all will be regarded with ineffable complacency by "God, even our Father." Nevertheless, the questions remain: Is not the millennium a time of exceeding blessing for the world, for countless souls among Jews and Gentiles according to the Old Testament? and is it not, according to the New Testament, the special season for the reign of Christ and the heavenly saints manifested over the earth? These propositions we affirm to be equally true, and mutually consistent. But if they are, Dr. B.'s theory, which sets the completeness, &c., of the church at Christ's advent in opposition to the ingathering of saints subsequently upon the earth, is, if he will forgive our saying it, confusion arising from ignorance of the Scriptures.

It is a question of the Bible in general, and not merely of two or three texts like Zech. 14:5; Rev. 19:6-9; and 21:24; though these do plainly indicate the calling of other saints after, and distinct from, the church.

Dr. B. tries to defeat the application of Zech. 14 to the advent partly by questioning whether "saints" here may not mean angels, and chiefly, because the "coming" is not a personal advent, but perhaps the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, or even the conflicts before the millennium. The minute literal details, are, to his mind, irreconcilable with 2 Pet. 3:10. Evidently here, as elsewhere, Christ's coming is confounded with his day. There are connecting links between the subjects; but it is an error to suppose that the burning up of the earth signalizes his coming (Brown p. 59). That tremendous catastrophe occurs within the day of the Lord, and as we learn from other Scriptures, at its close, not at its commencement. There is no reason therefore, from 2 Pet. 3:10, to deny that Zech. 14:5 speaks of Christ's literal coming again to inaugurate the millennium; and if so, there are certainly men on earth subsequently saved and blessed.

This is confirmed by Rev. 19:6-9, where no ingenuity can fairly dispose of the fact that the marriage of the Lamb with the church takes place before the millennium, when confessedly the elect are not complete.

In reply to this (says Dr. B.) it may be enough to say that this cannot be the actual consummation of the marriage between Christ and his church in glory, because in the two last chapters of this book (which most of my opponents agree with me in referring to the everlasting state) the church is described as "descending," after the millennium is all over, "as a bride adorned for her husband"; and it is rather awkward to suppose a bridal preparation and a presentation of the parties to each other, a thousand years after the union has been consummated.

But this is to totally misconceive the bearing of these Scriptures. The marriage, beyond a doubt, takes place not, in Rev. 21, after the millennium, but in Rev. 19, before it. The latter chapter merely describes the descent of the glorified church, already long married, and now entering on the eternal state, in relation to the new heavens and earth in the fullest sense, invested after the 1,000 years with the same bridal beauty which characterized her when made ready for the wedding. What is to hinder one from speaking of his wife, ten years after the marriage, and setting out on some grand occasion, "as a bride adorned for her husband"? How absurd to infer, from such a simile, that the parties were only presented to each other so many years after the union was consummated!

As to Rev. 21:24, there is not the slightest need that the object and the prayers of the homage, the New Jerusalem, and the nations with their kings, should be homogeneous, or in the same state. It is the very thing we deny, the very thing Dr. B. ought to prove and not assume. Why should not the nations and their kings be in an earthly condition, the New Jerusalem being surely glorified? Why should not the latter answer to the transfigured Moses and Elias, and the former to the disciples, still unchanged upon the Holy mount {Matt.

4. We believe that the first part of Rev. 21 describes the eternal state, as the sequel to the course of events and changes presented in the preceding context, and that Rev. 21:9, et seq., is a retrogressive vision in order to enter into the relation of the heavenly bride to the earth and its nations, with their kings, during the millennium. There is a striking parallel to this arrangement in the retrospective view, Rev. 17, of Babylon, in relation to the kings and peoples of the earth, after her fall had been given in Rev. 14, 16 -- REVIEWER.
The simple, unforced meaning of the passage presents the conjunction of two different states: a higher and heavenly one; a subordinate, though blessed, earthly one. Nor can this be got rid of by the pretense that it is merely a mysterious prophecy which discloses the coexistence of two different conditions, so abhorrent to Dr. B. One might fairly ask where else it could be so naturally expected as in a book which expressly lifts the veil from the future. Still it is not made known there only. “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” {1 Cor 6:2}. Dr. B. cannot here argue that the “saints” mean angels, for the next verse positively distinguishes and contrasts them. “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” There would be no sense if the terms were interchangeable. “Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection, the world ólicaμένην to come whereof, we speak.” This must be in millennial times; for no such order of things can possibly exist after the millennium, and it is clearly contrary to the suffering and subject place which Scripture assigns to the saints before the millennium. The inference is plain and sure. It is the millennial relation of the heavenly saints, not of men in flesh and blood on earth. “Know ye not, that we shall judge angels?” Assuredly it is not our employment in this dispensation, or throughout eternity. The teaching of Eph. 1:10 is similar. God hath purposed in Himself, in (for or against) the dispensation of the fullness of times, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, &c. Clearly the apostle speaks not of the present, but of a future period, and of a grand gathering of all things, earthly and heavenly, under the headship of Christ, we being associated with him as Eve with Adam in his dominion. That is, it is the millennial and not the eternal state; for the millennium is the special display before the world of Christ’s exaltation as King: that over, Christ gives up the kingdom that GOD (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) should be all in all. Here, then, we have two states, the things which are in heaven, and the things which are on earth, united in a system of glory; not the earthly things sublimated into heavenly, much less the heavenly things reduced to the earthly level, but both, in their several spheres, under the sway of Christ and his bridial coheir. Probably Dr. B. might tell us here too, as well as in Rev. 21:24 (p. 62), that the commentators agree in applying the verse to one or other of these states, but not to both. We regret it of course; but this does not lessen our conviction that the word is against them, and that no serious Christian should allow modern tradition, any more than ancient, to make Scripture of none effect.

We have no space for dwelling on Dr. B.’s exposure of such vagaries as those of Homes, Burnet, Perry, and Burchell. If we were called on to analyze them, we might find grounds for a deeper tone of censure than what marks his criticisms. Their common difficulty is the Gentile army which Satan musters at the end of all, Rev. 20: their solutions, a mere choice of fable; for the first two take the rebels to be mortal men, and one of these two thinks that they may probably be generated from the slime of the ground and heat of the sun! the third conceived them to be the wicked when raised out of their graves, and the fourth, evil spirits. In reality they agree, or differ, quite as much with Dr. B.’s scheme as with ours.

As to the renewed asseverations that the church means “the universal family of the redeemed,” a few words must suffice:

1. “They that are Christ’s at his coming,” and all like texts are necessarily limited to the dead saints. Such passages, therefore, CANNOT refer to the saints of the millennium who are never said to die.

2. Such views, being true to the letter and spirit of these scriptures, are just what ought to be looked for from those who rightly interpret the word of God. Those who argue from the use of figurative language, against the facts thereby announced, are as little to be trusted, ofttimes, in dealing with the plainest declarations in the Bible. The premillennial advent is a truth which loosens their system. It is no wonder then to witness the pertinacy with which it is rejected till God teach them better.

3. The inconsistency of premillenarians (pp. 72-77) is not so great, in the extracts cited, as Dr. B. imagines; and even if it were real rather than apparent, it would evince the badness, not of the cause, but of its advocates. We humbly think that we have in hand something more important than the justification of the Bloomsbury lecturers.

The premillennial scheme reconciles the doctrine of the completeness of the church at Christ’s coming with a harvest of saints during the millennium. There is no dilemma, no shade of difficulty, save to him who starts with ignoring the scriptural definition and account of the church of God. And the notion of Christ’s coming to the earth only after the millennium, so far from being “the belief which clears all up,” (p.79), is sheer error. For the vision of the great White-Throne judgment is in fact no coming of Christ, but a going of the dead before Him -- no return of the Lord or of any one else to the earth, for there is no earth to come to. “I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.”

The “Supplementary Remarks” demand small notice from us; for we have already stated the sound view of “the church,” and it differs too decidedly from that of Messrs. Bickersteth and A. Bonar, and even from the Duke of Manchester’s, to claim our interposition in their battles. For, although his Grace rightly made its starting-point to be the ascension of Christ, he very wrongly uses Archdeacon Hare’s citation of Olshausen to prove that regeneration belongs essentially to the New Testament -- a delusion which
one had hoped was confined to the author of “Nehushtan,” and his wretched “Teaching of the Types.” Salvation is not possible, in any dispensation, by external operations of the Spirit; He always quickened souls, as He ever will, by the word of God. Nor is it a question of excluding the Old Testament saints from the scene of glory which we shall enjoy with them in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 8:11). But common privileges, either of grace or of glory, cannot disprove the plain testimony of the word, that the baptism of the Spirit (as distinct from regeneration) was not experienced before Pentecost; that on that baptism depends the body, the church, wherein Jewish and Gentile differences are unknown the distinguishing feature of the present economy; and that the millennium will see another condition where these distinctions reappear, with many features of the times before Pentecost, and with others peculiar to the new age. There are, thank God, many mercies which essentially pertain to all saints of all ages; but these must not be abused to deny differences which God’s sovereignty has affixed to the various dispensations as it has pleased him. Heb. 11:40, taken naturally, stands in the way of Dr. B. How, (will the reader guess) does he explain it away? They without us could not be made perfect -- that is, without Christ and the Spirit!! whose proper economy ours certainly is (p. 84). Well, this is no pleasant fruit of post-millennial interpretation. It is a bold figure, in expounding a plain doctrinal statement, to treat “without us,” as equivalent to without Christ and the Spirit. Besides, it is in no way the meaning even thus: for the Holy Ghost lays down two things:

**first**, that God has provided some better thing for us (i.e. clearly something better than “the promise,” precious as it was, for which all the Old Testament saints were waiting); and

**second**, that the Old Testament saints were not to be perfected, (viz., by resurrection glory,) apart from us.

Thus, the word of God, while showing ample ground where we all meet, is decisive that the elect are not to be jumbled together in a single indiscriminate mass, and proves most important distinctions, not merely between the church and the millennial saints, but between those of the Old Testament and either. It never speaks, on our view any more than Dr. Brown’s, of any portion of the church not rising and reigning with Christ. On the contrary, it proves that many saints besides the church shall reign with Christ when He comes.
Part 1, Chapter 4

The Premillennial Advent in Relation to the Agencies of Salvation

The church of God, we have seen, is not the sum of those saved throughout all ages, but rather the Scriptural designation of the one body gathered from among Jews and Gentiles since the day of Pentecost -- habitation of God through the Spirit. Hence it is a manifest oversight to suppose that the agencies and instrumentalities which the Lord employs in founding and perpetuating the church, are necessarily bound up with the salvation of the elect. “God hath set some in the church, first apostles [not patriarchs, or elders, who of old obtained a good report through faith]; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers”; &c. That is, a New Testament order of things is contemplated. So in Eph. 4:

When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men . . . ; and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” &c.

This machinery, most appropriate to the church-state, came in with the ascension of Christ to his place as Head, and with the consequent descent of the Holy Ghost. It was unknown to Judaism, and to the fathers. Yet all must allow God had been saving souls for four thousand years previously, when no such means or functions existed. There is not, therefore, the shadow of a presumption for maintaining that God will discontinue to save when the church disappears, scaffolding, building, and all. So that the fairest and most satisfactory test which Dr. B. can imagine, by which to try the truth of his doctrine, exposes, in effect, its total groundlessness; and confirms, in the most decided way, the speciality of the church as a body distinct, on the one hand, from the Old Testament saints, and on the other, from the millennial saints. Ministry, such as the New Testament connects inseparably with the church, flows from an ascended Lord as its source and giver, and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven as its power. Nevertheless, as beyond doubt saints there were before, all must own that saints there may be after.

Plainly, then, the testimony of Scripture is lost, in the second, third, and fourth propositions, which are connected, and as follows:

Christ’s Second Coming will exhaust the object of the Scriptures.

The sealing ordinances of the New Testament will disappear at Christ’s Second Coming.

The intercession of Christ, and the work of the Spirit, for saving purposes, will cease at the Second Advent.

For though it be true that baptism and the Lord’s Supper (i.e. in theological phrase, the New Testament sealing ordinances) naturally terminate with the Second Advent, it is a mere blunder to confine the stream of divine grace within these rites, let them be ever so precious; and much worse to treat them as its sole and inseparable channel. Abel, Enoch, and Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, knew them not; yet will Dr. B. acknowledge, that they were saved no less than ourselves. Why should it not be so with the saints during the Millennium?

Let us, however, examine what is urged, and in Dr. B.’s order. The following texts are cited as instances of the universal teaching of the Bible:

(1) As to Saints, Luke 19:13; 2 Peter 1:19; James 5:7; 1 Peter 1:13; 2 Tim. 4:8; Phil. 3:20;

(2) As to Sinners, 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Peter 3:10; Luke 12:39, 40; 17:26, 27, 30.

Thus one half of the Scripture would be inapplicable to saints, and the other half to sinners living after Christ’s coming (Brown, p. 98).

Now it is obvious that these texts are drawn exclusively from the New Testament, and from those parts of it which describe or suppose the state of things going on now, and previous to the millennium. What they prove, therefore, is the experience proper to the present dispensation, and nothing more. But this is useless, in all fairness, to Dr. B., who fallaciously takes for granted that these texts give us that which characterizes souls in the age to come. The argument deduced from them is no more valid against another experience in a new economy, than passages descriptive of the Lord as truly man in life and death could disprove his eternal Godhead. The Psalms and prophecies of both Testaments anticipate an era when (not to speak of Satan bound, and the Lord, with his risen ones, reigning over the world) righteousness shall flourish and evil be smitten; when the earth shall groan no more, but be glad: when both houses of Israel shall walk before the Lord in unenvying unjealous love, and all the ends of the earth shall fear God. These features are in contrast with those which now appear: they suppose a time for the saints on earth of good triumphant and not suffering, of enjoyment, and not hope; they involve the judgment of wickedness when it appears, not merely solemn warnings of future vengeance. It is perfectly right to use such Scriptures as Dr. B. refers to for our own guidance now; it is ignorance to suppose the state of things going on now, and previous to the millennium what they prove.

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that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.” It is clear that now, between the advents, the Lord is saving the world, and not judging it: we speak of the aspect of His coming and work, not, of course, of the results. The error is the exclusion of another economy when He will both judge and save. “And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth.” This is a most extensive and positive judgment; but it is in no way inconsistent with saying “in that day, lo, this is our God: we have waited for him, and he will save us; this is the Lord: we have waited for him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” The evidence is ample. If the reader will only search into what is said of “that day,” he will soon satisfy himself that, while it differs essentially from the present dispensation as the season of divine intervention in the judgment of the world, it will be as evidently the season of the world’s all but universal blessedness.

Hence, the disappearance of baptism and the Lord’s supper need be no difficulty to any serious mind. Their importance is indisputable -- the one, as the initiatory and individual, and the other as the corporate, confession of Christ and his accomplished redemption. But as they were certainly introduced late in the day of God’s mercy to sinners, so if God has willed it thus, there is no ground a priori why they might not pass away, when that special hour which witnessed their imposition has come to a close. And this is exactly what Scripture shows, however opposed to the ordinary systems of theology. Not that there is the slightest reason for expecting a new revelation, as some have rashly conceived: still less is it true, as our antagonist asserts without an attempt at proof, that a new dispensation necessarily implies a new revelation to usher it in (Brown, p. 106).

The Bible shows a past economy, when God saved souls before the sealing ordinances (to use Dr. Brown’s terminology) of the New Testament had appeared; it shows us the present time, and the institution of those striking rites; it shows us a future epoch has come to a close. And this is exactly what Scripture shows, however opposed to the magnificent purposes of God in those days of which Pentecost was but a sample. This will be plain to the unbiased reader of Joel 2, with its context, God in those days of which Pentecost was but a sample. This will be plain to the unbiased reader of Joel 2, with its context, of Isa. 32, 44, 49; Ezek. 36, 37; and Zech. 12, 14.

The same reasoning, in substance, applies to Dr. B.’s fourth proposition. It is true that the Epistle to the Hebrews (7-9) treats exclusively of the priesthood of Christ carried on within the holiest, after He had entered in once by His own blood; it is true that this applies from beginning to end of God’s work in forming the church of the First-born. Christ ascended and took his place as Priest, before the Holy Ghost was sent down to bring in a single soul into the proper “church-state.” But how does all this hinder the only-wise God from putting forth His grace and power, when Christ shall take His place on His own throne, instead of being, as now, seated on the throne of His Father? (Rev. 3:20). The objection is the less reasonable, because Dr. B. cannot dispute the fact that Christ was not thus a Priest in Old Testament times -- had not entered into heaven by His own blood -- had not yet obtained eternal redemption for any. If then the Old Testament saints were saved in spite of this lack, why not the millennial saints? If the credit of it, when it did not exist, sufficed for the one class, why not for the other? In fact, it is not that the millennial saints will be without His priesthood, but only that its form will be changed. “He shall be a priest upon his throne” [Zech. 6:13]. So that the difference is really in favor of these saints, as compared with those of the Old Testament.

The fallacy as to the work of the Spirit is equally palpable. John 7:38, 39; 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:7, 14; Acts 2:33; Titus 3:5, 6; Rev. 3:1, and 5:6, are the texts cited. But granting that the Holy Ghost may not be given in the way in which most of these Scriptures speak, that was as true of the times before the first advent as it can be after the second. If, in spite of this, the Holy Ghost did work for saving purposes in those early days (when he was not given in a full New Testament way, because that Jesus was not yet glorified [John 7:39]), why not in the last days, when Jesus is manifested in all His glories?

The argument, therefore, is weak to excess, and even absurd. The fact is, that the millennial saints will enjoy an outpouring of the Spirit suited to the magnificent purposes of God in those days of which Pentecost was but a sample. This will be plain to the unbiased reader of Joel 2, with its context, of Isa. 32, 44, 49; Ezek. 36, 37; and Zech. 12, 14.

Thus, the argument in connection with these three propositions entirely fails. For it does not follow that when Christ and the Church appear in glory, the work of salvation will terminate. Nor is it Scriptural, nor even logical, to assert that none will be saved when the New Testament “sealing ordinances” disappear; for beyond doubt many were saved before these ordinances appeared. All the objects of the Scripture will not be exhausted, because the special design of this dispensation is accomplished. Finally, Christ will still be Priest, and the Spirit be more than ever poured out after the completion of the Church and of this age. In every part, therefore, Dr. B. is singular and hopelessly astray; and some of his arguments go far to strengthen the system which he desires to oppose and overthrow, in particular the peculiarity of the church and of the present dispensation, and a millennium governed by different principles and characterized by mercies of another order.
Part 1, Chapter 5

The Kingdom

If our object were the exposure of errors and contradictions in the scheme of our adversaries, no part perhaps could be found more fertile than the question of Christ’s kingdom. But this would be disingenuous; for the province is so vast, and its boundaries in general so ill-defined in the minds of most Christians, that abundant scope presents itself for hostile criticism within the ranks of premillennialists. Dr. B. has, not unreasonably, taken advantage of the confusion, and seemingly with the most complete unconsciousness that it is “worse confounded” in his own statements. We shall try to steer as clear as may be of the same danger, though forced to show briefly how little the popular view can lay claim to accuracy or comprehensiveness.

Nor is our task difficult; for the scriptural account is simple enough. The Lord Jesus was born King of the Jews. Matt. 1 gives His genealogy as the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Matt. 2 His recognition by the heaven-directed Magi, as the predicted ruler of Israel. But if He was there for His people, they were unready for Him. His star was no bright harbinger, save to the distant Gentile; His birth no joy, save to the despised of men: not only was the false King, the Edomite, troubled, but “all Jerusalem with him.” What a welcome for the newborn King! Alas! all followed true to the sad beginning, growing false to Him around whose head prophecy and miracle, grace and truth, circled for a crown of testimony and blessing, such as man had never worn. Blinded by self and Satan, the Jews saw no beauty in Him who was a Savior as well as King, who could never wear. Blinded by self and Satan, the Jews saw no beauty in Him who was a Savior as well as King, who could never wear. But this would be disingenuous; for the province is so vast, and its boundaries in general so ill-defined in the minds of most Christians, that abundant scope presents itself for hostile criticism within the ranks of premillennialists. Dr. B. has, not unreasonably, taken advantage of the confusion, and seemingly with the most complete unconsciousness that it is “worse confounded” in his own statements. We shall try to steer as clear as may be of the same danger, though forced to show briefly how little the popular view can lay claim to accuracy or comprehensiveness.

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kingdom was in their midst when Jesus was there, delivering from the thraldom of the enemy. “If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you” (Matt. 12:28). “Behold the kingdom of God is within [in the midst of] you” (Luke 17:21). This they believed not; and that fatal error led them on, under Satan’s guidance, to the place which is called Calvary; and there, in His crucifixion, they proclaimed to God and man how they esteemed Him who was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their iniquities. Their rock of shipwreck was the exaltation of themselves in their then state, and their consequent refusal of Him who came to bless them, in turning away every one of them from their iniquities: not their expectation of His Davidical kingdom, but their exclusion of redemption, and their virtual denial of its need.

For our part, we fear something painfully akin, not externally, but in the core, pervades Christendom, and strongly tends to keep up the prevalent unbelief as to the true nature, objects, issues, and of course the time of the Lord’s Advent. For men not unreasonably fear and dislike a coming of Christ in sudden judgment of what they are pursuing with eagerness. And even Christians who mingle with the literature, the philosophy, and the politics of the world, are apt to get tainted more or less with the spirit of the age. Let them remember how the promise of a returning glorious Christ was to face with the last-day scoffers. Forgetfulness of this exposes one to the expectation unauthorized by scripture, of a gradually victorious reign of the gospel, instead of God’s testimony to the gospel of the reign. This is accompanied by (if it does not create) the thought that the godly need not suffer persecution, but rather and rightfully expect a share of this world’s respect and honors and influence, as their hoped-for millennium draws near. Thus they prophesy smooth things for their children, yet more than for themselves -- a proximate triumph for the Church, in Christ’s absence, on earth, instead of waiting for the appearing of both in heavenly glory, whereby the world shall know that the Father sent the Son, and loved the Church as He loved Him.

It is not denied, that “the kingdom of heaven” began with the ascension. Nothing can be more perversely untrue than that premillennialism obscures or weakens this. On the contrary, none have derived so much light as premillennialists from Matt. 13, which is the grand exhibition of the kingdom in this aspect, and during the present dispensation. Here they and their opponents necessarily take common ground against unbelieving Jews. But then it is a peculiar and anomalous aspect of the kingdom; not the predicted manifestation of divine power, when the evil shall be put down in this world, and the good shall dwell at ease, but “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 13:11). It is a wholly different thing which we find in the prophets, though confessedly both are states of the kingdom. Thus, if we look at “the little stone” in Dan. 2, it is beyond legitimate question that it symbolizes the dominion entrusted to the Lord Jesus. It is cut without hands (i.e., without human agency). It is “in the days of these kings”: not, as has been assumed, and upon no substantial grounds, “during the currency of the four famous kingdoms” (for the last only is supposed to be subsisting imperially); but in the days of the ten kings just intimated by the toes of the great image; precisely as in Dan. 7, we have the closing history of the fourth empire followed by a solemn session of judgment, and the investiture of one like the Son of Man in presence of the Ancient of days. Both manifestly exclude the ascension, which is entirely passed over here, as is the Lord’s stay and work on earth; both show the time in question to be during, and in reference to, the last form of the anti-Christian Roman empire before its destruction. With this all coheres. For the first action of the stone is judgment. There is no mere spiritual or moral influence which acts on the heart set forth here, but a direct and judicial demolition of the last human empire which is seen on earth. It is not the slow and checkered sowing of the gospel seed, often caught away, dying off, or choked up; neither is it some grand development ever and anon absorbing its enemies into its own substance or body. It is a grand display of divine force, which suddenly and utterly destroys the existing imperial power, with all that remained of its predecessors, before it becomes a mountain and fills the whole earth [Dan. 2]. No such idea appears in the passage as “the now existing church” (Brown, p. 322), “fighting and winning its way to the throne of the world” (ibid., p. 321); which is indeed a dream worthy of Papists or Mormons, not the truth as it is in Jesus. Dr. B.’s view (and it is the common one) subverts the entire teaching of the New Testament as to our right relations to the kingdoms of this world, and therefore must be rejected, not merely as erroneous interpretation of a prophecy, but as unsound and mischievous doctrine. It denies the essentially subject and suffering place of the Christian on earth; and, if practically carried out, would degrade the Church into an organized system of rebellion against the powers that be, at least in their anti-Christian principles and characters, -- a conspiracy consecrated under the plea that the kingdoms of this world are themselves conspirators against the interests and the people of God here below. 5

No! the more we reflect, the more are we satisfied that no Jesuit, no Hildebrand even, would ask more sanction for their ambitious schemes than Dr. B. concedes in the following words:

Christ’s presently existing kingdom has within itself the whole resources by which it is destined to crush the anti-christianism that obstructs its universal triumph, and to win its way to the throne of the world (p. 319).

He may guard his thought as much as he will; he may tell us that, as a mere succession of civil monarchies, the vision has

5. We do not charge Dr. B., as some appear to have done, with making the fall of the stone to be a judgment upon a mere abstraction. On the contrary, it seems to us to be a thoroughly practical evil. Again, he has no right to limit the sphere of judgment to the Papacy. All the kingdoms of the Roman empire are judged with the little horn.
nothing to do with them; he may say that the fall of those anti-Christian kingdoms can only be considered their fall in the character of hostility to the Church of the living God. But Cardinal Wiseman justifies the projects of Rome on precisely similar principles, with equal claim, as far as expounding the prophecy goes, and with greater ability. And such are the inevitable consequences, be it observed, of the attempt to apply the ordinary notion of Christ’s kingdom to the exposition of Dan. 2.

While it is true, then, that the kingdom of heaven is going on now, it must be carefully remembered that its present form is mysterious and special, because of Israel’s unbelief and rejection of the Lord. This is what we find fully brought out in the Gospel of Matthew. In consequence of the people’s refusing the King, He goes on high, and the anomaly appears of the kingdom, entrusted to the responsibility of man, proceeding in patience, and not enforced by power; so that if tares are sown by the enemy and seen growing in the wheat-field, there is to be no gathering of them until the harvest, when angels do that work. Such is the form and character of the kingdom presented in the New Testament -- long-suffering grace on the part of Christ’s servants towards evil doers, falsely professing His name. It is not a question of church discipline, to which it has been often and monstrously perverted, but of conduct towards the evil in the field (“the world”), where they are on principle to be let alone, mingling with the children of the kingdom till the end of this age (not of the next or millennial age, where a totally different state of things is found, and a different principle governs). In the end of THIS age the Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. That is to say, the form and character of the kingdom will change, judgment shall be executed on the wicked then alive (instead of grace bearing with them as now), and the righteous shall shine forth then, instead of groaning within themselves, as now. Judgment shall return unto righteousness in that day, and this publicly, manifestly, under the Son of Man. Hence in Daniel, where we have the normal aspect of the kingdom, there is the execution of judgment as its introductory act here below: as indeed it is the chief, though not exclusive, feature of the millennial reign, and everywhere so presented in the word of God.

The reader may now judge how far scripture is the source or sanction of Dr. B.’s fifth proposition:

Christ’s proper kingdom is already in being; commencing formally on His ascension to the right hand of God, and continuing unchanged both in character and form, till the judgment (p. 124).

Satan may still reign the prince of this world; creation may still groan, subject to vanity; all that live godly in Christ Jesus may still suffer persecution; the Jews may still cry, “Not this man but Barabbas”; the Gentiles may never so much boast, and never so little stand in God’s goodness: yet is it, according to Dr. B., Christ’s proper kingdom! Satan may be bound, and creation delivered into the liberty of glory; the saints that suffered first may reign with Christ; the Jews may say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, and the Gentiles may rejoice with them: nevertheless, according to Dr. B., the kingdom continues “unchanged both in character and form.” Now there is tribulation, then there will be none; now the gospel is being preached to all as a testimony, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, then (at least in Israel) “they shall teach no more every man his neighbor and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me.” No matter, according to Dr. B.,

the extent is nothing. The principle is the only thing of consequence, and who does not see that that is the same in both cases (p. 368)?

It is “Christ’s proper kingdom,” and it continues unchanged, both in character and form, till the final judgment!! Such is Dr. B.’s principle, and these are some of its consequences.

But we must glance at the evidences:

(1) Acts 2:29-36, compared with Zech. 6:12, 13; Rev. 5:6; 3:7, 8-13; and Isa. 9:7.
(5) Psa. 110:1, compared with Heb. 10:12, 13; and 1 Cor. 15:24-26.

These passages are employed by Dr. B. to show that the apostles take up precisely his “position against the premillennialists regarding the kingdom of Christ” (p. 128). These are bold words. How are they made good?

I. Peter’s arguments prove that Christ was the risen Messiah; that His death, and resurrection, and session at the right hand of God, were predicted, as well as His right to the throne of David. This we accept as cordially as Dr. B. Not a particle of this was believed by the incredulous Jews, with whom he associates his premillennialist brethren. But he further maintains that the Pentecostal mission of the Spirit was Christ’s first exercise of royal authority from the throne of Israel.

That CHRIST IS NOW ON DAVID’S THRONE, is as clearly affirmed by Peter in this sermon as words could do it (p. 130).

We, on the other hand, maintain not only that there is not one word to this effect, but that Christ’s ascension is expressly distinguished from his Davidecal title. Three separate Psalms are cited or referred to in proof of three distinct glories of Christ: Psa. 16 as indicating Christ’s resurrection; Psa. 132 God’s oath touching David’s throne; and Psa. 110 His session on Jehovah’s throne in heaven, which, as the apostle argues, was no more true of David than the resurrection of Psa. 16. This, then, affords not proof, but disproof: the Father’s throne above {where Christ is sitting -- Rev. 3:21} is not the throne of David or of Israel, as men most
singly make out of Peter’s words. So, as to Zech. 6:12, 13, (though it is quite lawful for us to appropriate very much that is blessed in it,) it supposes a time yet future, when “he shall be a priest upon his throne”: the regular and formal fulfillment of the prophecy, and indeed of the kingdom; not the mystery of His present place on the Father’s throne, Rev. 3:21. The possession of David’s key applied figuratively in Rev. 3:7 is an extraordinary witness to call, seeing that it pertained not to the king, but to his subject and servant. David’s throne is quite another thought. As to understanding Isa. 9:7 of “the administration of Christ in the church,” we can only say that, as interpretation, whether one looks at the text or its context, it is a sense which is destitute, to our mind, of the smallest probability. The passage supposes unprecedented vengeance executed, and the government carried out on principles of righteousness.

2. “Prince of life” we deny in toto to be the same as sitting on the throne of David. It seems to us a singular instance of a preoccupied mind that such a title should be cited in proof of a force so distant from its own proper meaning. Again, Dr. B. is quite wrong in asserting that “premillenialists tell us that Christ’s second coming must precede the conversion of the Jews.” Some, no doubt, have so thought, but by no means all. We ourselves agree with Dr. B. that the reverse appears here, as, indeed, we may add, from our Lord’s own words, “Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh,” etc. Their heart must be touched so to say, and so they shall say before they see the Lord. But Dr. B. has no warrant for adding, that on their conversion, “and events then hastening on apace,” He would send again to the earth your predicted Messiah. This interpretation is, we presume, to gain more time, and so far postpone the coming of Christ. Further, Dr. B. says, in reference to “till the times of restitution,” “the sense plainly is, that whatever the things predicted be, they are to be accomplished ere Christ comes; and that certainly will not be before the millennium.” But this is to miss the point. If the grand theme of all the prophets had been the great white throne (Rev. 20) and the subsequent eternal state, there might be force in what he says; for in that case Christ’s coming would be connected with the end of the millennium. But since all the prophets dwell, not on the final scene, but on the millennial times of blessing and righteousness, it follows that Christ’s coming is bound up with those times, not with their end or what follows; that is, the passage tells decisively for premillenarianism and against Dr. B., notwithstanding good Joseph Perry’s convictions.

3. The apostolic use of Psa. 2 in Acts 4 is the next argument. They apply the Psalm, beyond all contradiction, to the present sovereignty and rule of Jesus in the heavens (p. 140). But it is clearly used, not to prove or illustrate the nature of Christ’s kingdom, but solely as predictive of the world’s opposition to God and His anointed servant. Unquestionably, much of the Psalm was not accomplished; it cannot thence be assumed that Christ was actually reigning in Zion; and other scriptures show that He is not yet.

4. Still less plausible is the use made of Acts 5:29-31. What the Jews did not believe was that Jesus of Nazareth was the predicted Savior-Prince, and that salvation could only be through His cross. The word here translated “Prince” does not express regal dignity, but a “leader” or “captain,” as in Heb. 2 and 12. Further, it is His title in relation here to Israel (presented to their responsibility then, and by and by to be accepted through the grace of God); not a word is hinted about Christ’s actual relation to the Church, which is our author’s thesis.

5. Neither does Psa. 110:1 help Dr. B., nor do the comments on it in Acts 2; Heb. 10; and 1 Cor. 15. Sitting at Jehovah’s right hand is rather in contrast with the exercise of His Davidical throne, as we have seen in Acts. 2. Heb. 10 uses the fact of His seat there to show the work perfect and finished, instead of being always a-doing, as with the Jewish priest. It would rather prove that Christ was not ruling in the midst of His enemies. He is expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. When he reigns in the sense of Psa. 90 the enemy will have been made His footstool. In Heb. 10 He has completed His offering for His friends; henceforth He waits for another thing, viz., vengeance upon His enemies; and this “the kingdom,” in the full and literal sense of the term, is to witness. “Then cometh the end, when he shall, have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the father... For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.”

Dr. B. urges, as to this, the discrepancies of premillenialists; but, after all, what do they amount to? A mere difference in the application of a particular verse or clause in 1 Cor. 15. Some hold that the kingdom delivered up means the kingdom as now going on in mystery; others, and we believe more correctly, the proper and future kingdom of Christ. On this Dr. B. triumphs without reason. He conceives that you have only to combine the separate statements that “the kingdom” is in being with the one, and that it is the full Davidical reign of Christ with the other) to overthrow both classes of antagonists, and establish his own system. But it is plain, as Mr. Birks well observes, (Outlines, p. 203) that the same mode of argument may be used with equal success to establish any one of the conflicting theories by premises derived from the others. If we assume, with Dr. B., that the Davidical reign is clearly intended, and with Dr. McNeile, that that reign is future, the result is premillenialism as commonly held. Again, if we agree with Dr. B. that the reign here mentioned is begun, and with Dr. McN. that the Davidical reign is future, premillenialism follows equally.

Nothing, then, can be more illusive than this ad captandum style of reasoning, which would extract, from the admissions of two different sets of opponents, their common refutation.
Part 1, Chapter 6

The First Resurrection and the Second Death

Our purpose is, as briefly as may be consistent with perspicuity, to examine the arguments put forth by Dr. Brown in support of his sixth and seventh propositions, which are as follows:

When Christ comes, the whole Church of God will be "made alive" at once -- the dead by resurrection, and the living, immediately thereafter, by transformation; their mortality being swallowed up of life (p. 164).

All the wicked will rise from the dead, or be "made alive," at the coming of Christ (p. 178).

First of all, he opens with justly reprobating the painfully repulsive notion held by a few writers, that there is to be a succession of living generations upon the earth throughout all eternity. In denouncing this monstrous idea we are happy to agree with Dr. B., and so, we are persuaded, do the mass of godly and intelligent premillennialists. The fallacy depends on taking "for ever," &c., absolutely in all cases, instead of interpreting such phrases relatively to the context. Possibly our author may be right in conjecturing that its advocates were hurried into it through the gap which premillennialism leaves touching the ultimate destiny of the righteous who live on earth during the thousand years. For our part, we frankly own that, as far as we see, the principle of God's word is clear, necessary, and unchanging, whether there be others redeemed and saved elsewhere. The Lord and His apostle, in Dr. B.'s quotations, address and intend the class of heavenly sufferers elsewhere. The Lord and His apostle, in Dr. B.'s quotations, address and intend the class of heavenly sufferers elsewhere.

When Christ comes, the whole Church of God will be made alive when Christ comes, the answer is, that this is the case, and we venture to say that he cannot. His theory is a mere begging of the question.

He cites, indeed, for one simultaneous and glorious resurrection, 1 Cor. 15:20-23; John 6:39, 40; 17:9, 24 (i.e., the passages produced in his ch. 4 to show the completeness of the Church at Christ's coming, which no one doubts). The true enquiry is, whether scripture does not leave room for the blessing of other men on earth after the proper Church-work is done. Let Dr. B. ponder John 11:51, 52, for instance. Is it not plain that we are there taught the efficacy of Christ's death for the Jewish nation, and not for this only, but that also He should gather together in one the proper Church-work is done. Let Dr. B. ponder John 11:51, 52, for instance. Is it not plain that we are there taught the efficacy of Christ's death for the Jewish nation, and not for this only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad? That is, we have the Lord's death announced formally for Israel and for Christians, as for two distinct objects. The Apocalypse, like the Old Testament scriptures, exhibits the blessing, which results from it to the millennial nations, yea, to the universe itself, as the latter point is stated doctrinally in Ephesians and Colossians. Dr. B. ought to have applied the scriptures cited to those actually contemplated in the respective passages, without going farther and excluding what is revealed elsewhere. The Lord and His apostle, in Dr. B.'s quotations, address and intend the class of heavenly sufferers only. Whether there be others redeemed and saved in...
herself are already included in this unity. It is really a very strong proof of what Dr. B. objects to. In his scheme there is no world which could thus and then learn the Father’s mission of the Son, when the risen or changed saints appear with Christ in glory.

Upon the closing and supplementary remarks of ch. 7, which aim at overthrowing Dr. H. Bonar’s use of Isa. 25:8, we need not enter; partly because we differ somewhat from the argument, and chiefly because we have already rested the coexistence of earthly and heavenly blessing and glory during the millennium upon other proofs.

As for the Socinians and Dutch Remonstrants (p. 181, who employed Luke 14, 1 Cor. 15 and 1 Thess. 4, to deny any resurrection for the wicked), it may be “interesting” to those who eke out the feebleness of their cause and their reasoning by puny appeals in terrorem; but we doubt how far it will “strengthen” Dr. B.’s remarks. He concedes that this group of passages does imply that believers rise ALONE; that is, on a principle peculiar to themselves, and in a company amongst whom the wicked are not found.

Besides, it is utterly false that the same answer suffices for his premillennialist brethren now, as for the Socinianizing party: because the last denied and the former hold strenuously, and more distinctly than the soi-disant orthodox divines, a resurrection of the unjust.

But Phil. 3:11 receives from Dr. B., and claims from us, a fuller notice.

It was a resurrection peculiar to believers -- a resurrection exclusively theirs -- exclusive, however, not in the time of it, but in its nature, its accompaniments, and its issues (p. 183). Moreover, he acknowledges that the preferable reading is (not the vulgar ἐξανάστασιν τῶν νεκρῶν, but what, since Bengel, and in spite of Griesbach, “has been established”) ἐξανάστασιν τῶν ἐκ νεκρῶν. 6 This, we venture to affirm, is the strongest possible statement in Greek of an eclectic resurrection. “The out-resurrection from the dead” may convey some idea of its force to the unlearned reader. It is even more emphatic, as Bengel observes, than the word used of our Lord’s rising from the dead. The main question, however, is on the latter part of the phrase. Is ἐκ νεκρῶν ever predicated of the resurrection of the wicked dead, of those who, as we believe, rise last? NEVER. Ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν is, of course, true of Christ, and of the righteous, no less than of the wicked; for all that it means is the rising again of dead persons. This, then, is in not the smallest degree favorable to Dr. B., as he inconsiderately infers. On the other hand, the phrase ἐκ νεκρῶν is restricted to Christ and His saints; because this resurrection (whether of Him or of them) was from among the dead, who were left for the time undisturbed by it in their graves -- a prior, as well as a peculiar, resurrection. Nor is there the least difficulty in discerning why St. Paul chose the more general expression in 1 Cor. 15 though he there confines himself (as Dr. B. believes with us, in opposition to Mr. Birks, Barnes, &c.) to the resurrection of Christ and of them who are Christ’s. The reason is because he is asserting the abstract doctrine of resurrection which some of the Corinthians, though holding the perpetuity of the soul, had denied. But the apostle insists on the resurrection of dead persons, -- of the body. He shows that to question this is to destroy alike the foundation in Christ and the hopes of the Christian -- the grand motives to, and power of, present holy suffering. Can Dr. B. refuse this explanation of his objection? If not, the argument founded on the distinctness of the Greek formulas is thoroughly sound and conclusive. Neither is there ambiguity, in the phrase ἐκ νεκρῶν: it means “out of,” or “from amongst the dead,” not “from the

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6. (...continued)

Now we cannot say what this German scholar may have remarked in former editions, but we can affirm that, having examined his latest (sixth) edition of the Grammatik, we believe that no reference is made to the passage, much less is there an assertion so unworthy of a really learned man as is imputed to him. If W. ever committed himself to that opinion, it seems to have vanished from his most mature statements. The section 19, to which Dr. B. alludes (now at least) without reason, discusses the omission of the article under certain limitations -- a subject of which Winer is by no means master. -- It may be remarked here, that the late Mr. Gipps founded an argument of apparent weight and acuteness on the common text against a literal resurrection of saints before the rest are raised for judgment. The absence of ἐκ was the gist of his reasoning. But the fact that the sentence is not correct Greek, and hardly sense, as it stands in Text. Rec.; whereas the oldest and best authorities, for τῶν, read τὴν ἐκ -- Had Mr. G. known this, he would have felt that his main objection was gone -- nay, that the clause told strongly against him. “If,” says he, “Phil. 3:11 had meant to express the rising from the dead, the preposition ἐκ in composition with ἐννόησανς would have been repeated” (p. 85, note). It is repeated according to the latest critics, Scholz, Lachmann, and Tischendorf, none of whom sympathizes with premillennialism. The ancient MSS. A, B. (C is here defective), D, E read τὴν ἐκ. F, G, give τῶν ἐκ which is obviously a slip for τῆς ἐκ, and this again was, probably, the parent of τῶν without ἐκ in J, K and the cursive manuscripts which follow them. The best versions and fathers confirm the reading from the dead. The currency which the common reading once had says little for the accuracy of copyists, editors, and commentators.

(continued...)
place or state of the dead." Mr. Inglis's criticism on Heb. 11:19 (preface, pp. vi.,viii.), founded on ðθεev, "whence," as if it necessarily meant the dead state, is quite inapte; because, the expression being figurative (ἐν παραβολη), "out of dead persons" yields a sense just as good as its rival. Like the Latin unde, this Greek adverb means not only "whence" but from whom or which, and this, not in mere loose and barbarized dialects, but in the purest Attic authors. Mr. I.'s remarks ignore this (being founded on the mistaken idea that ðθεev can only mean whence, and only be applied to the dead state), and therefore, if ingenious, must forfeit claim to accuracy.

Dan. 12:2, "If it treat of a literal bodily resurrection, is decidedly opposed to Dr. B., because it makes it immediately succeed the great conflicts in Palestine, which most certainly are before, not after the millennium. The Gog and Magog

7. It is attempted by the help of Augustine (De Civ. Dei. XX. xxiii. 2), Calvin, and others, to maintain a strict parallel between this text and John 5:28, 29. But it is not true that "many" is equivalent to "all." The chief witness called by most is the alleged interchange of these expressions in Rom. 5:18, 19. But we deny the fact even there; for in the latter verse πάλιν is employed in relation to ὄν γε (the mass connected with the one), and in the former there is no such relation expressed; and the idea is the universal bearing of one offence and of one righteousness respectively, not the actual effect which follows in the next verse, where, accordingly, the phrase is altered. Moreover, "many" is not the same thing as "the many"; they are very particularly and frequently distinguished in Daniel. Compare, for the former, Dan. 11:34,44; 12:4,10; and, for the latter, Dan. 9:27; 11:33,39; 12:3. Marckius' reply to Ciccocius, which identifies them, is therefore unfounded, and even Dr. B. "now greatly doubts it." And it is evident that he has little confidence in the explanation of Munster and Clarious, who suppose that the change of the living righteous is hinted at in the word "many." The truth is that, on no view, premillennial or postmillennial, can our text be applied to a literal resurrection consistently with other scriptures or with the context. We have no doubt, therefore, that it refers to God'srevival of Israel, both nationally and spiritually, and with the open judgment of the wicked among them, after the destruction of the last king of the North ("the Assyrian," so often predicted in the prophets). Dan. 11 had already spoken of the Jews in the Land up to the closing troubles and deliverance for the elect. Dan. 12:2 shows us the reappearance on the scene of "many" long slumbering among the Gentiles. They had been "asleep" when movements of the deepest interest had been going on in the land and people of the Jews. Now they "awake"; but, as among the Jews in Palestine, not a few were apostate and cut off by God, and only such were delivered out of their last time of unparalleled tribulation as were "written in the book"; so of these returned Israelites, some are found destined to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. For they are not all Israel which are of Israel. We doubt not that, though employed figuratively, as often in the Psalms and Prophets, the language presupposes the known truth of a bodily resurrection, and this of just and unjust. It is possible that John 5 may allude to the passage, but that would not prove the literality of Dan. 12:2. It is much more certain that itself alludes to Isa. 26:19, which Dr. B. correctly refers to the figurative resurrection of Israel (pp. 234, 235). The language is at least equally strong in both, and the resemblance striking and undeniable. "Thy dead shall live, my dead body shall they arise. Awake, and sing (the prophet addressing them), ye that dwell in dust," &c. Ezek. 37 is, if possible, stronger than Dan. 12. "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." Beyond a doubt, not a physical but a figurative resurrection is here meant, just as in Daniel. It is the only interpretation which meets all the conditions of the text and context, and it is entirely free from the inseparable difficulties which encumber the use made of it by many on both sides.

The Hope of Christ's Coming Again, and Its Relation to the Question of Time 213
judgment, has added a countless throng to the mass of the dead, all are summoned up from their graves to stand before the throne. Here there is neither need nor room for describing them as “the rest of the dead,” because of the interval which separates them from the first resurrection. Nay, more: “the rest of the dead,” in v. 12, would have been a misleading and improper phrase, because it might naturally have been restricted to the same body of whom v. 5 had spoken: whereas in fact it includes ALL the dead, except those already disposed of in the first resurrection; not those only who were dead when the millennial reign began, but such as had died during its course, and the vast multitude whom fire from God devoured at its close. Nothing can be but such as had died during its course; not had spoken: whereas in fact it includes ALL the dead, all are summoned up from their graves to stand before the Judge. And as to the production of “the dead, small and great . . . and the dead were judged.” The wicked dead are excluded from that age no less than from the resurrection from the dead. The truth is that an indiscriminate resurrection (p. 260) is totally unknown to scripture, and the reasoning goes much farther than the millennium. All scripture which speaks of resurrection shows a distinct act, if there be only a minute between. Those who are Christ’s are never confounded with the rest, whatever the interval (which is naturally made known in a prophecy, that is peculiarly rich in times and seasons, days and years).

2. We utterly reject the assertion that Rev. 20:4-6 is an ambiguous revelation. People may have made mistakes about the extent of its subjects: but the thing itself has been clearly held even by men as eccentric as Mr. Burgh. And Dr. B. forgets that all premillennialists differ from his opinion of the subjects of the final resurrection, and most of them from his view of its character and results.

3. His last presumption, viz., that any other description of the resurrection of the saints is catholic, while this is limited, is a mere but decided blunder. Dr. B. omits the first clause of Rev. 20:4 (“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them”). Having thus decapitated the verse, having deprived it of a clause which, in our judgment, was purposely written in the most general form, so as to take in the saints of the Old and New Testaments, no wonder that he finds in the rest only disjecta membra. But then the mutilation is his own deed, as will be seen more fully by and by. At the same time we must do our author the justice to say that he discards the old objections, grounded on “souls” (not bodies) being named, on the want of particular mention of the earth, as the theater of the millennial reign, and on the word resurrection, as if it did not denote the restoring of life to the dead.

His nine arguments admit of distinct and conclusive refutation:

I. Dr. B. reasons that “this is the first resurrection” “seems to be figurative, because contrasted with the second death.” Why, it is hard even to imagine. The first death is the wages of sin in this world, the second death is the full and final...
wages hereafter. Dr. B. has overlooked the fact that both are explanations, and not the symbols to be explained. If the two deaths are literal, though they may differ, the two resurrections may differ, but are equally literal.

II. We are almost ashamed to speak of the objection to the clause “on such the second death hath no power,” taking for granted that the first resurrection is literal. “Is it likely,” says Dr. B., “that the Spirit of God means nothing more here than such a truism?” Such hypercriticism would make fearful carnage of the living word of God. It is the habitual way, especially in the psalms and prophets, of causing the reader to pause and ponder well their comforts or their warnings. Dr. B. will scarcely deny the parallelistic structure which pervades the scripture, and not least the Apocalypse. Nor is anything more common than to mark doubly, what was meant to impress the soul, i.e., both positively and negatively, as here. “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power.” The second death is so awful a reality as to make God’s gracious assurance of exemption from it anything but a needless repetition.

Indeed, (says Mr. Birks, p. 116) the words are a distinct proof that the resurrection is literal. For the second death is never named except with reference to a first death which has gone before it. The church of Smyrna is the only one which receives the command, “Be thou faithful unto death”; and hence it receives the special promise, “he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” It is not to saints as living but as having suffered death, or about to suffer it, that exemption from the second death is promised. This character does not apply to millennial believers, who are exempt from the first death during its continuance, but applies fully to the martyrs, and indeed to all believers who have died in the faith before the Lord comes.

III. There are but two alternatives in this prophecy, says Dr. B.: -- the first resurrection, or the second death. Into which are we to put the millennial myriads? Into neither, as far as the millennial saints are concerned, who, not dying, will not rise, but be changed doubtless. The rest, dying before, or destroyed in the Gog and Magog insurrection, will be cast into the lake of fire. On Dr. B.’s view, the blessing is reduced to the character of the millennium as one of prevailing spiritual life: but thus, as another remarks, all the emphasis is lost, since believers in any age are blessed and holy, and are equally exempted from the power of the second death.

IV. The limitation of the reign to 1000 years is no difficulty. Rev. 22 shows that the book recognizes the reigning for ever and ever, while Rev. 20 takes up the reigning for a special purpose which has an end.

V. The next difficulty, viz., that the rest of the dead do not rise immediately on the expiry of the thousand years, but after the little season beyond, is weaker still. It is nowhere tied to that moment; it could not be before -- that is all. On the other hand, there is a difference in the way Satan’s period is spoken of -- μετά ταύτα δ. α. λ. μ. χ. This formula does connect the loosing of Satan with the close of the thousand years, but it is nowhere used of the resurrection of the rest of the dead. The truth, therefore, is against Dr. B. and his colleague in the British Quarterly.

VI, VII. These are merely the arguments reasoned by Mr. Gipps, on the opening of the book of life, and on the sea, death, and hades delivering up their dead, only in connection with the great white throne, not with the first resurrection. But we have already replied enough on these heads to show that they are appropriate where they are, rather than elsewhere, on the literal scheme. Besides, a book is not like a seal which can be opened but once; and here, say what Dr. B. will, it is connected solely with those not found in it. The other images are not of blessedness, but of trouble, sorrow, &c., and therefore are fitly joined with the wicked.

VIII. The next objection to the literal sense is that it is exclusively a martyr scene. But this is simply to repeat the mistake of the third presumption. Dr. B. objects to Mr. Elliott’s way of stating the case, that he makes St. John to specify particularly, as conspicuous among those seen seated on thrones, the martyrs and confessors; whereas, according to his own interpretation, they only are seen. The fact is, that Mr. E. has understated the matter. For the beheaded saints, and those who refused the beast’s overtures, are two classes added to those who were already seen enthroned. The apostle saw certain thrones filled, and judgment committed to those who sat there. Besides, he sees souls of slaughtered saints; and, moreover, there were such as had rejected all connection with the beast; and these two classes, who for the time seemed to have lost all, are reunited to their bodies, and reign with Christ no less than the rest. Dr. B. speaks of the verb ἐκκάθισαν (“sat”) as a virtual impersonal. This is not doubted; but it is in no way connects the clause with what follows, which is his desire. If it had been put in the sentence after the other clauses, there might be ground for such a supposition. As it is, there is none. The first clause leaves room for all the heavenly saints, save the added Apocalyptic sufferers and faithful, which the next clauses distinguish and subjoin. Christ and these heavenly saints quitted heaven together, in Rev. 19: Christ and they reign together over the earth, in Rev. 20: and all those who suffered from, but who really overcame, the beast, are there too, not as Israel reigned over, but reigning with Christ as those who had gone before them. On the figurative view, what can be more absurd than a revival of martyr-spirit, when it is least needed, when all is unpleasantly happy and prosperous for the Church?

IX. The last objection is, that our view can offer no consistent explanation of the “judgment” that “was given unto” the enthroned saints. We must be forgiven for pronouncing such a remark somewhat perverse. It is not expressly connected with the slain martyrs, though no doubt they had it as well as the rest; and this, therefore, dissolves
the narrow limits which Dr. B. seeks to borrow from Rev. 6:10. We do not deny that there may be a link; but we affirm that the Lord God’s judging and avenging the blood of His slain ones is a very distinct thing from judgment being given to others seated on thrones, nay, to themselves there. Dr. B.’s object is to bind together, in the judgment given, both the slain and their slayers, so that if the saints be personally present their persecutors must be also in the same personal way; and if the latter be spiritually understood, so the former. But, as we have seen, this is not the force of judgment being given to men. In his sense, God had already avenged the blood of saints and prophets in Babylon; and the beast and the false prophet, with their instruments, had met their terrible doom from the Lord, before the enthroned saints had judgment given to them, or began to reign with Christ.

Are we mistaken in affirming that our ingenious opponent has wasted his time, his research, his labor, in vainly assaulting the impregnable fortress of a first resurrection? Is it not as true for all saints who suffer with Christ, as the second death is sure for all sinners who despise Him?
The Judgment and the Eternal State

There are few subjects as to which the thoughts of men more decidedly clash with the revealed mind of God than the Judgment; there is none, perhaps, in which the children of God are more endangered by the unbelief so natural to the heart at all times, and by the confusion which has prevailed so long. The enemy has sought to avail himself of all sorts of things, good or bad, in order to darken spiritual intelligence and blind the eye alike to “that blessed hope” and to the judgment which hangs day by day over this doomed earth. Thus he has taken advantage of the modern impetus given to Bible circulation and missionary efforts, admirable as they are in their objects, and still more as they might be, if directed according to the word by the wisdom which comes down from heaven, but capable of the sad illusion that men are to bring about the times of refreshing for the world in the absence of its rejected Lord. To such the idea of a sudden, unprecedented, divine interruption, not crowning their successes, but calling to account for unfaithfulness, for self-seeking, for despising the scripture, for grieving and quenching the Holy Ghost, is painful and unwelcome, and so much the more when Christians are drawn into the snare of the common hopes, interests, and efforts of the age. It convicts them of ignorance of scripture, and of opposing, as far as they can, the mind and counsels of God. It detects the pride which endeavors to patch up the broken vessel rather than confess our fault and submit to the sentence of God. It recalls to zealous repentance from the bustling plans and enterprises which tend to cover the weakness, and ruin, and guilt of man. Above all, it demands an immediate stop to every movement which is outside and against God’s word, and positive separation, in all its forms, from a world which is recognized as ripening for vengeance. Let none say that this is to damp the activities of the grace which seeks the good of all men, specially of the household of faith. The removal of obstructions, the cessation from known evil, the good of all men, specially of the household of faith. The guilt of man. Above all, it demands an immediate stop to this is to damp the activities of the grace which seeks the every movement which is outside and against God’s word, enterprises which tend to cover the weakness, and ruin, and recall to zealous repentance from the bustling plans and convictions of ignorance of scripture, and of opposing, as far as they can, the mind and counsels of God. It detects the pride which endeavors to patch up the broken vessel rather than confess our fault and submit to the sentence of God. It recalls to zealous repentance from the bustling plans and enterprises which tend to cover the weakness, and ruin, and guilt of man. Above all, it demands an immediate stop to every movement which is outside and against God’s word, and positive separation, in all its forms, from a world which is recognized as ripening for vengeance. Let none say that this is to damp the activities of the grace which seeks the good of all men, specially of the household of faith. The removal of obstructions, the cessation from known evil, the refusal of the world’s harness -- in a word, obedience is ever peremptorily due to God, and never can lead to relaxation of Christian love and labors, though it may throw off the slough of the serpent that has mixed itself up with them.

But we must turn to Dr. Brown, who assumes that the judgment is “one undivided scene,” not rule over nations, nor vengeance upon public bodies, but a judgment of individual persons. He urges that the two things are so different that they cannot be put into one unmixed conception. Now, is it not evident that such statements as these betoken a mind unsuject to the word of God, which never speaks of an unbroken scene, nor of an unmixed conception? The question is not whether there is a judgment of individuals, of the secrets of the heart, but whether the Bible reveals but one single judgment act at the end of all, an act which embraces every creature, saint or sinner, indiscriminately, and then for the first time manifests their eternal destiny.

But it is plain at a glance that such a scheme fails, not because there is no truth in it, but because it is the narrowest section of the truth. It interprets the entire judgment of God by that which is a single though a most solemn and momentous part. The true question is, does not scripture make known both temporal and eternal judgment, executed by Christ the Lord? Does it not disclose vengeance on living men, as well as a holy assise over the dead? Does it not require us to believe that there will be what we may distinguish as His war-judgment, previous to His judging as a King, and this again before He calls up the dead for the resurrection of judgment? (Rev. 19, 20). This is the plain, simple meaning of the last great prophetic strain which treats of the orderly sequence of these events, against which it is in vain to appeal, as Dr. B. does, to texts here and there, which merely speak of judgment when Christ comes: for all, premillennialist and postmillennialist, equally bow to this.

But we are pointed to Matt. 25 as an insuperable difficulty in our way. In order to explain what we believe to be its true bearing, it will be necessary to take the prophecy as a whole. First of all, it is clear that the first and greater part of Matt. 24 addresses the disciples, as they were associated in feeling, faith, and hopes with Jerusalem and the special portion of Israel in their land. Hence they are warned against false Messiahs, they are guarded against confounding the earlier sorrows with the great tribulation that is to precede the nation’s deliverance; but the gospel is the gospel of the kingdom, the prophetic admonition to flee is for “them which be in Judea,” the token on earth is the idol set up in the sanctuary and the Jewish Sabbath is supposed to be in force. Furthermore, there is not a thought of going to be with the Lord in the air; not a hint of the Father’s house, but a very specific showing them that the Son of man is to appear in the most vivid and sudden way, “as the lightning,” for their deliverance. They are not therefore to go into the desert, nor to believe that He is arrived and in some secret chambers; for when He does appear, it will be with power and great glory; and their enemies shall see and mourn. It is Christ’s coming to the earth for the deliverance of the godly Jewish remnant who will be at the close of the age awaiting Him. The disciples were their forerunners in many obvious and important respects. But it is plain that the close
of Matt. 24 and the parables of the virgins and of the talents in Matt. 25, drop all particular connection with the Jews and Jerusalem, and evidently are verified in the calling and occupation of Christians as such, during the absence of Christ in heaven. Equally clear, is it that Matt. 25:31 to the end concerns distinctively the Gentiles.

It is not a mere infliction of chastisement, it is not an outpouring of vengeance on a particular nation, or an assemblage of hostile people; it is the calm session of judgment before the King of all the earth, and before Him shall be gathered all nations. But it is in positive contrast, as to its subjects, with Rev. 20: 11, 12, 8 because there all that stand before the throne are the dead, here all are the living; there, as we have shown, they are exclusively the wicked, here they are both good and bad; there the judged, being the dead, were irrespective of country and race, here they are the Gentiles as distinct from the Jews. The ground of the judgment, which hangs like a millstone round the neck of the traditionalist, confirms the true view. For the king does not on this occasion enter on the details of general conduct. There is no judging of the guilty Jew according to the law, and of the guilty Gentile outside the law, according to his actual condition, as in Rom. 2. But the gathered nations are dealt with according to their treatment of the King's brethren, sent out to announce the kingdom before it was, as it will then be, established in power: for God will take care to send forth previously an adequate and universal testimony; and this will act as a test among the nations. Accordingly the King owns as done to Himself the least kindness shown to His messengers, and punishes their dishonor as leveled at His own person. But manifestly such a test best applies to a brief and eventful crisis, when the gospel of the kingdom shall be proclaimed far and wide, immediately before the appearance of the King who judges thereon by a criterion utterly inapplicable to the times when the glad tidings were not so preached, much less the kingdom. Again, the true interpretation accounts for the King's brethren as a class distinct from "the sheep," or godly Gentiles. They are His converted Jewish brethren, who witness the kingdom of all nations before the end comes. This distinction is lost and useless in the common view; for important as such a thing is in a judgment of the quick, all differences of Jew and Gentile disappear in the resurrection, which, it will be observed, is here unnoticed, and we believe incompatible with the language employed. Scripture never speaks of nations after resurrection, as Dr. B.'s exposition supposes. Nor is there real force in Mr. Birks' objections. For:

1. The judgment of the living nations has not been given in the preceding parables, but we have had the Jews and the Christians: now we have the Gentile as such;
2. Isa. 66 in no way denies such a gathering of all nations as Matt. 25 describes;
3. The sentence being final is no obstacle, for the King is there to decide everlastingly;
4. As to the notion of a climax, it is to us an evident mistake. The prophecy to be complete naturally shows us the ways of the King with the nations after sketching His ways with His Jewish remnant {Matt. 24:1-44}, and with the Christian parenthesis {Matt. 24:45-25:30}.

Accordingly we have no doubt that it is quite fallacious to confound this very special dealing of the Lord with all the Gentiles summoned before His millennial throne, and the description of His judgment of the dead found elsewhere. But this overthrown, the chief buttress of Dr. B.'s proposition eighth is undermined. We believe, as well as he, that when Christ comes He will put honor on such as have confessed Him and shame on those who have denied Him; we believe that both reward and punishment will be in "that day"; but it does not thence follow that all are dealt with simultaneously, as Dr. B. takes for granted. Hence Matt. 7:21-23; 10:32-34; 13:30-43; 16:24-27; 25:10; John 5:28,29; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:5-16; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 1 Tim. 5:24,25; 2 Tim. 4:1; 2 Peter 3:7-12; 1 John 2:28; 4:17; Rev. 3:5; 20:11-15; 21:7,8; 22:12,15, are wholly unavailing. Some of these texts refer only to the quick, and others to the dead alone: none treats good and bad, quick and dead, as judged in one indiscriminate judgment. Indeed John 5 shows that, in the most momentous sense, the believer shall not come into judgment and that a life-resurrection awaits him, as a judgment-resurrection remains for the evil doer.

It is useless, therefore, for Dr. B. to prove, as he does clearly, that man is appointed to death and judgment: we believe it as strongly as himself. No more does it serve his purpose to urge that we must all be manifested before the tribunal of Christ, and receive according to the good or bad done in the body; for we too insist on it as a clear and necessary truth. Both look for "the hour," and "that day": both connect judgment with the coming of Christ: both maintain that "then he shall reward every man according to his works." But not a text hints, nor an argument proves, that "the righteous and the wicked will be judged together." Dr. B.'s case entirely breaks down. His claim would have been strong, indeed, if Matt. 25:31, and seq., could be legitimately identified, in time, character, and subjects, with Rev. 20:11, and seq. But there is a plain and certain contrast between them, not sameness. In Matthew, nations are in question, in the Revelation the dead; in the one the scene is the earth, in the other earth and heaven are fled away; in the former both the righteous and the accursed are seen, in the latter none but the lost; in the gospel the living Gentiles are tested by a very special preaching of the kingdom, which is to go forth before the end of the age, and they are sentenced according to their behavior towards the messengers of the king, while in the Apocalypse it is a solemn scrutiny of those things which were written in the books, according to the works of the dead -- a ground of judgment not limited to a
peculiar testimony and epoch, but embracing all ages and
dispensations, before the flood and after it, -- under the law,
or without the law, -- whether they had, or whether they had not, heard the gospel. The difference, therefore, is complete, and so is the failure of Dr. B.’s scheme of a
universal and simultaneous judgment.

It remains to notice his ninth and last proposition:

At Christ’s second appearing, “the heavens and the earth
that are now,” being dissolved by fire, shall give place to
“new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness,” without any mixture of sin -- good unalloyed by the least evil.

The passages cited are 2 Peter 3:7-13; Rev. 20:11; 21:1.

By putting this passage, then, in Revelation alongside of
the passage in Peter, we obtain the following argument, which I believe it to be impossible to answer: The conflagration and passing away of the heavens will be “as a thief in the night, in or at the day of the Lord,” -- the time of His second advent (2 Pet. 3). But the millennium precedes the “fleeing or passing away of the earth and heaven” (Rev. 20, 21). Therefore the millennium precedes the second advent” (B. p. 289).

But there is an obvious and fatal fallacy here. For we deny that the day of the Lord is equivalent to the time of His second advent. There are most momentous changes linked with the Lord’s coming and previous to His day. Thus the dead saints are raised, the living are changed, and both caught up to be with the Lord in the air at His coming. How long this precedes the day of the Lord, it is not our present object to enquire; but we altogether reject Dr. B.’s assumption that they are the same thing, or even at the same time. Without that identification, which the author takes for granted instead of proving, the syllogism comes to nothing. The truth is, that “the day of the Lord” may be readily seen, by any who examine the Old Testament prophets, to be a long period characterized (when it is fulfilled, not in early types, but in the grand events of the last days) by the direct intervention of Jehovah’s presence, power, and glory here below. Peter furnishes the connecting tie between Isa. 65, 66 and the Revelation, and embraces within the compass of that great day, not only the millennium, but the season that succeeds till the heavens and earth that now are give place to “all things made new.” The millennium then does not precede the day of the Lord, but is included within its magnificent range. The coming of the Lord gathers His saints to Him before that day, and a fortiori before the millennium, as we have already sufficiently shown in commenting on 2 Thess. 2:1. Thus the argument, which Dr. B. supposed it impossible to answer, is as loose and incoherent as the sand. And here we close our reply to his assault upon premillennialism.
Part 2
Part 2, Chapter 1

The Millennium -- How Brought About

When God was converting souls as He never did for extent in real quickening power, either before or since, the apostolic preacher told his hearers to repent and be converted, that their sins might be blotted out, so that seasons of refreshing might come from the face of the Lord, and He might send Christ Jesus that was fore-appointed to them, whom heaven must receive till the times of restoring all things, of which God spoke by the month of His holy prophets since time began (Acts 3). This is plain and conclusive.

It is impossible more definitely to connect the sending of Jesus from heaven, not with the destruction, but with the restoration of all things -- the subject of the bright visions of the prophets, in contradistinction to the work of the gospel. The ungrieved power of the Spirit was then operating largely and profoundly; but this had for its effect on Peter’s mind to urge repentance on Israel, that so might come from Jehovah’s face that which really brings about the millennium. There is no thought of a “continued effusion of the Spirit,” still less of a “continued effusion of the Spirit,” still less of a professing world, as the adequate answer. It is that which is elsewhere styled “the regeneration” (Matt. 19), when the Son of man shall sit (not on the Father’s throne as is elsewhere styled “the regeneration” (Matt. 19), when the Son of man shall sit (not on the Father’s throne as now, Rev. 3, but) on the throne of His glory; and His once suffering apostles shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. If no such state of things consists with this age, or with eternity, when can it be save in the millennium? Manifestly, therefore, that good age which succeeds “the present evil age,” and which precedes eternity when national distinctions shall have for ever passed away, supposes the Son of Man to come again and to reign over the world.

Thus the nobleman, according to the parable, will have returned, having received the kingdom; and the kingdom He delivers up to Him who is God and Father at “the end,” not of this age, but of the age to come -- i.e., the millennium, when He shall have put down all rule and authority and power; for He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. This is not what occupies Christ now. He is calling out those who were enemies, and gaining them as His friends, yea, His body and bride, to reign with Him when the world-kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ is come (Rev. 11). He is not in this age dealing righteously but in long suffering with His enemies; in that age He shall put them under His feet, not in title only, but in fact. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him (which will be the work and issue of the Millennium, not of this age), then shall the Son also Himself be subject to Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:28). This is disclosed in Rev. 21:1-8; not in what goes before or after.

The common postmillennial system of Christendom ignores and opposes all this clear, positive teaching of Scripture. It is in effect a denial of the Bible millennium altogether. Dr. B.’s view, even if true, would make it simply an extension of what is going on now throughout the world. He excludes Christ, he includes Satan, he maintains the mixture of tares with wheat in his scheme. Thus it is not a new age but the last stage of this present evil age, conceived to be an exceptional period which shall surpass in brightness all the world has yet beheld. It is a visionary millennium of man without a shred of divine evidence, nay, in hopeless antagonism to the word of God. The root of it is unbelief as to the central place of Christ in the ways of God, and the substitution for Him of salvation or the saved.

Hence, habitually all is viewed from present experience, and tends to magnify man as he is or hopes to be -- not the Lord. Instead of calling the Christian to self-judgment, because of our miserable fall from primitive power, purity, and love, this scheme directly fosters the proudest and wholly baseless hope of doing that by the gospel which God receives for Christ sent from heaven in judgment of the world and especially of Christendom. “When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness,” It is perfectly true that the earth in the millennium is to be the scene of universal blessing; it is utterly false that this is ever once attributed in Scripture to a preached gospel. The delusion would not stand an hour’s examination of Scripture, if it did not flatter man 9 to the dishonor of Christ -- the common source of all error even among children of God. And what (can the reader believe it?) is the Scripture, the one Scripture adduced to support the scheme? “All power,” &c., Matt. 28:18-20. The late Cardinal Wiseman, like many a Romish controversialist before him, cited the same passage with quite as much reason to support the fabric of Papal infallibility. It need hardly be said that there is not a syllable which supports either the claims of the Pope, invested with

9. Weigh the following words: --

Some looked to the revival of miracles as one great means of the rapid conversions which are to signalize the latter day; but in vain. As we do not need them, so the soul in a healthy state does not desire them. The Church is in its manhood, and miracles are for its infancy” (Brown, p. 302).

I do not cite this because of agreeing with those who would revive miracles for converting souls in the latter day, but to illustrate the blind self-conceit of the Gentile, spite of Rom. 11. Was the apostolic age, as compared with ours, the infancy and {now} the manhood of the Church?
all power in heaven and on earth, or the hopes of missionary societies. The Lord pledges His presence with His servants in their making disciples of all the Gentiles; but far from hinting at the conversion of the world in the age to come as the effect of their work. He expressly speaks of being with them all the days until the completion of the age. He himself would come in power and glory for that age, using His angels to clear out of His kingdom all offences and those that practice lawlessness; and then should the righteous shine in their heavenly sphere, as He had taught them already according to a previous chapter of this gospel, which explicitly shows us the separating judgment that will distinguish the end of this age, and thus prepare the way for the peculiar features of the age to come, that follows before the eternal state.
Part 2, Chapter 2

Nature of the Millennium

The remarks already made on the parable of the tares preclude the need of much argument here. Only, it is an exaggeration and mistake if people have taught such that the millennium is a perfect state, or that there can be such till eternity. Isa. 65 is clear that sin and death are still possible within its course; and Rev. 20:7-10 demonstrates, that after its expiration there will be a vast musther of the distant nations, Gog and Magog, under the guidance of Satan, once more deceiving men. These have been all born within the thousand years, and may have rendered a feigned obedience throughout; but not being renewed, they fall under Satan’s snares as soon as he is loosed and goes out to deceive them. The reign of the Lord in visible glory over the earth will not change the heart nor deliver from temptation when the enemy appears.

But this has nothing in common with the wheat field, among which tares were sown. Tares do not mean men as merely evil by nature, but the result of Satan’s special sowing in Christendom -- heretics and other corrupt persons mingled with the confessors of Christ. In that field the servants are forbidden to take in hand the extermination of the tares from among the wheat. Care for the true, not judgment of the false, is their business. Others -- the angels -- will deal with the children of the wicked one in the time of harvest (i.e., in the completion of the age). Patient grace becomes the servants, not earthly judgment, which in their hands might work, as indeed it always has wrought, mischief to the children of the kingdom.

At the present there reigns grace; in the Millennium righteousness will reign; in eternity righteousness will dwell. The thousand years will not be without evil, but the earth will be happy and perfectly governed, till Satan, during the short space that succeeds, is allowed to marshal the distant nations against the camp of the saints and the beloved city (earthly Jerusalem); but those nations who fall under Satan’s last deceit are never called “tares.” They were no produce of Satan’s seed, for they existed in an unregenerate state before he was let loose. It is not the fact that any intelligent premillennialist describes the millennium “just as other people do” (p. 310); for postmillennialism by extending such a parable as that of the tares to that day, simply destroys the millennium. The clearance of tares from the kingdom of the Son of man will not hinder the birth of men throughout the thousand years, multitudes of whom will be unrenewed, and thus exposed to the enemy at the close. The popular system is infidelity as to the millennium; it denies the introduction of a new age after this age, and the coexistence and display of the kingdom of God in both its parts -- heavenly and earthly. The end of the age is not the end of the world, but the completion of the present course of time, when the Lord will not have His Servants exercise judgment by rooting the evil out of the field. In the end, judgment will be applied to purge out all scandals for the reign of Christ and those who are glorified along with Him. The making disciples of all nations cannot contradict the Lord’s word, that the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. It is the grossest begging of the question to say there is no millennium to come after this. Preaching for a witness suits the actual time, but not the millennium. Jehovah shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Jehovah and His name one.
Part 2, Chapter 3

The Millennium --
Display of the Kingdom in Judgment

The two visions in Dan. 2-7, to which our attention is challenged, are as strong evidence as need be asked to the falsehood of the postmillennial theory of the advent.

First, as to Dan. 2, it is manifest that the stone cut out without hands -- symbolizing the kingdom of God introduced by Christ -- falls with destructive effect on the image in its final stage (i.e., the feet of iron and clay); and that only after this execution of judgment does the stone become a great mountain and fill the earth. The stone smiting the symbol of this world’s power is, according to the mystics,

the Kingdom of Grace (p. 315). As Kingdoms, simply -- as a mere succession of civil monarchies -- the vision has nothing to do with them, and the kingdom of Christ has no quarrel with them; for civil government, as such, whatever be the form of it, is a Divine ordinance. The mission of the Church is not to supplant, but to impregnate and pervade it with a religious character, and to render it subservient to the glory of God” (pp. 319-420).

Is this a fair intelligent interpretation of God’s kingdom breaking in pieces and consuming the great Imperial powers of this world? Is it a reasonable explanation that the blow of the stone which breaks and disperses utterly the iron and clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, means the Church impregnating and pervading civil government with a religious character? Is it possible that a man should be so blinded by a false system as to pervading civil government with a religious character? What! a woman hiding leaven in three stages (i.e., the feet of iron and clay); and that only after this execution of judgment does the stone become a great mountain and fill the earth. The stone smiting the symbol of this world’s power is, according to the mystics,

... of Gentile imperial power by God’s kingdom in Christ, which thereon spreads over the earth as the waters cover the sea. It is not a mere difference of prosperity or extent, but of character as contrasted as judgment with grace -- of administration as different as Jesus displayed in power and glory is from that same Jesus hid in God. The weapons are wholly new, the change of dispensation complete.

Dan. 7 is substantially similar. The kingdom of the Son of Man over all people, nations, and languages, is after the fourth beast is destroyed in consequence of the blasphemies of the little horn. Dr. B. misquotes v. 25, which means that the times and laws (not the saints) are given into the hands of the little horn. But this is the error of most divines. What has this to do with “the kingdom of grace,” so called? Is it not divine judgment in the strictest sense -- not the eternal judgment of the dead before the great white throne of Rev. 20, but that of Rev. 19? It is an absurd begging of the question, and even opposition to the plainest Scripture, to ask “who does not see that this has nothing to do with the second personal advent of Christ” (p. 329)? Dr. B. is quite right in joining Psa. 2 with this scene; but does he really believe that Christ’s breaking the nations with a rod of iron, and dashing them in pieces like a potter’s vessel, is the kingdom of grace, and not the execution of judgment on the quick? Does he want us to believe that grace and judgment, even to consigning the beast and the false prophet to the lake of fire, are the same thing, and not irreconcilably opposite? Now the Lord works by the Holy Ghost through the Gospel on souls; then He will destroy nations. Is this no change of constitution, form, or dispensation, but merely its latent energies set free, and its internal resources developed, for the benediction of a miserable world? Can [de]fusion be more complete or plain? Destruction of earthly power, according to this teaching, is the full blow of heavenly grace.

The whole is there from the first, not a new element is added. Expansion and development, growth and maturity are all the difference (p. 332).

Postmillennialism has its “development,” no less than Popery. It is not correct that Dan. 7:26, any more than 2 Thess. 2:8, intimates the gradual nature of the destruction to fall on the Lord’s enemies. It means that the effect of the judgment will be thorough, not a slow process, nor repeated acts of vengeance. And to insinuate that an outpouring of wrath from above on the gathered hosts of the west is “carnal warfare” is to my mind bolder than becomes a man with God’s word.

Ben Ezra (i.e., Lacunza) seems to think almost all interpreters of Scripture regard the prophecy of the little stone as fully accomplished in Christ’s incarnation and cross, and the mountain in the Christian Church (vol. I, pp. 146-147). But this is not so. Probably most Latins follow Jerome, who was himself led away by Origen’s allegorizing; and beyond doubt a more decidedly non-natural explanation can hardly be conceived. But Hippolytus applies the fall of the stone to Christ’s judgment at his second advent; and so does even Theodoret (in Dan. c. ii.). The latter reasons elaborately against the supposition that the
fifth empire is in progress.

But if they say that the former presence of the Lord is signified by these words, let them show the empire of the Romans destroyed immediately after the appearing of our Savior; for quite contrariwise, one may find it in full vigor, not subverted, at the birth of the Savior... If, therefore, that former event, the Lord’s nativity, did not destroy the Roman empire, it remains that we should understand His second appearing.

There appears to be some confusion in what follows from the good Bishop of Cyrus; for it is evident that the expansion of the stone into a mountain that filled the whole earth was after the execution of judgment on the Roman empire in its final divided state. Crushing, and destroying, too, not saving, is the character of the stone’s action from the first, as here depicted; and that is not grace, but judgment. To call judgment “carnal” is a sin as well as an error.

Rom. 8:19-25 clearly leads us to the same conclusion. It is a question neither of this age nor of eternity, but of the intervening millennium. Preaching, profession, or even the real faith of saints, will not deliver the creature from that vanity to which it has been made subject since the fall. The pouring out of the Pentecostal Spirit left it as a whole groaning and travelling in pain together as before. Even the Christians who have the first fruits of the Spirit groan as they wait, not for more of the same kind to meet their need, but for the redemption of the body, when the longing of the creature shall be gratified with the revelation of the sons of God; thereon follows its own deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. We, a new creation in Christ, stand in the liberty of grace now; then the creature itself, the still captive earth, shall enjoy the liberty of glory. How will this be brought about? If the deliverance of the creature depends on the manifestation of God’s sons, the answer is certain. It is not in this age; for, all through, our life is hid with Christ in God. It cannot be in eternity; for this will not be till the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. It is between the two, as we have said already.

“Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6). Assuredly this, too, can only refer to the millennium, not to the present time, nor to eternity. Not to the present; because we are called to suffer now, not to reign. Not to eternity; because there will be no world to judge then. “The Kingdom,” i.e., the special kingdom, whether of Christ or of those who, having suffered with Him, shall also reign together with Him, will have terminated; though in another sense all saints, millennial or ante-millennial, shall for ever reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

Again, God has made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Himself for the administration of the fullness of the time. And what is this purpose of His? To gather together (or head up) in one all things in Christ, both those in heaven and those in earth; in Him in whom we have also obtained an inheritance (Eph. 1:9-11). This is millennial, and as distinctly marked off from the present time as from eternity. The eternal state will be no such display of Christ’s headship, with His associated bride over all things, but the delivery to the Father of that displayed supremacy, that God -- Father, Son, and Holy Ghost -- may be all in all. And as to the present, what can be in more evident contrast, whether in good or evil? Judaism, Heathenism, Mohametanism, Popery, sectarianism, worldliness, ritualism, rationalism, rampant in Christendom: is all this God’s purpose? Is this the heading up of all things in Christ? Even if we look only at that which is good, it is a good of quite another complexion and aim; for God is now gathering out a people for His name, forming His elect from Jews and Gentiles into one body, not gathering all the universe under the headship of Christ. Clearly, therefore, as it falls in with the characteristics neither of this age nor of eternity, the Scripture cited must refer to the blessed millennial days, when Jehovah-Jesus shall be not only king over all the earth, but head of all things heavenly and earthly, the Church being united and reigning over all with Him.

Observe, too, that the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks both of the time and of the sphere of the millennium as “to come,” and manifestly is the mark of distinction both from the present and from eternity. For the inspired writer designates the miraculous displays which were signs to unbelievers in the earthly days of the Gospel, as “powers of the age to come,” i.e., partial testimonies of that energy which will characterize the future age, when Jehovah shall not more truly forgive all iniquities than heal all diseases, and the creature shall be set free and joyful (Psa. 96-97), instead of groaning in bondage as now. And as this is a defined future age (μελλόν ταξιωμ) so the theater of it is designated in Heb. 2:5, the world, or the habitable earth to come (ἡμέρες ἡμῶν καὶ ἡμέρες θεοῦ), a description which, as it is expressly not the present, so it is inapplicable to eternity.

Another remark, too, it may be well to make, that of the three Scriptures which speak of universal blessedness and glory for the earth, none connects it with the preached Gospel, all with divine judgment. Thus in Num. 14:21 is the first mention of this purpose of the Lord, after Israel had betrayed the apostasy of their hearts, when the Lord pardoned according to the intercession of Moses, but pronounced judgment on all that provoked Him by their unbelief. A remnant was saved then, and so it will be at the end of this age. Isa. 11 is the second, where the picture of millennial blessedness; and in this the earth is full of the knowledge of Jehovah, is prefaced by the Lord smiting the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips slaying the wicked. The judicial act [by Christ] the Apostle Paul (2 Thess. 2:8) explains to be the manifestation of Christ’s presence, which does not convert sinners but destroys the man of sin, in order to His millennial reign. The third and last case is Hab. 2:14, where it is evident that the filling of the earth with the knowledge of Jehovah’s glory is in no way the fruit of people laboring for love or vanity, but of God’s mighty intervention for His own glory, when the proud head of nations shall be brought to nought.

Thus all is uniform in Scripture, and as no passage attributes the great change for the world to that which is now entrusted to man, so all Scripture show that the saints will be taken to heaven, that men on earth will be judged, and that the days of heaven on earth will follow to the praise of the Lord alone.
Part 2, Chapter 4

Millennial Revival
of Jewish Peculiarities

It is thought strange that any Christians should agree with Jews in their views of Old Testament prophecies, and look for a rebuilt temple, a re-established priesthood, restored sacrifices, and an Israelitish supremacy. But Dr. Brown misstates both Scripture and ecclesiastical history in his zeal against such convictions.

What our risen Lord corrected (Acts 1) was not the expectation of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, but the expectation of it “at this time.” Rather does He confirm the apostles in it, while intimating that it was not theirs to know times and seasons which the Father put in His own power. That element was not expelled from their minds wholly or in part, but shown to be reserved in the Father’s hands. Another work was about to proceed, not Israelitish supremacy yet, but a witness to the dead and risen Jesus in the power of the Spirit both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Their error was not so much in the thing itself as in the time, just as on the last journey He added a parable because He was near Jerusalem, and they thought the king would immediately appear. The parable, then, like the answer before the ascension, corrects their haste, but maintains instead of combating their expectancy of the kingdom. “He said, therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.” Then we have the immediate work, not the kingdom received, and his return; but the servants entrusted with the money began then to trade with it meanwhile till he came. And lastly he comes back, having received the kingdom. They were only premature, not wholly wrong, and the Lord did not set aside, but only postponed the expectation derived from the prophets, which He never denied, though He did reveal what would intervene between His glory on high and His return. The popular view of Christendom, as usual, is ignorance, even of the New Testament, which it employs to set aside the hopes of the Old Testament. Again, it is quite incorrect that any question of restoring the kingdom to Israel agitated the saints in Galatia or at Colosse. It was a wholly contrary principle, and decidedly akin to the ordinary view of Christendom, viz., bringing Christians now under the law or Jewish ordinances.

To hold fast Jewish expectations for Israel to be restored at Christ’s second advent is a main means of preserving Christianity distinct and uncontaminated by Judaism; and thus the apostle ever fought against those who would Judaize now. The heresies of Cerinthus or others who grossly Judaized in early days were the result of carrying out these errors to the full. None of them held Christianity pure and simple for the church now, the restored kingdom for Israel by and by, but jumbled all together to the degradation of our own position and hopes, and the defrauding of Israel; and Christendom, in general, is fallen into the same error in principle, though less offensively in form, and with better views (thank God) of Christ and His work. Even the orthodox premillennialists of the second and third centuries missed heavenly truth, as they failed to see the future restoration of Israel to their land, and the promises then to be accomplished in them nationally. The overwhelming majority of Christians (or at least of professing Christians) rejects not only premillennialism but the restoration of Israel to their land, as to which Dr. B., strange to say, agrees with us against the mass alike of ancients and moderns.

There is no ground to expect new revelations, but the fulfillment of old prophecies is another matter. According to these predictions, the world to come will be blessed under Messiah and the new covenant. Christians will then be on high, and the gospel, as it is or ought to be now preached, will have done its work here below. Where lies the difficulty? It is hard to see. That all nations shall flow to the religious center of the millennial age, the mountain of Jehovah’s house in Jerusalem, that the Canaanites shall no more be in His house, that no uncircumcised stranger shall enter into His sanctuary, are all true and consistent. So in Mal. 1:11, Jehovah’s name shall be great among the Gentiles, &c. If they contradict each other, to take them figuratively would not really reconcile them; but there is no discrepancy whatever. Objections of this sort are hardly better than cavil, which, even if we could not solve them at all, cannot and ought not to bring to nought the overwhelming force of the positive evidence.
Part 2, Chapters 5 and 6

Millennial Coexistence of Earthly and Heavenly Things

The great defect of Dr. Brown’s reasoning here, as elsewhere, is the assumption that things are to abide essentially as they are now till the eternal state closes the present. This is unequivocally to ignore Scripture, which speaks of the age to come in contradistinction to that which now is, as of course before eternity. It is in vain to take advantage of those who ignorantly mix up the heavenly and the earthly, and to break forth into the exaggerated cry -- “What a mongrel state! What an abhorred mixture of things totally inconsistent with each other!” The millennium differs from all that has been. The transfiguration was but a partial and passing sample. Jos. Perry’s desertion of his friends for the opposite view here will avail little against Scripture. Take John 17:22-23, and compare with it Eph. 1:10-12, and Rev. 21:9-27. Are not the glorified saints, made perfect in one, to be a proof to the world that the Father sent the Son, and loved the saints as He loved Christ? How deny it when they appear in the same glory? In what condition will “the world” be? Is not this the display of the glorified to men in flesh? And when can this be save in the millennium? Will there be “the world” in the eternal state to know anything of the sort?

The effort to make the Millennium a mere extension of present blessing, more converts, &c., with “not one(!)” element in it that has not been already realized, needs no refutation to those who accept what has been before us. The question is not one of salvation but of God’s ways in the government of the world. The end of the age is when the Son of Man takes (not, gives up) the kingdom, and, having received it, returns. He will then judge the habitable earth (ὁικομένην, Acts 17), as He will judge the dead before He gives up the kingdom.

Eph. 2:14-19, and John 4:21-23 apply solely to Christians now since redemption, and neither to believers before Christ, nor to those of the Millennium. Isa. 2:2-3, Mic. 4, and Zech. 14 are equally explicit as to a wholly different order, accompanied by marks which are certainly not seen under Christianity. When the prophets are fulfilled, Christ will be judging among the peoples, and nations shall learn war no more; and Israel shall be restored to their land, and the Gentiles shall be thoroughly humbled. You cannot safely Christianize Judaism any more than Judaize Christianity. Distinguish this age from that which is to come, as Scripture does, and those objections vanish; confound them, and you have the main source of Christendom’s ruin, and the chief mischief of Dr. Brown’s work, because it denies the distinction, place, and responsibility, both of the Christian now, and of the Jew by-and-by.

One evident consequence is, that those who deny the revival of Jewish pre-eminence in the millennium find themselves hopelessly dumb in presence of such scriptures as the closing chapters of Ezekiel; and the efforts after the figurative makes the late Duke of Manchester the ally, so far, of Dr. Brown, blending thus in one vague company the upholders and the deniers of Israel’s national hope. Such is the effect of error. The strongest evidence has been already adduced to prove that the condition which the prophet depicts is the most striking contrast with the Christian state. If it was only the absence of Pentecost, when the feasts shall be once more celebrated by restored Israel, how distinctive of their future, as compared with their past (or with our present) of which that feast is the standing type!
Part 2, Chapter 7

Millennial Binding of Satan

This popular scheme not only eliminates the presence of the Lord from the coming age, but explains away the exclusion of Satan. It is asked,

If the expectation of an entire cessation of Satanic influence be indeed Scriptural, how come it to pass that no mention is made of it -- not so much as a hint given of it in all Scripture, but in this solitary passage (Rev. 21:3, 7), in a book, the import of whose symbols has divided the Church to this day.

I answer, first, that the unbelief seems to me deplorable which would reject a truth if it be but clearly revealed in this book of Scripture; and there are as plain revelations here as in any other part of the Bible, as is manifest from the hold which numerous portions take of the simplest believers throughout Christendom. But, secondly, it is a mistake that no hint is given elsewhere of the same truth.

Isa. 24:26 declares the humiliation in the day of Jehovah, which awaits the powers that govern men, both unseen and seen. He shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth (for this is the true sense, which the authorized version obscures and enfeebles). The next verse intimates that it is not their final judgment, but a setting aside from their mischievous influence “in that day,” after which they shall be dealt with (and as we know from the Revelation, not for a limited time, but for eternity). “And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited.” Thus all are in due season and place. The Jewish prophet reveals what was bound up with the deliverance of earth and Israel with the nations. The final Christian prophecy lets us into the link of the future age with eternity. Even Dr. B. confesses as perfectly possible that the general idea expressed by Isaiah is symbolically developed by St. John. It is a superficial thought that this is no part of the putting aside of Satan’s power, or a shift to which he who believes it is reduced.

Isa. 27:1 may be compared, “In that day the LORD, with his sore, and great, and strong sword, shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea.” Granted that the language is figurative; but what do the figures mean but the destruction of Satan’s power among men in a way quite unprecedented? Only, of course, the latest revelation must be heard, explaining the figures supplied in the earlier communication.

It is only the New Testament, which, revealing the Trinity, also develops the truth as to the world, the flesh, and the devil. In the Old Testament the full character of them is comparatively in the dark. Nevertheless enough is revealed from the first to indicate their presence and action, though not yet detected as they were when Christ manifested them in the power of His Spirit. The Old Testament shows him (save in the earliest temptation, as the Serpent) rather as an adversary, an accuser in nature, &c. (1 Chron. 21; Job 1, 2; Psa. 109; Zech. 3). The New Testament shows this enemy as the Prince of the power of the air, and lord of this world, and everywhere supposes their approaching downfall. “Art thou come to destroy us?” says the man with an unclean spirit (Mark 1). “Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?” say the two demoniacs from the country of the Gergesenes (Matt. 8). “And they besought him (says Luke 8:31) that he would not command them to go out into the deep” (τὴν ἀβυσσόν, the bottomless pit). The time was not yet come; but the demons had the presentiment before them. The word of God had sentenced them long ago. Christianity, as such, had yet to be brought in; and in appearance Satan acquired greater power than ever by the death of Him who in that death really broke his power in God’s sight, however slowly and by stages the results of the victory may be manifested among men, and against the powers of evil. But Rom. 16 declared that the God of peace would bruise Satan under the feet of the saints shortly. That this does not take in each stage of his defeat, but only the final act, is more than any man should say. The casting out of demons by the disciples was to our Lord the keynote of the last triumphal song (Luke 10:17-19). But Eph. 6:12 is explicit that, whatever the victory before God which faith even now knows in the cross (Heb. 2:14), the Christian has still to struggle against principalities, against powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual [hosts] of wickedness in the heavenlies. Other allusions in the Epistles are familiar. And most appropriately, in the last book of the New Testament, which presents the windup of time and the eternal scene, the Spirit indicates the successive applications of power to the overthrow of the devil. First, he and his angels are cast down from heaven to earth -- not by spiritual energy of faith in the heart, but by angelic ministration (Rev. 12). Next, he is effectually shut out, even from the earth, in the abyss, or bottomless pit, by angelic power, just before the
millennium (Rev. 20:1-3). Lastly, though allowed for a short space to emerge after the thousand years, and to deceive the nations then living in the four corners of the earth, it is but the eve of his final and everlasting perdition; for he is thereon cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where there is but torment unceasingly, and whence no being ever escapes (Rev. 20:10).

How do people meet this distinct testimony of God? On the plea that, as the fall of Satan in Rev. 12 meant paganism losing its influence in the Roman empire under Constantine, so the binding of Satan in the abyss for a thousand years meant the cause of Christ carrying it everywhere, and the Church never permitting the devil to gain an inch of ground over the world for that time (Brown, pp. 379-386). The grand mistake which vitiates the popular theory is that the work of grace is made everything, and thus the Scriptures that speak of the divine government of the world in the millennium are confounded with those that relate to the salvation of souls -- the coming age, with this age. It is not meant that God will cease to save man by grace on earth during the millennium; but the distinctive character and prime object of that age will be, not the gathering God’s children into one by the Spirit sent down from heaven, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, but divine power displayed in the Son of man’s putting down Satan, and reigning over the earth till all be subjected to Him, after which He surrenders the kingdom, that God may be all in all throughout eternity.

The principles Dr. B. here lays down are mistaken, and his reasoning of no force. He argues from 1 John 3:8-16, Heb. 2:14-15, and Rom. 16:20, that Satan’s presence and action are inseparably connected with man in his fallen state -- consequently, as Hengstenberg puts it, that death, sin, and Satan reign during the thousand years! Certainly the apostles, as well as the prophet Isaiah (11, 32, 35, 36) have taken pains to teach us the very reverse -- the prophet dwelling on earthly things, the apostles chiefly on the heavenly side. I do not deny analogies to the past and present in the Apocalyptic visions; but the moment you insist on the punctual fulfillment of such a prophecy as Rev. 12 in the Christianizing the empire under Constantine, the failure becomes manifest. It was not the spiritual victory of the saints, but Michael and his angels, that ejected the dragon and his angels from heaven. The brethren overcame him thus, while he was not cast down, and this is the warfare the Christian has to wage (Eph. 6). But a quite different war casts him out of heaven, not saints by faith, but angelic, by virtue of divine power, exercised judicially. When Rev. 12:8-9 is accomplished, the Christian warfare will have no more place here than Satan and his angels will have place on high. A total change will have occurred, and another testimony will be in progress on earth, Christians having been caught up on high. It would have been a strange issue of Constantine’s victory that the woman (who in this scheme means the Church) should thereon flee into the wilderness to escape the enemy’s rage. We could better understand triumph than flight, and that the high place, rather than the wilderness, should protect the people of God, as the fruit of such a victory, if here intended. It was a singular crisis to bring persecution on the woman when the Gospel had triumphed over Satan in his pagan tools. Dr. B. speaks of error flying before the truth; but his text shows us the woman flying from the face of the serpent. Is this the interpretation of Rev. 12 which is to inspire confidence in his view of Rev. 20?
Part 2: Chapter 8

Millennial Features and the “Little Season” that Follows

Dr. B. concedes somewhat more than the mass of postmillennialists; for he allows that the millennium will be characterized not only by the universal diffusion of revealed truth, by unlimited subjection to Christ, by universal peace, by much spiritual power and glory, by the ascendency of truth and righteousness in human affairs, by great temporal prosperity, but by the territorial restoration of the natural Israel then converted. So far there is nothing to contest, though there is much to desire, especially as to Christ Himself. The main divergence is the answer to the question how the millennium is to be brought in. The common notion is that it will be by means at present in operation, indefinitely increased, but not, as we believe, by the appearing and personal reign of Christ, judging the quick first, and finally the dead. The difference is immense in itself and in its results. A mistake here, though not fatal to faith in Christ, confuses all truth as to the ways of God, flatters Christendom instead of warning it, and lowers Christ as unduly as it exalts the dead. The difference is immense in itself and in its personal reign of Christ, judging the quick first, and finally the dead. The difference is immense in itself and in its results. A mistake here, though not fatal to faith in Christ, confuses all truth as to the ways of God, flatters Christendom instead of warning it, and lowers Christ as unduly as it exalts the Church while it is on earth. The moral effects are thus as disastrous for the soul as the error in interpretation darkens the mind to almost every part of the Bible. Nothing more directly tends to put new wine into old skins, to the ruin of both.

It is evident also that Dr. B.’s adherence to his former convictions, in the matter of Israel’s restoration nationally to their land, fits ill with his adoption of Whitby’s (or the common) hypothesis. For national conversion and restoration to a particular land does not savor of the gospel any more than temporal prosperity and universal peace or mere profession of the truth. And in fact the Apostle Paul contrasts, in Rom. 11, the future destiny of Israel with their lot now, while the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles. “As touching the gospel, they [the Jews] are enemies for your sakes [i.e., the Gentiles now grafted in], but, as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes.” When the fullness of the Gentiles is come in, their partial blindness will cease, and so all Israel shall be saved, not by their believing the gospel now preached and thus merging in Christianity, but by the coming of the Deliverer out of Zion, who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And if their casting away was the reconciling of the world [as now under the gospel], what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? There the Lord, “reversing all His former methods,” will not merely deal with a chosen people, calling out the Church to the faith of His cross and heavenly glory, in spite of Satan seemingly more than ever paramount, but He, with His glorified saints, will come and expel the enemy, and not without judgments establish His ancient and now repentant people, filling the glad earth, which as yet groans, with the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. All Scripture, of Old and New Testament alike, looks on to this mighty change, while it attests the faithfulness of God in the meantime, whatever the sorrow and shame through the allowed power of Satan till that day. But manifestly the distinction from the Gentile of the Jew, blessed as a nation in their own land, is precisely what cannot be under the gospel, which shows it now blotted out entirely, for God is making Jew and Gentile who believe one new man, and building them together for His habitation through the Spirit (Eph. 2). The millennium will behold wholly different conditions.

It is easy to see that almost all his proofs point to another system, not the gospel. Thus Isa. 11 supposes a divine smiting of the wicked or lawless one; and this Paul binds indissolubly with the appearing of Christ’s presence, not a mere providential event in His absence (2 Thess. 2:8). So Isa. 25:7 is surrounded by divine judgment, and the resurrection of the saints (cp. 1 Cor. 15) as the circumstances and means of “that day’s” deliverance. Again, Psa. 2 supposes the execution of judgment by our Lord, and (according to Rev. 2:26-27) by the glorified saints with Him. Isa. 2 is in contrast with the gospel, which goes out to all nations, not all nations flocking to Jerusalem, v. 4 being the very reverse of what the Lord declares shall be in this age till the end come (Matt. 24:7-14). So binding is this scheme, that the gospel is regarded as “the rod of Christ’s strength!” Now, if any intelligent Christian will only examine Psa. 110, he cannot but see that the first verse, Christ’s session at Jehovah’s right hand, is while the gospel goes forth; whereas, in Psa. 110:2, the sending forth of Christ’s rod out of Zion is when the time comes to rule in the midst of His enemies, not converting them into His friends and forming them for heaven. Being a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek, He will of course be of that order then, as He is now: indeed then He will exercise it fully, and be displayed as such. But then only, and not now, He will strike through kings, because it will be the day of His wrath; whereas now it is the day of His grace, when the gospel is
being preached to every creature. It is extraordinary that a sensible man should cite Isa. 64 and Zech. 14 for a similar purpose, seeing that both open with the execution of unprecedented judgments when the Lord shall come with His saints and plead with all flesh by fire and sword, and cleave Mount Olivet as the standing witness that the returning King of Israel is Jehovah the Creator. The blessing here is after this: but is the gospel?

Dr. B. thinks there will be declension in the millennium. Though there be no distinct proof, analogy is certainly in favor of the thought, which appears to be confirmed by the typical teaching in Numbers. But there is no real support of the notion that this “little season” may extend through one, two, or three centuries. However, this is so purely speculation as not to deserve further notice. But the last gathering to war of Gog and Magog has nothing in common with Luke 18 and 17:20-30, 1 Thess. 5:2-3, and 2 Peter 3:3-4. Good and evil are entirely apart in Rev. 20, whereas in the other passages they are mingled as now till judgment falls. Nor is there any coming of Christ in their case; but “that day” spans over the millennium and the space beyond, so as to embrace all judgment of quick and dead within the kingdom. There is no coming for the great white throne, because the Lord had come to reign more than a thousand years before. All the dead who had not shared in the first resurrection go and stand before Him to be judged according to their works, and are accordingly consigned to the lake of fire. On the other hand, the righteous enjoy the new heavens and new earth for ever, reigning in life by one, Jesus Christ, spite of the surrender of the kingdom to God as we are told in 1 Cor. 15:24.
Part 3

Objections

2 Thess. 2:1-8. An effort is made to parry this witness, which the late M. Faber, followed by Dr. B., regard, as in their judgment, “the only apparent evidence for the premillennial advent.” The statement of the case is very inexact. It is not true that what excited and unsettled the Thessalonians was the time of Christ’s second personal advent, but the false representation that the day of the Lord was come ἐνέστηκεν. Nor is the express subject of discourse the second personal “coming” of our Lord, but a disproof of the error about the “day” which had alarmed them.

The apostle beseeches them, by a motive drawn from their bright hope of Christ’s presence and their gathering to Him, not to be shaken by the rumor about the day of the Lord. Then he proceeds to show the impossibility of that day arriving before the well-known apostasy was developed, and the manifestation of the man of sin, which evils are to be judged in the day of the Lord. The παρουσία and the ἡμέρα of the Lord are not only not identified as by Dr. B., but they are in contradistinction; for the former is used as a comfort to the Thessalonians, as well as a disproof of the rumor that the terrible day of the Lord was then present. The Thessalonians were persuaded by some (and the authority of a letter of the apostle was falsely alleged in support of it), that the day of the Lord was (not at hand or imminent, but) arrived, as pointed out in an early part of this book. They, teachers and taught, must have meant some such figurative sense as Dr. B. contends for; and there is no doubt that the Old Testament not unfrequently uses the phrase in this way, as for Babylonia, Egypt, &c., an earnest, it would seem, of its full force at the end of the age.

Now the apostle meets the error by showing them in 2 Thess. 1 that the day is not figurative but a real personal revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His mighty angels, taking vengeance in flaming fire on them that know not God, and on them that obey not the gospel. It is not His party triumphing by the gospel, nor a political overthrow of their adversaries, but a solemn retribution -- to the troubled tribulation. Then he assumes their remembrance of his first epistle, in which he had taught them both about the presence of the Lord to translate the saints to Himself on high, and about the day of the Lord with its sudden blow on the careless world. Hence he beseeches them by that joyful hope, not to be troubled by the pretended revelation that the day of the Lord was there; for this (not the presence of the Lord) could not be till the ripening of the predicted horrors which that day is to avenge. When the Lord does appear, the saints appear with Him, instead of being then caught up to Him. Hence the apostle discriminates, and as he was inspired to connect our gathering together to the Lord with His presence, so he links the judgment of the man of sin with the manifestation of His presence. Compare 2 Thess. 2:1 with v. 8. The result is, then, that while all agree that the presence of the Lord in v. 1 is personal, v. 8, far from being some previous and preparatory figure, is a subsequent state of His advent, and means, not merely His presence in order to gather to Himself above those who look for Him, but the appearing or epiphany of His presence, when He destroys the lawless enemy or Antichrist of the last days of this age. Nowhere does Daniel attribute his destruction to the church, nor does any Scripture attribute it to the truth, as Dr. B. alleges without the smallest reason.

Matt. 24: 29-31. The assertion is, that the direct and primary sense of the prophecy is Christ’s coming in judgment against Jerusalem; and that this is decided by v. 34. I ask Dr. B. to compare with this Luke 21, where he will see that the Lord, as there represented, brings in the times of the Gentiles not yet run out after the destruction by the Romans, and His own advent after those times, and not till then says, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled. Will any man stand to such a sense of the prophecy, and to claim for it our Lord’s decision? Joel 2 refers to the same great event, but, though accomplished in part, it is not fulfilled yet any more than Mal. 4.

Rev. 19:11-21 (pp. 442-446). Dr. B. thinks the “detail” is the very thing which proves! it not to be the personal coming of Christ, and contrasts the passage with Matt. 16:27; Heb. 9:28; 2 Thess. 1; Col. 3; Titus 2; and even Rev. 1. Can reasoning be less solid? Doctrinal use or allusion in a few words proves that a prophetic book cannot mean the greatest event of prophecy, because this gives details, the other texts not! Where could detail be revealed with such propriety as in Rev., and surely in the visions rather than in the mere preface of the book? It is in vain, I would add, to found an argument on ἄνθρωπον (Rev. 20:11), as if it involved the idea of Christ’s presence then. The word which would warrant such an inference would be παρουσία. “From whose face” applies wherever Christ may be, whether He come again to the earth, or the earth and the heaven flee away from before Him as is expressly said in this very clause. It remains then that postmillennialism is a dream, and that Christ’s appearing is blotted out from Rev. 19 where God reveals it, and put in where the nature of the case (Rev. 20:11) excludes it. Can there be more palpable insubjection to scripture or love of a tradition that makes void the word of
God? Matt. 25:31-36, with which the close of Rev. 20 is identified, is exclusively a judgment of the living nations when He comes again; Rev. 20:11-15 is the final judgment of the dead who did not rise to reign with Christ. Can contrast be more definite and certain?

**Rev. 5:10.** Dr. B. understands the future reign on (or over) the earth as relating to the ultimate triumphs of Christ’s cause upon earth during the present state (the vicious thought that everywhere pervades his book), more than to the glorified condition of the saints (pp. 446-447). Is refutation called for? The passage proves that not even the redeemed in heaven are yet (at the point of the Apocalypse referred to) reigning over the earth. They are to reign with Christ, as all scripture shows; and this, as the book elsewhere proves, is the result of His coming when they are risen, and He has received the kingdom. A triumph of the church on earth during the present state is contrary to scripture. The apostasy, not a reign of Christendom, and then the man of sin revealed, precede His presence in judgment or the day of the Lord.

**Matt. 19:28.** No wonder Dr. B. does not object to vague and incorrect statements of the case which confound the millennium with the eternal state of which Rev. 21:5 treats. But a little consideration suffices to demonstrate that the fulfillment of the Lord’s assurance to the apostles is in “the kingdom,” in the millennial age, and neither before nor after it. For “the regeneration” is expressly said to be when the Son of man shall sit on His throne of glory. Now assuredly this is when He comes, not before the second advent, nor when heaven and earth flee away before His face as He sits on a wholly different throne, the great white throne for judging the dead (not the twelve tribes of Israel). There are none said to be assessors with Christ in that eternal judgment of the dead. Not even Dr. B. contends that “the regeneration” is a picture applicable during the present state, when Christ is not come but seated on His Father’s throne (Rev. 3:21): will he argue that during the eternal state there can be an apostolic royal judgment of the twelve tribes of Israel? If it be neither, the millennium is the sole alternative that remains; and if it be so, in what condition but a glorified one can the apostles thus judge Israel? Or are the judges and the judged to be both explained away?

**Heb. 4:9,** the Sabbath-keeping of glory is the last objection Dr. B. discusses at length. I have no care to interpose on behalf of the seventh millenary as the sabbatism of the apostle; but the notion of Calvin, which Dr. B. endorses, that it is a question of the present rest, which is the portion of believers in Jesus, seems to me clean contrary to the scope of the chapter. We are called to fear and to labor now; we are in the wilderness still, and are only on our way to the rest of God. We who have believed enter, but we are not yet entered into the rest. We have already entered into rest in Jesus, as to which we do not fear, nor do we labor. But we do fear settling down when we ought to be marching on, lest, a promise being left of entering into God’s rest (i.e. in glory), any of us should seem to have come short of it. It is not time yet for the believer to rest from his works, but to use diligence to enter into that blessed rest, which is not arrived but remains, for the people of God. Postmillennialism, here as everywhere hinders intelligence of the scriptures.

My task is closed. I believe I have answered fairly and conclusively, if scripture be really our standard, the arguments of Dr. Brown. How far the answer is satisfactory to him or to those who share the popular view of a postmillennial advent of Christ must rest with their consciences now. The day hastens which will declare the truth to all who have not already ascertained it with certainty from the word of God. May He bless by the power of His spirit His own revelation to the praise of the name of Jesus.
On the Millennium.

A Review of the Late Bishop of Lincoln’s Two Lectures

Having examined fully Bp. Hall’s *Revelation Unrevealed*, let me now test Dr. Chr. Wordsworth’s *Two Lectures*. But it is important to remark that the term “Millennium” tends to narrow unduly the scriptural evidence. Rev. 20 is undoubtedly the ground for defining the time. This, however important in its place (and it is just the place for it), is quite subordinate. The doctrine of a displayed kingdom, which the Lord Jesus is to establish in power and glory over all the earth and all the nations, with Israel and hence Jerusalem as His center here below, is revealed in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets; it reappears in the Gospels, and is dogmatically laid down in the Epistles, which assure us who now believe of “some better thing.” For we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavens with [in is the correct word] Christ (Eph. 1:3) already exalted there at God’s right hand. But this only helps those who search the scriptures, to the quite distinct truth of the first dominion, the kingdom, coming to the daughter of Zion, as Micah says with a crowd of others, when the Judge of Israel is no longer rejected by her as now, but owned as Lord in His eternal majesty. The proofs will be given abundantly from the Bible throughout. How long this kingdom will last is defined in Rev. 20:4; but the general truth has the amplest evidence.

The doctrine imputed to those who assuredly believe in the Millennium, p. 2, is stated incorrectly. “The first resurrection” includes the general mass of the risen saints, as given in the opening clause of Rev. 20:4:

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them.

These were the armies which were in heaven and followed the Faithful and True when He comes forth to execute judgment (Rev. 19:11-16), clad in white pure fine linen or byssus, expressly explained in v. 8 as the righteousnesses of saints (cf. Rev. 17:14). They were already risen and glorified like their Master. Not so the two classes that follow which were till now in the disembodied state. Therefore we read at this point, “and the souls of those beheaded on account of the testimony of Jesus and on account of the word of God”: a description exactly answering to the early martyrs of the Apocalyptic prophecy (Rev. 6:9), who cried for vindication, and to whom it was said, “that they should rest yet for a time (i.e. in the separate condition) till both their fellow-servants and their brethren, who were about to be killed as they, should be fulfilled” (v. 11). Here accordingly, and connected especially with these sufferers, we find the later martyrs of the prophecy, “and those who [with a different construction to mark the distinct classes] did not homage to the beast nor to his image, and received not the mark on their forehead and hand,” of whom we read in Rev. 13, 14, 15.

As to all this the late Bp. was as unenlightened as Bps. Andrewes and Hall, or the ancient expositors who misled them. Neither Andreas nor Arethas, nor Primasius nor Bede, any more than Origen or Eusebius, Augustine or Jerome, understood the scope of the Revelation or the prophetic word in general. Nor did the Reformers any better, Luther, &c., Calvin, &c.; nor the Anglicans, nor the Presbyterians of Great Britain. The early ecclesiastical writers, whose remains we have, betray rapid and grave departure from the truth. In no subject do they manifest it more than touching the heavenly associations of the Christian and the church. They claim the Jewish hope after a mystical sort. Hence they deny that restoration of Israel to their land under the Messiah and the new covenant, which remains for the Jew in God’s mercy, quite distinct from the far more glorious things reserved for us who anticipate them.

Again, risen saints do not reign “on earth,” as the old Chiliasts taught (Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, Tertullian and Lactantius, &c.), but over it: an error which exposed them, both to much mistake on their own part, and to attacks of men like Dionysius of Alexandria and others who followed in his wake. Further, what deplorable ignorance to speak of Satan gathering the nations to battle, “in order to war with Christ and His church?” What is written in Rev. 20:9 is the very different statement that “they went up on the breadth of the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city.” That is, the postmillennial insurrection from all quarters of the earth under Satan is to be directed against the saints, who will flock to the land that surrounds Jerusalem, and form an immense “camp” round “the beloved city”; for then indeed is Zion Hephzibah and the land Beulah. The church is not in question. It is an earthly scene.

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From Rev. 12 Satan has no place in heaven.

Further, Rev. 20 does not reveal “the universal judgment,” but expressly the judgment of the wicked dead, small and great, raised for this purpose, set before the great White Throne, and consigned to the lake of fire which is the second death, in contrast with the righteous who shared the first resurrection and reign with Christ, more than a thousand years before that judgment. Here, Dr. W., with the theologians ancient and modern, is directly at issue with the uniform doctrine of scripture, which never teaches such a judgment, but denies it for those who believe. What can be plainer than our Lord’s own words in John 5:24? No doubt the A. V. disguises this fundamental truth of the gospel: for it confounds ἐκλήσιας with κατάκριμα, and hence insinuates that the believer may come into ἐκλήσιας or “judgment,” though to be saved from “condemnation”. But this is to misinterpret scripture according to tradition, not to receive it from God as he revealed the truth. Even the R. V. leaves such an error without a plea.

The entire context makes the truth so plain that there is no excuse for unbelief. For the Lord shows that, founded on His person, the Son of God and Son of man, are two functions. As Son of God He gives life; as Son of man all judgment is given to Him. The veil of flesh gave occasion for man to disbelieve and dishonor Him. It is therefore as Son of man He will judge those who do not believe in Him, the Son of God. He who hears Christ’s word and believes Him that sent Him has life eternal and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. For it is now an hour when the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. But the unbeliever who dishonors the Son by denying His glory, and consequently does not receive life in Him cannot escape the judgment which the Father has given to Him, that all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. This the believer does now, and therefore has life instead of coming into judgment. He hears His word and receives God’s testimony to Him Who is the true God and eternal life. Judgment is to secure the honor of the Son in those who despise and reject Him now; whereas the believer, having life eternal, lives to honor Him henceforth and for ever. They were not to wonder at this; for an hour is coming (in distinction from that which “now is”) in which all that are in the tombs (it is the body therefore) shall hear His voice and shall go forth: those that produced good, unto a resurrection of life; those that did evil, unto a resurrection of judgment. Thus, if we, hear Christ’s word, we know that there is no universal judgment, but, as certainly as divine truth can make it, two contrasted resurrections: the one of life for the body on behalf of those who, having life eternal in their souls, produced good things; the other of judgment, because, having refused the Son of God now Who is life, they did only evil things of their own corrupt nature. Their judgment is indeed just, as the salvation of the believer is of grace which fails not.

With the doctrine in the Gospel of John the Revelation entirely harmonizes. For in Rev. 20 we have quite clearly a resurrection of life for those who were blessed and holy, and just as plainly a resurrection for the wicked over whom the second death has power. And the Son of man is He Who, as He gave life to the saints, will judge the wicked who had no part in the first resurrection, as they existed only to dishonor Him and do those evil works which come up in that solemn and everlasting judgment.

We shall all be placed before the judgment-seat of God; and each of us shall give an account concerning himself to God (Rom. 14). We must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done by the body, according to what he did, whether good or evil (2 Cor. 5:10). Not a word in either scripture teaches that it will be at the same epoch, a mistake drawn from not seeing that the judgment of all the nations is of living men on the earth when the Son of man shall appear in His glory (Matt. 25:31). But these inspired declarations on the one hand carefully avoid weakening the blessed assurance that the believer is by grace exempted from judgment, which Christ bore for him on the cross that he might not bear it; while on the other there will be a complete manifestation of ourselves and of all done in the body, which takes the awful form of judgment for him who rejected Christ and His cross. Each shall give account of himself to God; but the unbeliever must suffer for his sins, because he despised the Son of God and His propitiation which alone annuls them before God.

It is really a question of honoring the Son and hearing His word, and of faith in His work as well as His person. He who receives the truth in its simplicity and fullness as God revealed it avoids the traditional error of a promiscuous or Universal Judgment; which is real heterodoxy as to the gospel, mixes up believers and unbelievers in a way abhorrent to the truth, and plunges souls into doubts and anxieties so that they are often constrained in unbelief to ask, Am I His, or am I not? Dr. W. raised the question as to Rev. 20, with too much confidence in himself and in other men; but it goes far deeper, and the true answer proves how little that able, learned, and pious man, entered into the truth of the gospel itself. But we may see a good deal more before having done with his pamphlet, of which we here notice not quite a page.

Nobody among the many writers on prophecy who have passed before me, ancient or modern, regards the Apocalypse as absolutely continuous chronologically. On the other hand no writer of worth denies that there is continuity in the main. This is quite independent of the view taken of Rev. 20, though of course it falls under the general plan. Assumption or theory cannot decide such a question but internal evidence. There are here, as in other books of the kind, landmarks given by the inspiring Spirit which no one can slight without loss. Inattention to its structure has made vain the attempt of many, of old as at this day, to elucidate its bearing as a whole yet more than in detail.

The co-ordinate hypothesis (p. 3), for instance, is evidently and utterly inapplicable to the two marked series which ran through the prophecy in what may be called its
first part, Rev. 6-11. Within themselves the Seals and the Trumpets, as well as the Vials or Bowls in the second part of the book which begins with Rev. 12, bear the seal of consecutiveness on their face. What can be more absurd than to doubt, in a carefully numbered sequence, that the first is before the second, the second before the third, and so on, not in revelation only but in accomplishment? Some have been hardy enough to even question this relative order which is so natural and manifest; but their reasons are as baseless as their scheme refutes itself. The only semblance of difficulty perhaps is in the Seals; but even there, how untenable is the denial! It is the Bishop's assumption (page 4), with many another premillennial as well as postmillennial.

Upon the Epistles to the seven Churches in Asia he first of all argues; but what is said there proves nothing but limited acquaintance with the subject, and an illogical character of mind.

They [the Ancient Expositors] did not imagine that the Epistles to the Asiatic churches, in the second and third chapters of the Apocalypse, are to be limited to those seven churches; but, in their opinion, they are to be applied by a figurative expansion to the Christian churches of every age and country (pp. 3, 4).

This is transparently another question, distinct from the proper visions of things to come, in the book. But even here the order is not insignificant. Can anything be less reasonable than to displace their relative position or to deny that, prophetically applied, Ephesus is the first and Laodicea the last? Their “figurative expansion” perfectly consists with their order, whether historical or prophetic.

It was mere fancy to say that

the period of seven Seals in the sixth chapter [it is really in the opening of Rev. 8] extends from Christ's Advent to the end of the time.

What has “silence in heaven for about half-an-hour” to do with eternity? Take it literally or allegorically, the seventh Seal can mean nothing of the sort. Probably it was the sixth Seal which ran in the good bishop's head, as with the “Ancient Expositors” whom he follows, though it is well to say plainly that no exposition of the book is known for several centuries. From none of the more distinguished Fathers have we an extant commentary; any which exist in Greek or Latin are of exceedingly little value.

Those who did write and remain seem to have led Dr. W. into the strange interpretation that the First Seal applies to Christ's Advent, and the Seventh to the end of time. Every part of that scheme is erroneous. The true scriptural figure of our Lord's work at His first Advent is “the sower going forth to sow”; three fourths of the seed failing, and even of the fourth which bore fruit, but a third arriving at perfection. How could a result so checkered and short answer to the archer on a white horse and a crown given him, who went forth “conquering and to conquer?” No room is left in such a symbol for “the apostasy” and “the man of sin,” which the apostle declares must be before the day when the Lord appears in glory. Again, there is a manifest analogy between the four horses of the earlier Seals. What more irreverent than to regard the Lord as one of God's infictions on the guilty world? or the first of them His victory in the gospel, followed by heterogeneous matters?

The Seals run connectedly as the dealings of God with man after “the things that are” {Rev. 1:19}, or the church state {Rev. 2, 3}. Then the Lamb opens the book that reveals the measures God takes with the rebellious to put Christ in possession of His promised inheritance {Rev. 5}.

On this view all is plain enough and consistent; whereas the extant early comments are as unintelligent as those of such as can only read now through their discolored spectacles. Tradition is hardly better than the poor stuff of rationalists. The world, not the church, is the object of the judgment set forth by the four horses {Rev. 6:1-8}. How preposterous to look for the gospel in the white horse or any other! Never is spiritual work set forth by a war-horse of any color, however apt a figure for aggressive power in good or evil.

Hence, as is well-known some who are the antipodes of the late Bp. of Lincoln strive to see in the first Seal Christ's second Advent in judgment! Abstractly this is less extraordinary than applying it to the gospel of grace. For in that day (Rev. 19) He will come forth from the opened heavens, the Faithful and True, on a white horse, with (not a mere chaplet, but) many diadems upon His head, clothed with a garment dipped in blood, and followed by the armies in heaven on white horses. How different from the first Seal! Instead of a bow, even out of His mouth goes a sharp two-edged sword to smite the nations, as He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. The points in contrast make the desired identification impossible.

What then, is the force? The first Seal really imports a time of conquest by prestige. The bow is enough. There is no carnage. It will be more truly than for Julius Caesar, “I came, I saw, I conquered.” The second or red horse is characteristic a time that follows of bloodshed, and probably of civil war: peace taken from the earth, “and that they should slay one another,” and hence a great sword is given; but in no way the sharp two-edged sword that proceeds out of His mouth in symbol, Who speaks and it is done. The third is the black of scarcity, which presses on the necessities rather than on the luxuries of life. The fourth is the pale horse of Death, and Hades following, when God's “sore plagues “ accumulate over the fourth part of the earth. But a salient part of the truth revealed is their sequence in this order and no other; which is upset by making the first Seal last, or coincident with the last.

As usual in the septenaries of the Revelation, the first four have a common bond, which the remaining three do not
share, though they too are connected, each following in due order as the Seals were broken successively. When the Lamb opened the fifth Seal, the prophet saw, not another horse and its rider, but the souls of martyrs for God’s word and their testimony “underneath the altar,” i.e. as if offered in sacrifice for the truth; approved of God now, but awaiting, for the time of public vindication, the completion of a further band of brethren who should be killed as they were.

Then is the sixth Seal, when not only a great earthquake ensues, but the governmental powers, sun, moon, and stars, are convulsed, and the stabl est institutions are smitten, and small and great of men are filled with dread of the Lamb’s wrath. They say in their alarm that His great day is come. God does not say so, but reveals that such is the thought and language of their fear: two very different things which many ancients and moderns confound in their shortsightedness. For how could the seventh Seal follow, if the sixth were really the end of man’s day, and the great day actually come? It is not so: an immensely important and awful sequel of apostate lawlessness plays its subsequent part, as the Revelation shows plainly, whether people understand or not; for all do not hear who have ears.

When the seventh Seal was opened (Rev. 8:1), there took place in heaven silence for about half-an-hour; and the seven angels that stood before God have seven Trumpets given them, while the high priest (viewed angelically, for under this series we have angels throughout) intercedes in answer to the prayers of all saints, but herewith the loud tokens of deepening judgment, which falls on the third part of the earth, as in the Trumpet series on the western or Roman earth. These accordingly do go down to the close, and the mystery of God is then finished, not before. The seventh Trumpet really announces the world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ as come, while the seventh Seal only ushers in the seven Trumpets after a brief pause. The seven Vials or Bowls on the other hand are made to indicate a special character of judgment before the end comes, in keeping with what we may call the second volume of the Apocalypse. Hence there is necessarily a slight retrogression in their case.

But there is another feature of moment not only to notice but to understand. In each of these three septenaries occurs at the same point a parenthesis, not in the regular course of Seals, Trumpets, and Vials, but apart yet connected with each series. It is uniformly inserted before the seventh takes its course. Thus Rev. 7 is the parenthesis before the seventh Seal is opened; as Rev. 10, 11:14 before the seventh Trumpet is blown; and Rev. 16:13-16 before the seventh Vial or Bowl is poured out. It is therefore unfounded to suppose any lack of symmetry or of order in the book.

Heavenly glory was already revealed for the elders in Rev. 4, 5. But Rev. 7, however glorious, does not describe this. There are two scenes in that anticipative parenthesis. One deals with the twelve tribes of Israel, out of whom God lets us not forget that a measured number is sealed for security from the storm of judgment anticipated even after the sixth Seal. The other gives us to see the blessed ways of grace which will have a countless crowd out of every nation and tribe, and peoples and tongues, who come “out of the great tribulation” which is before the age ends. These are to be before the throne of God, and to serve Him in His temple with the Lamb as their Shepherd. It is a pretty strong draught on credulity to confound either with the crowned and enthroned elders who really set forth in symbol the heavenly redeemed {Rev. 4}. Why not too distinguish the sealed Israelites from the palm-bearing Gentiles {Rev. 7}, who are both to enjoy the blessedness of the kingdom, when the Father’s will shall be done on earth as now in heaven, and all be administered above and below by the Lord Jesus to the glory of God?

Far is one from saying that there are no difficulties, for such as we are, in contemplating so boundless a scene. Certainly the prejudices, natural even more to Christendom as it is, hinder spiritual intelligence of the inspired word. But let believers own that the fault is in themselves, never in the scriptures which reflect alike the grace and the truth of God, Who, knowing all perfectly, has deigned to reveal to us the things to come. Let us recognize that what is written is the communication of the Lord; “if any be ignorant, let him be ignorant.” There is His word for us. It did not come out from a party: nor did it come to a party only, but to all the children of God {1 Cor. 14:36-38}. Let us not through unbelief be defrauded, nor defraud others, of so interesting and important a part of His gift and of our heritage.

It is unfounded then that the period of the Seals, in Rev. 6, “extends from Christ’s Advent to the end of time” (p. 4); it is at least equally so that “after the opening of the Seventh Seal St. John commences again at the initial point from which he had first proceeded.” Both series are expressly and in the plainest terms declared to be “the things which shall be” (Rev. 1:19), and “which must be (4:1), hereafter,” or (more definitely) after “the things which are,” the state comprised by the seven churches in Rev. 2, 3. The vision in Rev. 4, 5 is exclusively future, and must be accomplished before the Seals and the Trumpets can begin. The crowned and enthroned elders, &c., are in their due positions on high before a Seal is opened; and the Seals are all opened before the first Trumpet is blown. There is only a brief but solemn silence in heaven “about half-an-hour” between the first series and the second. What can exceed the monstrous interpretation of the ancient commentators, such as Victorinus and Tychonius, that this means the saints’ eternal rest? Yet this wild idea, which has not a shade even of plausible appearance to commend it, has prevailed from early days to our own. It is the less reasonable, as the same writers profess to see eternity in the palm-bearing Gentiles before the seventh Seal was opened. This too we have already noticed as a blunder, but at least intelligible if not intelligent: whereas their notion of the half hour’s silence, on any feasible principle, is neither. It is a marvel of credulity without reason and against scripture.
Nor is it true that, after the sounding of the seventh Trumpet, a return is made to “the first origin of the church” (ib.). For there is not a trace of “her history” beyond Rev. 2, 3. After that the symbol of the saints glorified is seen as the four-and-twenty elders in heaven {Rev. 4}, till this yields to that of the bride, the Lamb’s wife, when the due moment comes to present the bridals of the Lamb {Rev. 19}. What the Bp., with a crowd of predecessors calls the church (in Rev. 12) is really the symbol of Israel about to appear on the scene, mother of a Son, Male of might, Who is to shepherd all the nations with a rod of iron. Who this great personage is ought not to be inscrutable but most obvious. It is Christ, come of Israel according to flesh (as all know, and both Testaments witness), Head and Bridegroom of the church, not her Son, as perverse misinterpretation alleges. No! The Revelation clearly distinguishes the woman of Rev. 12 from her of Rev. 19, 21, 22. The church is the bride in this book (as the great world-church is the harlot); while the mother is Israel, seen in God’s purpose of glorious power as she is destined to in fact, but in sorrow before that time come. For also the dragon is invested with the form of the Roman empire to oppose and devour, so that she must again flee into the wilderness till the day dawn. There are undoubtedly in John’s Revelation, as in Paul’s Epistles; “some things hard to be understood, which the un instructed and unestablished John’s Revelation, as in Paul’s Epistles; “some things hard to be understood, which the un instructed and unestablished writers who differed in principle as an extreme allegorist, though he did not live to comment on the Revelation. From Constantine’s time indeed writers began to imagine, as it was not to be wondered at perhaps, a present millennium, though not all in the same sense. But it is unnecessary to speak of later Fathers, as I attach not the smallest authority to any of them, however early.

However this may be, the notion of the millennium advocated by the late bp. of Lincoln, no matter who held it, is in every respect absurd. What contempt of the Apocalyptic order to say that John “reascends once more” (p. 5)! What ignorance of Rev. 20 to fancy that it declares what Christ had done for the church since His incarnation? How He had bound Satan! though the N.T. is express throughout to the contrary. See 1 Cor. 5:5; 2 Cor. 2:11, 11:3, 12:7; Eph. 4:27, 6:12; 1 Thess. 3:18; 2 Thess. 2:2; 1 Tim. 1:20, 3:6, 7, 4:1, 5:15; James 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 John 4:1, 6; Rev. 2:9, 13, 24, 3:9, to say nothing of chaps. 9:11, 20, 12:17, 13:4, 16:13, 14, 19:20. Christ’s preservation of His servants in every age no believer contests. But the vision speaks of their reigning; whereas the N. T. reproves such a present thought as the practical folly of the Corinthians, and insists on the contrary that they must suffer now, until “that day.” Undoubtedly Christ has done His infinite work, and carries on His intercession and care in every suited and blessed way for us on high, till He appears the second time unto salvation. But this, or His calling to heavenly glory all that are true to Him, or His ordaining strength out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, what has it all to do with a saintly resurrection to reign with Him?

It is a miserable bathos to conclude, that “St. John shows in the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse that the failings, which had been described in such vivid colors in the
preceding Visions of this book -- under the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Vials, -- were due to themselves; and that all God's acts toward man are done in equity and love" (pp. 5, 6). A Jew might have said far more; a heathen almost as much. St. John showed this in Rev. 20! The only thing really shown is how utterly, with the one exception of Rev. 17, 18, Dr. Chris. W. misunderstood the book as a whole, and this chapter in particular: else he never could have conceived an inference so pitiful and even imbecile. And this is the real moral to be drawn: that a man, be he ever so respected and able otherwise, should seek to comprehend a book before he writes. Think of his adding, “This twentieth chapter, then, according to this view, is a summary of the Apocalypse”!!! Beyond doubt, “it is in perfect harmony with the whole.” It is the moral picture and bright issue of what he calls “this sublime drama.” And when so regarded, it gives no countenance to Dr. W.’s Anti-millenarian notions.

In the next section II. (6-14) the Bishop proposes “to consider the reasons pleaded in behalf of Millenarian opinions,” but really offers his own reasons against them. He is like others under the delusion that the doctrine rests on opinions,” but really offers his own reasons against them. He is like others under the delusion that the doctrine rests on one single passage of scripture, Rev. 20. If it were so, God’s word once spoken is amply sufficient for faith, as a thousand times would not suffice for unbelief. But that kingdom is revealed in many scriptures of both Old T. and New; and, once received, it is seen to fill a very large part of the Bible indirectly as well as directly in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets, in the Gospels, the Epistles, and the Revelation. Not to have seen this implies sad prejudice and lack of intelligence {in divine matters}.

John 14:2 and Luke 20:36, as well as John 12:32, Acts 1:11, 3:21, John 5:28, 29, 6:39, 12:48, 1 Cor. 15:52, 1 Thess. 4:15, 2 Thess. 1:7, Matt. 16:27, 25:31, 32, Luke 9:26, 2 Tim. 4:1, and Dan. 12:2 are the texts culled to prove that a Millennium is repugnant to scripture. On the contrary every one of these falls in with the doctrine; some even demonstrate its truth, besides the bulk of distinct testimony which is left out.

Thus the Christian’s hope of Christ’s coming to present us in the Father’s house above is as consistent with the Millennium as is our risen equality with angels. Other scriptures prove the blessing of Israel and the nations on the earth at that very time under Christ’s reign, as Matt. 19:28, Rev. 21:24-26, and in the O. T. Isa. 11:10-13, 24:21-23, and Zech. 14:5-9.

Theologians in general quite overlook Eph. 1:10, God’s purpose in Christ for an administration of the fullness of the times; which is to head or sum up all things in Him, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth -- in Him in Whom we too were made to have lot or inheritance; for we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Here we learn in the dogmatic teaching of the great apostle, and not only in parable or prophecy, that God will put the entire universe heavenly and earthly under Christ; and that we shall share it with the Heir of all things in that day of glory. This is neither the present time of gathering the heirs, nor the eternal state, when it will be no longer a question of His government; but having put down all enemies He gives up the kingdom to Him Who is God and Father, that God may be all in all {1 Cor. 15:28}. Hence, as a groundwork for it, we hear in the companion Epistle to the Colossians that all the fullness was pleased in Him to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of His cross -- by Him the things on the earth and the things in the heavens (Col. 1:19, 20). For it is to be on the basis, not of His creative rights only, or of His incarnation, but of the reconciling work in His death.

To leave out of our faith and hope the counsels of God is to have no intelligent communion with the future display of Christ’s glory. It is also to ignore the mystery of Christ and the church; and this is just where believers are for the most part, since they betook themselves to the weak and beggarly elements against which the apostle strove so strenuously and solemnly in early days. He knew, and took care that we should hear, that after his departure grievous wolves should enter in among the Christian confessors, and among their own selves should men arise speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. And so it came to pass that Christendom lost largely the sense of God’s grace and almost wholly the understanding of His glory as purposed for Christ “in that day.” Through the influence of such as Origen and Eusebius, or of the more sober and orthodox Augustine and Jerome, the hopes of Israel were denied; and consequently the church, ignorant of her heavenly glory with Christ, was held to have succeeded to the earthly inheritance. This is what the apostle dreaded for the Gentile, as we may see in Rom. 11, lest he should be wise in his own conceit, and, instead of fearing, become boastful to his ruin and eventual cutting off.

Why the Bp. referred to John 12:32 is strange; for it refers to the attractive power of Him crucified, and has no bearing on the question. But Acts 3:21, especially 19-21, refutes his own view; for it proves that the Lord Jesus is to refer to the attractive power of Him crucified, and has no bearing on the question. But Acts 3:21, especially 19-21, refutes his own view; for it proves that the Lord Jesus is to come to present the kingdom to Israel as well as for other glorious designs of God. Among these, and of the deepest moment, is His raising bodies, as He is now quickening souls (see John 5:25-29). But it is an error of the first magnitude to think of one simultaneous resurrection. Our Lord here speaks of two, in open contrast of character, “of life,” and “of judgment,” or as elsewhere called “of just and unjust.” These Rev. 20 declares, as might be expected from the great Christian prophecy, severed by more than 1,000 years for a momentous purpose, the special reign of Christ and His own over (not “on”) the earth, where they once were holy sufferers, and distinct from reigning in life throughout eternity, wherein even the millennial saints that never suffered will in due time share.

“The Last Day” is the general expression in John 6, 11,
12 for that time which begins by our Lord raising the believers and ends with judging the faithless, answering to the two resurrections, and opposed to the Jewish hope of present exaltation under a living and reigning Messiah as things are. There is no difficulty in the “hour” of John 5:28 covering 1,000 years and more, since the “hour” of v. 25 covers admittedly a still longer space. It is therefore unfounded and indeed plain contradiction of scripture to say “there will be no Millennial interval between the Resurrection of the saints and the Universal Judgment.” It is an absurdity to talk of both taking place on one and the same day, unless the last day be understood as already explained {an epoch spanning the millennium}: why imagine an ordinary day?

For not only do 1 Cor. 15:52 and 1 Thess. 4:16 fall within its capacious limits, but 2 Thess. 1:7, Heb. 9:27, Matt. 16:27, Luke 9:26, 2 Tim. 4:1, Matt. 25:31, 32, Isa. 2, 4, 11, 12, 24, 25, 26, 27, Jer. 30-33, Ezek. 12, &c., and Dan. 12:2, varied as they are in scope and character. But why need particulars be cited, when prophecy as a whole bears on it? It is the day when the Lord takes in hand His execution of God’s purpose in good and evil from raising the saints to judging the wicked, as distinguished from the first man where all ends in failure and ruin through sin.

As to all this the Bp.’s views, through heeding human tradition, were vague and confused, defective and even false. With Christendom generally he was a Ptolemaist, not a Copernican; he made the church his center, not Christ; and thus, bending all scripture to his own relations, he left no room for the various glories of Christ for earth as well as in heaven, and for His reign over Israel and all nations, and indeed for His displayed supremacy over all creation, which we shall share with Him. Hence, too, his ignorance of the judgment the Lord will execute on the habitable earth (τὴν οἰκουμένην) in righteousness at His appearing, as well as earthly rejoicing and the multitude of the isles glad at the earth with less than 30 cursives, &c.; and the best Latin copies, Coptic, &c.; whereas the Alex. and the Basilian uncials of cent. 8 support the present with less than 30 cursives, &c. Of these the Alex. might have greater weight, but that it alone reads the present in Rev. 20:6; all else give the future. The title of king given to the believer in no way means that he is now reigning, which the apostle reproves in First Corinthians as inconsistent with an actual call to suffer with Christ. Assuredly John 10:28 implies simply that no hostile power can pluck out of His hand as Phil. 3:21 shows that at His coming He will prove Himself Savior of our bodies as He is now of our souls.

What he failed to see is that scripture is abundant and plain in assuring that, distinct from the present and before eternity, Christ will come in glory to reign over Israel and all nations according to the consentient testimony of the Prophets, confirmed by His own words in the Gospels, and the Holy Spirit’s witness in the Epistles, and by the Book of Revelation. He thought such an expectation leads necessarily into low and irreverent notions concerning our Lord. Entirely do we sympathize with the hope for the glorified of our proper blessing in the heavenly places; but to slight the prospects of a blessed earth for Israel and the nations is not faith but prejudice (p. 10). O. T. and N. we have seen to be an ample and irrefutable witness to it. If sin entered there, the Son of God came there to put it away by the sacrifice of Himself. Satan achieved the greatest success there; Satan will be thence expelled, first for a long while, then for ever. God there displayed His grace in Christ; in Christ God will there display His glory.

So far from there being any inconsistency the kingdom of God when manifested has its heavenly things no less than its earthly; and all things shall not only be put but seen under Christ the Heir of all, heavenly and earthly headed up in Him, as they were all reconciled to God by His work on the cross. The low view is the curtailing of Christ’s glory, nor is it true reverence to explain away plain scripture. Others yielding to unbelief think that for a Divine Person to take flesh and die on the cross is incredible degradation. Why should it seem to disgrace Christ risen and glorified to reign over the earth for 1,000 years, besides the perfect and unbroken rest of eternity? It will accomplish unfulfilled
scripture and display a righteous kingdom over men as Christ only can. The Deity of Christ stands distinct and intact, and indeed will derive further and rich evidence thereby.

It is all a mistake (p. 11), though made by early Fathers and those who have since followed guides so erring, that the earth is to be peopled by the risen saints. Not so; they will have heavenly glory and reign with Christ over the earth, not on it, as we see in the symbolic New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:19ff and 22). Israel will then be on earth a saintly people, not in name only but in reality; and the nations shall seek (as they have not yet done) unto the Rod of Jesse; and His resting place shall be glory. And all the creation that still groans shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty (not of grace, as is the new creation even now, but) of the glory of the children of God. Therefore we that have the first-fruits of the Spirit, though we too groan within ourselves, do all the more wait for the adoption, the redemption of our body; as the earnest expectation of the creature also waits for our revealing, the signal of its deliverance. What difficulty is there in believing that the unconverted among the nations, though controlled by the power of the great King, surrounded with abundance of all good, and freed from the Tempter, will relapse under his wiles when he is let loose for a little season, and be consumed with fire? It is only the “monstrous” mistake of the Bp. that the risen saints are concerned. The earthly saints, Jews or Gentiles, are threatened by Satan, not his allies.

It is false that the present mixed state (p. 12) will continue when Christ reigns. For the darnel and wheat grow together unto the end of the age (αἰτίωνος), not of the world (κόσμου). The error excludes the judgment of the quick, and of the habitable earth (Acts 17), as well as of the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15). All the parables cited, good and bad fish, good and bad guests, wise and foolish virgins, find their separation at the end of this age; and the Millennium is no gulf (p. 13) but a blessed bridge between the age’s end and the eternal state.

So the Thessalonian saints (p. 13), like others, were waiting for Christ’s coming, which is followed by the Millennium. It is His appearing that destroys the man of sin before the kingdom is set up in power and glory. When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory (Col. 3:4); we are caught up before, and follow Him out of heaven for that day of judgment of the earth (Rev. 17:14, 19:14). 2 Pet. 3 warns those who mock His promised coming with His day, which fills a thousand years and does not close till the universe melts with fire; and Rev. 1:9, 11:18, agrees with this.

The creeds of Christendom do not contradict (p. 16) the Millennium. The Athenasian confesses the foundations of the faith; the so-called Apostles’ Creed is rather infantine like the Nicene. They do not assert the Millennium. Utterly false is it that, if true, it would falsify Christ’s promises to His church; for on the contrary in the millennial day the world will see that the glory, which the Father gave Him, He gave them, perfected as they will then be into one, that the world may know the Father sent the Son and loved those glorified saints as He loved Christ (John 17:22, 23). I am sorry to say that such language betrays infatuation, but am glad to agree that it is no question of the early Patristic writers, but of scripture (p. 15). No importance is attached to the Rabbis either (p. 15).

And as to Cerinthus or the like, one abhors their heterodoxy yet more than Montanist enthusiasm (p. 17). What matters the opinion of a worldly-minded semi-Arian like Eusebius about Papias? Neither (pp. 18, 19) is an authority, any more than the Romanist expositor who falsely attributes the decline of faith in the Apocalypse to millenarian teaching. None love, understand, or enjoy that blessed book so much as those who believe what it teaches of that kingdom (p. 20). The Epistle to the Hebrews and the Apocalypse clashed with men’s will, and hence were unjustly questioned by men of shallow faith, like Caius the early Roman presbyter (p. 20). Origen, learned and clever indeed, was but a sorry defender of the faith. Did not the Bp. know that he was unreliable and wild, even to the ungodliness of universalism? Surely also Dionysius of Alexandria (p. 23), an able man without doubt, cannot be acquitted of strange doctrine on Christ’s person in opposing the Sabellians. Nor was Jerome (pp. 24, 25) a model of orthodoxy any more than of temper, though an erudite and laborious translator. Augustine of Hippo was one of greater weight; but we have to bear in mind that the Millennial views he opposed (pp. 26, 27) were not sound, those which were rejected by the Reformers and the Puritans (pp. 28-31). Only it is certain that some of the best instructed and most pious men in the Anglican body found no such incompatibility in its formularies with their faith in Christ’s millennial reign as the Bp. argues, who himself narrows “the last day” unscripturally (p. 22). The prayer in page 33 is on the contrary consistent. “The end of the world” is the mistake repeated from the A. V. of Matt. 13:39, 49. We all value the Apocalypse at least as much as the Bp. (pp. 33, 36) and do not share in daily use the slight which the Book of Common Prayer puts on that divine book, while it honors the Apocrypha for its lessons in Oct. and Nov. and more.

The second Lecture calls for fewer words. How strange the doctrine that Christ through His death bound Satan! -- that this is the true interpretation of Rev. 20:1-3 (pp. 37-44)! and that the first resurrection of vv. 4-6 is not bodily but spiritual by baptism! Hence they live with Christ and are made unto God Kings and Priests in Him (p. 52), and even now judge the world and angels by the precepts of the Law, &c. represented by the 24 elders, as the four cherubim typify the Gospels! This Bp. Wordsworth will have to be the authorized interpretation of the church, attested for more than a thousand years by such as Origen, Dionysius, Jerome, Augustine, &c.

On the face of the prophecy this scheme ignores its plain structure. For Rev. 19 beyond a doubt supposes Babylon on earth fallen for ever, and in contrast the marriage supper of
the Lamb in heaven, followed by heaven opened, and the Lord with His armies, His saints, emerging to execute judgment on the Beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies. Thereon, not before, ensues the binding of Satan for a thousand years (not days), and the long predicted reign of the saints over the earth for the same long period. Yet during it the Beast reigns also, not only the ten horns but his the one great authority to whom the dragon gives his power! What? . . . during the reign of Christ and His saints! Such is Dr. W.’s scheme.

Hear on the contrary the scriptural expectation.

And it shall come to pass that Jehovah shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth (ISA. 24:21).

In that day Jehovah with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish Leviathan the crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea (ISA. 27:1).

Only the N. T. is fuller and more precise, giving stages in Rev. 12:2, 20:1-3, and v. 10, of which the present vision is intermediate. The same N. T. leaves no shadow of doubt that, though the work is wrought by which Satan will be crushed for ever, he is still active in deceiving the nations, as well as in tempting, hindering, and accusing the saints: Acts 5:3, 19:13-16, Rom. 16:20, 1 Cor. 5:5, 2 Cor. 2:11, 4:4, 7:5, 11:14, 12:7, Eph. 2:2, 4:27, 6:11, 12, 16, 1 Thess. 2:18, 3:5, 2 Thess. 2:2, 9, 1 Tim. 1:20, 3:7, 4:1, 5:15, 2 Tim. 2:26, James 4:7, 1 Pet. 5:8, 1 John 2:13, 14, 3:8, 10, 4:4, 6, 5:18, 19, Rev. 2:9, 13, 24, 3:9, 9:11, 12:7-17, 13:1, 2, 16:13, 14. These scriptures abundantly prove that the promised binding is still future, and that Bp. W.’s notion is hopelessly at war with revealed truth. Nothing could be farther from his intention; which the more illustrates the peril of deserting the plain word of God in deference to the thoughts of men, however venerable or numerous. The binding of Satan is reserved for the presence and day of the Lord.

“The first resurrection” only, and brightly, confirms this. The O. T. saints and those of the N. T. the church were already in heaven; for how else could the Lamb’s wife have made herself ready for the marriage? These saints had been symbolized by the 24 elders (Rev. 4, and in 5 also by the four cherubim?): which is as sure from the context as the application to the 24 books of O. T. scripture and to the four Gospels is a chimera. Here that symbol changes to “the bride,” and “the guests” at the Lamb’s marriage supper; and this again to “the armies” that follow the Lord out of heaven, when He assumes the character of Warrior. Then in Rev. 20 we have the change from “white horses” to “thrones” when the reign is to begin. In Dan. 7 the thrones were set. Here they are filled. “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them.” These were the saints already glorified, who had followed the Lord out of heaven (Rev. 18:14, 19:14).

“And I [I saw] the souls of those that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God.” These were the martyrs whose souls were seen under the altar in Rev. 6:9, who were slain in the earlier persecutions of the book after the elders were seen complete in heaven, and who were also told that they should rest yet a little while till their fellow servants also and their brethren that should be killed even as they were should be fulfilled. But now as these were fulfilled under the later persecutions of the Beast, these two classes are raised together. Hence we read, “and such as (or whosoever) worshipped not the beast nor his image, and received not his mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” “Souls” is therefore strictly correct, as in Rev. 6:9, so here in v. 4. They had died and were seen in the disembodied state; but now “they lived,” which has no reasonable sense but in a resurrection from the dead, as it must be also to “reign with Christ a thousand years.” And this is the uniform apostolic doctrine of the N. T. “If so be that we suffer with [Him] that we may be also glorified with [Him]” (Rom. 8). “If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him” (2 Tim. 2). “Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14).

Granted that “a thousand years’ reign” must not be confounded with “reigning in life,” as all saints shall throughout eternity. But the principle of the difference is as clear as it is scriptural. The millennial reign is for those that suffer with Christ, which embraces all that are His in O. and N. T. times till He comes for them and presents them on high. It is not restricted to saints who suffer for Him. All saints who from the beginning suffered with Christ share that reign. But those who suffered in the Apocalyptic troubles were only called of God while the glorified are seen on high. As they did not survive to welcome His appearing for the reign, they are thus raised at the last moment, not to be reigned over, but to reign with Christ like those already seen seated on the thrones. Those thus honored are then fulfilled:

The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is He that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of the Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Such is the simple and unforced interpretation of the vision, as worthy of the Lord and of the prophet, as that of the Lecture is mean, and harsh, as incongruous with the Apocalypse generally as with this particular context. The plain and just meaning further the action of the Book and is consistent with all revealed truth, not to say requisite for God’s glory, and the Lamb at that juncture. “Know ye not that the Saints (not the martyrs only) shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” Those

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3. The four living creatures of Rev. 4, 5 are symbols of the judicial power of God. These four features are found in Christ, in Whom the judicial power of God is invested. Each of the four gospels are impressed, respectively, with one of the features of the four living creatures: Matt., the Lion (the King); Mark, the ox (the Servant); Luke, the Man; John, the eagle, the One from heaven.)
converted during the millennium escape all suffering with Christ; for there is no enemy there to sift or tempt, Satan being forcibly kept away. Hence they will have no such reigning before the world, then for the first time, as the millennium affords for Christ’s holy sufferers. Yet like all saints, they “shall reign in life by the one, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17).

It would have been easy to have criticized the lecture in detail from first to last; as it would have been difficult in that case to have avoided sharp notice of singularly wild sentiments, if one dealt with the statements as they deserved. It is preferred therefore to let the distinct enunciation of the truth itself dispel the error, which leaves a lamentable blank in the future of the universe, where God has revealed, in both Testaments, the grandest scheme for the glory of Christ and the saints of the heavenly places to the joy of all creation, especially of Israel and all the nations, before the judgment of the dead and the eternity which follows. How blind are all who, listening to tradition, fancy that the state of things which began with the cross, wherein Satan is still the prince and god of this age, is the reign of the saints with Christ predicted by John! No, that reign is the restitution of all things (Acts 3:3), the revealing of the sons of God, when the whole creation ceases to groan, the idols utterly pass away, all families of the earth are blessed in Christ, He and His heavenly ones shine in heavenly glory, and Jehovah alone is exalted in that day. The gospel and the church are given their special development in the N. T. But the visions of glory promised to Israel and of blessing for all the nations of which the O. T. speaks must surely be “in that day.”

The Bible Treasury, New Series, vol. 1
The Second Advent
Before, not After, the Millennium

Scripture is not only the mine, but the standard, of truth. Error cannot stand before the inspired word. Not that the believer is competent of himself either to draw out or to apply aright; our sufficiency is from God, Who also made us sufficient, says the apostle, as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Every Christian cites 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16, &c.; 5:2; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; 2:1, 2, 8; 3:5, to prove that Christ’s coming, or παρουσία, is our hope, and that His day will bring judgment on the world. With all this, it is allowed, the apostle’s later Epistles agree, as do those of James, Peter, John, and Jude. It is not otherwise with the Gospels.

But it is a strange position to except the Book of Revelation, especially ch. 20:1-8, unless we concede the synchronism of vv. 8, 9, with 2 Thess. 2:8! Even so it is confessed that the very great difficulty is involved of a preliminary victory over Satan earlier than the final victory. “But possibly,” says professor Beet, “the events of Rev. 19:11, 20:4, may take place without any interruption of the ordinary course of human life” (p. 30)! Let the Christian read and judge.

To what is all this unbelieving perplexity owing? To the notion that Christ’s coming cannot possibly be followed by the millennium and its subsequent conflict, and must therefore follow these events.

But is this true? What saith the scripture?

The Lord taught the disciples, not merely that He was to return from heaven, but that they were to be as men looking for him. “Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord, when he shall return from the marriage feast; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him” (Luke 12:35, 36). Of a millennium to intervene first, not a word. What is said rather excludes it; for will it be a “little flock” as now, when “Jehovah’s people shall be all righteous,” and “all nations shall flow” unto the mountain of Jehovah’s house? Christ’s coming was not a mere doctrine assented to, nor a prophetic event at such or such a date. A living hope was bound up, with His coming -- they knew not how soon. The Lord laid the utmost stress on their state of habitual expectancy -- that when He comes and knocks, they may open immediately unto Him. “Blessed are those (He adds, v. 37) Whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching.” This goes far beyond mere acquiescence that He will come at some distant date.

Prof. Beet treats this attitude even now, and of course a fortiori of old, as a mistake. “It was near to the thought of the early Christians”; yet he agrees with the infidel that it was an error. “It must be at once admitted that we cannot, with reasonable confidence, expect a return of Christ during the lifetime of men now living. Still less can we daily expect His return” (pp. 149, 150). This with a vengeance is the higher criticism of modern thought.

It is really bolder than any man should be with (not apostles only but) the Lord of all. Did not He know the truth? Did He deliberately set His own to watch in a way open to Gibbon’s sneer or Mr. B.’s correction? Did He not encourage them to watch for His coming from heaven as the only right state of soul? His teaching is uniformly to this end: so much so that He characterized the evil servant in Matt. 24:48 by saying in his heart, “My lord tarrieth,” the prelude to beating his fellow-servants, and to eating and drinking with the drunken.

In accordance with this the Lord presents the virgins in the following parable as gone forth to meet the bridegroom. Such in fact was the position of the early Christians, the wise and the foolish alike. The Lord warned that during His delay they would all go asleep, as they all did. This was but partially “in the days of the apostles”; but it became worse and worse not long after. Certain it is, as He predicted, that soon “they all slumbered and slept.” But the Lord also indicates that “at midnight,” when all was darkest, there is a cry, Behold the bridegroom! Come (or, Go) ye forth to meet him. Then what activity! all arose and trimmed their lamps. It is this cry that awakes slumbering Christendom. When the foolish are in quest of the grace they lack, the wise resume the original place so long abandoned by the saints, the bridegroom comes, and those that were ready go in with him to the marriage feast. The foolish and unready come to find the door was shut. It is false that our Lord’s return was not expected as a constant outlook “by His better informed followers.”

Nothing was revealed in prophecy to blunt the edge of

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that hope. The Lord seems to have expressly provided that His own, however intelligent, might be kept, expecting Him as habitually as the simplest. Thus, as far as parabolic language goes, none could infer that the same saints should not go out to meet Him, fall asleep, wake up, go out fresh and in with Him to the wedding. On this principle are all the parables constructed: the wheat-and-tarefield, the mustard-seed, the leaven, and the rest in Matt. 13, in no way forbid but fall in with waiting for Him in their lifetime, whatever may be the filling up of the sketch as He tarries. It was the due posture of hope, which all the truth strengthens instead of weakening. Our Lord did predict in Luke 21, as well as in ch. 19, the near approaching destruction of Jerusalem: did this hinder it? Why, it also was in that one lifetime; and the next event described is His judicial dealing with mankind when seen coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Even Peter’s death, and John’s survival, are carefully so presented in John 21 and 2 Pet. 1 as not to interfere with watching for Christ. A special revelation of the apostle’s death left all open for the heart, and Peter recalls it only when about to depart. But he does more. In the same ch. 1 of his Second Epistle he distinguishes between “the prophetic word,” and the “day-star arising in the heart.” The former they had known, even in their unconverted days; and they did well to pay heed to it still. But now they had, or at least ought in the gospel to have, a better light than the lamp of prophecy, shining in the “squalid place” of the earth as it is. As Christians they should enjoy the heavenly light that shines through the rent veil, and Christ Himself as the morning star for the heart’s hope, before the sun of righteousness cannot be hid from the world. It is therefore ignorance of scripture, and a misuse of prophecy, to let any supposed intervening events check the hope of Christ’s coming. The Lord, and the apostles, down to the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, always and strenuously make the hope independent of prophecy, not by a fanciful sentimentality, but by a revealed difference in nature and character. The hope is of Christ for heaven. Prophecy treats of events for the earth; which a better knowledge of the word learns to be subsequent. There is no earthly sign revealed to intercept the hope of Christ’s coming for us, to receive us to Himself.

Now there are no Epistles of St. Paul so full of the hope as those to the Thessalonians. There, therefore, we may surely look not merely for better information, but for the unerring light of God.

Did the apostle then lead the saints in Thessalonica to look for the millennium before Christ’s coming? He taught them, turning from their idols, as a part of their conversion, to wait for God’s Son from heaven as well as to serve a living and true God (1 Thess. 1:10). And so filled was he for himself with this bright hope that in his labors this is his one unfailing joy, not any proximate prospect for European Asia or the world at large, but “Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming”? So he prays that the Lord would give them to abound in love to the establishing of their hearts in holiness before our God and Father at our Lord’s coming with all His saints. He will not, does not, sever “that day” from the actual moment in his desires for them and all. Then ch. 4 is worthy of close attention. The Christians at Thessalonica were so intent on the immediate coming of Christ, that they grieved excessively over one or more of their number who had died. This was just the occasion to tell them, as so many do, that death is to all practical purposes the coming of Christ to that individual. Whatever analogy people may frame, the apostle presents our Lord’s coming as the divine comfort and remedy for, or rather His triumph over, it. But he does this in a way which demonstrates the fundamental antagonism of post-millennialism to the true hope. “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep” (1 Thess. 4:15). The same formula he carefully repeats in vv. 16, 17: “and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air” &c. If the express intention of the Holy Spirit had been to set the apostle with the saints, then living, in looking for Christ always, assured of His coming soon but not knowing when, could any words be conceived more suited to the purpose? How easy to have put “those who might be alive” when He comes, in the third person, -- to have said “they,” as he did say of the deceased.

Nor is it here and now only that the inspired writer so speaks. In 1 Corinthians, written after both those to the Thessalonians, we find precisely the same thing in his great vindication of the resurrection, when he adds a secret as to the saints found alive at the advent. “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed . . . for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51, 52). Compare also 2 Cor. 5:1-10, converging on the same point. It is therefore the clearly maintained principle of a proximate, not an ultimate, hope. The language of scripture joins issue with the theology of the schools. Christendom has lost the tongue of Canaan, because the truth is no longer a living reality for men. The apostle put no date, and made not a shade of error. Like his Master, he in the Spirit would have the saints ever waiting and looking for Christ’s coming.

Beyond controversy the early part of 1 Thess. 5 speaks of the day of the Lord in a way wholly different from that which prevails among our “negative “ brethren. It is judicial for the world which it will overtake as a thief in the night, but not the Christian who certainly ought not to be in darkness, that that day should overtake him so. How could it surprise any suddenly if it cannot be before a thousand years of peace beyond example? The coming of the Lord rightly held presupposes the believer resting on redemption, sealed with the Holy Spirit of God, and already meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Those who confound the Lord’s coming and His day are as the rule in a like confusion as to the soul; they rarely distinguish aright the work of Christ for them and of the Spirit in them. In such a condition they rather dread, than welcome, the coming of the Lord,
and willingly drop into the illusion of great progress and of indisputable improvement, both in the churches and in society at large . . . To these must be added the many triumphs of the foreign mission field. Before our eyes Christ . . . is going forth conquering and to conquer (p. 151).

How averse such minds are and must be from the solemn warnings of divine judgment! Yet how plain and sober is scriptural truth! Hear the scriptures that speak of God’s purpose to fill the earth with His glory and the knowledge of it: Num. 14:21; Isa. 11:9; Hab. 2:14. In all these the connection is with His judicial dealings, not with our preaching the gospel. Nothing is so blinding, and self-exalting, as unbelief.

Could a better informed follower of Christ say that the Thessalonians, “like so many others since, had misunderstood St. Paul to teach that the Great Day was close at hand”? (p. 150). Really such misunderstanding, both of St. Paul and of the Thessalonians, is discreditable, though a too prevalent error. It is no opinion but a fact, now recognized by the Revisers [of 1881], as well as by all recent translators and reliable commentators, that the ground of such an impression is a mere blunder, though it misled every body for more than a thousand years. I pointed it out to my friend Dr. D. Brown many years ago, while he lived in Glasgow, before exposing it in public. Yet there it stands uncorrected still in the sixth edition of his Second Coming (pp. 4, 5, 42-51, 425-433), though he has not ventured to controvert, as I am persuaded neither he nor any other can fairly overthrive, the evidence of it. The delusion which alarmed the Thessalonians was the cry that the day of the Lord was actually come (ἐνέστηκεν); and the apostle beseeches them by, or for the sake of (ὑπὲρ), the reassuring hope of the Lord’s coming and our gathering together unto Him, not to be shaken about that day (2 Thess 2:1). First, it was the disturbance of fear, and this through the false alarm that the day had come, not at all excitement about the blessed hope; which hope on the contrary is appealed to as a reason by the way to comfort them against their groundless alarm. Secondly, the true text and translation of the last clause in 2 Thess. 2:2 is, beyond doubt, “as that the day of the Lord is present.”

Dr. Brown and Prof. Beet are under a delusion here about God’s word less excusable than that of the Thessalonian saints. Not only do they wholly mistake what was at work then and there, but they set thereby the apostle at war with himself. For their misunderstanding makes him explode here what he urges later on the Romans (Rom. 13:12), that the day is at hand (ὁγιάσθηκεν). Compare too Phil. 4:5, Heb. 10:37. James speaks similarly (James 5:8); and so substantially Peter (1 Pet. 4:7). Indeed the Lord had Himself impressed His coming suddenly as a motive for all to watch in the early Gospel of Mark (13:35-37); and none other is what we may call, pace Prof. Beet, His last word closing the Apocalypse. It seems clearly meant to hinder that fatal misuse of the prophetic visions, which enfeebles, if not frustrates, the divinely given hope of His coming. “He which testifieth these things saith, Yea, I come quickly.” Did John cavil or correct his Master? He answered, “Amen; come, Lord Jesus.”

The apostle next explains that the day -- for this was the question, not His coming to gather us to, Himself on high, but His day or judicial dealing with the world -- cannot be till the evils are completely developed, which that day is to judge. Of these he specifies the apostasy, the falling away from God’s truth after being once professed; and further the revelation of the lawless one, as the consummation of the mystery of lawlessness already at work. Once the actual hinderer was removed, the lawlessness doing its secret evil would culminate and be manifested in the lawless one whom the Lord Jesus shall slay (or destroy) with the breath (or spirit) of His mouth, and shall bring to nought by the shining forth (or appearing) of His coming -- not by His coming simply, but by the appearing of it (2 Thess. 2:8). Now when Christ, our life, shall be manifested, then (τοτε, not εἰσὶν) shall we also with Him be manifested in glory (Col. 3:4). It is the moment of His and our appearing, after we have been caught up to Him.

Prof. Beet abandons the Protestant interpretation {reformers and also historicism} of the apostasy or at least of the man of sin. What unbiased Christian can wonder?

There is nothing now corresponding in the least degree to the tremendous antagonist of God and man described in 2 Thess. 2:4 (p. 150).

This may be true as to the person, but the principles are latent at work; and it is unwise to speak as he does of the slow development in modern times of forces bad, if not of good. The passage itself, if we were not living in an age of movement intensely rapid in every sense, most naturally prepares us for the most sudden display of the son of perdition, depending as this does simply on the removal of him that restraineth now. Undoubtedly the worst evil, the lawless person {Antichrist}, must be revealed before that day which is to annul him; but to say that the day is not near is flatly to contradict the word of the living God, as well as ignorance of what the text here teaches. Only Mr. B. is to be congratulated for breaking loose from the post-millennial argument, under which others still lie, that the παρουσία of our Lord in 2 Thess 2:1 is His personal advent, in v. 8 is only figurative. This sleight of hand Prof. B. repudiates (p. 22). He owns it is the same throughout; but where then is his millennium before Christ comes? The text reveals a continuity of unbridled willfulness, already working as

2. Dr. B. {Brown} asks (S. A. {Second Advent} p. 44), “What unbiased reader would so understand the passage?” Certainly he could not understand the meaning of the apostle from a version already “biased,” and indeed false. Why do not all use the unequivocally correct version? Does the apostle deny that the day could be present till the millennium come first? Nay, but till the evils he predicts were consummated. Hence Dr. B., like Mr. Faber, feeling this fatal to his post-millennial theory, labors to make the appearing of Christ’s coming here providential. This Prof. Beet abandons honestly.
leave, till it rise (on the removal of an existing barrier) into a revealed head, the lawless one to fall under the Lord Jesus in His day. How then possibly foist in there the millennium before that day? The Thessalonians, misled as they were by the delusion of a judgment-day already come, fell into no such a preposterous dream as this truly strange doctrine.

It is unfounded then, as a commentator ought to have known, a mere vulgar error, that the Thessalonians had misunderstood St. Paul. He himself gives quite a different source of the mischief. He speaks of either a word, or spirit, or epistle as from us, i.e., pretending so to be {2 Thess 2:2}. It was not his First Epistle misunderstood, but a spurious communication that is meant; for the apostle never taught it was his First Epistle misunderstood, but a spurious application of that communication that is meant; for the apostle never taught anything in the least resembling it. The misleaders must have insinuated a figurative day of the Lord under the gospel, answering to such partial or germinant applications of that day as we have in Isa. 13, 19, &c., on Babylon, Egypt, &c. For the Thessalonian saints were passing through sore trial and persecution; so that he had sent Timothy even before his First Epistle, lest by any means the tempter had tempted them to the compromise of their faith and of his own labor. He foresaw their danger of being moved by these afflictions. It seems to have been just in this way that Satan was now working.

Before the First Epistle they were so enthusiastic as to be cast down exceedingly because some fell asleep; for they imagined that these would thereby lose their place at Christ’s coming. This was dispelled by the assurance that these also put to sleep by Jesus will God bring with Him; for, when He descends from heaven with an assembling shout, the dead in Christ shall rise first, then we the living that remain shall be caught up together with them. But the more serious error corrected in the Second Epistle is about the living on whom the false teachers sought to bring the terror of the day of the Lord, availing themselves probably of their sore trials as indicating that the day was come. Not so says the apostle in 2 Thess 1. In that day the trouble will be to the persecutors and other wicked men; the righteous are to rest. Their blessed hope of being gathered to the Lord at His coming ought to have guarded them from such a panic. Besides, that day can only arrive when secret lawlessness is replaced (the barrier being gone) for the Son of man’s kingdom, then can question that, when the earth is thus purged (not yet dissolved or destroyed) for the Son of man’s kingdom, then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father? It is the age to come before eternity, the millennium age, wherein are the glorified on high, and the earth closed by the Lord’s coming, what can it be but the millennium? Heb. 6:5 confirms this. The powers of the “age to come” mean samples of such power over Satan, disease, and the like, which the disciples wrought when Christ was here and subsequently; of which the age to come will be the full theatre, and display to God’s glory, when Satan’s overthrow will be manifest all over the earth.

But there is yet more to observe in Matt. 13:41, 42. Does anyone doubt that it is of the harvest-field, the world, our Savior speaks as His kingdom, whither at His coming His angels are sent to gather out all offences (or trap-falls) and those that practice lawlessness? On the other hand, who can question that, when the earth is thus purged (not yet dissolved or destroyed) for the Son of man’s kingdom, then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father? It is the age to come after this which is closed by the Lord’s coming, what can it be but the millennium? Heb. 6:5 confirms this. The powers of the “age to come” mean samples of such power over Satan, disease, and the like, which the disciples wrought when Christ was here and subsequently; of which the age to come will be the full theatre, and display to God’s glory, when Satan’s overthrow will be manifest all over the earth.

3. When can the millennium be even seemingly introduced here? Not in the general sketch (vv. 4-14), which is as opposite to Isa. 2 as can be conceived. Not in the particulars that follow: “Immediately after” (not the millennium but) the tribulation &c. . . . “and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming.” The prophecy in no way agrees with the sack of Jerusalem, nor with the end of Rev. 20. There is “a witness,” not a millennium.
glorified, and the Spirit could lead into them those who enjoyed redemption through His blood.

A King reigning in righteousness will characterize the new age. Now the Lord sits on the Father’s throne (Rev. 3:21); then He will sit on His own throne and will rule with a rod of iron, shattering all that rebel as the vessels of the potter. So it will be in the age to come or millennium. How absurd to apply this to the eternity that succeeds! As it has been well remarked, righteousness dwells in the new heavens and new earth when the promise is fulfilled absolutely and for ever. It is no question then of righteous government which represses or punishes evil, as in the millennial day. Neither is it this “evil age” when grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21). Now the Lord asks, or prays, not for the world, but for His own, the gift of the Father (John 17:9).

By and by, when this age is to close, and the coming one to dawn, He asks the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. It will be no question then of the mysteries of the kingdom during which He is the rejected but glorified Son of Man. Having received for Himself the kingdom (Dan. 7, Luke 19), He returns. During His absence His servants, according to the parable, trade with the money entrusted, and on His return receive according to fidelity; as the citizens who hated Him and would not let Him reign over them are slain before Him. Here is without doubt the coming of Christ, but not a hint of a millennium before it; whilst the character of the judgment executed at His coming perfectly suits a millennium, not an eternity to follow.

The same lesson flows from Luke 17, where the days of Noah and of Lot are by Himself compared with the day when the Son of Man is revealed. Here is not the smallest resemblance to the loosing of Satan and the war of Gog and Magog in Rev. 20, any more than to the past siege of Jerusalem by Titus (A.D. 70). Before the Lord appears in judgment it will be so, as we may see in 1 Thess. 5. When His day comes as a thief, it will overtake them eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building, marrying and given in marriage. How strange to apply Luke 17:31 to the dissolution of all things! or even to the destruction of Jerusalem! It is neither an indiscriminate judgment in providence, with which vv. 34, 35 stand in marked contrast, nor yet the last judgment, with which not a feature tallies. It is simply and only the Lord’s appearing, with the millennium to follow this judgment of the quick which it cannot precede.

But we must not omit Matt. 25:31-46. How any sober Christian can turn this scene into the counterfeit of Rev. 20:11-15 is inexplicable, if one knew not the power of prejudice. The latter is expressly a judgment of the dead, without one living man; the other not even of all living men, but only of all the Gentiles or nations, the Jews being before us in the early part of Matt. 24 and professing Christians in the parables that close ch. 24 and go on to Matt. 25:30. Hence it is the King as such Who judges the Gentiles on their treatment of His envoys, His brethren; and they are set as sheep on His right or as goats on His left accordingly. This is wholly foreign to the judgment of the dead at the end of all in Rev. 20, the “resurrection of judgment”; as vv. 4-6 gave us the previous “resurrection of life,” answering to John 5. That of the righteous only is before us in John 6, 1 Thess. 4, and 1 Cor. 15. As this is a resurrection from among the dead, it is necessarily prior, like Christ’s, to that of the remaining dead. And εἰκόνα “then” may be a long interval as easily as a short; just as “hour” and “day” may last a thousand years and more, as the context proves. But where in all these texts, or in any of them, is Prof. B.’s millennium before the Second Advent?

Throughout St. Paul’s Epistles and the Gospels, to which we might add the Book of Acts and the Epistles of James and Peter and Jude, we find everywhere the same metaphors and the same phraseology (p. 26). So say those opposed. But let us read on.

The early Christians were looking for Christ’s sudden and visible return from heaven, to raise the dead, good and bad, to judge all men, and to bring in eternal retribution. Really this is a perplexing argument from one whose theme is that Christ’s coming must follow the millennium. Rev. 20:1-8 is therefore the millstone around the Professor’s neck, which must be somehow got rid of and cast into the sea, if possible.

Now it is wholly denied that the blessed manifested kingdom of Christ rests on that passage only of the N. T., while the O. T. prophets are full of it, yea law, Psalms, and Prophets. Take Acts 3:19-21, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and He may send Jesus Christ, Who hath been fore-appointed unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, of which God spoke by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.” Seasons of refreshing were to come from the Lord’s presence, Who would send Jesus that had been fore-appointed for them (Israel’s repentance being in full view, as usually for the millennium). Heaven must receive Him till times for restoring all things according to prophecy. That is, Jesus will be sent to bring in these blessed times when all things shall be (not destroyed, as in Prof. Beet’s scheme, but) reconstituted, as the prophets of old testified. Christ will come from heaven to earth in order to establish millennial blessing. The Greek must be wholly altered to bear the meaning “till all be accomplished.” Christ is on high till times come of restoring all, not till all shall have been restored. Having received the kingdom, He returns in it, and must reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet; for He is to abolish all rule, and all authority, and power, before He gives up the kingdom at the end of all. The repentance of Israel, the return of Jesus, the restoring of all things, besides fulfillment of the prophetic word, point to the millennial kingdom.

Again, Luke 20:34, 35, is entitled to great weight on this head, as it also confirms what has been already said on Matt.
12, 13, and Heb. 6. “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but they that are accounted worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead,” &c. Before eternity arrives “that age” is to run its course, as well as “this age” to close. And “that age,” or dispensation, is characterized here by “the resurrection of the just,” those counted worthy to have part in that age and the resurrection from the dead. How contrasted with the dead who, unworthy and unblessed and unholy, are only raised, after “that age” is over, for a resurrection of judgment and the lake of fire! Scripture never speaks of a general resurrection but of two distinct risings -- of life, and of judgment, separated by the kingdom of Christ and those who reign with Him, the only age when these thousand years of blessing for the earth that now is can be in consistency with Scripture. Compare Phil. 3:11, 20, 21. To say that the resurrection ἐκ v. from the dead is not as peculiar by priority of time as well as in nature, accompaniments and issues, is to give up the force of language as well as description and context. The phrase itself is so weighty that one of the ablest, stumped by faulty premillennialists, made the wrong vulgar reading in Phil. 3:11 a chief ground of objection, as Griesbach strangely accepted it. It is now exploded by all critics. What would the late Mr. Gipps have said now?

The more one weighs Prof. B.’s words on the Book of Revelation generally, and on Rev. 20 especially, the less one can accept them.

That this event -- the one definite event for which the early Christians were waiting, (Christ’s return) is less conspicuous in the Book of Revelation (!) than in the rest of the New Testament (!!) excites no surprise” (p. 27)!!!

To ordinary Christians this seem as surprising a deliverance as one has heard for a long while. The reason is as peculiar as the conclusion. The other writers leave us outside the veil (which is untrue);

the Revelation takes us within, and portrays the unseen world before, and during, and after, the coming of Christ.

And therefore! in a book which is thus instinct with what is before, and during, and after Christ’s coming, this event is less conspicuous than elsewhere, where it is touched on for the most part practically, and but occasionally if we except 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Q. E. D.

The question nevertheless remains, Where, amid the many and various visions of this mysterious book, shall we place the great event[,] &c.

Yes, this is just Prof. B.’s difficulty, because he is not content to believe it where God has placed it and written it for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope. “The only answer” to this question which seems good in his eyes is, that we must not leave it where “this mysterious book” gives it, and we must “place” it, where this book testifies that Christ does not and cannot come. In Rev. 20:11 there is total and manifest contrast with Christ’s coming found in the Gospels and Epistles, save the fact of Christ’s sitting on a throne (which is true generally of His reign for a thousand years and more, to say nothing of His present seat on His Father’s throne). Is it seriously contended that the twelve sitting as assessors on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, when the Son of Man shall sit on the throne of His glory, symbolizes with the eternal judgment of the dead? Then is the time when 1 Cor. 6:2, 3 will be fulfilled; not the outrageous confusion with the judgment of the dead, where are no thrones nor assessors, whatever commentators may dream and say. And so in Matt. 24 the powers of the heavens are shaken, and all tribes of the earth mourn, and the angels gather together His elect (which the context here limits to Israel) from one end of heaven to the other. But all these statements describe a time different from and anterior to the fleeing away of the earth and the heaven when no place will be found for them. They abide in Matt. 24, but not Rev. 20:11.

The other collocations of scriptural texts in p. 28 have been already shown to be unsound and imaginary, doing violence to Scripture at every turn. And all this to blot out the appearing of Christ from Rev. 19:11-21 where it is revealed, and to foist it into Rev. 20:11 where there is no coming described, for the very plain and decisive reason that He will have come already! Nor is it too much to say that, unless Christ come before, it becomes no longer possible thenceforth; for Christ’s coming means to this earth whence He ascended (Acts 1). Now before the white-throne judgment the first heaven and the first earth passed away. As nobody pleads for coming to the heaven and new earth of eternity, it is demonstrable that He must have come before “the end,” when the elements are dissolved with fervent heat. Christ’s coming therefore must be before, not after, the millennium. What avail our notions of difficulty, or facility, or safety (pp. 29-31), against the word of God? Matt. 25:32 at the beginning of the kingdom is in no way inconsistent with Rev. 20:7-10 at the end. The camp of the saints and the beloved city (Jerusalem) may be compassed; but not a saint is hurt, and not a sinner escapes: fire from God out of heaven comes down and devours the bad. Surely if there was affliction for the oppressors, and rest for the oppressed, proved gloriously at the Lord’s revelation from heaven (2 Thess. 1:6, 7), there is nothing in that to reconcile with divine judgment falling on the unconverted of the millennium, who had rendered feigned obedience, till at the end the temptation of Satan proves the irremediable evil of man not born of God, in presence of glory then so long familiar, as now in contempt of God’s grace.

Nor is there any such strange confusion as adversaries feign. The risen saints reign with Christ over (not “on”) the earth; the saints threatened come together as such, consisting of saved Israel and the godly Gentiles. Only the wicked die at that time under God’s hand (Isa. 65). On the Holy Mount the Lord had once shown a vision of His power and coming, where on the one hand men appeared in glory, and on the other men in their unchanged bodies, and Christ the head of both. Was not this a little sample of the kingdom that is to
be? It does not answer either to this age, or to eternity. Why is it judged incredible with you (alas! in Christendom), if God does what He says? It was, for men who had not tasted of death in this age, a vision of the kingdom of God coming in power {Matt. 16:28-17:13; 2 Pet. 1:16}, the beautiful and impressive foreshadowing of that shall be at the advent, when the glorified shall reign over the earth, and Israel and the nations are here below. It pleased Christ; surely nothing but extreme prejudice, not to say the carnal mind, makes it displeasing to Christians. The kingdom of God comprises “heavenly” as well as “earthly things” (John 3:3, 5, 12); and the sooner this is learned the better for souls.

Here indeed our men of allegory are deplorably astray. There is no complaint of the Fourth Gospel; but why speak so ungratefully of the “most mysterious book of the New Testament” (p. 137)? Many an unbelieving assault has been made on the Gospel; why then remind the unwary reader of the difficulties which surround the authorship of the Apocalypse? Prof. B. has ill-will enough to point out its “startling grammatical forms and entirely different modes of thought” (p. 38), in order to cast doubt or discredit on it. Yet he well knows how Paul and Peter and James have been each and all attacked more or less. But is it in him quite honest? He may not be aware that the peculiarities of form and thought belong to its prophetic character, and are wholly independent of its date and authorship, which are as certain as anything of the kind can be for all fair and competent students. But does he not himself believe that John the beloved, the Patmos prisoner of Domitian, wrote the book, even though here only he assumed the Hebraistic style and rough garment of a prophet? This was just as much in keeping with its revelation of judgment, as the Epistles and Gospel called for, and have, another mould of thought and speech for their design.

Let me say that Genesis in its noble simplicity is no more admirable an introduction to the Bible, than the Apocalypse is its suited, worthy, and profound completion. The wrestling-ground for contending commentators of every school, and hence open to the sneer of worldly men, divines or sceptics, too indifferent to God’s word, and too disposed to lay the faults of its misusers on the book itself, there it stands, still pronouncing the blessing of the Lord on him that reads its words, and on those that hear and keep them; “for the time” (whatever unbelief may cry) “is at hand.” And in fact where is the inspired book which, especially in difficult and dangerous times, has wrought more powerfully for good in grave Christian men, notwithstanding many a mistake through haste or prejudice? It is idle to expect that comprehensive and deep understanding of the Apocalypse should exist where there is not familiar acquaintance with all the prophets, as well as with the distinctive ways of God which the New Testament reveals. For where the Old Testament prophets are discursive in the main, and little beyond Daniel and Zechariah is consecutive, and even these have separate visions of no great length or variety, St. John was enabled by the Holy Ghost to communicate a systematic, connected, and complete view of the things which should be after “the things which are,” or the church-state (Rev. 2, 3), till time melts into eternity under the judicial hand of our Lord and of His Christ.

No doubt some men of marked piety and general learning, and many with little of either, have written on the book; but even when they were so {marked by learning and piety}, this is far from being all that is required to write competently and profitably on it. More than any other book, it openly presses into its service, or subtly refers to, almost every part of the Old Testament; yet is there a characteristically mystic use which is adapted to the New Testament and convicts the mere literalist of a wholly mistaken principle. Originality, after a divine sort, appears throughout; The most able and erudite of its expositors have been in no way distinguished for spiritual intelligence, and are often the devotees of a foregone conclusion, so that they can be entitled to little weight in such a question. And what is the object of alleging mere and evident extravaganzas, from whatever quarter they may come? Is it to commend truth? or to merge God’s word in men’s uncertainties? It is the opprobrium of commentators, and of none so much perhaps as the prophetic, that they search, not for God’s mind, but for the support of their own preconceived ideas; and that the repute of some casts a long train of followers; as their transparent fallacies provoke another crowd of opponents. Yet the truth remains, sure and acceptable in God’s grace to those who have faith to depend on the Lord for it.

But surely John 17, on Prof. B.’s confession, belongs to “the solid platform” of the N. T. writers. Can it then be denied that in vv. 22, 23, we have in weightiest correlation those who are glorified on the one side, and on the other men alive on earth, whether yet to die or not (p. 31)? The glorified, and the unchanged are there in presence one of another, as the Lord teaches us, and with blessed result (in a prayer of His own heart), which these believers do not believe, and therefore venture to stigmatize as “mixed together in strangest confusion” (p. 31). It is really distressing unbelief on their part, who do not apprehend this the third unity -- of glory. For there are three. The first (John 17:11) is the united expression before a hating world of the Father’s name, given to Christ, and now to keep those who were then around Him. The second is in view of those who should believe through their word, unity of communion in the Father and the Son, that the world might “believe “ (John 17:21). The third is the closing unity of glory, where therefore alone they are perfected into one; and, as it would be manifested, it is for the world to “know.” The demonstration will be before their eyes; for Christ and His own are to be displayed from heaven in the same glory.

With this agrees Rev. 21:9-22:5: a retrogressive vision introducing the relation of the Bride to the kings and nations after Christ comes; just as Rev. 17 is to show how the great Harlot stands toward the kings and nations before He comes.
In both cases it is a return to give what was not before described. This is undeniable in the case of Babylon whose fall had been given in Rev. 14:8, and 16:19. Then Rev. 17 explains why, closing with the dirge in ch. 18. So Rev. 21:1-8 is the everlasting state which is altogether distinct, the Lamb not being seen as such, but "God all in all." It is the conclusion chronologically of the series that began in Rev. 19, 20 and in fact the end of all, if we can so designate the everlasting state. As you can have nothing subsequent to eternity, the Holy Spirit helps us here as before by a mark (Rev. 21:9), strikingly similar to that which introduced the eternity, the Holy Spirit helps us here as before by a mark

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merely in heaven, as in Rev. 19, nor as in the new heavens and earth of Rev. 21:1-8 but in its millennial aspect. That this is the truth appears clearly and certainly from "the nations" (Rev. 21:24, 26, 22:2), and "the kings of the earth" (ch. 21:24), which are not and cannot be in eternity, as surely our opponents must admit. As it is not this age, any more than eternity, what can it be but the age to come, the millennium, or "the kingdom"? Prof. Beet therefore ought to see that his idea of "the everlasting splendor pictured in Rev. 21, 22" (p. 28) needs the corrective of the text itself more maturely and accurately weighed. Still less true is his statement in p. 34 that "there is nothing to prevent us from reading the glorious visions of the prophets as descriptions of the final glory." Let him or Dr. Brown face Zech. 14 squarely, to take but a single text, and say whether such a chapter can be fulfilled either now or in eternity. When then? This is but a sample from the prophets, who in truth support nothing but premillennialism.

It is frankly acknowledged that the principle of new heavens and a new earth is laid down in Isa. 65, 66. But the remarkably abstract form of the Hebrew construction is not to be overlooked, not the relative and indicative, but the present participle, which seems a favorite way of describing an action apart from a specified actual time. There is another consideration which any observing Christian reader can see; -- that the context restricts its application here to Jerusalem, and the land and the people of Israel. None can deny that the state of things portrayed is not eternity, any more than things as they ever were or are now, or can be, save in a different age. So even Dr. J. A. Alexander allows (Comm. in loco) that "it is a promise or prediction of entire change in the existing state of things; the precise nature of the change, and the means by which it shall be brought about, forming no part of the revelation here". It is true that this change he, in his usual manner, inclines to believe moral or spiritual only. But this is a mere opinion: he admits an "entire change," to which the Apocalypse gives the fullest scope, far beyond O. T. or Jewish limits, now that Christ is come and the Holy Spirit given that we might have the mind of Christ, and enter into the boundless counsels of God. It is sorrowful where such grace is not appreciated.

Thus then we have the symbol of the glorified church, the holy city Jerusalem (not the earthly one), but coming down out of heaven from God; yet there are "the nations," and "the kings of the earth," contemporaneously connected and blessed here below. It is in vain to cry

What a mongrel state of things is this! What an abhorred mixture of things inconsistent with each other! (Brown's Second Advent p. 392).

It is no answer to speak of "the transient glimpses at the Transfiguration," &c. The thesis is that God reveals a long millennial period, widely different from all that has been, and in many respects from the eternity which follows, to which those glimpses are a partial testimony. To the earth Christ will come in His own glory, and of the Father, and of the holy angels; there may be difficulties beyond what is revealed; but the opposite scheme, in the desire to delay His coming, and to deny the true character of the kingdom, makes His coming an impossibility; for it is imagined to be, when the earth and the heavens will have fled away. Now Christ is to come here again.

Take another instance, which the system of these brethren furnishes of the havoc it works for all the practice as well are the truth of the church. Indisputably Christians are called to be unworldly, suffering, separate, and subject like the crucified Lord here below. Now if Dan. 2:44 (p. 140) is thus misapplied to the kingdom already set up, the church has to subdue and destroy the imperial powers, or "anti-Christian systems," as they are styled. That is, it must, like Popery, subjugate and overthrow all opposing powers that be. Thus does the church, through that error, become a rebel in Christ's name, instead of a holy sufferer, as Christ and His servants taught and practiced. Take it as God's kingdom when Christ comes "in the days of these kings," the ten toes of the statue, and all becomes true, plain, and consistent. No need then to metamorphose the instant and irreparable destruction of the powers into the slow dealing of providence, any more than to rob Christ of His prerogative of filling the whole earth with indisputable authority, immediately consequent on His judgment of the quick. Dan. 7 confirms this as the only true interpretation. The Ancient of days comes when judgment is given to the saints of the high or heavenly places. Then they will safely and holily reign with Christ to God's glory. To attempt it now is a sin and a lie; it is in theory if not in fact to play the part of fifth-monarchy men, whether Papists or Protestants, Covenanters or Roundheads.

The truth is that all is vague on this human scheme, which grew up as men neglected scripture, and hope in man supplanted faith in God. Christ personally recedes into the distance; and "His cause," identified with the efforts of men (of ourselves or persons like us), takes the place of Himself with His own. This may please and flatter our nature; but it betrays that sad decay of proper bridal affection which characterized the decline and fall of the church since apostolic days, through the darkness of medieval times, and which, in no way retrieved at the Reformation (however blessed as far as it went), has well-nigh vanished away in the isolating though busy unchurch-system of our century. I
regret that I in speaking what is in my judgment unquestionable, one must wound the susceptibilities of many brethren I love and esteem highly. But let God be true, and Christ's honor above all; and the rather, as it is in their highest interests that, if the truth, it should be spoken out. I repudiate a party or school of doctrine to cry up, and yet more the petty spite or vanity of crying down, those dear to the Lord.

Again, it ought not to be a light thing that the hope of Christ's coming, while owned in word, should become for children of God no more than a dead letter. This it must be where men look and labor avowedly, before Christ can possibly come, for a vainly expected universal diffusion of revealed truth, universal reception of true religion and unlimited subjection to Christ's scepter, universal peace, much spiritual power and glory, inbringing of all Israel, ascendency of truth and righteousness, and great temporal prosperity over all the earth for a thousand years or more, perhaps much more, as a previously certain and revealed barrier. They may indeed love the Lord's appearing, and long for Him to break the usurper's spell over the world, and establish for rebellion peace, and for wretchedness blessing to God's glory. But it is unreal to profess waiting for One, Who, as you are assured, cannot possibly come yet, nor for a long while, according to this hypothesis. The hope ceases to be a present reality in the soul, as it is supposed to be a mistake of scripture. Watching for Him becomes a poetical idea, an amiable or pious enthusiasm, which, notwithstanding the positive and known hindrances from scripture. The reasoning on 1 John 3:8-10; Heb. 2:14, 15, and Rom. 16:20, is as weak and false as the unbelief of Rev. 20:1-3, 7, is painful and complete. The issue is worthy of such grounds -- the melancholy fable of the church in Christ's hand not only defeating Antichrist, but for a thousand years never permitting the devil to gain an inch of ground to plant his foot on over the wide world! It must never be the truth of Christ reigning personally. I can conceive no interpretation of Rev. 20 more perverse, nor more at issue with the New Testament throughout. But

Christ's coming habitually. It was to be not only a sure goal of their hopes one day, but a practical constant outlook, confirmed, not corrected, even in both the Epistles to the Thessalonians, while, quite different misapprehensions were cleared up. But the divine light vouchsafed then shone brightly on that blessed and living hope, not only not setting it aside, but joining the inspired apostle with the saints alive on earth, as the "we" that wait (for aught that was made known) for His coming. A post-millennialist, if he expressed his creed, must say, They that shall be alive, that remain unto the coming of the Lord; he could not truly and intelligently say, "We." Either he knows better than the apostle, or he ought (as is the truth) to infer that his own system is false. None who holds this system can, ex animo, join the apostle and say, "We that are alive, that remain," &c.

There is another fatal issue of postmillennialism. It presents the kingdom when supposed to be triumphant without the King. It abuses the present abnormal phase of the kingdom to deny its future regular form according to the Old Testament prophets as well as the New. Now the King, rejected by His earthly people is hid in God above, seated on the Father's throne, not on His own {Rev. 3:21}; and hence we have its "mysteries" made known, as in Matt. 13, to explain its singularities, till this age ends, and the new age displays it and the King reigning in righteousness, times of restoring all things, as God declared from the beginning. But this glorious exhibition before the universe for a thousand years is just what unbelief leaves out: an irreparable blank in God's revealed plan, which cannot be without also introducing confusion every where else. Thus Christ's person is absent from the scene of His exaltation, and the church is no longer to fast but enjoy honor and glory, where He was crucified without. It can be no longer true for the thousand years that His members suffer with Him. They are in idea, what the apostle said as a reproach and not without irony, -- they are reigning "without us," yea, without Christ. But, said the large and true-hearted servant, "and I would that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you." When the day really comes, Christ will reign and all His risen saints. The Corinthians had practically dropped into a figurative reign of His cause.

But the word is, as long as there is a member of Christ, "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him." "If so be that we suffer together, that we may be also glorified together." And as they wrongfully exclude Christ from their millennium, so do they keep Satan in the face of positive scripture. The reasoning on 1 John 3:8-10; Heb. 2:14, 15, and Rom. 16:20, is as weak and false as the unbelief of Rev. 20:1-3, 7, is painful and complete. The issue is worthy of such grounds -- the melancholy fable of the church in Christ's hand not only defeating Antichrist, but for a thousand years never permitting the devil to gain an inch of ground to plant his foot on over the wide world! It must never be the truth of Christ reigning personally. I can conceive no interpretation of Rev. 20 more perverse, nor more at issue with the New Testament throughout. But

Not so, says St. Paul, but rather, "We shall not all sleep (die), but we shall all be changed." It is appointed unto men, indeed, once to die, but after this the judgment. Faith in Christ and His work alters all for us. That was lost man's sad portion; what is the Christian's? Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear a second time without sin unto salvation. The soul's want was provided for at His first advent, as the body's will be when He shall be seen a second time.

Like the Master, also the servants will die (p. 154). This error has been already refuted. The apostles speak in a way which a post-millennialist must in honesty avoid.

To the early christians, although the day of Christ was known to be not close at hand &c. (p. 152)!

He knows the danger of what the Lord recommends! It represses missionary effort!

If we have no reliable proof of the nearness of the visible return of Christ, to speak of it as near is in the last degree dangerous(p. 36).

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Christ is the Life as well as the Resurrection, and the saints so profit thereby, that according to scripture we ought to wait, as the early Christians did, not for death, but for
indeed all that these believers say on the millennium is mere incredulity, a muster of cavils against its revealed character, and a substituted fanciful exaggeration of the present, but no real reign of Christ and the glorified saints, no personal exclusion of Satan, no true deliverance of the groaning creation, though Dr. Brown does admit a sort of restoration of Israel to their land, which ill assort with his other views.

Nor is there any less loss for the soul now. For the hypothesis of a general resurrection and of a simultaneous universal judgment undermines the distinctive peace, joy, and assurance of salvation for the believer. Confound the two resurrections, enfeebles the resurrection of the saints from among the dead; and the consciousness of present union with Christ is impaired if not lost, and all is confusion as to the future. Christ’s coming, and His appearing, the great day and the white-throne judgment, are all huddled together in one lump, so that the poor heart oscillates between hope and fear, the joy of meeting our Lord and the anxiety of judgment. In scripture how different! The saints even now live of the life of Christ risen from the dead (John 20:20; Col. 3:4); and accordingly life and salvation in His name both point to those spoken of as quickened with Him, raised up together, and seated together (not yet with, but) in Him in the heavenly places (Eph. 2). Christ has borne the believer’s judgment; and so he comes not into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Undoubtedly he will give account of all done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10), and receive accordingly, no less than the unbeliever who, rejecting Christ, has neither life nor fruits of the Spirit, as the believer has. Hence for the one it is judgment, for the other it is not. And any Christian has but to consider and see the absurdity of being judged after you are justified, and of God too. Yea, the believer is glorified at Christ’s coming before he renders an account, which supposes that he is saved, but determines the special position he is to receive in the kingdom. The resurrection of the just is therefore a resurrection of life, as that of the unjust is one of judgment. Believing in Christ, the saints had life here and now; they will be raised when He comes again, to have that life applied to their bodies which they already know for their souls since He first came. And it is as distinct in time as in principle and results; like His own it is a resurrection from among the dead, even if we were not told that there is an interval of at least a thousand years.

Nor is that interval without grave moral significance. It is a reign over the earth, but of heavenly glory with Christ, for those who suffered with Him, as all saints do till He comes again. The millennial saints do not thus suffer, and hence do not share in this special reign, but enjoy its benefits to the full. In another sense all saints are to reign in life (Rom. 5:17, millennial with the rest), throughout eternity. It is no question of suffering for Christ, or being martyrs, as many have gathered from a hasty view of scripture, and especially of Rev. 20:4, though the passage itself leaves ample room for all that had suffered with Christ. For if children, heirs also -- heirs of God and joint-heirs with Him; if we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him (Rom. 8:17). So, if we endure (and in the millennium it is enjoyment, not endurance), we shall also reign together (2 Tim. 2:12). Such shall be “accounted worthy to obtain, that age” (whatever they might suffer in this age), and the resurrection from among the dead. They are sons of God being sons of the resurrection. The wicked have no such spiritual relation, and are compelled to rise for judgment at the appointed hour, when that special reign is over, and a large addition is made to their already large ranks from all ages.

But we may go farther. The distinctness of time as well as of character is therefore a weighty part of revealed truth. But it is even to be gathered from a book as ancient as Job (14 and 19). For thence we learn that unlike any vegetable ever shooting “afresh,” sinful man as such “lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.” Not a word of the Lord’s coming then; but there is the very significant synchronism of no more heaven, though it be ordinarily less shaken than the earth: the negative and the positive marks precisely agree with Rev. 20:11, 12. It is the end, not of “the age,” or “this age,” but of the kingdom and of the heavens and earth that now are. Then, and not before, “man” shall be raised. How different that which we read of the saint in Rev. 19! “For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand up at the last on the earth (or dust); and after my skin hath been thus destroyed, yet from (or in) my flesh shall I see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.” This is, we may perhaps say, what is appointed for the saint, and evidently before the heavens and earth are no more. It is the first resurrection, as the other will be the second death. To the greatest of all prophecies, closing (as no other book could so well) the canon of scripture, we are indebted for the exact measure of the kingdom in time; but the difference of the two resurrections, and the priority of that of the saints, are as certainly to be gathered from one of the earliest books of the Old Testament, as from the latest of the New. Even the Pharisees did not question a resurrection of both just and unjust. It was reserved for Christendom to confound both in one general resurrection, though Christ (John 5) and scripture so carefully discriminate them. We have seen by the way, how inexcusable is the assumption that the premillennial advent is taught only in one chapter; but of this perhaps enough has been said already.

Now where is even an approach in any text adduced for the desired inference that the millennium precedes the advent? Not a hint of it appears either here or in any other scripture: let it be produced, if there is one. Every one of these texts admits of the millennium after Christ’s coming; not one intimates such a thing before it. Instead of so blessed a change for the earth, we are warned of a spoiled crop till harvest-time in the end of the age (Matt. 13), of days like those which brought the judgments in the days of Noah and of Lot (Luke 17), of departure from the faith in the latter times (1 Tim. 4), of seducers waxing worse and worse in the
last days, of men having a form of godliness, but denying the power (2 Tim. 3), and of a mystery of lawlessness to work up, on the removal of a restraint, into the lawless one revealed, who draws down, as Mr. B. confesses, the Lord Jesus personally appearing in judgment (2 Thess. 2). If the Gentile did not abide in God’s goodness (and who would dare to say he does?), cutting off would ensue, says Rom. 11, not the millennium. To unsophisticated minds such continuous and prevalent iniquity, till the Lord judges the quick at His advent, excludes a millennium, such as scripture describes, or even Dr. Brown’s imaginary amelioration of this age before that day. Nay, some of those very scriptures, with a crowd of others, imply the millennium only when Christ is come.

Again, our Lord and His apostles never once speak of a millennial issue of preaching or the like. Where the millennium is spoken of, prophecy invariably declares that divine judgments introduce it. Compare Isa. 1:24-31; 2; 4; 9:4-7; 11:4-9; 24-25; 59:16-21; 60-66; Jer. 10:7-25; 23; 30; Ezek. 20; 38; 39; Dan. 2; 7; 11; 12; Hos. 2; 3; Amos 9; Obad. 15-21; Micah 4; 5; Nah. 1; Hab. 2; 3; Zeph. 3:8-20; Hag. 2:6-9, 22, 23; Zech. 2:8-13; 10: 12; 14; Mal. 4. The Psalms as well as the Law might be cited; but this will suffice. The gospel was to be preached in the world for a witness unto all the nations; but for this age not a sound of the world being converted or even brought as yet to a universal profession of the Lord’s name. This is at best unauthorized enthusiasm, the fruit of unconscious presumption in neglect of scripture, which alone can decide the “how” as well as the “what.” That the earth is to be full of the knowledge of Jehovah’s glory is certain; that preaching or the church is to effect it is not only without, but against, God’s word. It is an honor reserved for Christ in person, Who will execute judgment on His enemies, destroy idolatry, expel Satan, bring Israel and the nations to repentance, bless all creation, and reign in power with His glorified saints till the last foe is annihilated, when He will give up the kingdom to Him Who is God and Father, that God may be all in all. The eternal state is not the delegated kingdom, though there will be everlasting glory in the new heavens and new earth.

The gospel mission, as it is of God’s grace, could not be other than universal in its scope and call; and the infinite work of Christ’s atonement demands nothing less. This for the responsibility of the disciples was to disciple all the nations (Matt. 28), but what a very different thing from the effect in man’s hand or from God’s counsels! Simeon related (says Acts 15) how first God visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. To this agrees the clear and general testimony of the N. T. It is in vain to oppose vague statements, or fanciful interpretations of “the tree” and “the leaven,” as if scripture could contradict itself. Our Lord expressly anticipates some as believing, and some as disbelieving (Mark 16); and such was the fact according to the inspired history (Acts 28). God is not in this age proposing universal blessing under Christ’s government in power and glory over the earth; He gathering for heaven saved souls, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, that, when all things are in fact put under Him, they too may be manifested with Him in glory (Col. 3). This will be the millennium. The world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ will have come (Rev. 11:15).

But the N. T. is made completely inapplicable, if the millennium come ere this age closes and the day of the Lord arrives. For its habitual language is essentially distinctive, and supposes, not all nations flowing to Zion, exalted above the hills, but “sheep in the midst of wolves,” who have to “beware of men” (Matt. 10), a people purified to Himself for His own possession (Titus 2), “a chosen generation” (1 Pet 2), “in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation” (Phil. 2), “all that will live godly suffering persecution” (2 Tim. 3) -- the very opposite of reigning in righteousness, peace, and glory; expressly suffering with Him now, and looking to reign with Him only in “that day.” As the Lord had said in John 16, “in the world ye shall have tribulation.” To him that overcomes now, the promise is by and by to sit with Christ on His throne (Rev. 3), as we see verified in Rev. 20; but this is the millennium of His day. Even when the final testimony in this age goes forth i.e. the everlasting gospel (Rev. 14), the solemn warning that accompanies it is, “for the hour of His judgment is come” {Rev. 14:7}. Alas! for the self-flattering unction, that we, or any like us, are the men to make good the millennium by our efforts! This is truly a carnal and unscriptural expectation, which takes fire at true testimony as paralyzing missionary zeal, though obliged to own that none in fact are more zealous than those who look for Christ’s coming before the millennium. In principle, the waiting for the Lord to come in grace and in judgment ought on the face of it to add urgency to our love and labors.

Further, it is a mistake to suppose that the N. T. (save in Rev. 20) is silent about the millennium, if we mean the thing and not the mere word; if only the latter, it is but illusion. The following are but a selection of N. T. scriptures which apply to the millennial day rather than to any other: Matt. 19:28; Luke 1:70-79; Acts 17:31; Rom. 8:19, 23; 11:26-31; 1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Eph. 1:10; Phil. 2:10; 11; Col. 1:20; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; 2 Tim. 2:12; 4:1; Heb. 2:5-8. The O. T. had so fully described the millennium, and shown it to hinge, not only on the Messiah’s presence, but on terrific judgments as introducing it, that there was the less need for the N. T. to dwell on what had been revealed already. To hold out the Lord’s coming was therefore the exigency of the truth, if the millennium follows, but scarcely comprehensible if it be conceived to precede. For His coming in due time brings in the heavenly glory, as well as the peaceful reign over the earth, when the war-judgments have overwhelmed the wicked. And the Revelation is exactly the place to give particulars; for only in such a prophetic book could we intelligently expect the full, detailed, and relative order of these stupendous events. This we accordingly find with a precision and completeness, as well
as unity, found nowhere else in the compass of inspiration, whatever rationalism may object to. No wonder it is called The Revelation. But dark unbelief casts its shadow over its pages, and would, if it could, convert it into the enigma of man, instead of owning it the solution of our Lord Jesus.

Why too, in comparing the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptists, refer to John 14:18 (p. 24), and say nothing of the opening of the same chapter, where Christ’s proper coming is set forth, not with earthly signs, but with heavenly blessings beyond any other? One might as fairly set Matt. 16:28, Mark 8:38, Luke 9:27, against the prophecies of His advent in each Gospel and say that “His words here are not accompanied by any of the many and constant associations which mark, both in the Gospels and Epistles, the visible return of Christ at the last day.” Is mystification sought? What else is the aim? In John 14:1-3 the truth of His coming is revealed in its strict personality and heavenly aspect as our hope at least as distinctly as elsewhere. In John 5:28, 29, the resurrection had been shown to be, not simultaneous, but fundamentally distinguished as twofold, a resurrection of life, and a resurrection of judgment, whilst ver. 25 is decisive that “hour” may be long enough to let in a thousand years and more. So in John 6 (not to speak of John 11:24) “last day” can be no difficulty. And where is a previous millennium supposed in any of these scriptures?

It may have been the unhallowed wish of the multitude in John 6, who owned Jesus as the prophet that should come, and desired to make Him a King, as the fulfiller of Psa. 132:15. But what would it have been but a carnal millennium on this side of death? Now it is the very aim of the Lord Jesus to make known that, instead of any present blessing by His reign now, He was come from heaven, and incarnate, to give the believer eternal life and resurrection at the last day, feeding meanwhile on His flesh, and drinking His blood. Thus a millennium is excluded till the last day comes and the righteous join Christ, for the display of His glory in the universe according to prophecy; as the apostle connects the raising of the saints with inheriting the kingdom (1 Cor. 15), where the words rendered “then” simply indicate subsequence; whether long or short, depends wholly on other facts or statements, as do the words “hour” and “day.” So 1 Thess. 4 speaks only of the dead and living saints at Christ’s coming; but how does any one of these scriptures, I say not involve, but admit of, the millennium before the second advent? If the millennium follow, their bearing is plain enough, though man’s mind can easily suggest difficulties.

It may not be unseasonable to repeat that the N. T. says so much the less of the millennium, because it occupies so large a place in the O. T. The promises to the fathers (Genesis passim) suppose that time as the season of their most manifest fruition, however truly faith takes them up now in Christ. But it will hardly be contested that the Abrahamic inheritance of the world will then be enjoyed more distinctly than at any other period. So, in the prophecy of Jacob (Gen. 49), the gathering or obedience of the peoples to Shiloh looks onward to that day. Without dwelling on more debatable witness in the types of Ex., Lev., Num., &c., we may refer to the Psalms as running over with intimations beyond mistake. Take, among others, Psa. 2, 8, 22, 45, 72, 93-101, 110, 117, 118, 132, to say nothing of the concluding Hallelujah Psalms.

Still richer thus, if possible, were the prophets. Isaiah is almost too familiarly known in this connection to call for many words. But we may notice that, after appeals to conscience and heart, Isa. 1:24-31 speaks of the Lord suddenly intervening in judgment to bring in righteousness for the chosen people; as Isa. 2 shows it will be the same principle and result for the nations. It is the kingdom by and by, not the gospel now, idolatry vanishing only in that great day. Is it possible that spiritual men can confound with the gospel “the spirit of judgment,” and the “spirit of burning” (ch. 4) by which the Lord is to purge the blood of Jerusalem? Then follows manifested glory upon Zion. Such will be the character of that future reign. Meanwhile, Israel having stumbled at the Stone of stumbling -- Messiah in humiliation, the testimony is bound up, the law sealed, among His disciples -- the children given to Christ Whom the prophet represents, signs and wonders, while Jehovah hides His face from Jacob (ch. 8). If this, according to Heb. 2, applies now, ch. 9 is no less explicit that the end of the age will see the intervention of His glorious power, when He breaks the rod of the oppressor, and Israel rejoice before Him. Then will they wake up from their long and fatal sleep, and joyfully own “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful,” &c. And so one might pursue the theme throughout.

A mourner over Judah’s sins and judgments as Jeremiah was, none the less does he point to the kingdom fully in chs. 3, 16, 23, 30-33. Ezekiel too is not silent on this head: chs. 16, 17, 20, 28, 34, 36, 38. Daniel shows us, as the issue of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and of his own visions, the kingdom of God consequent on a judgment that extirpates the Gentile powers, rather than a description of that kingdom. On the so-called Minor Prophets we need not dwell. Speaking generally, they bear witness to the same glorious result on earth, as does the O. T. as a whole. It is neither heaven nor eternity, but Messiah’s reign.

The N. T. confirms the Old in this fully; but it does more and better. To us it opens heaven and higher hopes, which gradually grew into brightness in the rejected Messiah glorified as man on high, and there made head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:22, 23). Hence, save for special purposes, it is the heavenly side of the kingdom, on which the O. T. is all but silent, whereas it becomes the prominent and characteristic testimony of the N. T. The earthly side was in no way denied, but rather disappeared in the incalculably superior glory of what has now come fully to view. Yet, painful to say, it is this special privilege for the Christian to enjoy in hope, consequent on Christ’s
accomplished redemption and the gift of the Spirit, which appears to stumble some of our brethren. For the N. T. says no more than is requisite of the earth by and by; the aim is to insist on heaven in a way and measure which is quite new; and therefore Christ’s coming, to receive us to Himself and give us a place with Himself in the Father’s house above, becomes the distinctive keynote. But the Christian does not therefore lose his part in the kingdom, though the heavenly hope helps to explain more clearly the exalted relation he is to have in reigning with Christ at that day.

The Father’s kingdom will come where the risen saints shine like the sun; and His will be done on earth as in heaven, because the glorious Son of man will hold the reins of power (Satan being bound), and the angels of His might gather out of His kingdom (clearly the earth) all scandals and those that do lawlessness {Matt. 13}. Then, and then only, are the saints to judge the world, yea, angels (1 Cor. 6), as the apostles sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt. 19). It is a state of things surely to be fulfilled, but as surely neither in this age nor in eternity, but in the age between, when all things, the habitable world to come among them (Heb. 2:5-8), will be seen put under Christ, as they cannot be now or when the kingdom is given up {1 Cor 15:25-28}. It is to be feared that those who find it incredible that God’s kingdom should consist of earthly and of heavenly things to be displayed together at Christ’s manifestation, when we, too, shall be manifested together with Him in glory {Col. 3:4}, fall into the kindred unbelief now of excluding from their hearts and their teaching such unearthly and glorious motives. The apostle counted the letting in of this heavenly light on common matters most desirable, wholesome, and influential. It did not occur to him that real Christians would object to the divine scheme of the kingdom, because Christ will be the displayed Head of all things in heaven and of all things on the earth {Eph. 1:10}. The objectors are not indeed Sadducees; but unbelief as far as it goes joins saints in bad companionship. Together they err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.

And the consequence of this unbelief has been disastrous from early days to our own. The low chiliastic views of the second and third centuries, which fell back on the Jewish hope of the earth at Christ’s coming, were met for the most part by the allegorizing interpretation, which assumed a reign of the gospel and of the church, either already or at a future day. The purpose of God to put the universe heavenly and earthy under Christ was given up by both to the unspeakable loss of the saints, and sad slight of their Lord. Under this error lie our brethren today. Even Dr. B., who differs from most of his friends by looking for all Israel’s inbringing as a leading feature of the latter day, nullifies its distinctiveness by his usual argument of less now and more then, so as to assimilate all and deny a new age or dispensation. This vagueness dissolves the power of the truth: else he must feel that the nature of the church as the one body of Christ wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile forbids, and is inconsistent (as long as it is in process of building) with, the inbringing of all Israel. But this he does not see, because he, as much as those who reject Israel’s hope, ignores the special calling and character of the church. Now according to scripture it is not the merging of all Israel in the church which is predicted; but, along with their conversion, prophecy points out their restoration to more than pristine glory and blessedness under Messiah and the now covenant; and this, to be the head of the nations on earth, when the glorified reign over it from their heavenly seats with Christ.

When the church ceased to affirm the future prospects of Israel on earth, she along with this lost sight of her own heavenly hopes, and began to seek ease, honor, and power here below, and naturally perverted the prophecies to this end. At length she substituted herself so completely for the ancient people of God, that she dreamed Jerusalem and Zion, Judah and Israel, to be only so many varying expressions of her own glory, either now or at a future day. For another age characterized by Christ’s presence and reign was now become intolerable. As long as (alas! how briefly) the church walked in the living hope of her own heavenly association with Christ’s glory, she also confessed God’s immutable mercy for Israel here below; that at Christ’s coming He might have the glorified with Himself above, and concurrently therewith His earthly people, the channel and means of the universal spread of His name among all nations broken by judgments, and under the Spirit’s latter rain, Satan being banished from his wondrous haunts.

The prevalent view betrays the usual symptoms of unbelief. It does not face a quantity of plain scriptural testimony. It occupies itself with exaggeration of others or with its own difficulties and objections, not positive truth. It neglects the scriptures which tell us clearly how the kingdom is to come. It is based on the assumption of human progress in the face of the clearest warnings of failure increasing till Christ come. It hides its self-confidence under the plea of the Spirit in and by man working Christ’s cause to ultimate triumph. It denies the divine purpose of putting all things visibly under Christ, and the glorified saints on high with Israel and all nations blessed here below before eternity come. It banishes the King from His kingdom, for His bride to enjoy it if she can in His absence, and insists on keeping Satan in his bad eminence, spite of the strongest assurance to the contrary. To what is such obstinate incredulity due? Were the eye single to Christ’s personal glory (not “His cause” in our hands), the whole body would be full of light, instead of the confusion this error breeds for this and almost every other truth.

It is false that Christ’s second coming “will be at once followed by the final separation of the good and bad, and by the eternal glory” (p. 135), and that consequently the millennium cannot follow it. Our Lord, to correct the thought that the kingdom of God was about to be manifested immediately, spoke parabolically (Luke 19) of going to a distant country (heaven) to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return. His servants (Christians) meanwhile trade with His money; His citizens (the Jews), not content with
rejecting Him as they were already doing unto the death of the cross, send a messenger after Him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. All this (in spite of Peter’s call in Acts 3) was punctually fulfilled in the murder of Stephen, sent after Christ as it were with that insulting message. So indeed it was shown in the Acts at large and the N. T. generally. But when Christ comes back again, having received (not given up) the kingdom, He awards to His servants for the kingdom authority over this or that, and utter loss for such as make no use of what was given; He also executes judgment on the rebellious people. All this will be as surely fulfilled. But it is in no respect the great white-throne judgment for the lake of fire, nor the eternal glory of Rev. 21:1-8 when He shall give up the kingdom to Him Who is God and Father. It is what the apostle had in view when he charged Timothy by (or testified both) Christ’s appearing and His kingdom (1 Tim. 4:1); for He is to judge not dead only at the end, but quick at the beginning and in one form or another all through the kingdom. Reigning in righteousness is the characteristic display then; and we shall share His throne.

The post-millennial system misapplies or excludes that grand prospect which the apostle was inspired to open out to us in Eph. 1:10; Phil. 2:10, 11; Col. 1:20. For, though there be results for eternity, the millennium will be the blessed manifestation before the universe of the Savior’s triumph. What grace does now is in no way the administration of the fullness of times; nor will eternity be anything of the kind, for Christ shall deliver up the kingdom and Himself be subject to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) may be all in all (1 Cor. 15:24-28).

The millennium is not a characteristic period of conflict between good and evil, however changed the conditions. It is a reign of righteousness on earth, Christ and His glorified saints reigning together over it. It is the heavenlies, no longer infested by spiritual wickednesses, but purged for ever, and filled with those who were once the slaves of Satan, bearing in their risen bodies the image of His glory. It is the heavenly Jerusalem, reflecting from on high, not glory only, but that same spirit of grace (Rev. 22:2) in which those who compose it once walked on earth by faith: the beautiful contrast of the earthly Jerusalem which in that day will still be the witness and instrument of unsparing righteousness (Isa. 60:12). Then more fully will be seen the truth of the great Melchizedek, not only in person and title but in the exercise of His priesthood, when He will bless man with the blessing of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth; and bless the Most High God Who will have delivered the enemies into the hand of the faithful. Heaven and earth will no more stand severed and opposed through sin; nor will it be merely grace in Christ from heaven shining for all that they may believe, and on believers as they feebly pursue their pilgrim path; but heaven and earth shall form the harmonious theater of suited glory. “For there are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and that of the terrestrial is another.” “And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith Jehovah, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel (Hos. 2:21-22).

Eternity is not an “administration” or stewardship, as this will be; nor is it true as a fact yet, but, a revealed purpose for that intervening day “to sum (or head) up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth” -- “in Him in Whom we also obtained an inheritance,” having been foreordained according to His purpose. For we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. During this evil age Satan is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2), the god of this age, who beguiled its rulers to crucify the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2). This, however, only gave occasion to the mystery concerning Christ and concerning the church. While Christ sits exalted head over all things at God’s right hand, the Holy Spirit is sent down to gather out and together the members of the one body, the sons of glory; so that, when He comes again, having received the kingdom, they too may reign with Him. Then the earth will be judicially cleansed from its defilement, and the ancient people of God in repentance welcome their once rejected but now glorified Messiah, and thus take their destined place, though on the ground of pure mercy, as the head of all nations and families of the earth, at length blessed under the sway of the only worthy One.

In the eternal universe there will be no more sea (Rev. 21:1). For the millennial state it is written, “Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills be joyful before Jehovah; for He cometh to judge the earth with righteousness shall He judge the world and the peoples with equity.” It is the kingdom of God before being given up. Then will creation be, not burnt up as at the end, but delivered; for the revelation of the sons of God is come; and as they are no longer waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body, creation groans no more, but is set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of God’s children (Rom. 8). It is the day of the displayed glory of the Second Man, and His manifested triumph over Satan, not the conflict, but the kingdom; and when this (not the strife) draws towards its close, Satan is loosed for a little time, but for a great moral lesson, after which he is overwhelmed and tormented forever. Then only will be the eternal state.

Then will the world, not “believe,” as it ought, now, that the Father sent the Sea (John 17:21), but “know” that the Father did send Him and love the saints on high as He loved Christ (v. 23); for will they not then shine in the same heavenly glory? For the glory which the Father gave Christ, Christ gave them (v. 22), now first said to be “perfected into one,” as indeed cannot be till then. This is the perfection of supernatural interference, the very reverse of “heaven and hell withdrawing from the field, and leaving it to the inherent power of principles as manifested in human life on earth,” as
Dr. Edwards erroneously thinks (p. 73).

Dr. Edwards writes for the most part calmly. Yet with an adequate knowledge of scripture one cannot yield to his thoughts or his reasoning.

It is true, as a matter of course, that the advent of the Messiah is first shown in the O. T. (p. 63), and that only after His rejection by the Jews was His second advent discerned clearly from the first. But it is a mistake that the second advent is ever represented in the N. T., as introducing “the eternal reign of God when Christ shall have delivered the mediatorial kingdom to the Father” (p. 64). The age to come is ignored between the end of this age and the eternal day. Nor does scripture leave room for a third advent, which cannot therefore be postulated.

That the end of (not this age, but) the world and the judgment of the dead will be ushered in by an advent of our Lord Jesus, is certainly opposed to the N. T. Rev. 20 is absolutely silent about His advent, because it has been already described in Rev. 19, and what follows consists of its results. There are no quick [living] to be judged after fire from God has devoured the rebellious nations (Rev. 20:7-9); so that the judgment in vv. 11-15 consists solely of the dead, and we may add of the wicked, who, if we believe our Lord in John 5:24, exclusively come into judgment, as these do. They are judged according to their works, which for a sinner is perdition. The books according to the figure employed bore witness of their deeds; the book of life had none of their names. Divine sovereignty was silent; their works confessed the justice of their doom. If Christ must appear to judge quick and dead, it cannot be at the end of the kingdom, because there is no earth to come to, any more than quick to judge. According to the express terms of the vision, earth and heaven will have fled away, and no place be found for them. The dead stand before the throne; but it is neither the earth nor yet the heaven as far as we know, for they are then gone. It is a going of the dead to be judged by Christ, not in any sense His coming, which is a fabulous interpolation for that time. His true advent for the judgment of the quick is in Rev. 19:11, not in Rev. 20:11, when it is no longer possible, as in fact it is not so written.

As to “inherent improbability” (pp. 65-67), no argument can be more precarious. The nature of the case implies a divine intervention unexampled in the past. The only question for a believer is, What saith the scripture? The first coming of our Lord was no mere link in the chain of the world’s history; nor will His second coming be. The one was God’s humiliation in Christ’s person in grace; the other will be in Him man’s exaltation in glory. That both are above “development” is simple to faith, whatever be the speculations of philosophy. The atonement of Christ is not more the answer to a guilty conscience, than it is God thereby glorified even in the face of sin; and the kingdom will be the display of His victory before the universe to the joy of all the once groaning creation, the blessing of long deceived and benighted man, the glorified enjoying the reward of fidelity -- in their reign with Christ as they once suffered with Him. Yet Dr. E. asks, “What is gained by a millennium?” and answers, “Apparently, nothing; absolutely nothing.” This is really too dense.

The new age, however necessarily distinct from all before, is a stewardship, an economy. It will have its peculiar object -- for Christ to put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. Though He has the title already (Head over all things, which God has put under His feet), He is not yet making good that title against His enemies. While sitting at the right hand of God, and on the Father’s throne, He is acting as priest, &c., for His friends, till God makes His enemies His footstool. Then He will come, having received the kingdom, rule in the midst of His enemies, and strike through kings in the day of His wrath. It is a new age marked by its own special principles and ways, wholly distinct from what He or we are doing now, when He is gathering the coheirs who are associated with Himself in a heavenly way for His reign over the earth at His coming.

Is it not profane to speak of this holy and glorious kingdom of Christ and His own, as wearing the appearance of an immense demonstration, like the triumph of a Caesar? Such a comparison one might understand from the lips of a Festus, who regarded the revelation of God as questions of superstition, and of one Jesus which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

It neither grows out of the intellectual and spiritual condition of the human race, nor leads to higher attainments intellectual or spiritual (p. 66). It is the purpose of God to glorify the Lord Jesus and those who have in faith shared His sufferings, not only as now in Himself on high, but from out of the heavens over the earth, placed as it has never yet been in fact under His scepter.

But Dr. E. should not speak as he does both of the millennial reign, and of the short space that follows:

For a time it burns like a fierce light to be quenched in utter darkness; again, however, to blaze out in final and unending day (p. 66).

Satan expelled, Israel and all nations blessed, creation delivered, Christ and His own that are changed reigning over the earth, the Most High God possessor of heaven and earth united and in peace, and He Who was erst crucified bearing up the pillars of God’s glory: can anything be more worthy of Christ, or more in accordance with God’s word? Otherwise a vast deal of scripture in O. and N. T. is reduced to a blank, which again obscures both this age and eternity, with which in that case its contents are more or less confounded.

No prospect so desirable both for Christ and for the race. God occupies Himself with the glory of Christ, which will not fail. The millennium is no mistake, but a revealed and splendid chapter in God’s story of the universe. In Adam man fell and died; in Christ man will be made alive and blessed. Israel under law became ruined and scattered to every land; under Christ their King, and the new
covenant, they will yet be gathered and maintained in peace, and joy, and honor. The nations invested with imperial authority became “beasts,” as Daniel calls them, till the last, in the blasphemous pride of its chief, brings down the Son of man’s judgment in His kingdom, when all peoples, nations, and languages shall serve Him. The church, saved by grace, and the responsible witness on earth now to Christ glorified the world; but as unlike a Caesar’s triumph, as a man of dust differs from the Lord of glory. If there were no millennium, what a gap in God’s ways and in the display of His counsels!

That the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ shall come at the close of this age, and last for a long but terminable period constituting the new age, before “the end” or eternity begins, is no difficulty to a true-hearted believer accustomed to bow to scripture, and on his guard against tradition. And the insurrection of the distant nations after the thousand years are over, when Satan is let loose for the last temptation, simply shows that it is an age or dispensation when man is tried under quite new conditions and for the last time. Would the experience of a thousand years of righteousness, peace, and outward blessing, under the glorious reign of Christ and the heavenly saints, endear God to the race as such, so that they would reject the deceit of Satan?

To this the answer of God’s word by the little space {Rev. 20:7-10} is, that the race (however controlled to their own immense advantage, with every mercy around them through the infinitely beneficent and mighty One Who held the reins and shed the blessing) only needs the active temptation of Satan to turn and rebel once more at God. Nothing but to be born of God can avail. They submitted in Satan’s absence, when it was their own interest to render such obedience as it was, and when every transgression paid a just and speedy penalty. There was no temptation; and all was good around, and abundantly too. In such a state they could not be God’s people, and He their God, for the new heavens and the new earth. Satan’s temptation, unless God must or would convert them all, was precisely the due way to test them, as the race had been, if otherwise, always tested before; and they fall to their ruin at the first trial of Satan, as did man from the beginning. Is it godly, is it intelligent, is it decent, first to blot out the truth of the scriptural millennium, and then to stigmatize its freedom from social conflict, and its “reign in holiness and profound peace for a thousand years,” as a state to which “the actual history of the world is infinitely preferable” (p. 67)? Truly “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” {Matt. 12:34}.

“By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” {Matt. 12:37}.

It is ignorance and unbelief to regard the millennium as earthly alone. The distinctive truth is that, both heaven and earth will be in blessed nearness of harmony under Christ and the risen saints. And here it may be well to observe that the chief, perhaps only, N. T. semblance of proof for the earth exclusively is the misrendering of Rev. 5:10, where it is painful to see the error of the A. V. reproduced by the Revisers {of 1881}. For the usage, as far as appears, is that with words of authority or rule επί indicates the sphere ruled over, εν the place in which the ruler lived. There is a shade of difference between gen. dat. and accus., but none as to the general fact that they express the subject of rule, not the ruler’s abode. It will be seen, in the Books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, for instance, that the locality of the king is regularly expressed by εν, the sphere by επί. This being so, the true rendering is “over,” not “on.” Those who have given the latter have adopted a legitimate force of the preposition generally, not its meaning when modified by the connected βασιλεία. The millennial reign then is heavenly, but over the earth, where Israel and the nations do not reign but are reigned over.

Every one fairly informed on the question knows that the N. T. assumes the O. T. revelation of God on the millennium, but it is almost exclusively on the earthly side. The N. T. is not “more authoritative” (p. 69), but it adds very fully the connection with the heavens under the risen Christ, Heir of all things. Still, while the coming of the Lord is put forward prominently, the kingdom is in no way hidden in the N. T. nor even in the Epistles to the Thessalonians. “The kingdom” implies Christ’s coming to reign over the earth. In 1 Thess. 2:12 the apostle speaks of God calling to this, as an encouragement to walking worthily of God; and 2 Thess. 1 shows the enemy had taken advantage of their persecutions and afflictions to say that the day of the Lord was arrived. The apostle, even before he dissipates this delusion, treats their troubles, on the contrary, as a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, “that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God for which ye also suffer.” It is clearly the millennial reign with Christ which was suggested. And this is the more evident from v. 10, where it is said that Christ “shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at in all them that believed.” The world will then know by the glory in which Christ and His own shall be manifested, that the Father sent the Son and loved them as He loved Him. This is the millennium, not the eternal scene in the new heaven and new earth.

The next argument of Dr. E. on 2 Thess. 2 (pp. 69, 70), like some of Prof. B.’s, goes against the millennium, whether before or after Christ’s return. Now it is quite true, that what the apostle says excludes the millennium before He appears to destroy the lawless one. Here we are cordially agreed. But where is there the shadow of a reason against a subsequent thousand years of peace? More extraordinary still is the next statement:
The impression left on the reader’s mind is that Christ’s reign is a long conflict with evil, which in the end embodies itself in the person of the lawless one, whose defeat brings the war to a close.

A similar misconception appears in Prof. B.’s paper (p. 28). The impression given by the chapter is that the open outbreak and God-defying pride of the lawless one brings the Lord from heaven to annul him by the shining forth of His presence. This coalesces not only with Rev. 19:11-21, but with Isa. 11:4; both of which are followed beyond controversy by the millennial reign. After that reign is over, Satan is let loose for a special and needed sift ing of the kingdom is surrendered, and God is all in all. So far Himself be subjected to Him that subjected all things to Him, solemn eternal judgment that follows, then the Son shall also reign, but by the judgments which precede, and the still more reign where all things are to be subjected to Him in fact, of His open foes (the lawless one first of all), and enters on the Lamb takes place in heaven, before He appears in judgment His body, the church, are not complete. The marriage of the nourishing, &c., friends; and this, because the members of all His activities are of grace in converting foes, and subduing His enemies now, as He will when the kingdom comes? As to really vanquishing them, He is quiescent now: all His activities are of grace in converting foes, and nourishing, &c., friends; and this, because the members of His body, the church, are not complete. The marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven, before He appears in judgment of His open foes (the lawless one first of all), and enters on the reign where all things are to be subjected to Him in fact, as they are now in title. But the reigning is when the dispensation is in full and public operation before the universe. When that is done, not only in the millennial reign, but by the judgments which precede, and the still more solemn eternal judgment that follows, then the Son shall also Himself be subjected to Him that subjected all things to Him, the kingdom is surrendered, and God is all in all. So far from there being no hint, there is a pointed reference to the millennial reign in the latter half of 1 Cor. 15:24 and the whole of v. 25.

But Dr. E. makes up for such shortcomings by his open admission (pp. 71, 72) that the figurative interpretation of Rev. 20:1-10, for which Dr. Brown and Prof. Beet contend keenly as a question of life or death, “completely breaks down.” Nay more, he frankly accepts the interpretation that finds in the passage the doctrine of two resurrections, and that a long period, symbolically designated a thousand years, comes between the resurrection of the saints and that of the rest of the dead.

What is there to contend about after such an admission? the plain Christian may ask in surprise. That the millennium is a governmental system, and for a time only, in Christ’s hands, is the point. It is not the perfection of the new heaven and earth, when rule is over.

This passage (adds Dr. E.) contains no hint that Christ comes before the thousand years begin . . . But St. Paul plainly tells us that the saints are raised at Christ’s coming (1 Cor. 15:23). In this respect, that is, in reference to the resurrection of the saints, I infer that the advent is premillennial. Beyond this I cannot see that the passage supports the millennial theory.

It appears to me that a premillennialist must be hard to please who cannot see in this admission Dr. E.’s surrender of the post-millennial view; nor can I doubt that his two negative coadjutors must have been scandalized by a confession so distinct and positive, if not complete. To hold that Christ comes from heaven to raise the saints a thousand years and more (symbolically or literally) before He raises the rest of the dead, and yet that He does not then reign, and does not bring in times of restoring all things, though so full of prophetic testimony and therefore of such interest to God and His children, and that the world is not to know the wonders of God’s love to Christ and those that were His in days of suffering, and that there is to be no accomplishment of God’s purpose for administration of the fullness of times, no heading up of all things in Christ, both heavenly and earthly {Eph. 1:10}, in which we are to share the inheritance with Him: -- to hold what Dr. E. allows, and to deny, as he does, these glorious consequences of Christ’s coming, is to present as remarkable a group of inconsistencies as one can expect to see in a man of ability. In this judgment Prof. Beet and Dr. Brown would agree against Dr. E., unless I am greatly mistaken. One can but deplore the violence done thereby to the texture of scripture, and the impotence to which even the truth confessed is thus reduced.

The fact is, however, that our negative brethren are singularly at war with each other on vital questions. Thus Prof. Beet will have it, as the teaching of very many statements, by various sacred writers . . . that the coming of Christ will for ever end the conflict of good and evil (p. 140).

Such is his main position. This is directly at issue with Dr. Edwards, who holds that Christ comes to raise the saints for heaven where they will reign with Him, before the millennium (or a thousand years symbolical before the rest of the dead are raised, Satan being meanwhile bound and cast into the bottomless pit). Yet he also holds that the thousand years, far from being a time of holy peace, are a continuation of the conflict between good and evil, but under changed conditions . . . Heaven and hell withdraw from the field to leave it to the inherent power of principles, as manifested in human life on earth (p. 73). Thus all is avowedly reduced to a human level and order, beyond any dealing of God in the past!

The conflict assumes apparently a more human character! and this, after confessing Christ come, the saints raised, and Satan bound!! Of course Dr. B., as well as Prof. B., wholly reject all these features of Dr. E.’s wonderful millennium. “A more human character” is only true, if the all-important place of the risen Head and the risen saints is owned, not “withdrawn” but from heaven controlling the earth for good,
as never before, and ruling the nations with a rod of iron, in contrast with the gospel. The loosing of Satan after the thousand years, and his successful seduction of men far and wide on earth (for be never gains the place of accuser in heaven, as we know him), will only the more bring out that all flesh is grass; for it might have been thought an “inherent improbability” for such as judged from the unbroken peace, righteous government, and visible glory, of that unparalleled period. But flesh ensnared even then by Satan is devoured by fire coming down out of heaven; and heaven and earth are dissolved and vanish away for Christ’s judgment of the dead, who are cast into the lake of fire; and new heavens and a new earth appear wherein righteousness dwells, and God (not the exalted Man) is all in all.

For Dr. B. here, and more fully in his Second Advent, contends for a millennium which only differs from this age by an increase of the good now at work, and a diminution of the evil, with scarce one thing adequately answering to the visions of the kingdom as set forth in both Old and New Testaments alike. Dr. B. indeed does not argue like Prof. Beet, as if the passage in Rev. 20:1-9 stood alone and at issue with every other in the N. T. The chief thing peculiar to that passage in fact is defining the length of the kingdom; and where in the N. T. could that measure be given so fittingly as in its one great prophecy? The kingdom itself is most fully described in the Old Testament as well as less so in the New. Dr. B. does not question, as Prof. B. seems to do, the sphere of the reign with Christ (pp. 30, 146). They do indeed join arms in throwing doubt over its being a resurrection of the saints. One of them calls it an unproved assertion that the prophet speaks (in v. 4) of three classes, i.e., of the saints in general, besides the twofold Apocalyptic martyrs; another assumes that they are only martyrs.

In truth Prof. B. leaves it doubtful as far as appears (and I should abhor misjudging him or any other), whether he believes in a millennium at all, save possibly “a fresh departure greater and better even than the Reformation” (pp. 34, 35)! And he widely differs in the hasty assertion that “the visions of Daniel refer always to the eternal glory” (p. 33). Dr. B. on the contrary, with no less confidence, maintains the opposite error that the first vision (and the same principle applies no less to the last) is not even a new dispensation, but only a final step of the same unbroken dispensation as the present (pp. 119-121)! Thus both ignore “the age to come” in flat opposition to scripture. Again, Dr. B., in his aversion to the natural interpretation of Rev. 20:4-6, which Dr. E. admits it is impossible to evade, dwells on the symbolical and difficult nature of the Revelation, with almost every possible interpretation advanced, and the varieties of understanding this very passage among its literal interpreters (pp. 107, 108). Now what matters all this cloud of dust, if he is sure it is inspired, and that the Holy Spirit enables him to understand its genuine meaning? When people are so full of others’ uncertainties, can one trust their own assurance? Prof. Beet goes farther still, and does what he can to take up the old scepticism which those who shrunken from Rev. 20:1-10 fell into respecting even its genuineness (pp. 137, 138). But no man ever quarreled with the Apocalypse, unless the Apocalypse gave no quarter to his own idols. There is no book of scripture more self-evidently of God.

As far as appears, Dr. E. symbolizes with the late Prof. Moses Stuart, who believed in a first resurrection literally, and yet adhered to the traditional view of a general resurrection before the great white throne. But this amalgam is incoherent, and the exegesis unsatisfactory, even to the Andover expositor himself; as every comment must be which is not based on two distinct resurrections, of the just, and of the unjust. A general resurrection, or a universal judgment, is opposed to God’s word, and fraught with perplexity and error.

Dr. Brown, after some prefatory words of no concern here, begins with 2 Peter 3:10-13. His fundamental mistake is the assumption that the day of the Lord is the equivalent of the Second Advent. Now any careful reader of the O. T. may see that “that day” includes a vast variety of divine dealings, and is a period, not an epoch. It begins (not with the Lord’s presence or coming {i.e., the rapture} at all, which is positively and plainly contra-distinguished from it in 2 Thess. 2:1, 2, as we have already shown, but) with His judicial dealings on earth {beginning with His appearing in glory}; which judgments, in one form or another, occupy the kingdom for more than 1000 years, till it is delivered up at the end. This is the simple truth of the day of the Lord, apart from controversy; and it thus completely disposes of the difficulty. The dissolution of the universe is near the close of that day, but still within it, which is just what the apostle states {see 2 Pet. 3:7-13, JND translation}. Dr. B. perplexes himself by taking for granted that it is at the beginning. His argument in pp. 91-93 is wholly invalid.

The earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up: the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat; but all that the apostle Peter determines is, that it is “in” that day (v. 10) and by reason of it (v. 12). It was not to be before, nor yet after, but within {the day of the Lord}, and because of the presence of, the day of God {i.e., the eternal state}. The Apocalypse of John adds, where alone we ought to expect distinct details in their relative order, that this same destruction of heaven and earth is to be only just before the end. No wonder therefore that those who cling to the postmillennial theory decry the inspired book which demolishes it. The burning up and sweeping away are just before the day {of the Lord} ends, which had been running its course for more than a thousand years, an ample period for all that scripture predicts or premillennialists say. Nor is it true that the warning to the scoffers is pointless. If they ask, “Where is the promise of His coming?” the apostle answers with “the day of the Lord” and its overwhelming terrors, which will destroy the ungodly at the beginning, but will not end before the heavens and earth that now are pass away: the fitting and full reply of God to the scornful scepticism which took its stand against His word on the
{alleged} stability of the visible creation. The day will come as a thief, nor will it terminate till every word is accomplished. Dr. B.'s argument cannot survive the touch of scripture.

Just as vain is his reasoning on John 6, and the kindred texts in pp. 94-96. The Lord will assuredly raise up all the dead saints, and change the living ones, to be caught up together in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; but this leaves all open as to any who may be born of God afterwards during the day of the Lord, when Messiah's praise shall be of God "in the great congregation," and "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kingdoms of the nations shall worship before Thee." It is absurd to ignore the harvest of the millennial earth, necessarily distinct from the saints who compose the first resurrection. They that are Christ's are to be raised at His coming; but how unreasonable, as well as unscriptural, to fancy that Christ has none to bless in the day of His power and joy! Texts which "generation" to come. Psalms and Prophets speak distinctly unreasonable, as well as unscriptural, to fancy that Christ has none to bless in the day of His power and joy! Texts which speak of saints past or present do not shut out the "generation" to come. Psalms and Prophets speak distinctly of saints in that day on the earth. That they die not proves they will not be raised; that they do not suffer with Christ indicates that they are not to reign with Him in that day, for they will be reigned over; but as nothing forbids the gracious quickening of the Spirit in that day, so they will have their blessed portion in the eternal state. A premillennialist must be a simpleton to be perplexed by a conclusion as unsound as the premise is negligent of scripture.

In pp. 97, 98 follows a string of texts (Matt. 10:32, 33; John 5:28, 29; Rom. 2:6-10, 16; 2 Cor. 5:10) which are cited for simultaneous presentation and judgment of righteous and wicked at Christ's second coming. Not one of them utters a word to that effect. All teach award; none defines the time or way, still less simultaneity. Other scriptures prove that they are wholly apart; one at least defines the long interval. Dr. B. connects Rom. 2:16 with v. 10 and preceding; whereas it really links with v. 12. Again, Acts 17:31 speaks solely of Christ's judging the habitable earth, and not the dead. It is therefore nothing to Dr. B.'s purpose, but proves a different judgment, which the postmillennial scheme ignores. John 5 is so far from indicating a simultaneous judgment, that it proves the believer's portion to be life, in contrast with judgment which awaits the wicked only; so that there are two contrasted resurrections also. Hence in 2 Cor. 5:10 we read that we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done through the body according to what he has done, whether good or bad; but not a hint that it will be for just and unjust at the same time, which is elsewhere shown to be unfounded, yea, contradictory of God's word. Dr. B. is loose and unhappy in his citations.

But what then of Rev. 20:11-15, which is supposed to express clearly the absolute universality of the Last Judgment? (p. 99.) Can reasoning be feeblest? As in Rev. 11:18, and 19:5, "the small and the great" include none beyond those that are named, the God-fearing, so in the passage questioned "the great and the small," do not go beyond the dead that now stand before the throne for judgment, after the blessed and holy we saw raised 1000 years before to reign with Christ. Dr. B.'s argument really upsets his own conclusion. "The great and the small," as well as the mention of the sea, death, and Hades, do solemnly mark the universality of the dead left by the first resurrection; but to seek, as is sought, to include those already raised in "the dead," who now so long after stand before the throne to be judged, seems as opposed to all just interpretation of the chapter and to all scripture, as it is to all sound reasoning. It can only be accounted for by the darkening influence of error, a πρωτον ψευδος.

Every one must be manifested before Christ's Bema, saints and sinners at their respective and due times: the saints already glorified to give account and receive according to their deeds; sinners, as they have violated conscience, transgressed God's law, or rejected His gospel, to come into judgment, whence none of them can be saved, for they have not life. Hence here it is said (Rev. 20:12) that "the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books according to their works." If so, it was and could only be everlasting rain, as inspired David expresses it (Psa. 143:2); and so in the N. T. judgment is contrasted both with life (John 5:24, 29) and with salvation (Heb. 9:27, 28).

Yet my excellent friend Dr. B., after citing the affecting repetition in verse 13 ("and they were judged every man according to their deeds"), appeals to "the almost identical language of the Gospels and Epistles already quoted," which do not treat the judgment of the righteous and wicked as one whole. He asks, Are we to believe that Life's book was opened for no other purpose than to show that not one of those then raised and then judged was to be found in it? The answer is, that the text expressly declares that the dead, not some but all, οι Μεθρητε, were not merely "made manifest" as all saints are to be, but "judged" also, as no believer is or can be, if we accept the words of our Lord, "out of the things that were written in the books." This is inevitable perdition, as every believer saved by grace through the faith of Christ ought to know.

For what then was or could that "other book" be opened, save to make plain that if God's wrath, long revealed and despised, must take its course righteously, God's sovereignty was neither disappointed nor conflicting? The names of the condemned were not there. Therefore it is not "baldly," but with awful emphasis, added, "And if any one was not found written in the book of life, he was cast into the lake of fire." Not a hint of one who was found written there. The book of life tallied perfectly with the books of deeds. Their works called for God's final punishment; to grace they had been indifferent or actively opposed. I regret that a dear Christian should count it "bald" to believe the divine expression of a most weighty truth -- the consistency of sovereign grace with everlasting judgment. And the folly of traditional theology is the more evident; for if the righteous were "nakedly expressed" here or anywhere as sharing the
judgment with the wicked, it would contradict the O. T. as well as the New, the Lord no less than the apostle. The error strikes not only at “the most mysterious book of the N. T.,” but at fundamental revelation in general. To say that the believer comes into judgment is at issue with the truth of the gospel itself, and is the mere fruit of reasoning from the assumptions of the natural mind.

It is not true, then, that “the one answer to all this” (p. 101) is the “first resurrection,” though it be irreconcilable with the anti-scriptural dream of a last simultaneous judgment of all. For we have seen thus far that there is not an atom of truth in one argument alleged. Now Dr. B. betakes himself to another venerable and widespread error, that

the persons raised in this first resurrection are the martyrs exclusively” (p. 102).

Two classes, he says correctly enough, are here very definitely specified; but how come he and his friends to overlook the general description which precedes, leaving room for all saints beyond those martyrs? “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given them,” -- exactly fulfilling what the apostle brought before the unspiritual and forgetful Corinthians (1 Cor. 6). Does not Dr. B. know that the saints (not the martyrs exclusively) shall judge the world? Here is the vision of its accomplishment.

We know from 1 Cor. 15, 1 Thess. 4, 2 Thess. 1, and many other scriptures, that the saints at large, of O. and N. T. alike, are to meet the Lord at His coming {the rapture}, and to be with Him in the Father’s house on high. This the Revelation, as being characteristically a judicial book, does not describe on any scheme whatever; but it does disclose the glorified saints above ere this, notably the marriage of the Lamb come and His wife (the church assuredly as having made herself ready in Rev. 19). Others are there entering into the joy of heaven, not in that most intimate relation, yet blessed indeed -- they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9), not the bride but the guests. It is not faith nor wisdom to slight, or confound, these distinctions of God’s word. And it is but a shuffle to evade them under the pretense that it is a question only of interpretation. Not so. The text is plain, too plain for prejudice; and therefore it must be explained away by misusing Rev. 21:2. The bride is not invited to her own wedding; nor are those invited to it the bride. So in Heb. 12:22-24 (where the different objects are marked by κύριος, “and,” but neglected in both the Authorized and the Revised Versions), “the church of the firstborn,” who are enrolled in heaven, are clearly distinguished from the ” spirits of just men made perfect.” It is a false system which merges all saints in one throng; and if the O. T. saints are thus distinguished from the assembly of firstborn ones, how much more the saints in the wholly changed conditions of the age to come! Not seeing this, and bent on denying it, Dr. B. (in his Second Advent p. 84) has been betrayed into the stupendous blunder that Heb. 11:40 (“God having provided some better thing concerning us [of the N. T.], that apart from us they [the O. T. saints] should not be made perfect,”) means

They without us could not be made perfect, that is, without Christ and the Spirit! whose proper economy ours certainly is.

Such is the result of his desperate effort to escape the plain distinction drawn by inspiration between the saints of the O. T. and those of the New.

Now both compose the general mass of saints, which our brethren overlook, as seen by St. John, already occupying thrones in Rev. 20:4, as before seen following Christ out of heaven in Rev. 19:11-14. Compare also Rev. 17:14. When Daniel (7:9) beheld the thrones, not “cast down,” but “set up,” he speaks of no sitter but one, the Ancient of days; when John saw thrones, they were filled by sitters on them, and judgment was given to them. The phrase is purposely general, the better to comprise the undefined body of changed saints just issued out of heaven with Christ in order to reign with Him. But as not a few had suffered unto death in the earlier and later persecutions described in the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:9-11, 13:7, 15), these, who had been slain subsequently to the rest and were not yet raised, are carefully specified as now alive from the dead, both classes of them, to join the general group already enthroned (Rev. 20:4). No doubt this goes far to put out of court the historical notion of the Pagan and the Papal periods; but this is a secondary question of application which may be left to the speculative. Our business now is the true exposition of the text before us; and there is no intelligible ground in its plain terms for doubting that there is first, in the opening clause of verse 4, the general body of those who have part in the first resurrection; then the earlier class of Apocalyptic martyrs; and lastly the later company, for which the earlier were to wait. The last sufferers having been killed even as those before, the two specified classes are now raised in time to join the great bulk of the glorified who had already been seen on the thrones {having been caught up at the rapture}, so that they all might reign with Christ a thousand years. Who can fail to see that this is the clear and sure meaning when attention is once fairly drawn to the passage? It was unnecessary to define who filled the thrones (p. 146); for it could not but be the saints answering to the bride and the guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb, who had followed Him out of heaven for His judgment and reign over the earth.

These form the first and general class (of Rev. 20:4); to which both groups of Apocalyptic sufferers {the martyrs during Daniel’s 70th week} were added when raised, as the prophet was given to see. Dr. B. at least expressly admits the two “very definitely specified” classes of martyrs, though he, like many others, has not taken account of the already enthroned saints (of Rev. 4). It is idle to dispute that the verse reveals the general body, with two classes added of special interest in the Apocalypse. It is negligence or prejudice which accounts for the strange oversight of the general clause. What does it matter if the {church} Fathers saw not the wood of that clause in their hasty preoccupation with the trees in the subjoined clauses? What avails parading
moderns, whose exegesis was not “strict,” but really fanciful in the extreme, or vague and lifeless? There the word of God stands, the test of all interpretation. Disprove what is here given, if mistaken. Let objectors give the exact sense without ignoring its most important introduction.

Dr. E. is right, Dr. B. quite wrong, as to Rev. 20:4-6, which, only if taken literally, corresponds with Rev. 1:6; 2:10, 11, 26, 27; 3:21; 5:10; as it is the sole adequate recompense for such suffering as we see in Rev. 6:9-11, &c. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him”; not His “cause” merely having the upper hand in other persons without Him, but ourselves reigning gloriously with Him.

And here let us observe how unjust is the slight put on the Revelation, as not having equal authority with other books of scripture. Is it to be justly blamed because its expositors have so differed one from another? There can be no sliding scale among inspired writings. If it be, as the apostle John declares, what the Lord Jesus gave him from God, woe be to the man who contemns it in comparison with other books. As with St. Paul’s letters there are things in the Apocalypse hard to be understood, but the amount is excessively overrated. The first five chapters are as plain as other books. As with St. Paul’s letters there are things in the Apocalypse hard to be understood; but the amount is excessively overrated. The first five chapters are as plain as most parts of the N. T. So are chs. 7, 10, and even 12-15; chs. 17-22 are so for the most part. Only chs. 6, 8, 9, 11, 16 present serious difficulty in some respects; yet even in these there will be found unquestionably edifying matter for souls.

In fact, then, Rev. 20:4 is a comprehensive sketch of the saints risen to reign with Christ. Its peculiarity is, not only that it defines the duration of that reign over the earth before “the end,” but that it specifies two added classes of sufferers slain in the crisis which precedes the day of the Lord. Without this vision it could be but dimly seen how those will be found unquestionably edifying matter for souls. As with St. Paul’s letters there are things in the Apocalypse hard to be understood; but the amount is excessively overrated. The first five chapters are as plain as most parts of the N. T. So are chs. 7, 10, and even 12-15; chs. 17-22 are so for the most part. Only chs. 6, 8, 9, 11, 16 present serious difficulty in some respects; yet even in these there will be found unquestionably edifying matter for souls.

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It is well-known that the post-apostolic Fathers till Origen were millenarians. The remains of some and the writings of others, bear ample testimony to early and prevalent conviction of a literal resurrection of the saints, and their reign with Christ for a thousand years. But these antenicene views were but partially true at best, to say nothing of Talmudical reveries that crept in here or there. They looked for a reign and living of the glorified on the earth. They never rose to the height of God’s purpose for Christ’s glory in the universe. They entered not into the N. T. light in 1 Cor. 15, Eph. 1 and Heb. 2, cast on Psa. 8: the risen Son of man at the head of all creation, not Palestine only nor yet the earth, but “all things that are in the Heavens and on earth”; and the saints till then changed into His glorious likeness at His coming, and associated with Him, the heavenly bride of the Bridgroom. Like their adversaries that followed, they mixed up the {heavenly} hope with the prophetic word; so that dreaded times or expected seasons intercepted the heart’s waiting for Christ, and lowered their eyes from heaven to earth.

Then the ruin of the church’s testimony grew apace. Origen spread widely his allegorizing system, Dionysius of Alexandria his dialectic, Eusebius of Caesarea his flattery of the powers that then were. At length the influence of Augustine established all but universally in Christendom the so-called spiritual theory, that the first resurrection means regeneration in virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection, and that the baptized, if at least God’s elect, are reigning with Christ ever since He ascended to heaven!! This truly “wild” interpretation not only prevailed before the Reformation, but keeps its ground since among Romanists, as among many of the Protestants who still hold it, save where the yet lower ecclesiastical theory of Grotius proved acceptable, till the Arian Dr. Whitby broached, early in the eighteenth century, his discovery -- to spread like wild fire -- of a future reign of Christ’s cause on earth, gradually brought about by divine blessing on Christian agencies, but helped on by providential dealings also.

Of the Whitbyite hypothesis Virtringa, though striving to trace a foreign source, was the learned advocate, as Dr. Brown is the chief popularizer and warm special pleader in our day. More plausible in one respect than the Augustinian fancy, it undermines and supplants the revealed hope more fatally, falls in readily with the delusion of human progress, and thus corrupts the faith with an expectation essentially worldly and carnal. In particular, the Grotian idea of an ecclesiastical reign since Constantine left men free to conceive, as did the late Bp. Waldegrave and many other brethren, that the millennium is past, and the little space ebbing out; so that they could look for Christ’s coming without one revealed event between. For all these speculators had alike fallen into the error of identifying His advent with “the end” or the judgment of the Great White Throne. So men like the admirable S. Rutherford or Bp. Hall might be dark indeed as to prophecy; but the hope for them was not so paralyzed, as it became half a century or more afterwards by Whitbyism, which suits perfectly the unbounded self-confidence of the revolutionary liberal movement, the characteristic of the last hundred years. Scripture, on the contrary, assures of decension and apostasy, the mystery of lawlessness, and the lawless one revealed, whom the Lord Jesus destroys at His appearing [2 Thess 2:8] -- the distinct reversal of the Whitbyite
expectation, which glorifies present instrumentalities and robs Christ personally of His honor, as it leaves Satan in possession, however reduced.

Take a sample or two of its effects manifest in the in the essays before us, as everywhere else in this school. They all object to what is said to be revealed but once: an irreverent unbelieving notion worthy of all detestation as applied to God’s word, nay, unworthy even of honorable men. “If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater” {1 John 5:9}, says the beloved disciple. “Know ye not” says St. Paul, “that we shall judge angels?” {1 Cor. 6:3}. Now this follows the question in v. 2, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” -- the same truth, which reappears explicitly in Rev. 20:4-6, as it had with less detail appeared in Dan. 7:18. But if it had been true that the reign of the saints with Christ had been revealed only once, is our judging angels the less credible or important, because we here have it in this single passage? Christ’s surrender of the kingdom to the Father is notified only in 1 Cor. 15:24. Is it therefore of dubious import or of insignificant value? Is it not a truth of the utmost consequence, because it draws the line (undivulged in the O. T.) between the millennial reign and eternity? Without it one could not decide, as Prof. Beet and Principal Brown do not yet, the just force of the O. T. prophecies in general and of not a few in the N. T. Hence it is idle on this ground to object to the stoppage of Satan’s temptations for a thousand years, or to the revolt he stirs up in the little space that follows. Their argument at bottom is blind unbelief, sure only to err, and lead astray all who lean on that broken reed of Egypt.

Again, it is argued in this hazy system that the beginning of the millennium may be as uncertain as the starting-point of the seventy weeks. Now where is the analogy? On the one hand it is a question mainly between the seventh or the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, and two commandments not a little resembling. On the other hand, the most tremendous judgments will fall first on the western powers in confederation with the Jews and their king, followed by the destruction of the eastern under their great northern chief, with carnage beyond example in both cases: events which close this age, and open the age to come, or millennial reign. Is it wise to set the easily understood vagueness of one ancient imperial mandate, out of two not unlike, against a crisis of unexampled solemnity and horror, to say nothing of Christ’s appearing, or of the universal peace and blessing that ensues without an enemy or an evil occurred? The effort to find gradual and successive steps in Dan. 2:44, 7:26, and 2 Thess. 2:8 is unworthy of sound philology, and contradicts the plain objects of the three texts, which describe nothing else or less than a sudden and complete extinction. Consuming in a slow sort and by evangelical means is precluded by the least approach to exact criticism as well as by a spiritual judgment.

But it is pleaded that the Whibite view is strengthened by the frank concession that the thing seen in the vision of Rev. 20:4 was a literal resurrection (pp. 109-111); and that Rev. 11:3-12, as well as Ezek. 37, &c., help the figurative force (pp. 112-115). I must reject Dr. B.’s historical application of the Two Witnesses as the full adequate sense for the crisis when every word is to be fulfilled. Probably Prof. B. and Dr. E. accept it no more than I do. Then the prodigal son in Luke was dead spiritually, and so made alive. Dr. B. himself admits that this is not the force of our text. So again in Rom. 11, if Israel’s casting away be the world’s reconciliation, what shall be their reception but life from the dead? Resurrection is the figure, not the explanation as in Rev. 20. Further, Dr. B. admits the reference to Rev. 6:9-11, where undeniably literal death is meant. How then can he escape the inevitable conclusion that here those literally slain are literally raised to life? Surely in all this argument logic and exegesis are equally at fault.

As the Two Witnesses are too questionable to afford a sure test, let us try the Jewish prophecy. Ezekiel was given to see a multitude of dry bones come together, acquiring flesh and sinew and breath, so that they stood on their feet an exceeding great army. This revival is the figure, of which the explanation follows, “These bones are the whole house of Israel,” who were to be placed in their own land (Ezek. 37:11-14). John saw thrones with persons seated on them; and then two classes of disembodied souls who had been slain for Christ, or in refusal of the beast, and were now caused to live that they too might reign with Christ. This is the Apocalyptic vision, of which the explanation is, “This is the first resurrection” (Rev. 20:5). Plainly therefore, in all accuracy of exegesis, the cases are in contrast; for in the Jewish prophet resurrection is the vision, in the Christian prophet resurrection is the declared meaning of the vision. Figures are in no way denied, nor yet symbols. The question is as to the meaning of the vision here, and the revealed answer is, This is the first resurrection.

The context demands the literal sense. Dr. E. confesses it here. Dr. B. resists it in vv. 4-6, while a little lower (vv. 12, 13) he cannot but allow it. Is this spiritual? or reasonable? or consistent? In the same short context two resurrections are predicted, with nothing but blessedness affixed to the first, with nothing but judgment and the lake of fire attached to the second. Yet, according to this shifty invention of Dr. Whiby (as poor a commentator as he was a contemptible critic, to say nothing of his fundamental heterodoxy), the first is to be figurative, the second beyond doubt literal notwithstanding the design and character of this ambiguous and debatable book! Such principles of criticism, such exegetical practice, who can consider but as illegitimate in the extreme? For surely in two visions of the same context, successively balanced against each other with the respective key words, This is the first resurrection, and, This is the second death, they should be, in all consistency, either both literal or both figurative. As even the allegorist is obliged to admit that the second is literal, we insist that so ought to be the first: else the chapter is not fairly dealt with. No book could be intelligibly interpreted on a plan so arbitrary. It is not the book which is censurable, but its
interpreters, of whom the Whitby school is perhaps the lowest.

To obviate the pressure Dr. B. asks for the literal sense of v. 5, “The rest of the dead lived not till the thousand years should be finished.” But, instead of waiting for an answer from a neighbor capable of searching him, he insinuates a reply which simply proves his own bewilderment:

Is it a set of men rising literally from the dead? Why, in the place of this, we find them to be a cloud of mortal men in the flesh, enemies of Christ and His cause, &c.

(p. 115).

Now the true answer is, that the prophet saw that the rest of the dead did live, and that the most incredulous of believers admit that so it is, in vv. 12, 13. The inscription of vv. 7-10 is never called a resurrection. In vain is it objected that there was “a little time” more in the account. For the “till” in no way negatives an added space after the thousand years; it denies the rising of the rest of the dead before that. The attempt to substitute the inscription of Gog and Magog for the resurrection which the prophet only saw afterwards (the sole possible reference that is not fraudulent), is a too evident diversion to prop up the tottering mythical interpretation of vv. 4-6. This may be truly designated as “distortion “wholesale (p. 116); whereas not a word is distorted in either vision, when both are interpreted literally. The one is a resurrection of life, as the other is of judgment; and thus the Revelation perfectly harmonizes with the Gospel of John. If we believe the Lord in both, a “catholic” or simultaneous unrepented of. Now blindness in part has befallen Israel wholesale (p. 116); whereas not a word is distorted in either vv. 4-6. This may be truly designated as “distortion “wholesale (p. 116); whereas not a word is distorted in either vision, when both are interpreted literally. The one is a resurrection of life, as the other is of judgment; and thus the Revelation perfectly harmonizes with the Gospel of John. If we believe the Lord in both, a “catholic” or simultaneous resurrection is a mere figment, which scripture disowneth and despiseth.

Dr. B. does not put forward here, but he does strongly maintain, in a useful book devoted to it, the restoration of the Jews, once more and for ever blessed nationally in the Holy Land. His error is in assuming that it will be under the gospel, instead of for the kingdom in the new age. For it is a matter of apostolic doctrine, with which the O. T. of course agrees, that “as touching the gospel they (the Jews) are enemies for our (Gentiles’) sake; but as touching the election they are beloved for the fathers’ sake” (Rom. 11:28). They stumbled at the Stumbling-stone -- a humbled, rejected, suffering, and crucified Messiah. Therefore are they scouring the gospel, themselves rejected. During their eclipse Gentiles are called by the gospel, and the believers (Jew or Gentile) are united to Christ the heavenly Head by the Holy Spirit sent down. When this new dealing of God is complete (wherein Jewish and Gentile distinctions vanish, and Christ is all), and we go to meet Christ in the air, divine mercy begins afresh to work in Israel, fitting them to be His earthly people, the leader of the nations under the Lord’s reign. Thus are God’s gifts and calling shown to be unrepented of. Now blindness in part has befallen Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in {Rom. 11}. By-and-by all Israel shall be saved, but this only when there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, Who shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob {Rom. 11:26}. It is the kingdom, not the gospel as now.

It is deeply interesting to compare in Rom. 3 the quotations of Psa. 53, and of Isa. 59, not only with the connection in these chapters, but with the citation of Isa. 59 in Rom. 11. Nor does it bear slightly on the question before us. It proves a total change between God’s ways under the gospel as now, and under Messiah at His coming again.

In Rom. 3 the apostle quotes the psalm and the prophet to prove the Jew shut up under sin, no less than the Gentile about whom the Jew at least, had no doubt. But, says the apostle, the law, of which you boast as yours only, speaks of you Jews, and condemns you explicitly and utterly; so those two witnesses (which might have been multiplied) conclusively declare it, “that every mouth may be stopped and all the world be under God’s judgment.” What follows meanwhile? The gospel of God’s grace, whilst Christ is away, glorified in heaven, consequent on His death on the cross. This accordingly is pursued, instead of the conclusion of the psalm, or of the prophecy; which say not a word about the grace which now flows out without respect of persons to Jew and Gentile. They point only to the future when the salvation of Israel is to come out of Zion, God bringing back the captivity of His people, and the Redeemer Himself coming to Zion. The apostle in Rom. 3 says nothing of Israel’s hope, because this is not the gospel: it dwells only on the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God set forth a propitiatory or mercy-seat through faith in His blood.

But in Rom. 11 he is proving that the present rejection of the Jew, which makes room for the indiscriminate grace of the gospel, is not to last always. For the Gentile, if he continue not in God’s goodness, will surely be cut off; as the ancient people, if they continue not in their unbelief, will as surely be grafted in. And this he proceeds to show as a prediction from the same Isa. 59. All Israel (not merely individual) Jews only) shall be saved. But it is, on the one hand, when the fullness of the Gentiles is come in; and on the other, when there shall come out of Zion the Deliverer: two facts most momentous, which indicate the present age at an end, and the new one come. It will be the kingdom when Israel are to be saved; as it is the gospel which gathers out the Gentiles in a mercy which ignores the national and peculiar privileges of Israel. God’s covenant to take away Israel’s sins only takes effect when Christ comes to and out of Zion.

Dr. B.’s contention is really with St. Paul. Is not this an immense change in God’s methods? A heavenly people cannot consist with an earthly one, both owned here below at the same time. The national restoration of Israel is incompatible concurrently with the indiscriminate grace of the gospel which blots out all natural differences in those who compose Christ’s body for heaven. The coming of Christ closes the heavenly purpose, and introduces in due time the earthly plans of God, Christ being the center of both. The Father’s name is developed in the former, as in the latter the name of Jehovah, the Almighty God; the Most High, the possessor of heaven and earth. These blessed counsels and ways of God in Christ for His glory are blurred...
or effaced by the post-millennial scheme.

Of the appeal to missionary feeling in pp. 116-120, and the closing words, little more is needed, as it has been sufficiently met already. It is sweet to find in a single verse of Rev. 22 the adequate safeguard. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take life’s water freely.” Here we have the heavenly hope, absolutely apart from, and thus unfettered by, the visions of coming judgments, providential or personal. St. John at the close is as fresh in living hope, as St. Paul at the beginning: they at least were God-informed followers of Christ, if the Thessalonians were alarmed by the false cry that the day of the Lord -- in some figurative sense probably -- was come. There is no mistake in any part of scripture. The church was to say, Come {Rev. 22}; aye, and not the church only (for even she might, and did, err), but “the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” It was the body of Christ, warranted, guided, and sustained, at the last point to which revelation leads us. The enemy would strive to divert them from the constant waiting for Christ’s presence; he might seek to shake by dread of the day, or by the great tribulation; or he might seek to interpose the improvement of the world or a millennium of Christ’s cause. But no! “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” And so was the individual to say who had only heard Christ’s voice, ill-informed perhaps about prophecy, the church, or aught else. Still this is the individual hope too: “He that heareth, let him say, Come.”

Then do we find the other side. Our first and best affections are, and ought to be, for Christ our hope. But Christ gives us while waiting for Him to share divine love toward perishing souls; and therefore we can turn round to a lost world and take up the good news, “He that is athirst let him come”: yea, more, “He that will, let him take life’s water freely.” This is the gospel in all its free grace, and in its due place; but it is subordinate to Christ and the hope of Christ, if indeed we are subject to God’s word.

*Bible Treasury* 17:137, etc.
In considering this discourse, which is as candid and as able as can be found on that side of the question, the reader will do well to bear in mind the apology which the author has made for himself (Sermons, p. 492). He acknowledges certain defects, of which we may frequently see clear evidences. No one, therefore, will charge me, I trust, with presumption, any more than with a hypercritical spirit, if it be needful to point out errors which a more patient discriminating search of the prophetic word must have corrected. The author here fully allows that he is far from being familiar with the subject, however unconscious he is of the mistakes into which he has fallen.

But let it be premised, wherein one can agree with him. Contrary to the interpretation of many popular millenarians, I believe that the privileges and glory of the Church are characteristically heavenly. This, and no other, is our calling. The hope is laid up for us, not here, but in heaven (Col. 1:5). It is in the heavenly places we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3). Our head is, not a living Messiah sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but a risen, glorified Christ at the right hand of God above, and we are by God’s grace seated in Him there (Eph. 1:20; 2:6). And if we look at Christ in Spirit here, it is Christ in or among us the hope of glory (Col. 1:27); not a Messiah reigning, -- a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, which was the constant expectation of the believing Jews, from the time of Abraham downwards -- not such a Messiah merely, accomplishing all the old familiar prophecies and ruling over the Gentiles, but a Christ in them now, and that as the hope of a glory yet unfulfilled, entirely hidden during all the ages and generations of the Old Testament, but now made manifest to the saints of God. This glory will soon be accomplished in heaven; meanwhile, Christ in us, the hope of it, is a secret no longer hidden, but plainly revealed and enjoyed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Hence, while on earth, which is not our element, the Church is really and distinctively a heavenly body -- not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. Hence, it is not merely to make all men see what is the fellowship (or the dispensation) of the mystery hid in God previously; but to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3). The Jews had been, and will be, the earthly people and witness of God. And so, finally, we wrestle, not as Israel did, against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places (Eph. 6).

Blessings, standing, testimony, conflict -- all are essentially heavenly; the contrast of Jewish place and privilege, which were of earth. Thus, to Israel the promise was of earthly exaltation, the mountain of the Lord’s house being established on the top of the mountains and people flowing to it, and many nations, or Gentiles, as such (and not an election of them) coming, and saying: “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” {Isa. 2:3, 4}. To the church, it was no more the honored mountain, nor yet the city of solemnities, where was the place which Jehovah chose to himself for an house of sacrifice, but an hour when the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth. No earthly temple need they, who, having Jesus Christ Himself as the chief corner stone, are growing unto an holy temple in the Lord, themselves in Him builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. The glory of a particular earthly people or place had no glory now, by reason of the glory which excelleth, the glory of the Lord above, which we all, the Church on earth, behold even now. Again, far from earthly peace and triumph, to us it was in this world tribunal, not merely as the needed path, but positive privilege; “for unto you,” said the apostle Paul, “it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” {Phil. 1:29}, and if we suffer we shall also reign over them: we shall reign with Him, joint heirs with Him {2 Tim. 2:12}. Thus it is not us, as to Israel, every man dwelling under his vine and under his fig-tree, no one making them afraid; but many mansions in the Father’s house, and Christ gone to prepare a place for us, and coming again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is we may be also {John 14:3}. Doubtless, the Father will take care that the world may know that He has loved us as He loved Christ: the glory by and bye will manifest and

1. Supposing the Church to be meant by Rev. 5:10, the verse does not state that the Church shall be upon the earth, but that these saints shall reign over it. Ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἡ ἡττάμεν ἐλαίου ἕλθιν καὶ ἐδίδοτο αὐτοῖς τὴν βασιλείαν, ἐν τῇ πόλει τῆς γῆς ἐκκλησίαν. ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἡ ἡττάμεν ἐλαίου ἔφθασεν καὶ ἐδίδοτο αὐτοῖς τὴν βασιλείαν, ἐν τῇ πόλει τῆς γῆς ἐκκλησίαν. The authorized version conveys a wrong idea, which, to this day, misleads many students of prophecy.
demonstrate this beyond all question. Still, to us, the blessed thing is to be with Christ, where He is. Briefly, Israel is the grand national witness of God’s justice on earth; the Church is the body of an exalted Christ, the blessed vessel of God’s grace for heaven. They had carnal ordinances, visible sacrifices, a human priesthood and a worldly sanctuary; to us of the heavenly calling, Christ is our one Priest, Ordinance, and Sacrifice, and that in the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. Their weapons and enemies, blessings and hopes, were as plainly of earth and the flesh as ours are spiritual and heavenly. At the outset I would state the unspeakable privileges of the Church, even more fully than is done in the sermon.

And now to notice briefly the observations seriatim.

The first is already anticipated. I admit, not only that heaven is the locality where Jesus is, but that there depart the spirits of the saints who have fallen asleep in Christ, to be present with the Lord (Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Cor. 5:6-8). But the latter of these passages explicitly shows us a blessedness beyond that of the separated spirit with the Lord. Paul was willing (verse 8) rather to be absent from the body (i.e. the present body of sin and death) and to be present with the Lord; but it was not the thing which he earnestly desired. This was quite another thing -- “to be clothed upon with our house which is FROM heaven” [2 Cor. 5:2]; which is especially contrasted with death and the separate state, and as decidedly preferred. “Not for that we would be unclothed, (i.e. of the body,) but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life” [2 Cor. 5:4]; i.e. the transformation or change, which is the exact opposite of, and triumph over, death. As to the passage in Philippians, although no one doubts that, personally, it is far better to depart and be with Christ, than to abide in the flesh, let any unbiased Christian read chap. 3:10, 11, and say whether it does not manifest some of the symbols and figurative expressions; but they do not the less indicate positive facts. Lastly, we have a number of plain literal expressions in verses 21-28 of the same chapter, some of which are the explanation of the foregoing symbols and figures. Prophecy is future history; and God may, and does, communicate it, in the forms which seem good to Him. Is 2 Samuel to be rejected as real history, because the Holy Ghost has begun it with a dirge (chapter 1) and closed it with a song, (chapter 22) alike full of the boldest and most beautiful, but true figures?

It is granted, that the vision which precedes the one in question, is symbolic. But, mark, if we have the symbol, the dragon, we have the explanation immediately after, “which is the devil and Satan;” if the prophet saw in the vision the key, chain, prison, and seal, connected with that old serpent, surely, it does not take much spirituality to discern that, by this, was meant, not the final crushing under the woman’s seed, but a previous intervention of God by an angel, to confine the tempter and destroyer during a certain defined period; that is to say, as in Ezekiel, so in Revelations, we have a symbolic vision with its meaning literally annexed, so far at least as God judged needful to guard against mistake. Now, it is upon exactly the same principle that I understand the next vision. As the key and seal are symbolical of a confinement and security thereupon, the thrones which John

2. In page 497, the author misquotes scripture. He refers, I suppose, to Matthew 25. He speaks of “the heaven of heavens; the place prepared for His people from before the foundation of the world.” Matthew speaks not of heaven, but “the kingdom,” and that prepared, not “before,” but “from the foundation,” which entire subverts the author’s inference. John 14 again, which speaks of the Father’s house, not of the kingdom, says: “I go to prepare a place for you;” which differs widely from being prepared before the foundation of the world.
saw convey the idea of the kingly dominion which will succeed the binding of Satan. Neither the key nor the thrones were other than prophetic symbols; but they were equally symbols -- one of what God would do to His enemy, the other of what He would do for His friends during the period of the thousand years.

3. Even if it be agreed that "the souls of them that were beheaded" is not parallel to "the souls (i.e. persons) that were beheaded," and that such texts as Acts 2:41; 3:23; 7:14; 27:37, are not quite in point; still, what are we taught? As John (chap. 6:9-11) saw in vision "the souls of them that were slain" not yet re-united to their bodies, but crying: "How long, O Lord," proving evidently, that they were in a condition short of what they longed for, but knew would soon be theirs; so here, after the expiration of the little season, when their fellow-servants and brethren were now killed, as they had been before, we have the description of all these souls joined to their bodies (Chapter 20:4). "They lived," &c., implies this.

But, when Dr. W. asks, "What was the meaning of the symbol?" and answers, "a glorious revival and extensive prevalence of the spirit and character of those who had laid down their lives for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus," it astonishes one that he should have been so pre-occupied with the notions of certain interpreters as to overlook the fact that He who revealed the symbol has adjoined His own explanation -- "This is the first resurrection." Just as, lower down, in the same chapter, having spoken of the lake of fire, the Spirit of God adds, "This is the second death;" the terrible explanation of that terrible symbol.

4. We have to notice the confusion in the first words, "the figure of a resurrection," as applied to Rev. 20. It is the exact opposite; it is the interpretation, not the thing to be interpreted. Nothing of the sort occurs therefore in this passage. Let us compare it with those here alleged.

Now, first, in Ezekiel 37, be it noted, that the dead state and then the revival of dry bones, is the symbol, and this is interpreted to mean the whole house of Israel brought out of their low estate, (or the grave, figuratively,) and God's Spirit put upon them, and they thus living, and placed in their own land. Here, on the contrary, visions pass before the prophet's eye, and in the one instance, the explanation given is, "this is the second death;" in the other, "this is the first resurrection." In other words, while the resurrection of the bones is explained to be a symbolic pledge of Israel's revival explained to be a resurrection -- the first resurrection seen symbolically, of course. Secondly, Dr. W. weakens and departs from the plain scope of the explanation given by the Spirit of the early part of Ezekiel 37; for, while nothing is said about the deceased children of Abraham, either in the vision or in the interpretation of it, the latter does decidedly and literally predict the resurrection and establishment of the same house of Israel, which was then scattered among the heathen. If a literal Israel was scattered, a literal Israel was to be brought back.

As to the other texts cited, it is admitted that resurrections may be spoken of in another sense, by a kind of accommodation; but this does not nullify the two facts, that there is such a thing as a real resurrection of the body; and that the Spirit of God explains this vision to set forth such a resurrection.

5. Evidently, Dr. W. is little acquainted with millenarian writers, or he would not charge them with this supposed inconsistency. There are notorious millenarians (Mr. Burgh, for example) who apply Rev. 20:4-6 to the martyrs exclusively. But I have no hesitation in saying that both these writers are wrong in excluding the rest of the saints. It is not true that martyrs alone are mentioned. There are three classes of persons viewed as having part in the first resurrection. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and (I saw) the souls of those that were beheaded because of the witness of Jesus, and because of the word of God; and such as had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received," &c. First, the previous saints, embracing both the Church and the spirits of just men made perfect; secondly, those who identify themselves with the class John had seen in chapter 6:9-11; and, thirdly, the sufferers under the bloody apostasy of the beast, (chap. 15:2,) the last two being especially what we may term the Apocalyptic saints, i.e. those of whom the Revelation treats, and whose comfort, guidance and sustenance under their tribulation, we may suppose to have been one main object of the book, by the gracious provision of our God.

6. A great part of the reasoning here falls, the moment it is seen that "the first resurrection" embraces not these martyrs only, but the saints before them also. "The rest of the dead" is then perfectly simple: it means the wicked, who had no part (blessed and holy is he that hath part) in the first resurrection.

But one word as to Dr. W.'s explanation. He says, "the remnant" and "the rest" is the very same Greek word. And what of that? It is the same word in Rev. 11:13 and in 12:17. So it is, no doubt, in Rev. 19:21 and in 20:5; but as there is not the smallest analogy in the former case, so neither is there in the latter. In chapter 19, it is the remnant of the beast's armies, after he himself and the false prophet were cast alive into the lake of fire -- a living remnant, which is thereon slain. But in chapter 20 it is a remnant left by the
resurrection of the saints who have their part in the first resurrection -- a dead remnant, embracing all who do not rise to reign with Christ.

7. These consequences pressed upon us do not follow.

1. So far from limiting judgment to the wicked, I believe, on the contrary, that 2 Cor. 5:10 and Rom. 14 refer exclusively to Christ's dealing with the works of His own. There the question is not about our persons; we are not put upon our trial whether or not we shall be saved. For, 2 Cor. 5 is Christ's appraisal of the conduct of those who are already justified; He reviews the works, good or bad, of those who are cleansed by His blood, but He could not condemn themselves without condemning His own cross. The believer hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.

(John 5:24.) Nay, the Word of God is even stronger; the believer shall not come into judgment, εἰς κρίσιν. There is absolutely no judgment of the person, no solemn assize as to his guilt, no κρίσις for him: in such a judgment the Psalmist (143) assures us no man living shall be justified in God's sight. But God has already justified the believer; Christ is dead, is risen, is at the right hand, and is interceding for him. On the other hand, it is the judgment, the κρίσις, which is the settled portion of poor man, as we are told in Heb. 9:27, and it is the details of this last, I believe, which Rev. 20:11 presents us with. Again, it is clear that Matthew 25:31-46 does not refer to the dead at all, and even among the living leaves out the Jews entirely. It is the Son of man's judgment of all the Gentiles (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη), and hence the ground and nature of the investigation is quite different from that stated in Rom. 2, which really does state the character of that solemn and final scrutiny. And it certainly appears highly inconsistent (I do not say incorrect) to press the force of the last part of Rev. 20 in a plain and literal manner, (however there may be figures interspersed,) in the very same discourse which seeks to evade the force of the portion almost immediately going before. It is not that I doubt the application of the white-throne scene to the last closing session of judgment; on the contrary, I agree with the author in what he says, save in his assumption that the righteous are included in it. No proof is offered. There certainly ought to be; for, to a simple mind, the bare reading of the early part of the chapter conveys the idea that all judgment of the righteous must have been over for one thousand years, (literal or symbolic,) for they have been reigning with Christ during that period, and then the rest of the dead are raised, not to a resurrection of life, but to one of judgment and the second death.

But, plainly, Rev. 20 records two resurrections; one in verses 4-6 which is called the first resurrection, and evidently distinguished from the other resurrection in verses 12-15 of those whose portion is the second death. It is inconsistent to interpret the former figuratively, and the latter literally, as was long since urged by Bishop Newton.

2. The judgment of the works of the saints before the tribunal of Christ is not represented as being during the thousand years, much less during the scene which follows it (i.e. the great white-throne judgment of the rest of the dead). I believe that it must precede the actual reigning; because the divers places and rewards in the kingdom hinge on, and pre-suppose, to my mind, a foregone examination of the things done in the body, according to which each is to receive. The five cities and the two, in the language of the parable, depend on the use of the talents, and can hardly be awarded, much less enjoyed, till the Lord has examined the conduct of His servants.

The judgment of the quick goes on during the millennium, as in Matt. 25.

The judgment of the dead (i.e. of such as had not part in the first resurrection) succeeds, as we have seen in Rev. 20:11.

Now, what is the difficulty to the receiving the plain revelation, that about the close of the reign with Christ, but previous to the white-throne judgment, Satan is allowed to go out and deceive the Gentiles, or nations, which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, and gather them to battle against the beloved city? I see none. So that the next head,

3. is not only needless, but contrary to any supposition ever heard of among sober-minded millenarians. This last rebellion is before the wicked dead are raised. Nor does “the camp of the saints” and “the beloved city” mean the glorified saints, in my opinion, but the city where God, the Jehovah, has set His name, when His people (the Jews) are all righteous. Nothing can be more simple, as it appears to me. The only difficulty is to conceive how so sensible a person could have so strangely bewildered himself.

8. According to Dr. W., “the resurrection of all the dead,” is stated or implied to be for the purpose of their being tried before the great white throne. But I answer, that even this necessarily excludes those who are and have been reigning in life by one, and with one, even Christ Jesus. It is admitted that the expression, “the dead,” embraces all those who died but had not part in the first resurrection; but this is absolutely all which can be proved, by fair reasoning, from the context.

As to John 5:28, 29, observe, that while the day of the Lord in 2 Peter 3 evidently embraces events separated by one thousand years -- the morning and evening of that great day -- and cannot be reduced to a twenty-four hours’ day; so here, somewhat similarly, “hour” cannot be restricted to a period of sixty minutes. Nay, in verse 25 of the same
context, "hour" embraces a lapse of more than eighteen hundred years. Why may it not be extended similarly to one thousand years, three verses lower down? As all Christians agree that this hour of quickening does run on from Christ's time till the present; surely, it is perfectly in keeping to hold that the hour of judging may occupy the millennium. And other Scriptures show that it does so precisely.

Again, 2 Thess. 1:7-10 states no more than all instructed Christians, who look for Christ's premillennial advent, rejoice in. From 2 Peter 3:10, we simply gather, that in the day of the Lord (without revealing whether at the end or at the beginning of it) "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat," &c. But 2 Thess 1 and Rev. 20 give us this further light, that, while flaming fire will accompany the Lord's revelation from heaven, taking vengeance when He comes to be glorified in His saints, yet will this be but the precursor and monitor of the conflagration at the close of the reign on the earth. Dr. W. is, therefore, mistaken in imagining that we separate the vengeance and the glory by a thousand years; but we do affirm, what while all these Scriptures are true, they do not furnish the same, but different, aspects of the truth, and we simply seek to discern things that differ. This, in my humble judgment, the author has failed to do.

1 Thess. 4:15-17 refers exclusively to the resurrection of the righteous. There is not a word about a general resurrection. It is the same thing with 1 Cor 15. But I should have thought this at least confirmative of a first resurrection, in which the wicked have no part.

I cannot allow the justice of what is said of Acts 3:19-21. The obviously correct rendering of the passage is: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, unto the blotting out of your sins, that 4 times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send 20:34-36 is misapplied. Studied with a simple mind, it is highly corroborative of a special resurrection, a resurrection of the just quite distinct from that of the unjust. "They that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age and the resurrection from the dead" is anything but a general rise of dead persons. It is clearly eclectic. It belongs to the worthy. It is, in short, the first resurrection. Besides the saints of the heavens, there will be a converted, spared remnant of Israel, God's holy seed on earth. These are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them; they marry and are given in marriage. They are men in unchangeable bodies, and of them especially the sweet promises in the prophets speak. But they are clearly not the children of the resurrection, for they are not risen.

Is the next statement, in page 516, true? All agree that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," but instead of reading in the context (Is. 11) that the Gospel works its way to universal extension, we find that the rod out of the stem of Jesse must smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips slay the wicked. (Compare verses 4 and 9.) 2 Thess. 2:8, instead of teaching that this was done at the death of Christ, or was to be done by the progress of the Church, reveals, alas! a dismal progress of iniquity: shows that not peace and happiness, but the falling away, must come first, and that
man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; declares that
even then this evil was working as a mystery, or hidden
form, of lawlessness; but, upon the removal of a hindrance,
the Lawless One would be revealed, whom THE LORD
would consume (not by the gradual influence of the Gospel,
but) by the Spirit or breath of His mouth, and would (not
save by the preached grace of God, but) destroy with the
brightness or epiphany of His presence.

Matt. 13:31, 32 and 33, conveys the idea of progress,
gradual progress. But of what? of a good thing or of a bad?
Is a great spreading tree, where the birds of the air (compare
verses 4 and 10 of the same chapter) come and lodge, is the
nest of the wicked one according to Christ? It may bear His
name, but is it the mind which was in Christ Jesus? Lofty,
ambitious, soaring -- may aptly describe Christendom; but is
it Christianity? I trow not. (Compare also Dan. 4.)

The parable of the leaven is still plainer. It marks
diffusion over a certain defined quantity, three measures. But
it is the spread of leaven; and the instructed scribe knows that
leaven is everywhere the symbol of that which is corrupt.
Let the reader compare 1 Cor. 5:6-13 with Exod. 12:15, 17,
5:9. Again, we find where the mingled state was to be
described, the presence of evil was marked by that of leaven.
Lev. 23:17. This parable, then, proves the exact contrary of
that which is here drawn from it. It is the progress of
corrupt, not of sound, doctrine, if we are to read the parable
with a spiritual eye.

2 Thess. 2:1, 2, in no degree sets aside the possible
immediateness of the coming of Christ; but, on the contrary,
exhorts the saints by the coming of Christ and their gathering
unto Him, not to be troubled, as though the day of the Lord
were then present. It would seem that false teachers were
troubling the Thessalonians with the thought that the day of
the Lord was actually come, and they in the midst of
tribulation, instead of being caught up to meet Jesus in the
air. “No,” says the apostle, “I beseech you by His coming
and by our gathering unto Him, that ye be not troubled.”
You have no reason; you will be with Him; you will come
along with Him. -- The day of the Lord (compare 1 Thess.
5:1,) is that part of the coming of the Lord which looks with
judgment towards the world. It is associated with vengeance.
The presence of the Lord embraces it, it is true, but
embraces much more, especially that sweet thought of the
Lord’s calling the Church to meet Him. This latter is never
called the day of the Lord. In this very chapter it is
the comfort to the saints against the terrors of that day. And that
day shall not come except there come the apostasy first, &c.;
that is, certain terrible events were to happen before that day;
but not necessarily, so far as revelation informs us, before
the Lord’s coming or presence. These events might, or might
not, be before the Church was taken away, for the Father
kept the times and seasons in His own power or authority;
but they must be before the day of the Lord.

Moreover, I must utterly reject the notion that death and
the coming of the Lord, are “in effect and decisiveness the
same thing.” It does seem wonderful that such a remark
should have been written, when the passages under
consideration (1 Thess. 4, 5, 2 Thess. 2) confute it. Instead
of the apostle there teaching what Dr. W. says, he uses the
coming of the Lord as the blessed consolation against death.
He does not say, “we must all die, and therefore ought to
bear the stroke patiently;” nor does he teach them that they
should rejoice because the separated spirits of their deceased
brethren were gone to glory. He, on the contrary, brings the
hope of the Lord’s coming, as a present thing, as the most
influential of comforts, as, in short, the divine remedy for
sorrowing saints in such circumstances. That is, instead of
identifying as in the sermon, he positively contrasts the
Lord’s coming with death. And, surely, there cannot be a
greater contrast than there is between death and the victory
over death, viz. the resurrection of the saints at the last
trump. Compare 1 Cor. 15, especially verses 54, 55. It
seems as if the Spirit wrote the passage to neutralize such an
error -- “When this corruptible shall have put on
incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality,
THEN (and not before) shall be brought to pass the saying
that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” Death, in
scripture, is the thing vanquished; not the victory. Nor does
the apostle here detain himself for a moment with the
incomplete state of the separate spirit. It is the resurrection
which is the victory -- the resurrection of them that are
Christ’s in His presence. It is the resurrection which
vindicates Christ’s claim to these vile bodies of ours. When
they lie crumbling or crumbled into dust, what so unlike and
so unworthy of the Firstborn in glory? But He will come
and change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His
glorious body. Far from being death, -- the enemy, -- the
destroyer, His coming is that of the Savior who swallows up
death in victory. And it is His power, His victory. May we
never be satisfied short of it!

This same chapter (like 1 Thess. 4) suggests another
and most convincing proof of the fallacy of this popular notion.
It is agreed that the Lord’s coming is a motive pressed upon
all the Church: none can doubt it. But in 1 Cor. 15:51, it is
clearly revealed that “WE SHALL NOT all sleep,” or die. Death,
and the Lord’s coming are in no sense the same thing; the
latter affects us all without exception, the former does not.
Death affects us as individuals, and our happiness, in
departing to be with Christ, goes not beyond ourselves. But
the coming of the Lord at once acts upon the
members of the whole Church; and what will be the joy of all
the members when we all
throng to meet Him in the air? Is this the same as death? So

Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.” Surely, this is not the
Gospel, but the judgment; not grace, but destruction.
in Heb. 9:27, 28, it is laid down that, while “it is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment,” the portion of the saints is contrasted in the very next verse: “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many,” and instead of death (or judgment either, in the sense here spoken of) being set forth as the lot of the believer, it is written, “unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” No! I look not for death, but for Christ, and Christ is not death, but life, -- our life. Can contrast be more definite?

To say, then, Ought not the remembrance -- that death is, in effect, to every one of us, the same as the coming of the Lord to judgment -- to bring home to us, with quite sufficiently persuasive power, the admonition of the Lord, “Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come:” to say thus, is to be wise above and against what is written. For the remembrance is not true; and it is the truth only which sanctifies. But we have just seen that it is untrue to affirm that death and the Lord’s coming are, in effect, the same thing to any one, for in themselves they are different, and in Scripture they are ever contrasted. The addition of “to every one of us” makes it as singular a contradiction as can be well conceived to the apostolic words -- “we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord.” That is, some believers will meet the Lord when He comes, without passing through death at all. May it be ourselves, beloved! And one may go further, and affirm, that to say, the remembrance of death ought to bring home to us, with quite sufficiently persuasive power, the admonitions of our Lord, “Watch, therefore,” &c. is not to be the disciple, but the teacher of Christ. Now, I believe that what He said, and that only, is the right weapon to faith. The sheep hear His voice, and He said, “Watch, therefore,” not for ye know not what hour ye shall die, but “what hour your Lord doth come;” and so uniformly -- never once on the ground of death. It is for the coming of the Master we are set to watch, with lamps burning and loins girded. But death is in no way the Master, any more than the Bridegroom; far from it, death, (however humiliating in itself, inasmuch as it is the last effect of Satan’s power touching us,) is now one of our servants through the grace of our Lord Jesus. Cast into the waters, He has made them sweet for us; and, life or death, all are ours!

_The Prospect_ 2:36-40.
Part Five
Answer to Historicism

The Second Advent

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Publisher's Note

*Elements of Prophecy*, by W. Kelly, appeared in *The Bible Treasury*, and then in book form, with additions. What the reader has in his hands is a freshly typeset copy of the 1876 Morrish edition of this work.

Items in braces { } have been added. Thus, for example, Scripture references have been inserted so that they may appear in the Scripture Index; and notes in brackets { }, including some footnotes in brackets, have been added.

Preface

The work now before the reader is the examination of a book which appeared many years ago from the pen of a certain professor of Moral Philosophy and was regarded at the time by not a few as conclusive against Futurism. Even then, as some know, it was my intention publicly to test how far its principles were scriptural, and its reasonings valid; and it seemed to me none the less a duty because of the deliberate and strong conviction, whatever the delinquencies of the Futurists, that its tendency was retrograde, to the dishonor of Christ and the injury of the church of God. The professor however having since then divulged views on the punishment of the wicked which shocked all orthodox men, including of course those of his own party, I have judged it best not to give his name, nor to cite formally from his book. Hence such as have not read it might scarcely gather that my work is controversial; while those who do possess it will see that, however briefly, I have endeavored to follow up with conscientious care his use of scripture and his argument, as well as his plan, so as to leave nothing unrefuted which seemed worth noticing. The Christian will perceive and I hope learn from God how much larger and more exact and profound is revealed truth than either the Historical scheme or the Futurist. This is the fruit I desire by grace to the praise of the name of the Lord Jesus.

Prophecy is the revelation of the thoughts of God as regards the future, and His glory in Christ is the one blessed end of the prophetic word, as well as of all the divine actions. Make man, make self, the end, and singleness of eye is gone: darkness ensues by the just judgment of God -- a result as sure in the domain of the spiritual understanding as in that of the spiritual conscience. It is true we may say of the prophetic part what the Holy Ghost says about the whole written word, that it is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works. Still, the revealed acts are the expression of the principles of God’s government of the world, and therefore the accomplishment portrayed in His word is the place where we learn these principles fully. This is surely what we have to ascertain. Otherwise we form our own notions of that which God has given us, prophecy, whereby to know His thoughts. Our business is to gather of what God speaks; and though all scripture is given for our profit, it is in no way necessary that all should be about ourselves. The glory of God in dealing with Jews is, in its place, as much the object of our faith as His dealings with Christians. And the apprehension of the distinctions in His ways, that is, real understanding of His word, depends on our knowing to whom it applies.

Is not this taking away scripture from the church? Quite the reverse. There is no instruction in the past or future history of Israel, as revealed in the Bible, which is not for the church, but it is not about the church. That such passages are so written as to bear an analogous application to the Gentile body, now grafted into the olive-tree of earthly testimony {Rom. 11}, I do not deny -- an application which calls for the utmost caution, and a right division of the word of truth, because each dispensation has its own peculiarities, and in some cases there may be, and are, points of decided and intended contrast. Still, the church is not the subject treated of under the names of Judah and Israel, Zion and Jerusalem; and the effect of the unrestrained accommodation of such passages, to which we have been all accustomed, has been not only to rob the Jews of their promises, but to lower and obscure incalculably the privileges of the church, so far as present realization is concerned.

There is now, however, a considerable class of persons who admit that the only complete fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy involves the restoration of the literal Israel to their own land, and their national blessing and peace there, according to the new covenant, in the presence and personal reign of the Messiah. Hence, as a whole, they rightly refer the prophecies of future glory to the same people whose sins and judgments are therein detailed. They acknowledge that the reign of Christ over the converted Jewish people in the millennium is a very different thing from the secret counsels of grace which, through faith, have saved souls from the beginning. So far there is a step, and an important step, in the true direction. But here is a stopping short. It is not seen that the rejection of Christ by Jew and Gentile on the cross, and His consequent exaltation at the right hand of God, and the intermediate mission of the Holy Ghost here below till the Lord returns again, have made way for the accomplishment and revelation of an unique work of God, which had been kept secret from previous ages and generations {Col. 1:26}. This work is the church, Christ’s body.

It is not merely an increase of light as to the counsels of salvation, on which the entire line of the faithful, from Abel downward, had reposed, but there was a hitherto unknown and hidden mystery respecting a body destined to be the consort of Christ in heavenly glory at His coming, and meanwhile called into manifestation and enjoyment of its privileges by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, who was to commence, sustain, and guide it here below, while waiting for the Bridegroom. The Holy Ghost had acted, He had given faith, He had quickened, He had wrought efficaciously and savingly from the first; but there was no baptism of the Spirit till Pentecost. He was not (that is, in this new way) till Jesus was glorified (John 7:39). So the Lord teaches us in Acts 1:5 “Ye shall be baptized of the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” When just about to ascend He said this to the already believing, regenerate disciples. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost did baptize them. He imparted many miraculous gifts, “the powers of the world to come”; but besides this He baptized them on that day, never before. Now it is certain that the formation of the body, the church, hinges upon the baptism of the Spirit, for “by one Spirit (as we are told in 1 Cor. 12:13) are we all baptized into one body.” You cannot, therefore, have the body of Christ before the baptism of the Spirit; they are simultaneous and inseparable things.

Accordingly we there find for the first time “the church” spoken of as an existing corporation (Acts 2:47). The Lord Jesus, it is true (Matt. 16:18), had already said, “Upon this rock I will build my church”; but these words themselves prove that His church did not yet exist, save in the purpose of God. “Upon this rock I WILL build my church. It was not yet building. The

Introduction

1. Bishop Pearson, whatever may have been unsound elsewhere, has justly remarked, that

... the only way to attain unto the knowledge of the true notion of the church is to search into the New Testament, and from the places there which mention it, to conclude what is the nature of it. To which purpose it will be necessary to take notice that our Savior, first speaking of it, mentioneth it as that which then was not, but afterwards was to be; as when He speaks unto the great apostle, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church”; but when He ascended into heaven, and the Holy Ghost came down, when Peter had converted three thousand souls, which were added to the hundred and twenty disciples, then was there a church... for after that we read, “the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). A church, then, our Savior promised should be built, and by a promise made before His death; after His ascension, and upon the preaching of St. Peter, we find a church built or constituted,

(continued...)
foundation had to be laid; in death and resurrection alone could it
begin. It was essential, as a condition of the existence of the
church, that in the cross the middle wall of partition should be
broken down, and Jew and Gentile be made one new man: in the
next place Gentile and Jewish believers were built together for
an habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:14, 15, 22).

For the Comforter was now come, the promise of the Father,
to be in and with them for ever -- that Comforter for whom it
was expedient that Christ Himself should go away. The old
Judaic order was nothing now before God. There was another
and better temple, where God’s presence was. There was one
body, wherein Jewish and Gentile distinctions were absolutely
gone, the church on earth, and one Spirit who resided there. It
is not a mere continuation of a believing people who looked to
promise, but established on accomplished redemption, an entirely
new body appears, brought into union with Christ in His
heavenly honors, between the first and second advent, while He
is absent above. The latter terminus is admitted now by many
who would dispute the former. It is confessed that the church is
the bride, the Eve of the second Adam, and that the millennial
saved people, though just as much saints, as truly redeemed by
the blood of Christ, as we are, nevertheless answers to the type
of Adam’s children, and not of his wife. That is, it is an
acknowledged principle that saintship, as in those who succeed
the second advent, does not necessarily constitute membership
of Christ’s body. But as to the former terminus, even a far plainer
proof has been here produced as regards the saints who preceded
the first advent. Whatever may have been their many and
precious promises, they are never in scripture called the church
of God; nay, it has been shown that they could not consistently
be so termed, because they were not baptized of the Holy Ghost
into the one body, and there is no other introduction therein than
by that baptism, 2 which did not then exist. The true, the
scriptural, limits of the church are the cross and the coming of
the Lord Jesus [at the pretribulation rapture]; founded upon the
one, and waiting for the other, is that body, one with its Head on
high, in which God dwells by the Holy Ghost; a new and
unchauncy body, having a path here below traced out for it, in
many and important respects, quite distinct from what
characterized the Old Testament saints, or what will characterize
the millennial saints.

If these principles be admitted, their bearing on the faith,
affectations, worship, and service of the children of God, will soon
be felt and seen. But of such consequences this is not the place
to speak, though I would here advert briefly to the way in which
they affect our apprehension of the prophetic word.

The disciples, though subsequently forming part of the church
when it began, were nevertheless not of it during our Lord’s
ministry on earth. They believed in Christ, they followed Him
in His temptations, they were instructed by Him, but were not
yet of the church, nor could they be till Jesus was glorified on
high. {Acts 2:33} and the Holy Spirit baptized them here below
{1 Cor. 12:13}. Their position was thus a peculiar one during
that transitional order of things which began with John Baptist,
and terminated with the cross, the proclamation going out
meanwhile that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. If Matt. 10
be examined, it will be seen that the Lord gave them directions,
some of which suited them only in their then state, as in Matt.
10:5, 6, some of which might well apply when the Spirit was
given, as Matt. 10:16, 20, 24, 42, and others, which evidently
look on to a future resumption of the testimony among the cities
of Israel before the Son of man comes. Compare especially verse
23. Throughout this chapter -- and it is not the only one of
the kind -- the disciples are addressed as having a peculiar
connection with Israel, and in no way as being the church, or as
representing it. No one denies that much of the chapter was
fulfilled after the descent of the Holy Ghost to form the church.
It was then, and in Judea, that persecution fell upon them. Still
the chapter does not contemplate them as the church, but as
Jewish disciples carrying out a Jewish mission, and awaiting, in
the difficulties and sorrows of their testimony in that land, the
coming of the Son of man. In Matt. 17 we find Peter, James,
and John, the evident types of the spared and converted Jews in
the millennium, and in the same scene Moses and Elias, the types
of the glorified saints.

It is upon similar Jewish ground that our Lord speaks in Matt.
24. His disciples had heard Him pronounce desolation in the
preceding chapter. But it was a judgment mingled with mercy;
for He distinctly intimated that if the Jews should not see Him
henceforth, it was not unlimited; it was till ye shall say, Blessed
is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Vengeance must fall
upon the unbelieving generation, such as the mass then were and
are. But the time is coming when the nation, or at least a
remnant of it, shall bless and curse not; wise ones who
understand shall at length with joy welcome Him whom they
crucified on the tree.

And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his
disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the
temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these
things? Verily, I say unto you, There shall not be left here
one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down. And
as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto
him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be and
what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the
world [age]? (Matt. 24:1-3).

Now it is not doubted that the church may have used, and may
still use, the general principles of this chapter. All belongs to
the church, for profit, instruction, reproof, or comfort; but most
decidedly Matt. 24 is occupied not with the church, as such, but
with Jerusalem and the temple, the consummation of the age, the

(...continued)

and that of a nature capable of a daily increase. We cannot,
then, take a better occasion to search into the true notion of the
church of Christ than by looking into the origination and increase
thereof, without which it is impossible to have a right conception
of it. -- Art. IX. The Holy Catholic Church.

2. {The baptism in the Holy Spirit took place once, forming the body of
Christ. The body is not repeatedly formed, and the baptism in the Spirit is
not a recurring event. We have been added to a once-for-all formed body
by being sealed with “the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13) who was
promised at the beginning (Luke 1:49; Acts 1:4; 2:33).}
clash of nations and kingdoms, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, persecutions, and trials, similar to Matt. 10, and a preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to all the Gentiles throughout the habitable world. Such is the general picture to verse 14. After that, the scene becomes more specific, both as to time, place, and circumstances. Precise interpretation must confine verses 15-31 to a period still future, though Jerusalem is still the foreground.

“When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand); then let him which be in Judea flee into the mountains” (Matt. 24:15, 16). Now what has this to do with the church as the church? What has she to do with that holy place? (Compare Acts 6:13; 21:28). And how could the setting up of the abomination in the Jewish temple be a sign to the church to flee? But no! the passage refutes the idea. “Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains.” Accordingly they are directed to pray that their flight be not on the Sabbath-day, nor in the winter, for either might impede their flight and expose them to imminent peril. It is to be a brief though terrible trial: “except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved” {Matt. 24:22}.

That these are Jewish elect (see Isa. 65:9, 15, 22) is confirmed by the Lord’s warning the disciples about false Christs who shall arise. *Could the church*, who knows that she is to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air -- *could she*, I say, be in danger from the cries, *Lo! here is Christ, or there; behold, He is in the desert, or in the secret chambers?* But a perplexed Jewish remnant, whose hope is a *Messiah on earth*, might well need such monitions as the Lord here supplies. The coming of the *Son of man* (for it is Christ coming judicially which the chapter contemplates) shall not be secret, but as the lightning shining from east to west. They were not to be enticed by a “*Lo, here or there.*” Other unmistakable signs should be granted. “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (Matt. 24:29). Here again it is manifest that the Lord is not describing the translation of the elect church, but the gathering of His elect Israel, and for a plain reason: “When Christ our life shall appear,” says the apostle addressing the heavenly saints, “then shall ye also appear with him in glory” {Col. 3:4}. Christ will not be manifested first, and the church be caught up subsequently: *both are to appear together and at the same time in glory*. But with the elect Jews the case widely differs. “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other” (Matt. 24:30, 31). They are delivered and gathered *after* the Son of man has already appeared. The church had not only been caught up before, but had come out of heaven along with Christ preparatory to His appearing (Rev. 19:11-14). This prophecy, then, in any full sense, for I do not deny a partial historic accomplishment, looks to a future state of things, and directly concerns a believing Jewish remnant, quite distinct from the church.

Is it in Matthew, and other Gospels only, where we read of such a converted remnant? By no means. Matt. 24:15, 21 evidently refers us to Daniel for other particulars of the same scenes and times. If therefore it be clear that Matt. 24:15-31 concerns a future converted body of Jews, and not the church, have we not here also a divine help for interpreting Dan. 9:27; 11:31; 12:1, 7, 11, and the connected parts of the same? That is, the saints spoken of in Daniel are Jewish, saints, and not the church, properly so called. Daniel’s people, or at least the understanding ones (compare Matt. 24:15) of that prophet, are those whom the Lord further instructs in the prophetic discourse of our evangelist. Again, it is admitted very generally that Daniel and the Revelation are so linked that, when you have determined the bearing of the one, you necessarily therein involve the general interpretation of the other. The beast of Dan. 7 is the beast of Rev. 11:13; 17; and the time, times and a half, in that same chapter answer to the same period in Rev. 12, Compare the image in Rev. 13 with the abomination of desolation in the Gospel. Plainly therefore, while the Apocalypse has many subjects besides those treated of in Daniel or Matt. 24, while it admits of a far closer application than either to the providential history of the empire, &c, since the days of John, the grand final accomplishment of the book cannot be dissociated from the prophecies of Daniel and of the Lord Jesus Himself, which, we have seen, specially regard Jerusalem and the Jews at the end of the age.

Turning to the Psalms we find this truth confirmed. Let us first take Psalm 79, and assume what to many readers appears self-evident, that in its full import it tells of a day not yet come. The Holy Ghost there provides an utterance for a suffering people. But for what people? Clearly they are, and speak of themselves to God as His servants, *His saints* (Psa. 79:2). Now is there a single sentiment which is characteristic of the church of God? Or is there one which does not breathe of Jewish affections and hopes? If the heathen invade Judea, if they defile God’s holy temple in Jerusalem and lay the city in heaps, we can understand how these things may, and will deeply affect the heart of an Israelite. If the Gentiles shed the blood of God’s saints like water round about Jerusalem, and give their flesh to the beasts of the earth, rightly may he pray, “Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place.” But is this the language of the heavenly bride? 3 Is it suitable to her standing to say, “We

3. The following, from the Dublin Review (October, 1847), may illustrate the danger of applying the language of the Psalms to the church, regardless of their proper bearing.

Turn them (the terrible imprecations in the Psalms) how you will, call them prophecies, or what not, evade the plain and natural use of the optative forms in Hebrew as you please, still there is an evident exultation in the destruction of the wicked, which sets ill with that theory of Christianity which makes benevolence the sum and substance of it, as much as atheists have made it the sum and (continued...)
are become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Jehovah, wilt thou be angry? for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight, by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed” (Psa. 79:4, 5, 10). Is it for us to pray that God may be known among the heathen in our sight, by revenging the shed blood of His servants? “O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us: for we are brought very low” (Psa. 79:8).

Is there not another body of saints of whom these words will be far more emphatically true? Not that the church may not blessedly use such a psalm; not that she may not discern what is essentially applicable to herself: but plainly the circumstances, the experience, the cries, are all characteristic of Jewish saints passing through the fire, and not of the church of God. That they are owned servants of God, who suffer in and near Jerusalem before the Lord appears for their deliverance: that in the next psalm they call on Him that dwells between the cherubim to shine forth; that they acknowledge their sins, and the righteous retributive dealings of Jehovah therein; that they deprecate His anger and jealousy, crying, “Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved; O Jehovah God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?” that they appeal in faith to the God of hosts, cleaving to the link which binds Him to His people, howsoever failing, and entreat His hand to be upon the man of His right hand, “the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself”; that they are saints is plain, but it is equally evident that the whole current of their prayers, sanctioned by the Holy Ghost, and answered by the Lord in person, is quite inconsistent with the calling of the church. Forgiven all trespasses (Col. 2:13), I admit that it becomes us, individually conscious of sins, to confess them, in the assurance that God is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness {1 John 1:9}. But this goes upon the ground that we are forgiven (1 John 2:12), that we are already accepted in the beloved ( Eph. 1:6), and that as He is, so are we in this world (1 John 4:7); whereas in the Psalms it is plain that the believing remnant have still to cry, “Show us thy mercy, O Jehovah, and grant us thy salvation,” &c. Full known acceptance is evidently not enjoyed until Jesus appears (compare Zech. 12:10-14; 13:1; Joel 2, 3, &c.).

As to Psa. 81, it needs little proof that a joyful noise to the God of Jacob, the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery, the blowing up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on the solemn feast-day, that all this is no statute for the church, though it is for Israel: nor are we ever told to look for the finest of the wheat and honey out of the rock. Again, what relation to Christianity have the earthly tabernacles and glory in the land, beautiful as Psa. 84 and 85 may be? So also the fitting supplication for those who hate us is certainly not the language of Psa. 83:9-18; but it is the right utterance of faith in Jewish saints, who are looking to God to arise and judge the earth. “Do unto them as unto the Midianites; as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison: which perished at En-dor: they became as dung for the earth. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna: who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession. O my God, make them like a wheel: as the stubble before the wind. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire; persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, Jehovah. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame and perish: that men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.”

While the church is being called, God is interfering in no such way. He is proclaiming salvation to the world that rejected and murdered His Son, who is still, so far as man is concerned, the outcast One, though crowned with glory and honor upon the throne of His Father. Hence the church’s calling is governed by the present patience of God toward an ungodly world. Suffering, therefore, is her portion meanwhile, and grace, not judgment, her cry to God about her enemies. But the time is fast coming when God’s dispensational displays will change, and, instead of making His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust alike, “it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come out, that have no rain, there shall be the plague, wherewith Jehovah will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles” (Zech. 14:17-19). When that time comes, there will be another and a suited witness here below: not the church, (whose calling was during the time when the riches of His grace knew no measure, namely, between the cross and the return of the Lord Jesus), but His people Israel, the righteous remnant become a strong nation on earth. “Jehovah said, I will bring again from Bashan: I will bring my people again from the depths of the sea; that thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thine enemies, and the tongue of thy dogs in the same” (Psa. 68:6. See all Psa. 94). “Remember, Jehovah, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little
ones against the stones” (Psa. 137:7-9). “Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; to execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; to execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all his saints. Praise ye Jehovah” (Psa. 149:5-9).

4 I might thus comment on all the Psalms, save the few which describe the atoning sufferings of Christ personally. In all of them it is the Spirit of Christ in special sympathy with Israel, though the Holy Ghost applies to the church in the New Testament many truths which are equally true of us and of them (cp. Psa. 44:22, with Rom. 8:36). But this in no way sets aside their proper and prophetic bearings, any more than Hosea 11:1 is denied to contemplate specifically the literal Israel, because in Matt. 2:15 it is referred to Christ.

If then the Psalms are the outpouring of the souls of Jewish saints, if the Spirit of prophecy breathes in them from one end to the other, is it wonderful that the prophet, who especially presents us with the times of the Gentiles, should speak of the trials of the same Saints in the last terrible crisis of suffering? Other prophets dwell much upon their ultimate triumphs, in a state totally different from that in which the Jews are now, namely, under Messiah at His coming, and the new covenant. Daniel describes the four great beasts, and more particularly the last with its little horn, before whom three of the first ten horns, or kings, were subdued. “And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the high places, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the high places, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him” (Dan. 7:25-27). If Daniel in chapter 7 is occupied with these future Jewish saints and not with the church of God, who does not see that this goes far to decide the just and complete realization of Rev. 12, 13, and of the prophetic portion generally? For it is confessed by most that the Apocalypse is, to a great extent, an expansion of those parts of Daniel’s visions which were still unfulfilled; and those who trace as the grand lesson of the former, the corruptions, persecutions, and judgment of the papacy, are sure to bend a considerable portion of the latter to the same point. On the other hand, if it be clear that Daniel bears decidedly, in the most literal and important aspect of the book, upon the Jewish remnant during “the time of the end” or closing scenes of Gentile supremacy, the Apocalypse is necessarily fixed as having (I do not say its exclusive, but) its main application in the same eventful epoch.

It is in the final results that God proves His judgment. Morally, I admit, we should say that even now there are many antichrists. One might think to hear some reason, that this showed that the Antichrist should not come. But this is not what we have heard in scripture. Neither is it that we deny local events to which many Old Testament prophecies apply. Only it is quite certain if the word of God is to be listened to, that the vast body of the results of prophecy in Old and New Testaments will have their accomplishment in a state altogether different from that which exists at present; when the church will be no longer represented as seven candlesticks on earth, but under the symbol of twenty-four enthroned elders in heaven, and God begins to resume His old associations with the Jews, chastening them in a special way, and judging their proud and blaspheming Gentile oppressors. To leave the Jewish part out, to slight it, as is commonly done, is folly and presumption. It is presumption, for God will finally prove by judgment what He really is, and the truth of all He has said of man, His hatred of sin, and His faithful mercy enduring for ever. He will demonstrate publicly and irrefragably that there is a reward for the righteous, and a God that judges in the earth. To prefer the protracted period [historicism] is to prefer the moral judgment of man to the perfect manifestation of the almighty judgment of God. It is folly, because the peace and rest which follow God’s judgment in power cannot follow our detection of the moral character of what leads to it. The consequences are spiritual vagueness—a condition of soul, in this respect, hardly beyond that of many a pious Israelite who fully acknowledged God’s providence, foreknowledge, and wisdom in controlling earthly events. Nay, the judgment and full manifestation of God therein are even less seen in this scheme than a godly Jew might have known before the first advent of Christ.

Dan. 9 may briefly illustrate what I have been seeking to explain. It is clear that this prophecy directly contemplates the Jews and Jerusalem only. “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people (Daniel’s people, the Jews), and upon thy holy city, to
finish the transgressions, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy’ (Dan. 9:24). I do not doubt that this entire period brings us up to the end of the age {up to the appearing of the Lord in glory}. The terminus a quo {starting point} is equally clear, and, in my opinion, furnished by Neh. 2. From the command to build the city “unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks,” the briefer period being occupied probably with the building of the street and wall, and the longer period, added to it, carrying us on to the cutting off of Messiah: “After threescore and two weeks shall Messiah
(not be born, or enter on His ministry merely, but) be cut off, but not for Himself.” He is rejected; His own received Him not. He died for that nation, though not for that nation only {John 11:51, 52}. Now this is most important to note. The death of the Messiah is after the sixty-nine weeks expire, and has nothing whatever to do, so far as the text informs us, with the seventieth week. Between that death and the last week an evident gap appears, not measured by dates, but simply filled up by the revelation of disasters upon the city, sanctuary, &c. In this interval we hear of another prince, not the prince who had already come to bless the city, and who was Himself cut off, but “the prince that shall come.” It was not foretold that this coming prince was to destroy the city and sanctuary, but that his people should. What people are they? Unquestionably, the Romans; and they did thus destroy. Then follows a general picture of woe to the last. “And the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”

But what of the last week? It remains entirely apart, and the particulars are given in the closing verse. “And he shall confirm the covenant (not the covenant) with many (or the mass) for one week.” It is the history of the seventieth week. We have seen Messiah already cut off after the sixty-nine weeks; we have heard of another prince coming, whose people, not himself, destroyed the city and the sanctuary {AD 70}. It is of this future Roman prince we are now to learn. He covenants {confirms} for one week, for seven years, with the mass of the Jews {cp. Isa. 28:14, 15, 18, 22}. The covenant of Christ is an everlasting covenant, and never marred. But this is an evil covenant, and it is by-and-by broken. “In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that, determined, shall be poured upon the desolate.” This seventieth week again is taken up, though perhaps not this period only, in the Apocalypse viewed in its future application; the last half of {the seventieth} which are specified in the period of 1260 days, during which {time} are the witnesses (Rev. 11), as well as in the time of vengeance, during which the beast has power given which he uses in warring with the saints and overcoming them (Rev. 12, 13; Dan. 7). These saints, as we have seen before, are not the church, which is nowhere found on earth from the end of Rev. 3. Its earthly pilgrimage and testimony had closed before the [seventieth] week began: from Rev. 4-19 the church is seen symbolically in heaven, and in heaven only.

Thus is shown the peculiarity of our position, upon whom the ends of the ages are met. It is a novel, unprecedented and heavenly place, in no way interfering with the vast scheme of God’s earthly government: on the contrary, in this latter, room is purposely left for another field, which was entirely hidden of old, namely, for the development of the glory of Christ as the exalted Man. It is with a Christ on high the church is associated. Of course I do not speak of His incommunicable divinity, as the Son, but of a peculiar heavenly glory shared with His bride, and unknown to the Old Testament writers, who dwell so largely upon His Messianic rights. The church then began after the cutting off of Messiah, and goes up to meet the Lord in the air before the seventieth week commences with the Roman prince and his covenant. With the cross the earthly people fell under judgment, how long soever it might linger, while God was gathering a remnant to the Savior. That same cross becomes the foundation of Christ’s heavenly body, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. When this work is concluded, the church will be borne away to join the Lord in the air, and renewed dealings will begin with the earthly people once more. The church has, no doubt, committed to her the more complete revelation of these judgments on the Gentiles which precede the good things in store for Israel, but the strictly prophetic part of the Apocalypse is not therefore about herself. On the contrary it reveals, throughout the chief contents of it, the glorified worshiping in heaven, and the blows of divine judgment falling with a deepening intensity, till Christ and the saints come out of heaven and appear together for the destruction of the beast and the false prophet with their armies.

5. {Not ‘make.’}
Chapter 1

The True Principle
Compared with
Current Maxims

Christ is the center of the counsels of God, and hence of prophecy, which treats of the earth and of His government of it for His own glory. Hence the importance of Israel, of whom, as according to the flesh, came Christ who is over all, God blessed for ever. They are His people by a choice and calling which cannot fail in the end, though there may be and has been a fall and a long continued disowning of them in God’s righteous judgment of their apostasy. But mercy will restore them ere long, humbly, joyfully welcoming the Messiah they have so long rejected.

This had been feebly seen, nay, generally denied, throughout Christendom for ages. Scarce any error is more patent throughout the Fathers than the substitution of the church for Israel in all their system of thought. Every Father, whose remains have come down to us, is a witness of the same allegorizing interpretations; not only the Alexandrian school of Clement and Origen, but Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and the Pseudo-Barnabas. The Latins followed in the same wake, not Augustine and Ruffinus and Jerome only, but Tertullian, Cyprian, and Lactantius. Not one held the restoration of Israel to their land, converted nationally; the millenarian portion expected that the risen saints would reign with Christ in Jerusalem rebuilt, adorned, and enlarged, not that the Jews would be restored and blessed in the land. The medieval writers naturally adopted the same view: so did the Reformers, as far as I am aware, without an exception. All fell into the error of putting the church into the place of Christ, and so of leaving no room for His earthly people, besides His heavenly saints and glorified bride. They neglected the warning of the Apostle Paul, and assumed that the Jewish branches were broken off that the Gentiles might be grafted in, and take their place gloriously and for ever. They did not pay heed to the prophetic word, as Peter exhorts, but applied systematically the predictions of Israel’s blessing in the last days to the Christian church: still less did they appreciate the day dawning or the daystar arising in the heart. Catholics, papists, Protestants, had no real light, no spiritual intelligence, as to the hopes of Israel as distinct from those of Christians.

Is it not as solemn as it is startling to see thus beyond just question the immediate, universal, and lasting departure of the Christian profession from prophetic truth? But so it is and must be. For the divine glory in Christ as the center for all things in heaven and on earth being the revealed purpose of God (Eph. 1:10), when this is forgotten, false hopes spring up. Man, self, becomes the end, instead of Christ; the true light is lost, and darkness ensues in the just retribution of God. The effort to make the church all, instead of preserving the real dignity of the church as the heavenly spouse of Christ, lowers her to the position of Israel, a people reigned over, not reigning with Him, His inheritance, not heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

The future acts of God as revealed in prophecy are the expression of the principles on which He will govern the world; and so His word is the means by which alone we learn these principles fully. If we fail to ascertain them thus, we form our own thoughts of that which God gave us prophecy whereby to know His mind. Our business is to gather of what and whom God speaks; and no greater delusion can befall us than to imagine that, because all scripture is for our profit, all must be about ourselves. The purpose of God as to the Jews is in its place as truly the object of faith as His counsels respecting the church. Thus, the apprehension of His various ways for glorifying Christ is essential to real understanding of His word. Here, as everywhere, a single eye is needed. With Christ before us the whole body will not fail to be full of light.

Is not this to take away scripture from the Christian? Quite the reverse. To understand it according to God is the truest and richest gain; to misapply it to ourselves in Gentile conceit is ruinous. Yet there is no instruction in the past or future history of Israel as revealed in the Bible which is not for, though not about, the church. That such scriptures concerning the Jew may have been written so as to bear an analogous application to the Gentiles is not denied; but the application calls for the utmost caution and a right dividing of the word of truth, because each economy has its own peculiarities, and in not a few things there are confessedly decided and intended contrasts. It is an error therefore to read the church in Judah and Israel, Zion and Jerusalem;
and the effect of this alchemy, which the Fathers originated and handed down to popery and Protestantism alike, has been both to rob Israel of their proper hope and to lower that of the church incalculably.

Yet no maxim of interpretation can compare with this most misleading identification for importance, antiquity, or widespread reception. Since the apostles, perhaps beyond every other tradition, has this been accepted always, everywhere, and by all. Fathers, Romanists, Reformed, have alike applied it habitually in their comments, as well as in practice.

Few sober minds doubt that the visions in Dan. 12, 7 start from the times of the prophet; that the Revelation applied in some sense from John’s day; that the fourth beast sets forth the Roman empire; that the little horn in Dan. 7 denotes its last ruler; that Babylon in Rev. 17 represents Rome; that the prophecy in 1 Tim. 4 was fulfilled long ago; that the man of sin relates to the Antichrist, and is rather the ecclesiastical or false prophet power of Rev. 13 than the imperial chief or first beast; that the two woes in Rev. 9 are strikingly illustrated in the Saracens and Turks, and that the days, times, &c., may have had a symbolic force.

But these are points of detail, all of which together are a trifle compared with the one grave principle which effaces Israel from prophecy and installs the church in their stead. What then can be thought of the judgment that could overlook an error so transcendent, vitiating all sound exposition of both Old Testament and New from Genesis to Revelation? One can account for it by two considerations: first, a quite superficial estimate of the evil involved in this old and general error; secondly, a very exaggerated feeling against those who looked for a personal Antichrist among the Jews and a future revival of the Roman empire before the age ends, lest it should weaken Protestantism in the face of the popish re-awakening in our day. There is no adequate sense of the wrong which has been already done the truth for nearly eighteen centuries, and the darkening influence which Judaizing the church has wrought far and wide in Christendom, among the Orientals, Greeks, and Latins, as well as Protestants more recently, throughout all its history save the first century. The feverish doubts caused by a few fanciful essayists like Drs. Maitland, Todd, and Burgh, Messrs. Tyso, Dodsworth, and the like, were slight indeed compared with the original paralysis which destroyed all true power in the body of Christian profession, whether in the distinct perception of the Christian’s heavenly privileges in union with Christ on high, or in the just recognition of God’s fidelity to Israel.

To my mind the way in which Protestant compromise has played into the hands of Romanism is very serious (and this in many ways more than the prophetic speculations which palliated popery); but I speak of an error far older, deeper, more withering, and less suspected, which seems not to cross the vision of him who would defend the Protestant interpretation of prophecy against the futurist assailant.

The fact is too that it has been the common view of Protestants as well as futurists to take for granted the natural if not necessary clearness of fulfilled prophecy; to make much of general consent among interpreters; and to decry that view which could not plead antiquity or what was held by alleged heretics. Protestantism has ever made much of history, as if time were the interpreter rather than the Spirit of God leading souls into the truth. Hence Protestantism has sought to maintain that prophecy extends in nearly equal proportion over all ages down to the future advent of our Lord. This naturally excites the desire to find what answers to it up to and in our own day. And it is vain to deny that the ablest of Protestant interpreters have themselves laid down that the main use of prophecy is to convict, if not convince, unbelievers. Futurists have in this simply turned Protestant batteries against the Protestant system of interpretation.

The Christian, if wise, will eschew party spirit and narrowness here as elsewhere. He need not be a mere futurist because he cannot be a mere Protestant; and if anything ought to deter him from such systematizing, the contractedness of the one, and the virulence of the other, ought to serve as an effectual beacon against both. That half-a-dozen men in their zeal for what they saw to be unfulfilled pushed matters to extremes against the Protestant school which had misled them is clear; but to say that the system of the futurists in its very foundations directly contradicts the early writers is the last degree of controversial blindness if not asperity.

I am sure that it is a poor thing to court or reckon up the suffrages of the more ancient Fathers who wrote on prophecy; but it is absurd to deny that, right or wrong, they stand in the main with the futurists against the historicalists. They held that the end was nigh; they held that the Antichrist was an individual, not a succession; they held that he would take Christ’s place, not His vicar’s; they held that he would set up to be God in the temple of Jerusalem, not as the Pope in Rome; they held that the days are days, not years, so that the times of Daniel and of the Apocalypse would be but a brief crisis. Now these are the capital points of futurism, as opposed to Protestantism; and how the earlier Fathers thought is beyond controversy. Their foundations are those of the futurists. What has been alleged by special pleading consists of mere individual eccentricities, exaggerated into its very foundations, in order to ensure (or at least yield the semblance of) an easy victory.

Thus the great mass of futurists have ever held that the visions in Daniel start from his own time, if not from a defined point not far distant as the seventy weeks {Dan. 9}. But then they suppose a gap in the fourth or Roman empire, which, after extinction, is to revive for the time of the end; and of this they have unquestionable proof from scripture.
A few persons attacked were excessive in their sentiments. It was apparently from not knowing how much there is common to intelligent minds both futurist and Protestant, as well as to Christians who have larger views than either. It was ignorance probably; if not, it was worse. Such strokes of strategy may suit polemical objects; but they retard the truth, and injure those most who deign to use them or are misled by them.

Not the least hurtful of influences in the Protestant system is the assumption that history is the interpreter of prophecy, and the undue place thus given to it. Prophecy explains history, never the converse. No matter how the facts answer to the prediction, they are but the least and lowest part: God’s mind in the revealed facts is the lesson, and of this the Spirit is the only teacher, not history. Now He can and does lead the believer into the divine mind as well as the outward facts before, no less than after, fulfillment: so utterly do I reject the alleged futurist principle that fulfilled prophecy is plain as distinguished from the obscurity of what is unaccomplished. Not so: scripture is only understood aright by the Spirit, who is independent of time or history, and gives divine certainty by and to faith, whether the word of God be about the past or the present or the future. On the face of it the theory is false; for we must understand the prophecy before we can apply it truly, and when we do understand it (which is quite independent of its being fulfilled or not) we have what God meant. The proof of its application to events (that is, of its accomplishment) may be interesting to believers, and useful to meet (or stop the mouths of) unbelievers; but this is not the primary and ordinary intention, for it is in general given to instruct, cheer, and warn the believer, not merely to prove that God knows and speaks the truth beforehand as in some few exceptional instances.

And just think of the state of mind which could cite Deut. 4:32, and Psalm 28:5, in proof of the duty of studying history for the interpretation of prophecy! The first passage reminds Israel of the great and terrible fact that God spoke to them out of the fire. Moses appeals to them if ever man had heard the like. What is this to the purpose? Still less, if possible, is the second: the works of Jehovah and the operations of His hands are anything but man’s account of man’s doings. Nobody doubts that history, as far as it is true, must confirm a prophecy which really speaks of the same events: the question is its use in interpreting.

Nor are notorious facts justly to be styled history. In facts of the kind God acts in known public judgment, of which all the world can take cognizance. The fatal flaw here again is the leaving aside His public government for providence secret in its ways, which is not really the subject of prophecy as the general rule. In short then the use of fulfillment in reasoning with infidels is one thing; quite another is interpretation, which is our question.

It is in vain to deny that prophecy in general, even the visions of Daniel which take in the rise and progress of empire very cursorily, converges on the close of the age. Nor is there the least inconsistency in one who sees this, which it is utter prejudice or dishonesty to evade, complaining of that exaggeration of past or passing events to which the historicalists are notoriously prone. Take Dan. 7 for instance: is it not plain that the early verses as to the first three beasts are only introductory to the object of the Spirit? and that His object was meant to act as a present thing on the conscience, as well as to guide the feet of the saints when the circumstances appear? The confusion arises from the supposition that God’s moral government as such has its results now, which it never can have till Christ be manifested, in view of whom all has been carried on.

To the historicalist, Christ or His glory is not the key of God’s government; he is occupied with the past or present, which is but a parenthesis of secret providence between God’s immediate government of old on earth and His resumption of it in the midst of Israel when the beasts and the Gentiles at large are judged. He makes a Ptolemaic theory, instead of seeing facts as they are with Copernicus; he views Christendom meanwhile as the central object, instead of Christ the true center of the divine system. Hence, during that period of which history ancient or modern is so boastful, the great actors are regarded but as “beasts”; and all is passed over lightly till the conclusion of their history when judgments crowd into a brief space, and the Lord Jesus closes them all by His own personal appearing to judge and reign. Of these “times of the Gentiles” God has not lost sight; and hence they are noticed in Daniel, Zechariah, and the Revelation; but it is mainly to show how Christ will displace all and take the reins of God’s kingdom.

Now that God has brought in fuller light, the historicalists are those who oppose it most keenly, because it corrects a vast deal of their visionary interpretations, and they are not prepared for that which makes little of man as he is in order to exalt the second Man. Like the masses in Christendom, they had lost sight of the proper hope of the Christian. Neither did the so-called futurists deliver minds from the prevalent confusion, being occupied themselves with the solemn events of the last crisis of the age or with the reign of Christ manifested in glory that succeeds. They had, none of them, any adequate hold of the heavenly hope as a distinct thing from prophecy. They might be thought to heed the prophetic word, but enjoyed little, if at all, the day dawning and the day-star arising in their hearts. All was confounded for both.
Part Five: Answer to Historicism -- The Second Advent
Chapter 2

Alleged Presumptions
for Historicalism

The historical school allege in favor of their view certain presumptions, such as these:

1. That it is the nature of scripture prophecy to occupy a continuous range of divine providence, and that this must be especially true of such detailed and symbolic visions as those of Daniel and St. John;

2. That the writers of the primitive church almost unanimously contradict the theory of a future crisis, and agree with the Protestant interpreters on the most material points; and

3. That the discordance of those who contend for a convergence on the end of the age is fatal to the alleged superiority of their interpretation in point of simplicity, harmony and clearness.

1. The following scriptures have been produced to prove, not only that the inference is unsound, but that the allegation is entirely false. The test chosen is to take the leading prophecies in order from the first and to observe the length of the continuous period over which each of them extends.

1. Gen. 3:15 is supposed to denote a continuous period of seven thousand years from the death of Abel to the judgment. But surely this is an arbitrary view, and though in the scripture there may be included the enmity between Satan and man, no spiritual mind can fail to discern that according to God’s word the grand bearing of it is found in the two great crises of the cross and the appearing of the Lord Jesus.

2. Gen. 6:3. No one doubts the striving of God’s Spirit (or, at least, the days of man) an hundred and twenty years; but, again the interest is concentrated on the judgment which closes all rather than spreads over that interval.

3. Gen. 9:25-27. The curse on Canaan B. C. 1451 (Zech. 14:21), a period of three thousand three hundred years; but here too one looks onward to the future intervention of Jehovah rather than to any partial dealings meanwhile. And so with the blessing on Shem, and the enlargement of Japheth. To treat John 4:22 as the fulfillment of the former, and Acts 9:18 (? 15), 28:28 as the fulfillment of the latter, seems most inadequate. It confounds the earnest, which may be more or less continuous, with the fulfillment, which is yet future, and far from an unbroken line.

4. Gen. 13:14-17. The possession of Canaan B C 145-AD 70 for 1500 years would be a poor answer to the rich words of the God who gave promises to Abraham. The true accomplishment is still future, and will only be under Messiah and the new covenant.

5. Gen. 15:13-16. No doubt the Israelites were afflicted 400 years by the stranger; but the point of hope was the judgment of that nation, and Abraham’s seed coming out with great substance.

6. Gen. 22:16-18. Gal. 3 shows us that no long period is the point meant, but Christ the risen Seed of Abraham through whom blessing comes to all the nations. The Jewish promise of supremacy for the countless seed of Abraham is as yet unfulfilled. There is no question here of a space of 4000 years, but of the consequences of Christ’s first coming and of His second.

7. Gen. 49:3-27. Here too, in the scattering of Levi, we think not so much of a space as of a fact. There is more ground to speak of continuance in the case of Judah; but it is to me clear and certain that the gathering or obedience of the nations to Shiloh is yet future. It is the kingdom, not the gospel, which is before us here, and a future crisis, not past or present history.

8. Ex. 3:7-12. The sign is not the space of 40 years, but the final token of bringing Israel to Horeb.

9. Lev. 26. No doubt the chapter speaks of past sorrow and desolation; but the remembrance of Jehovah’s covenant and of the land, when Israel repent, is absolutely future.

10. Num. 24:17-24. Here also I cannot doubt that the Star’s smiting Moab and Edom refers to the great future epoch, not to any bygone period, though there may be a past application of “the ships from Chittim” &c.

11. Deut. 32:7-43. I see nothing properly to be styled a history of Israel in their own land in verses 7-20 extending over a long period, but rather Jehovah’s
blessing, Israel’s rebellion, and then His judgment, morally pronounced, followed by its execution; then the day when Jehovah’s hand will take hold on judgment to render vengeance to His enemies. Is not this crisis rather than the continuous range of events regulated by providence?

12. Deut. 33:5-11. Past discipline appears here and there, but the prophecy points to the known and final crisis. What we see in the Pentateuch is abundantly confirmed in the rest of the Old Testament. Hence we may conclude that, with few exceptions, the nature of prophecy is to deal in crisis rather than to occupy a continuous range of providence.

At another season we may look into the symbolical and detailed visions of Daniel and John in detail.

II. It is supposed that a full induction of facts proves that the writers of the primitive church agree with the Protestant interpreters on the following points:

1. That the head of gold denotes the Babylonian empire, not the person of Nebuchadnezzar, or Babylon and Persia in one.
2. That the silver denotes the Medo-Persian empire.
3. That the brass denotes the Greek empire.
4. That the iron denotes the Roman empire.
5. That the clay mingled with the iron denotes the intermixture of barbarous nations in the Roman empire.
6. That the mingling with the seed of men relates to intermarriages among the kings of the divided empire.
7. That the lion denotes the Babylonian empire.
8. That the eagle wings relate to Nebuchadnezzar’s ambition.
9. That the bear denotes the Medo-Persian empire.
10. That the rising on one side signifies the later supremacy of the Persians.
11. That the leopard relates to the Macedonian empire.
12. That the four wings denote the rapidity of Alexander’s conquests.
13. That the fourth beast is the Roman empire.
14. That the ten horns denote a tenfold division of that empire, which was then future.
15. That the division began in the fourth and fifth centuries.
16. That the rise of the ten horns is later than the rise of the beast.
17. That the vision of the ram and he-goat begins from the time of the prophecy.
18. That the higher horn of the ram denotes the Persian dynasty beginning with Cyrus.
19. That the first horn of the he-goat is Alexander the Great.
20. That the breaking of the horn, when strong, relates to the sudden death of Alexander in the height of his power.
21. That the four horns denote four main kingdoms into which the Macedonian empire was divided.
22. That the three kings (Dan. 11:2) are Cambyses, Smerdis and Darius.
23. That the expedition against Greece is that of Xerxes, BC 485.
24. That the mighty king (v. 3) is Alexander the Great.
25. That the king’s daughter of the south is Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus.
26. That the one from the branch of her roots is Ptolemy Euergetes.
27. That the sons of the king of the north are Seleucus Ceraunus and Antiochus the Great.
28. That the battle (ver. 11) is that of Raphia.
29. That the battle (ver. 15) is that of Panium.
30. That the daughter of women (ver. 17) is Cleopatra, daughter of Antiochus the Great.
31. That the expedition (ver. 18) is that of Antiochus against Greece.
32. That the prince (ver. 18) denotes the Roman power.
33. That the death of Antiochus is predicted in verse 19.
34. That the raiser of taxes is Seleucus Philopator.
35. That the letting person or thing (2 Thess. 2) is the imperial power of Rome.
36. That the Apocalypse begins from the time of St. John.
37. That the first seal (Rev. 6) relates to the early triumphs of the gospel.

On the other hand it is allowed that the early Christian writers are opposed to the Protestant school as to the following weighty points:

1. That the ten toes denote individual persons.
2. That the ten horns denote the same.
3. That the little horn (Dan. 7) is an individual king.
4. That the times, time, and a half of Daniel are three and
a half years.

5. That the period of Dan. 8. consists of literal days.

6. That the 1290 days, and 1335 days in Dan. 12 are to be taken literally.

7. That the man of sin (2 Thess. 2) is an individual.

*8. That the 42 months are three and a half years literally.

*9. That the 1260 days are literal.

*10. That the two witnesses are individuals.

11. That the beast and the false prophet are two individuals.

12. That the ten kings (Rev. 17) are individuals.

The points are marked with asterisks where concurrence is but partial. Thus some at least of the ancients apply the toes of iron and clay, or divisions of the empire, not to the barbarian kingdoms which sprang up in the 4th and 5th centuries, but to the kings of it at the very end, whom the Lord will find and crush at His second advent; as they also interpreted the little horn in Dan. 8 of Antiochus rather than of Antichrist, and some of the periods indefinitely.

But it is a total mistake that any, save a few extreme futurists who never exercised influence on serious souls in general, differ from the former list, save as to 35 and 36 in part. Thus the letting {restraining} power {2 Thess 2} is, I believe, the Spirit of God, and this not merely as dwelling in the church, but yet more distinctly as acting governmentally in divine providence. Hence the ancient reference was imperfect rather than false. Corrupt as Babylon is, it is not yet the apostasy nor the man of sin revealed. He who leteth acts still, though imperial Rome is long gone. The Holy Spirit is that power and person who hinders as yet the display and working of the lawless one, whatever governmental means He is pleased to employ for the world’s good order. Again, I do not doubt a general application of the Revelation since the time of St. John, viewing the seven churches as past, instead of as “the things which are” followed by the rest of the book as converging on the great future crisis. Of 37 the less may be said, as almost every person of intelligence has now abandoned the old fancy of early gospel triumph and among them (if I mistake not) the very person who first drew up this list.

But it must also be repeated, that among sober Christian inquirers the long first list is accepted on all sides; so that the second tells against the historical interpreters with unbroken force. This demonstrates how far any are justified in affirming that the Protestants have the warrant from antiquity tenfold on their side. The truth is that in all their distinctive features they stand wholly unsupported, yea opposed.

Yet one must frankly allow that no importance whatever should be attached to early tradition. Scripture, and scripture alone, is the only sure arbiter, the sole reliable source of the pure truth of God; and the children of God should be the more jealous on this score, as we see around us the unmistakable results of recurrence to tradition in the revived Judaism of our day. It is ridiculously ignorant however to suppose that the mass of Christians who look for the brief future crisis of a personal Antichrist in Jerusalem and a revived Roman empire to be destroyed by Christ in person have ever questioned these thirty and more points any more than the dozen which follow. The representation to the contrary is a mere sleight of hand trick of controversy, unless indeed those who made it knew very little of the real thoughts of those who have most studied prophecy in our day.

III. The last head remains to be noticed, the discordance of such men as Drs. Maitland, Todd, and Burgh, of Messrs. Tyso, &c. The believer is in no way concerned in defending the discrepancies of all, any more than the desire on the part of some to palliate Romanism. They were none of them men who took their stand in simple faith on the word and Spirit of God. Nevertheless, faulty and rash as their interpretations may be, and in points of detail often at variance with one another, they did service in recalling attention to the neglected and imminent end of the age, “the time of harvest,” as in other senses, so for prophecy also. There would be little edification in occupying the reader with a collation of their mutual contradictions or with those of the Protestant school, which simply show how far both are from deserving confidence. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light (no morning) in them.” The Christian has no interest save in God’s communications, which are very sure, and make wise the simple. In keeping them there is great reward.

Here too appears the importance of seeing that the manifestation of God’s glory in Christ is the proper object of prophecy. Had this been seen and held firmly, men could not have lost themselves in vain efforts to find in the past or the present what answers not to it save in scanty measure. Before Christ God was proving in every form the first man: since His rejection and the accomplishment of redemption on the cross, the Holy Spirit is revealing the mystery hidden from ages to the church, as well as publishing the gospel to every creature. It is of the scenes called the consummation of the age, συντέλεια τού αιώνος, as well as of the subsequent kingdom when the Son of man is manifested in power and glory, that prophecy treats, whether in the Old Testament or in the New. Rarely does the Spirit touch on any circumstance of guilt on man’s part or of judgment on God’s, without going on to these solemn times which introduce the days of heaven on the earth, and this is just as true of the symbolic visions of Daniel and St. John as of the rest, although there is no doubt expressed in the last a more systematized series.
But other dealings of God at the time of the prophet were but inchoative and germinant: the crisis is, as the rule and with very few and slight and evident exceptions, the plane of incidence where prophetic words and visions and types meet in Christ, then revealed and no longer hidden as now, the center of all things in heaven and on earth. To stop short of this, and arrest the mind meanwhile on analogies supposed or even occasionally real, is not only an error fatal to the true understanding of prophecy but bears evidence of a heart not in accord with the mind and purpose of God in glorifying His Son. For special reasons there might be revealed a chain of comparatively ordinary events in providence, as for instance from the first and through the greater part of Dan. 11, where in scripture historical account fails. But even there it is but introductory, as invariably, to the great principle of crisis. For we are only brought down continuously on the one hand to Antiochus Epiphanes and his iniquitous efforts against the Jews, the temple and the law, with the disastrous issue for himself, his instruments, or his victims, and the Maccabean stand on the other hand. Then follows a vast break, and we are abruptly landed in presence of the last wilful king in the land of Judea, and the final conflicts of the kings of the north and the south, terminated by divine intervention and the deliverance of the chosen people. It is plain to any upright and intelligent mind that, whatever be the importance of every word (and this it is not for me to deny or weaken), the grand point of the Spirit is to direct all hearts to the tremendous catastrophe of the close, which follows, not the merely introductory thread of continuous facts, 2000 years past, but the vast gap, after Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees, till the personal Antichrist reigns in the land, the old jealousies of the north and the south reproduce themselves round devoted Palestine and the Jews, and the power of God interferes to put down all rebels within or without, and establish the wise and holy in peace under the reign of Him who is Ancient of days no less than Son of man, and who must yet be honored on earth as well as in heaven to the glory of God the Father. “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us; this is Jehovah; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” The risen saints will reign along with Him over the earth, but from their own proper heavenly sphere: He is head to the church over all things.
Chapter 3

The Four Empires

It has been already shown that the clearness or the obscurity of prophecy is independent of its fulfillment, and that Protestants and futurists have been almost equally guilty of mistake as to this. For many among both have assumed its necessary obscurity when unaccomplished and its clearness when fulfilled. Both also have been eager to avoid the objection of novelty against their own system, and anxious to claim the consent of antiquity, not knowing that the Fathers were serious offenders against the truth and particularly ignorant on the subject of prophecy.

Nevertheless it ought to be not a matter of litigation but certain that the Protestant exposition in all its peculiarities is at direct issue with the early ecclesiastical writers who stood on the main foundations of futurism, except indeed as regards the restoration of Israel to their own land, which many Protestants allow no less than futurists. In this at least no instructed mind can agree with the Fathers; and the difference enlarges according to knowledge. Of the other presumptions for or against their respective systems, enough has been said already. As to such a protracted application as Protestant writers conceive, the Fathers knew nothing, expected nothing, of it. Some of the earliest held with the futurists that the prophecies of scripture are mainly occupied with the grand crisis at the end of the age; but the fact is however that very few appear to have known anything worth notice about these subjects, even in principle, not to speak of details.

We may now enter on a direct examination of prophecy, at least of that portion which is most in debate. And here it may be well to bear in mind its distinctive character. Prophecy is not, like Christianity, the revelation of God’s counsels but rather of His kingdom or of His ways in bringing it in. It is occupied, not with heaven and the sovereign grace that gathers to Christ there, but with the earth, and hence with the judgments of God which put down evil in order to the reign of righteousness. No mistake can be more profound than the notion that its main subject is the outline of secret providence during the last two thousand years and more. Daniel in the Old Testament shows us the rise and fall of the four great Gentile empires, the Revelation in the New Testament adding much light on the last phase of the fourth; but this is an episode rather than the direct subject of prophecy, which necessarily has Israel in view as the central people in the plans of God for the government of the world. Only their history branches into two divisions: Israel under the first covenant, failing at every point to the uttermost; by and by Israel under the new covenant met, delivered and blessed in divine mercy, and then used for His glory among all nations here below. All turns on Christ. There was idolatrous apostasy of old, which was judged in the Babylonish captivity; but when He was rejected by them as a nation, what could there be but misery and ruin? When He is by grace received, there will be abundant fruits of mercy and goodness. The interval between His rejection and His reception by the Jew is filled by “the times of the Gentiles,” under the fourth empire the gospel also going out and the church of God coming in. After this last empire in its last condition is judged at the Lord’s appearing from heaven, the regular order of prophecy resumes its course, and Israel becomes the head and center of all nations, the Gentiles the tail.

The Jews, no doubt, were blindly ignorant, and did perversely distort the word of prophecy; but it was a worse error which brought on their final catastrophe and dispersion. It was their insubjection to God, their self-righteous refusal to repent, their rejection of the Messiah and of the gospel. All through their history they only who looked for the Messiah served God according to His law; and, when the Messiah came, those who received Him not were alien from all His will and ways, no less than from the object of faith that grace then presented to them. So now it is evil to slight prophecy, but it is not wise to exaggerate that evil; for there is one still deeper underneath, the evil that slights Christ and consequently resists the Holy Ghost as well as the authority of the word of God in general. Faith in God is the great want of souls. How solemnly the Lord has the lack of it before His Spirit when anticipating His return to the earth! I see no room for boasting in Protestants against futurists, or in futurists against Protestants. Mede, Vitringa, and Bengel were men of piety, seriousness, and learning; but it is impossible to have the requisite spiritual intelligence for apprehending prophecy, or the word of God generally, till the Christian calling on high is discriminated from the earthly calling of Israel, and this intelligence is equally and conspicuously absent from both schools. It is a mistaken thought that any but a very few futurists ever doubted the ordinary meaning of the four Gentile empires, or of the other prophecies in Dan. 8, 9, 11. The mass of futurists agree with the mass of Protestants as to these elementary outlines.
They may differ a little as to Matt. 24, and still more as to the prophetic visions of the Apocalypse. On the other hand there is no doubt that, as to an alleged succession of the horns and the little horn of the fourth beast, the abomination of desolation, the man of sin, Babylon, &c, the historical school departs widely from the ancients.

But, as to the four empires in general, there is no real discrepancy among grave and thoughtful Christians. When we come to the details of the fourth or Roman empire, the divergence is considerable. A few eccentric individuals in modern as in ancient times have indulged in doubts and broached strange theories; but all sober persons apply the visions of the great image (Dan. 2) and of the four beasts (Dan. 7) to the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. The broad truth of this is indisputable. They were successive kingdoms, to which God allowed universal supremacy from the ruin of the Jewish state by Nebuchadnezzar till the Messiah. But this advent, as it was a perplexity to the Jews who looked for His glory and not His sufferings, seems scarcely less enigmatic to Christendom, which looks at His sufferings, not at His glory as returning to judge it -- one knows not how soon. It is particularly in view of this last point that difficulties are felt and found among interpreters. The soul that does not judge the present state of Christendom will no more understand prophecy than the Jew who failed to judge according to God the Jewish condition when Messiah first presented Himself. Without faith it is impossible to understand the word, any more than to please God in our ways. Accurate statement, sound reasoning, gravity and reverence are excellent; but, without the faith which applies the truth with a single eye to judge oneself and all things else in relation to God, they are wholly unavailing.

Further, not only are the four empires acknowledged to be successive in their rule, but they correspond respectively in each vision. The head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream answers to the lion, the breast of silver to the bear, the middle of brass to the winged leopard, the lower extremities of iron and clay to the unnamed ravening beast of the prophet’s vision. Only the great image was the more comprehensive of the two, that of the four beasts much the more detailed. The Son of Man’s kingdom is evidently that which answers to the vision of the little stone which becomes a great mountain. The doubts of the late Drs. Maitland and Todd, as of Grotius and others before, are mere incredulity. They never exercised the slightest influence among spiritual men. It is as to the course and conclusion of the last of the beasts or empires that we find the greatest disagreement. But there ought to have been no hesitation that, as the third means the rapidly acquired Macedonian kingdom of Alexander the Great, so the next is the Roman. Its place as the fourth (recognized in the New Testament as then in power), its strength, its subsequent division, its mingling with the seed of men, its sudden and utter destruction at the Lord’s second advent, point unanswerably to the same conclusion.

Here the Revelation supplies the most weighty intimations to help us out of difficulties; for it tells us of the fourth beast that “it was, and is not, and shall be present”; and, further, that its future re-appearance is to be “from the pit or abyss.” One can understand the ruin of that empire which played its part in the crucifixion of the Lord, and which will revive by diabolical energy in the last days to oppose Him when He returns from heaven to restore the kingdom to Israel.

Here is the statement of the man who did most to lay the foundation of the Protestant school [J. Mede]:

Nebuchadnezzar’s image points out two states of the kingdom of Christ, the first to be while those times of the kingdoms of the Gentiles yet lasted, typified by a stone hewn out of a mountain without hands, the monarchical statue yet standing upon his feet, the second not to be until the utter destruction and dissipation of the image, when the stone, having smote it upon the feet, should grow into a great mountain which should fill the whole earth. The first may be called, for distinction’s sake, regnum lapidis, the kingdom of the stone, which is the state of Christ’s kingdom which hitherto hath been; the other, regnum montis, (that is of the stone grown to a mountain, &c.) which is the state of His kingdom which hereafter shall be. The interval between these two, from the time the stone was first hewn out (that is, the kingdom of Christ was first advanced) until the time it becomes a mountain (that is, when the mystery of God shall be finished), is the subject of the Apocalyptic visions.

Note here, first, that the stone is expounded by Daniel to be that lasting kingdom which the God of heaven should set up; secondly, that the stone was hewn out of the mountain before it smote the image on the feet and consequently before the image was dissipated; and therefore that the kingdom, typified by the stone while it remained a stone, must needs be within the times of those monarchies, that is, before the last of them (namely the Roman) should expire. Wherefore Daniel interprets that in the days of these kingdoms (not after them, but while some of them were yet in being) the God of heaven should set up a kingdom which should never be destroyed, nor left (as they were) to another people; but should break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, and itself should stand forever. And all this he speaks as the interpretation of the stone. “Forasmuch” (saith he) “that a stone was cut out of a mountain without hands and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold.” Here make the full point; for these words belong not to that which follows (as our Bibles by mis-distinguishing seem to refer them) but to that which went before of their interpretation. But the stone becoming a mountain he expounds not, but leaves to be gathered by what he had already expounded.” (Mede’s Works, pp. 743, 744, 4th edition, London, 1677).

But the little stone is plainly the kingdom of God in Christ, which was only seen to come after the image was fully out, even to the toes; and its first action was to smite the feet and toes, reducing the whole statue to powder, after which it grows into a mountain and fills the whole earth. That is, the gospel, or the kingdom of God now known to faith, is wholly
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The vision looks at nothing but the second advent in power and glory, beginning with the judgment of the imperial system in its last form, and then the kingdom of God diffused to the blessing of all the earth and to His own glory for ever. The Protestant idea of a “regnum lapidis” going on from the incarnation of Christ through the whole course of ancient and modern history is a mere interpolation. Even Theodoret had better light. One can have no sympathy with the unbelief which overlooks the solemn place of the Roman empire, past or future; but why should one countenance the fable of a “regnum lapidis” meanwhile? It is possible and the fact that more than one untoward futurist denied the fourth kingdom to be the Roman empire, and this to relieve the papacy as well as to shake confidence in Protestant views. The truth is that there is no vitality, nor sanctifying power, save in the word received in the Holy Ghost. To slip away from this into the study of the elder commentators, especially of the Fathers, does pave the way for a relapse into the idolatrous embraces of the mystic Babylon, which might well turn to her own account the fable of the “regnum lapidis.” For she at least desires to reign now as a queen without sorrow, instead of being content with the apostles and saints to wait, apart from the world and in present rejection, for the Bridegroom, that we may reign together with Him at His coming.

I am not disposed to deny an application of prophecy, especially of the Apocalypse, throughout the middle ages; but it must be owned by fair minds that the resemblance between the prophetic visions and the historical facts is slight and vague. Who can wonder then that the injudicious efforts of most commentators known as Protestants, who sought to prove the most punctual fulfillment in the past, led to that reaction which is commonly called futurism? The Christian will do well to study the written word in peace, undistracted by controversy, profiting by every real help God vouchsafes him, but holding firmly to dependence on the Lord to open His word to him, whether prophetic or any other. It is the Holy Spirit who alone can, who will do so only where grace makes one true to the glory of Christ. For this He is sent down; and He at least is true to the divine purpose.

But on the other hand one may ask of those zealous for the past application of Dan. 2, 7, where is the complete and exhaustive likeness they profess to find between hordes of barbarians breaking up a long sick and expiring empire into some (say ten) portions in which they establish themselves, in the course of a century and a half, and a power of extraordinary vigor with ten kingdoms as the expression of its strength, swayed by one mind, which gives all unity, whether first to wreak God’s vengeance in idolatrous corruption, or finally to conspire against the Lamb to their own destruction?

In fact, even when one looks into the prophecies which deal with the times of the Gentiles, it is not true that their object is to enter into the details of succession (Dan. 11 being only in part an exception for peculiar reasons), but the Spirit is content to give the broad general facts with distinct light converging on the solemn crisis when God displays and establishes His kingdom on the rebellious ruin of man’s. The reason why people prefer to apply it historically is, because this transfers the mind’s attention to what the world has written and gives a certain scope to human ingenuity as well as research. But it weakens the impressive lesson of divine judgment on that which is highly esteemed among men. The true view recalls the conscience to God and His word, concentrating our attention on the evil and ruin of the first man, and on the sure coming and reign of the Second.
Chapter 4: The Vision of the Ram and the He-Goat

The Vision of the Ram and He-Goat

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, as the vision of the prophet in the first year of Belshazzar (Dan. 7:1), embraced the entire circle of the four world-powers. The vision of Daniel 8 stands strikingly contradistinguished in this that here we have only to do with the second and third of these empires, though (as it will be shown) we are brought down to the time of the end in an off-shoot of the third empire. No grave Christian doubts what every dispassionate reader of the prophet must see, that the ancient Medo-Persian and Macedonian powers are set before us.

It seems surprising that any one should make more than their worth of the singular speculations of the late Dr. Todd. For who can fail to see the unusual distinctness in the interpretation supplied by the Holy Spirit Himself? One need not reason on the date or the scene of the vision: verses 20, 21 are decisive to any simple mind. On the one hand the final superiority of the Persian over the Median is evident when we compare verse 3 with verse 20; the eastern source of it on its course of conquest westward, northward, and southward, being marked in verse 4. On the other hand the Macedonian conqueror and his overthrow of the great king appears most graphically in verses 5-7 as compared with verse 21. History may and does illustrate; but no believer needs more than is here given to have a clear intelligent certainty of conviction as to the prophecy and its application. Verses 8, 22 plainly point to a fourfold division after the death of Alexander the Great (not by defeat or when internal discord dissolved the kingdom, but contrariwise “when he was strong, the great horn was broken”), “four notable horns”; and so there were as is commonly known. It was absurd therefore to argue from verse 17 in Gabriel’s explanation that all the vision related to “the time of the end,” or that the powers represented by the ram and he-goat are future.

But it is a characteristic and an all but universal error of the historical school that they enfeeble and lose sight of the truth that the main object and interest of the vision hinges on “the time of the end,” the end of the indignation which rests on the Jewish people. There ought to be no need of proof that the end of the divine displeasure with the ancient people is certainly yet future. It is in vain to refer to Dan. 9:26, or 1 Cor. 10:11, to turn aside the phrase from its bearing on the end of the age. For the prophet in the one expressly limits the end to the city and the sanctuary, and brings in a definite subsequent period before the way is open for blessing; and the apostle means in the other that the ends of the ages are come, or met, on us, Christians. Matt. 24:14, which is also appealed to, really confirms the future view; for “the end” there spoken of is assuredly not yet come.

It may be added that there is no great difficulty in the way of applying the host of heaven and the stars to the Jewish system and its rulers, though at this time supposed to be subject to the Gentile beasts politically. The people may be Lo-Ammi; but such a designation, though it be not a figure from the day of Jehovah but rather from the night during which they feebly shone, was at any rate a testimony to their hopes whilst it acknowledged their true estate meanwhile. The last king of the north finds himself in collision with Christ, the Prince of princes, and perishes by divine judgment. But this king of the north is as distinct from the wilful king who will reign in Palestine as from the last head of the Roman empire, though all of them daring enemies of the Lord at the same epoch, as will be shown presently at greater length. Ancients and moderns have generally confounded all three.

Observe again the fact that the very language is changed, which from Dan. 2 was Chaldee. Now from Dan. 7, as bearing on that which, while connected with the Gentile powers, specially touched the ancient people of God, Hebrew is employed. Were it the design to draw particular attention to Cyrus and the details of that victorious career in which he had just entered when the vision was given, the propriety of this would be by no means apparent. Nor is it at all convincing that the reason for representing the second and third empires by the ram and goat (that is, not beasts of prey, but animals of sacrifice) is their favoring Israel, when both had been represented in the chapter before to the same prophet under the symbol of the bear and the winged leopard; yea, when in this very chapter the grand point is a king mighty, but not by his own power, who shall destroy the Jews, but himself be broken without hand -- a vision which affected the seer yet more deeply than that of Dan. 7. No one denies the admirable symbols employed to depict the comparatively slow and heavy aggressiveness of the
Medo-Persian, and the amazing rapidity and impetuous force of the spirited Greek; also the subsequent division of the Syro-Greek kingdom of the north. But all this, however full of interest, is preparatory to the main design for the latter day when a mysterious king shall meddle with the Jews to the hurt of many among them, but to his own destruction. That Antiochus Epiphanes answers in part to the little horn in the vision (Dan. 8:10) I do not for a moment doubt.

Only it is well to remark three points: first, the parenthesis consisting of verse 11 and the first half of verse 12, in which “he” takes the place of “it,” apparently looking onward to the great personage of the close rather than to the horn of the goat that typified him; secondly, that verses 13, 14 do not necessarily go beyond the defilement which has already taken place; thirdly, that the interpretation concerns itself with the crisis at the end, only linking on the proximate Medo-Persian and Greek empires with that tremendous issue, but with an enormous gap manifestly between the circumstances then at hand and the last end of the indignation of God against Israel. To deny the all-importance of the crisis in order to eke out a case of continuity here would be mere infatuation, the effect of a blinding system.
Chapter 5

Supplementary Observations

There are two matters which it seems desirable briefly to meet before passing on to fresh matter, as the true solution may confirm what has been already urged, and clear the way for what is to come. One is the question as to the identity of the two little horns of Dan. 7, 8; the other the use of the word “kings” as equivalent to kingdoms. These are handled in this order.

The Two Little Horns

The tendency of ancient as of modern times has been in prophecy, as everywhere else in scripture, to confound things that differ. Thus, on a large scale, the trials and hopes of Israel have been merged in those of the church, to the enormous loss of intelligence in the mind of God as revealed in His word; on a lesser {scale}, we see a similar confusion as to the great actors of the latter day, which inevitably narrows the scope of prophecy and spreads a haze over the solemn issues of the final conflicts of good and evil. From this the futurists have never fully emerged, for they in general make the Antichrist of the end to be the last enemy of the church instead of being the head of the Jews and Christendom apostate, and they leave no room for the other foes of the Lord, making all the prophecies of evil powers at the end concentrate in that great adversary. Now though it is natural for us to feel a special interest in the West, we ought not to lose sight of the East if we would have an adequate view of the field.

The truth is also that obvious uncertainty surrounds every school of interpretation as to the little horn of Dan. 8. Thus, while the ancients with almost one voice conceived that it presents the character and persecutions and end of Antiochus Epiphanes (some also maintaining a future reference to the wicked or lawless one, the Antichrist of St. John), Sir I. Newton (followed by his Episcopal namesake) and not a few others applied it to the Gracoe-Roman empire; but far more since view in it the Mahometan power, some of them interpreting it of the Turk. Others refer it, like Dan. 7, to the Papacy. No reader will be surprised to hear that the latter theories were not held of old, but that men, Jews and Christians, held then that Antiochus Epiphanes was meant, though many felt that more was included in the prophecy and regarded that enemy of the Jews as typical of their final adversary. Sir I. N. reasons thus against the view so long prevalent:

This horn was at first a little one, and waxed exceeding great; but so did not Antiochus. His kingdom on the contrary was weak and tributary to the Romans, and he did not enlarge it. The horn was a king of fierce countenance, destroyed wonderfully, prospered and practiced (that is, he prospered in his practices against the holy people); but Antiochus was frightened out of Egypt by a mere message of the Romans, and afterwards routed and baffled by the Jews.

The horn was mighty by another’s power, Antiochus by his own. The horn stood up against the prince of heaven, the prince of princes; and this is the character not of Antiochus but of Antichrist. The horn cast down the sanctuary to the ground, and so did not Antiochus: he left it standing. The sanctuary and the host were to be trampled under foot until two thousand three hundred days, and in Daniel’s prophecies days are put for years. But the profanation in the reign of Antiochus did not last so many natural days. They were to last until the time of the end, till the last end of the indignation against the Jews; and this indignation is not yet at an end. They were to last until the sanctuary which had been cast down should be cleansed; and the sanctuary is not yet cleansed.

The utmost then which can be allowed is that the prophecy had only a precarious and partial accomplishment in Antiochus. Its proper fulfillment is future.

On the other hand, they are wholly mistaken who, futurist or historical, identify the little horns of the two prophecies (Dan. 7, 8). No doubt there are points of resemblance between them, as there are between all men; but how absurd to deny their distinctness! It has been well shown that there are at least ten particulars predicted of the first horn:

- its rise from the fourth beast;
- its co-existence with ten kings,
- and its subjugation of three;
- its eyes as of a man, and a mouth speaking great things,
- and its judgment by the Ancient of days;
- diverseness from the other kings;
- blasphemy against God;
- persecution of the saints;
changing of times and laws;
and continuance for a time, times, and the dividing of time.

Again, at least twelve points are given as to the second horn:

- its rise from the he-goat or Grecian empire in one of its five divisions;
- its great increase of size and power,
- and the three directions of its conquests;
- its trampling on the stars of heaven;
- opposition to the prince of the host;
- removal of the sacrifice and casting down of the sanctuary;
- the time (two thousand three hundred days) of continuance or of some related events;
- its might not by its own power;
- its fierceness of countenance;
- its understanding of dark sentences;
- its triumph by policy;
- and destruction without hand.

The truth is that the marks of likeness between these two powers are of the most shadowy character, those of difference sharply defined and numerous. They agree in being enemies of the Lord and of His people, well as in their awful end under His judgment when He appears and reigns; but even here the form, circumstances, and precise epoch differ widely. The question is in no way one between the historical school and futurists, for a few of both see aright, the mass of both indistinctly, and some who reject both see at least not less clearly than any of either party.

The Prophetic Significance of Kings

On this one may be brief, as scripture shows that while “horn” means a kingly person or power, it may according to the context mean a succession and not merely an individual. It cannot be assumed that a succession is always meant, for it more frequently refers to a single person. But in Dan. 7:17-23 we have the decisive proof that a king may mean morally a kingdom. To treat this however as a license for so interpreting it universally in these prophecies is unwarrantable.
Chapter 6

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9

The main defect in the historical school here is one which vitiates almost every writer pertaining to it -- the assumption that the seventieth week terminates, either with the death of the Messiah and its immediate results, or at most with the destruction of Jerusalem under the Roman power. 4 There are not a few varieties of exposition among moderns as among older writers; but the error named has been and is an insuperable hindrance to a real understanding of the vision as a whole.

They all shut out the future from the last seventieth week, which nevertheless can be demonstrated to be its true force unfulfilled. Most of them deny a break or interval in the chain which nevertheless can be proved to be required on any right view of the prophecy. They thus destroy the analogy between this and all the other visions of Daniel, which from first to last bring us down to the point when the guilty Gentiles vanish under the judgment of God and give place to Him whose is the kingdom, and whose reign shall not pass away.

Further, those who regard every vision in the book of Daniel as going on to the future, that is, to the end of the age (though for this very reason not continuously, but with a broad and in general a well-defined gap) in no way deny truths common to almost all who have studied the prophecy. For instance, it is maintained by all, save three or four pseudo-literalists of no spiritual weight, that the first advent and death of Christ is foretold here, as well as the overthrow of the Jewish polity; secondly, that the weeks or sevens are to be reckoned as of years and not of days; and, thirdly, that 7 + 62 (= 69) such weeks were to elapse from the Persian decree to build Jerusalem before the cutting off of the Messiah. Rightly understood this, like all the visions in Daniel, goes on to the end of the age.

It is interesting by the way to note that the oldest extant exposition of the book approaches more closely to the truth than most of the works written on the prophecy since. For Hippolytus of Rome is distinct in this at least that the last week is occupied exclusively with the future immediately before the appearing of our Lord in judgment of the quick (the living on earth). There is not only mistake as to the starting point but the ordinary confusion of the Antichrist with the two little horns of Dan. 7, 8, the first beast of the sea, and the Assyrian or king of the north. This however need not surprise any one acquainted with the views which have prevailed and still prevail. It is the common state of all, whether historical or futurist. The good bishop’s chronology seems defective enough in thinking that sixty-two hebdomads {sevens} of years (even adding the previous seven) would cover the space since the return from Babylonia to Christ’s coming; but there can be no doubt that he interpreted the last hebdomad {seven} of the future, as indeed Primatius was disposed to do. Compare Hippol. R. Opp. ed. De Lagarde, pp. 23, 104, 108, 114, 166, 187.

There is the manifest and striking difference in this prophecy from the previous ones, that it is occupied mainly not with the Gentile conquerors so much as with Jerusalem, its sanctuary, and Messiah, with its glory and spiritual blessedness at least at the close, but with disasters and ruin to the last degree, not only during the last week, but for a term unmeasured before it.

From the beginning of the chapter {Dan 9:2} we learn how unfounded it is to wait till a prophecy is fulfilled before profiting by it. This did not Daniel, who understood, not by a special intimation to himself but "by books," the number of the years whereof the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the prophet. Himself a prophet too, he shows us the importance of weighing the prophetic word already given. Babylon was taken punctually: were not the same seventy years to issue in the return of the Jews from captivity? No sign of this favor of God had yet been given, save so far as the fall of the captor city might be its earnest. Daniel, not doubting but believing, sets his face to the Lord Jehovah to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. Such was the effect on one who judged the present in the light of the word and of prophecy among the rest: not occupation with political speculation, but confession and humiliation and intercession before God. Daniel identifies himself with all Israel. "And I prayed unto Jehovah my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him; and to them that keep his commandments, we have sinned and

6. {This is what amillennial writers do.}
have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments; neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets which spoke in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.” There is thorough vindication of the Lord and condemnation of all Israel (Dan. 9:7, 8). There is a pleading of His mercy and forgiveness (Dan. 9:9), but a renewed acknowledgment of disobedience and transgression on the part of all Israel, to which the curse written in Moses, under which they were groaning, is imputed (Dan. 9:10-12). It is owned that, though the Lord had smitten them, they had not entreated His face that they might turn from their iniquities and understand His truth (impossible otherwise); and therefore the Lord could but watch to inflict more and more (Dan. 9:13, 14). Reminding the Lord of His mighty dealings for Israel from the beginning, the prophet renews his confession but beseeches that His anger and fury be turned away from Jerusalem, and this to the removal of the burden and reproach of their sins (Dan. 9:15, 16), and begs in answer to his own prayer that His face may shine on that long desolate sanctuary, and His eyes may behold their desolations and the city called by His name for His great mercies’ sake (Dan. 9:17, 18), winding all up with a succession of most brief and earnest appeals. “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name” (Dan. 9:19).

Nor did the answer tarry. But it was strictly and exclusively in reference to what the holy prophet had besought the Lord -- Jerusalem and the Jews. “And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before Jehovah my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision” (Dan. 9:20-23).

Then follows the prophecy, “Seventy weeks have been set [divided] upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish {or close} the transgression, and to make an end of [or seal up] sins, and to atone for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies.” This is the consummation of grace -- the establishment of Israel at the end of the seventy hebdomads {sevens} specified; for it will be observed bat it is not simply the accomplishment of the efficacious work of propitiation and its consequences, but its application to the Jewish people, which alone can meet the prophet’s desires and God’s message in reply. Chiefly then to provide for the steps in the fulfillment of the prediction, and to mark where the interruption comes in, and to warn of the awful trouble which precedes the final blessing, we have the seventy weeks, not only summarized or viewed in their completion in {Dan. 9} verse 24, but next also broken into portions in the verses following.

Know therefore and understand: from the going forth of the word to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince [shall be] seven weeks and sixty-two weeks: the street and wall shall be again built, and in times of pressure. And after the sixty and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off and shall have nothing; and the city and the sanctuary shall the people of the coming prince destroy; but the end thereof shall be with the flood; and until the end war [and] desolations [[are] decreed.

If interpreters had looked into scripture for the decree which exactly answers to that which the prophecy describes, it is hard to see how there could have been hesitation or even delay. At least it is plain enough that it was neither Cyrus nor Darius, but Artaxerxes who issued such a command first in his seventh year, and then later in his twentieth year {Neh. 2}. But of the two a close comparison will soon show that the first, like the decrees of Cyrus and Darius, had regard to the temple, theirs for its rebuilding, his for providing its due order and service; and this was naturally entrusted to Ezra the priest (Ezra 7). But the later one was just as characteristically entrusted to Nehemiah the Thirshatha, and it is patent that his commission, as it grew out of his complaint that the city of his fathers’ sepulchers lay ruined and its gates consumed by fire, so was the decree, {Neh. 2} distinctly for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and its restoration in general.

It would seem that most have been turned aside through their adopting the vulgar reckoning (B. C. 445) of the date of Artaxerxes’ accession, and consequently of the twentieth year of his reign. But the fact is, that Bishop Lloyd here departed from Archbishop Ussher’s correction, who very deliberately records it as his judgment that the common reckoning places the first year of Artaxerxes nine years too late. The grounds of this the reader may see in his Ann. Vet. Test. A. M. 3531 (Whole Works, 8:292). People could not reconcile the dates of the prophecy with those ordinarily current, and hence have been disposed to adopt the seventh year instead of the twentieth. But I shall presently show that this view does violence to the sacred text and therefore must be discarded, for it brings in the last week wholly, or in part, to eke out the reckoning, whereas it is certain that the last week remains to be fulfilled.

It is plain on the face of Gabriel’s message that the division into seven weeks and sixty-two weeks had a special meaning: as otherwise such an arrangement would never be made, especially where the style is so singularly concise and pointed. The seven weeks or forty-nine years, then, embrace...
the restoration of Jerusalem; and the book of Nehemiah shows us in what times of trouble the work was begun and continued. To these add the sixty-two weeks of years already named, and the next announcement after that term is one of the strangest sound and most solemn import, not the birth, nor the reign, but the cutting off of Messiah. No wonder that Jews wince, and avoid or wrest such a prophecy. Yet was it no Christian who wrote the startling prediction but their own prophet Daniel, a man greatly beloved. Why should the Talmudists or others slight the writings of one so singularly honored by his inspired contemporary Ezekiel? If it be the fruit of an evil conscience, it is intelligible. For nothing can be plainer than that he who predicted without a date the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, when it is a question of His kingdom in power and glory, predicts here, after a chain of sixty-nine weeks of years the Messiah cut off and having nothing (that is, of the kingdom that should have been His among the Jews). It is just as in Isa. 49. Christ had spent His strength for nought and labored in vain, as far as His ancient people were concerned. Only the earlier prophet shows His confidence that His cause was with Jehovah and the recompense of His work with His God; and the answer is, that it is a light thing to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel: Jehovah appoints His rejected but accepted Messiah for a light to the Gentiles that His salvation may reach to the end of the earth, as the gospel now testifies. Whereas the later prophet abides the herald of captivity and of sorrow for the returned captives, who should know a flood of desolations after Messiah was to be cut off.

The Vulgate understands the clause following to mean, “and shall not have his people who should deny him.” This is not only an intolerable paraphrase rather than a version, but it narrows the sense unduly of יְשִׁיעָה to His people as no more His; whereas it means very simply “there is not (or shall not be) to him.” Its object is to show that, as the consequence of excision, He was to have nothing of all that might have been looked for according to promise. Every Jew would naturally anticipate all blessing to themselves, all glory to Messiah, at His coming. Who could have foreseen that He should be cut off and have nothing? Yet the spiritual man feels that it could not be otherwise; for sin was there as everywhere, and not even adequately confessed, still less judged according to God. Here (Dan. 9:26) it is not the efficacy of His death for others that is taught, as our English translators seem to have conceived, but the guilt of it on those who cut Him off out of the land of the living.

Hence follows a flood of sorrow and overwhelming desolation, at first and precisely under the Roman people who should destroy the city and the sanctuary. But this was not the end; for a vista opens of war and desolations to the end, and that by God’s determinate decree (compare Isa. 10). The indignation of Jehovah against His people is not yet complete. How amazing that men, pious men too, should have overlooked the broad and plain signification of a timeless interruption after this, including the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and all the long line of humiliating trouble on the Jew since, especially on Jerusalem and its temple! For beyond controversy the chain of weeks is here broken, as (to be exact as well as just) it ought to be. The series was unbroken from the Persian decree to restore Jerusalem till the sixty-ninth ran out, after which Messiah was cut off. How could this bring aught from God righteously but a breach and woes on those who by lawless hands had slain such a prince?

It is in vain to drag out of {Dan. 9} verse 27 the cessation of sacrifice in order to put it into verse 26. The true connection is thus destroyed, and a meaning is given by such a transposition to that suppression of Jewish worship which differs wholes as we shall see from that which is really attached to it where God has put it. And this also disturbs the true chronology by bringing in the last week, wholly or in part, and tacking it on to the sixty-nine weeks. Not that the cutting off of Messiah is said to be at but after the sixty-ninth week. This leaves the date somewhat open; it could not be before, it might be a little after. But with the seventieth week, as far as the prophecy teaches, it has absolutely no connection. On the contrary, events are named as posterior and evidently judicial consequences, although different in character, at the hand of Gentile oppressors, which are by no fair means within the course of the seventy weeks, but rather when the gap came following the cutting off of Messiah.

How long that interruption was to last, Gabriel had not come to declare. But the picture disclosed in the latter part of {Dan 9} verse 26 naturally includes all the woes of Jerusalem since the Romans took away their place and nation. The disastrous end is not yet come. For it is remarkable in more respects than one that the destruction here is attributed not to the coming prince but to his people, the Roman people; and so it was beyond controversy. They came and destroyed {in AD 70}. But their prince {a Roman} did not yet come -- I add, is not even yet come. We shall hear of him in the verse following when the seventieth week begins.

For on all just principles of exposition the last week remains till the Jews are once more back in Jerusalem and their sanctuary rebuilt. This is implied in what follows, however it may grate on those who slight the prophetic word through their confidence in present appearances. Alas! the Jews will be again there, the mass, not many only, of them (for this too the last verse teaches, as in many another word of the prophet elsewhere) in unbelief and ready to apostatize. And herein is found the true bearing of him who strengthens a covenant with the many for the one week (Dan. 9:27). It is the coming prince, a prince of that people which after the death of Messiah destroyed the city and the sanctuary. It is
the Roman chief, the little horn of the revived fourth empire {Dan. 7:8}, who is to confirm a covenant with the multitude of the Jews at the end of this age.

This is the simplest reference grammatically, as none can deny, not to the cut-off Messiah, who in no sense ever did or will make a covenant with any for one week, still less with “the many” or mass of the Jews, in this book bearing no good character (compare with this verse 27; Dan. 11:33, 39; 12:3: the more strikingly because of a different sense in Dan. 11:34, 44; 12:2, 4, 10, where the article is not used). It is in no way the covenant, still less the everlasting covenant, but a covenant. It is mere assumption to say (what the context explodes) that it must be a covenant with God. Have men never read Isa. 28:15, 18, that they so pertinaciously cling to the violent perversion of this verse to Messiah, overlooking the explicit teaching that Messiah had long before come and been cut off, and that we were told afterwards of a coming foreign prince, whose people destroyed Jerusalem? It is a future Roman prince who is to confirm a covenant for seven years, not with the godly remnant {of the Jews} but with the mass of the Jews, before the new age arrives when Messiah, even Jehovah of hosts, shall reign gloriously in Zion.

But the strongest hopes of man are weakness itself if God sanctions not. And how could He sustain what put His people into alliance with death and hell {Sheol} {Isa. 28:15, 18}? The confirmation of the Roman empire no more stands for the Jews than its seal of old could hinder the resurrection of the buried Messiah. Hence we read that in the half or midst of the week he will cause sacrifice and offering to cease. This suggests the scope of the covenant named. It appears that it will be a solemn engagement to permit the Jews to carry on their temple ritual. This he now terminates. But there is far more than this shown us. “And because of the protection [literally, “wing”] of abominations, a desolator [shall be].” So I understand this phrase. No one can dispute that it is quite as good a rendering as the unmeaning “on the pinnacle of abominations a desolator.” For the Hebrew word is used for a wing, and hence protection, as decidedly as for a wing or pinnacle of a building.

The desolator is sent retributively by God because this Roman prince breaking covenant with the mass of the Jews is allowed to suspend their legal worship and enforce idolatry. (Compare Matt. 12:43-45 and 24:15 with Dan. 11:36-39 and Rev. 13.) So we saw in Isa. 28:18. The overflowing scourge there, is the desolator here, who will tread down the Jews once more for their guilty yielding to Satan’s wicked triumph in the latter day. No doubt the Jews would scorn the imputation and count such a concession to the Gentile who once destroyed them an impossibility. So would they have said beforehand of the rejection of their own Messiah. But unbelief of danger is the path of ruin, not of preservation. And those who refused the Christ who came in the Father’s name are yet to receive him who comes in his own name, that is, the Antichrist, the wilful king of the Jews {Dan. 11:36; 2 Thess 2; 1 John 2:18; Rev. 13:11-18}, who, in league with the Roman beast {Rev. 13:1-10}, alike wicked instruments of the idolatry and evil still worse in the temple of God at Jerusalem {Dan. 12:11; Matt. 24:15; Rev. 13:14}, shall bring down the overflowing scourge or last desolator, the Assyrian of Old Testament prophecy, "and that until decreed desolation be poured on the desolate,” that is, on Jerusalem thus righteously wasted till He come and reign whose right it is.

It is no wonder then to my mind that the confusion of {Dan. 9} verse 27 with 26, common to most of the christian commentators, should expose their interpretation to the lawless attacks of rationalism. The view here presented however maintains all that is certain as to the past (whether in the restoring of Jerusalem under Nehemiah, or in the cutting off of Messiah, as in the subsequent, though undated, destruction of the city by the Romans, with its disastrous history up to the present), whilst it preserves the natural meaning of the last week for the end of the age, when the Roman chief {Rev. 13:1-10} of that day will meddle with the Jews again in Jerusalem and their worship, to his and their destruction under the Lord’s judgment when He appears and we with Him in glory {Col. 3:4} Other scriptures show that a righteous remnant will be kept, and that they will become the nucleus of restored Israel who are to be gathered into the land {Ezek 20, etc.} from all the countries of their dispersion, and blessed under the Messiah reigning in glory over the earth.
The Scripture of Truth: Daniel 10-12

This prophecy differs from all the preceding visions in the minute consecutiveness with which it presents to us, not so much the succession of the Persian empire down to the struggle with Greece, as the conflicts of the Syro-Macedonian kingdom with Egypt. But even here the historical thread is interrupted, partially in the prefatory part as we shall see, still more conspicuously at the epoch of Antiochus Epiphanes, the close of whom furnishes the point of transition where an immense gap occurs, and we soon after find ourselves in presence of the wilful king in the holy land [Dan. 11:36 -- the Antichrist] with the last embroilment of the last kings of the north and south. If the futurists are inexcusable in cavilling against the fulfillment of Dan. 11:1-32, they of the historical school may find it convenient to slip out of all reference to {Dan. 11} verses 36-45, not to speak of chapter 12 where their own erroneous interpretations are no less palpable, though in the opposite direction of applying to the past what is wholly unaccomplished because future.

The barest outline must here suffice to set forth the true object of the Spirit, how far the prediction has been fulfilled and what remains for the great crisis at the end of the age; for this will be found to be the common issue and meeting-place of the great closing scenes in the book of Daniel, and we may say in the prophets generally. The revealing angel declares (Dan. 10:14) that this vision refers to the Jew and the latter day -- not of course its starting-point of sorrow and trial, of weakness and shame, but its bright end when God will bless His people and land with power and glory.

Very briefly is the Persian sketched in the three successors to Cyrus, Cambyses, Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspes, till the fourth, Xerxes, famous for his “riches,” attacks the realm of Grecia. The “mighty king” that stands up is Alexander {the Great}, the great horn of the Grecian goat of Dan. 8:5-8, 21, whose sole kingdom breaks up, followed by four notable horns, two of which are thenceforth described in these wars, intrigues, alliances, with Palestine between them, often their field of battle, oftener an object of their strife. Here we see Ptolemy Soter and Seleucus Nicator; Berenice, daughter of Ptolemy Philadelphus and Antiochus, and the tragic end of that business; Ptolemy Euergetes and his successes over Seleucus Callinicus, who afterwards came against the kingdom of the south [Egypt]; then, after the death of his brother Seleucus Caranus, the antagonism of Antiochus the Great and Ptolemy Philopator at considerable length, as the Jews figure in it; the failure of his policy in giving his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy Epiphanes, and his defeat by the Romans; then the tax-burdened reign of his son Seleucus Philopator, murdered by his treasurer Heliodorus; and lastly Antiochus IV, his brother, surnamed Epiphanes but called Epimanes by his own subjects in derisive resentment. The Maccabees record his impious and sacrilegious madness.

But need we dwell here in the details of the Lagidae and Seleucidae? No sober Christian doubts the application of these continuous predictions from verse 5 to 32. Even the infidel is compelled to take refuge in the hopeless theory that they must have been written after the event! being as perspicuous as the histories of Justin and Diodorus. One might go farther and affirm that no history contains so exact, concise, and clear account of that period, the Spirit of God dwelling with especial fullness (Dan. 11:21-32) on the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, as the last of these kings in the past; and this, because he defied the sanctuary and sought the apostasy of the Jews, thus becoming of all these the only remarkable type of their enemy at the end of the age.

It is here that historicalism betrays its inherent weakness, especially when it forces scripture to comply with its presumed law of unbroken continuance. Every other vision in the book refutes this presumption; and if there be in this chapter an unusual and double line of kings traced, even here the beginning and the close protest against those systematizers who refuse to learn from the chapter itself its own contents. Verse 2 leaps over several kings from Xerxes to Alexander the Macedonian, who overthrew the Persian empire in the person of Darius Codomans. But a far greater gap is apparent at verse 35. In the former there is no intimation of it; in the latter room is left expressly and indefinitely for all intended. Indeed it is evident that the transition extends through two or three verses, “And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, [many] days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be helped with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed” (Dan. 11:33–35).

The last clauses of the quotation can leave no doubt that here we are transported from the Maccabean struggle to “the time of the end,” wholly passing over the first appearing of the Lord and the gospel state of things. Suddenly in {Dan. 11} verse 36 we look on the wilful king of the last days in the holy land, with the kings of the north and south once more. Of this
there can be no question for any intelligent and unbiased mind. In the course of the description of the conflict it is positively declared to be “at the time of the end,” and the connection with the succeeding chapter (“at that time”) is alone consistent with such an epoch and character of events; but it is the end of the age, not of the world save in that sense. It is immediately before the time of reward for the righteous on earth, the time when waiting melts into blessed enjoyment for the saints in the kingdom of God.

Evidently therefore the effort to find here the Papacy or even Mahometanism is a delusion; as also still more the old empire of Rome in the east. It is a feeble interpretation that finds in the Gospels and Acts “such as do wickedly against the covenant,” or in the language of the chief priests to Pilate, the promise of Pilate to release whom they would, the address of Tertullus to Felix, and the wish of Felix and Festus to do pleasure to the Jews, examples of corrupting “with flatteries.” And we need to look in quite another direction, beyond the Acts and the Epistles, for the just application of the words “the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits.” It is the glory of the Christian to suffer; the Maccabees really did exploits. So too the Maskilim were among the people, the Jews; and “the many” in {Dan. 11} verse 33, not in 34, is a technical phrase meaning the mass of that nation. Their troubles are plainly set forth, and a persecution which was to have a sifting effect then, and up to the time of the end. And I have little doubt that there will be an analogous state among the Jews in the land when the time of the end comes -- analogous, not in heroism, but in tribulation. The mistake is in applying all this to the intermediate Christian state.

Once “the king” {Dan. 11:36} is introduced on the scene, we recognize the great personal rival and usurper of the rights of Christ in the holy land. So interpreted, and only so, the prophecy flows on clearly and smoothly. It is St. Paul’s Man of Sin, as opposed to “Jesus Christ the righteous” who according to 2 Thess. 2 is to sit in the temple of God showing himself that he is God; it is he who coming in his own name {John 5:43} is to be received by the Jews that rejected Him who came in His Father’s, the Antichrist of St. John {1 John 2:18}. Here he is “the king,” an expression borrowed apparently from Isa. 30:33, (cf. Isa. 57:9) where he is really distinguished from the Assyrian, as here from the king of the north. The article does not necessarily imply a reference to some person or power already revealed in the context, but one so familiar to the Jewish mind that they at least should be in no danger of mistake who believe the prophets.

We have seen that it is not Antiochus Epiphanes, but a king after the great gap and in the time of the end. No doubt it will be before the judgment of the fourth or Roman beast, which is to revive once more by a sort of resurrection power of Satan before going into perdition (Rev. 13:2, 3, 5; 17:8). But the wilful king’s rule is in the land of Israel, as his blasphemous self-exaltation is pre-eminently in the temple of Jerusalem, and his prosperity is till God’s indignation against Israel is accomplished. It is arbitrary, yea contrary to the scope of the passage, to transport the wilful king to Rome, or to conceive that the proper seat of his power is in the west or anywhere but in Palestine: {Dan. 11} verse 39 is as decisive for this as verse 37 that he is a Jew, though apostate; and this is confirmed by {Dan. 11} verses 41, 45, though the subject be no longer the wilful king, but his enemy the last king of the north. Everything however fixes the scene as in the holy land just before the final deliverance of the Jews. This king of the north is the little horn of Dan. 8, the king of fierce countenance, who shall stand up against the Prince of princes but be broken without hand. So here he comes to his end, and none shall help him.

Dan. 12 repudiates every effort to turn away any of its parts from the last great crisis for Israel. Daniel’s people shall then know the tribulation that is without parallel even for them; and they have tasted bitter times enough under Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, and Titus. But after the future and worst they shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. God will make it a means and occasion of purging them. It is true that the resurrection in Dan. 12:2 is figuratively spoken, but it is of the Israelites, and not confined to those “of a clean heart,” who now lie as it were dead and buried among the Gentiles, but who then shall come forward, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. It is the time of the judgment of the quick {the living}, when evil men are no longer tolerated, and intelligence and zeal for the Lord meets its recompense (Dan. 12:3).

Again, the sealing of the book (Dan. 12:9) points to the end of the age among Jews, in contrast with the portion of the Christian in the truths now revealed, as we see in Rev. 22:10. So too the three years and a half (Dan. 12:5-7): apply as people may to others after a protracted scale, there can be no doubt that it is expressly said of the Jews at the end. A fuller revelation comes by John to us, not to Daniel (Dan. 12:8, 9).

The brief period of the crisis is strongly confirmed by Dan. 12:11, 12, in the former of which it may be observed we have the true source of the Lord’s reference in Matt. 24:15: not Dan. 11:31, which is exclusively past in the days of Antiochus, but Dan. 12:11, which is wholly future and speaks of Antichrist only though no doubt sustained in it by the fourth beast or Roman empire. Compare Dan. 9:27, and 11:36-39.

We have thus taken, not a collection of extreme views, but what is set forth by an advocate of historicism who is more than ordinarily alive to the future, in order to show that the system in its best shape fails in representing the true scope of prophecy. The main error is preoccupation with ourselves, instead of seeing that Christ’s glory is the true object of God in scripture, which accordingly shows us Him in heavenly places as the head of the church, but Him also about to appear as the King of Israel and as the Son of man to reign over all nations.
Chapter 8

General Conclusions

Maxims have been drawn from traditional views of Old Testament prophecy, applied to Daniel in particular, which it seems well to notice before passing on to those of the New Testament.  

I. The law of departure, which has been thus stated: every detailed prophecy must be viewed as commencing with the chief present or next preceding event at the time when it is given, unless direct proof to the contrary can be brought forward.

II. The law of continuity, which supposes that each prophecy is to be viewed as continuous, unless when there can be assigned some strong internal proof that the continuity is broken.

III. The law of progressive development, which conceives each prophecy that is added to give a fuller expansion of what was seen more briefly before.

IV. The law of prophetical perspective, or the notion that distant events are described more briefly in comparison with those near at hand.

1. Now no sober believer will be disposed to doubt the general truth of the first principle, though he might not think it reverent to treat the word of God as one speaks of creation around us, and to formulate canons of interpretation in prophecy as theologians have done to the great detriment of revealed truth in general. As the rule prophecy, especially detailed prophecy, starts from facts present or imminent. It supposes failure in what is actually before us, the judgment of which God pronounces, in order to make way for “some better thing.” But herein lies the fatal defect of the first “law,” that is a mere intellectual deduction, even if true, which is not always apparent, leaving out man’s sin and God’s judgment, as well as His intervention another day. The moral side is thus overlooked, as well as the divine glory; that is, all that is of chief moment for God or man. But it is plain that in this cold, scientific, dissection of the prophetic Word the alleged law cannot be justly applied to the famous Seventy Weeks.

If the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem was only in the days of Artaxerxes Longimanus, the terminus a quo of the series, this can scarcely be said, without extreme harshness, to have been either the chief present event, or one preceding the prophecy which followed immediately after the fall of Babylon. The object of all this is mainly to involve the reader in a preconceived theory of the Apocalypse, as well as of the Lord’s prediction on Mount Olivet, which evidently are each as distinct from one another, as both are from the book of Daniel with its distinct visions going down from each respective starting-point to the end of the age.

The Apocalypse alone contemplates not only the millennial reign from first to last, but the events which follow, and even the eternal state. How groundless then to frame laws from the book of Daniel for what is so obviously different?

2. Then we have seen that, though there may be a measure of continuous order, every vision of Daniel from which the law is avowedly drawn shows a break more or less distinct; and the same principle is certainly true of the Lord’s prophecy. It is confessed that there is one apparent break in the last. It would be truer to say that they all exhibit, after a certain continuity, a distinct gap, before resuming the connection of each with its results in divine judgment at the end of the age.

3. If it be merely meant that each successive prophecy adds more light to what was already vouchsafed, the third maxim would be true enough, and almost a truism.

4. The alleged “prophetical perspective” seems to be as purely imaginary as can be conceived. The fourth empire has far more details than any of its predecessors in Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, as it has also in Daniel’s vision of the beasts. So have the little horns in Dan. 7, 8. On the Seventy Weeks the law does not in the least bear; and it is reversed by the enormous disproportion given to Antiochus Epiphanes in the last vision, and still more by the space occupied by the final struggle (Dan. 11:36-45; 12).

But further, to reason from the state before Christ to the eighteen centuries under the gospel, to assume that now we ought very plainly to expect a peculiar fullness of prophetic revelation, and this respecting the ordinary events of God’s

7. {One of the values of this section is the exposure of the circularity of the ‘hermeneutics,’ or principles of interpretation. The result was really arrived at first; then the rules of interpretation were invented; and finally, behold, there are the rules for understanding prophecy. This way of dealing with Scripture is, of course, still in operation today.}
providence, proves nothing but the extreme pre-occupation of a special pleader. We must weigh the predictions of the New Testament themselves, without drawing rules from the visions of Daniel, so obviously different, in order to control their application as men desire. It is as true in prophecy as in the truth as a whole, and in practical conduct, that “if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”
Chapter 9

The Lord’s Great Prophecies in the Gospels

Matthew 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21

It is allowed by the historical school that there is a real difficulty in every hypothesis, so as to make caution peculiarly needful in treating of this prophecy; and indeed that many who differ from the futurists elsewhere seem almost ready to adopt their exposition here. The prophecy begins with troubles in the apostolic age; it closes with the second advent of our Lord; yet there are express words in it, besides the apparent connection of its parts, which seem to confine it within the limits of one generation. But these considerations being inconsistent with each other, which of them must be modified or abandoned?

Three answers, it is alleged, have been given. That of Bishop Newton and others, who adopt a figurative construction of the closing scene, and thus cut it off from all immediate or direct reference to the Lord’s personal return; that of the futurists (Burgh, McCausland, Tyso, &c.), who sever its beginning from apostolic times, and regard all as converging on the end of the age; that of Bengel, Horsley, &c., who would trace a continuation from the siege of Titus to the second advent. As the moderns confess the untenableness of the first view, which chiefly rests on an unfounded restriction of “this generation” to the apostolic age, we must look a little more closely into the other two.

The truth really is, that Luke 21 furnishes, not a parallel to Matthew 24 or Mark 13, but a most important supplement. This is lost, if one regards his verses 20 et seq. as an inspired paraphrase of the two other Gospels, and thus miss the true force of “the abomination of desolation” on one side, and of “the days of the vengeance” on the other. The parallelism of the prophecy is admitted; but this is perfectly consistent with the belief that the Lord uttered truths, some of which the Spirit led one to omit and another to record, and vice versa. No parallel in the Gospels is absolute, nor indeed in any part of scripture. The measure of correspondence depends on the degree in which the divine design in each permits or opposes it. It was the same occasion, and substantially the same discourse; but the design of the Holy Spirit working by each writer accounts for the difference in each reproduction of the prophecy. Inspiration is characterized by the Spirit’s selection in accordance with His special object by each instrument. This is the true key, not the notion that Luke 17 is the real parallel to Matt. 24.

Again, the point of departure in no way decides this question. Granted that in all three Gospels the prediction starts from times close at hand, instead of pointing at once to the end of the age; but how does it hinder the Spirit from vouchsafing the true link of transition in one Gospel, while the other two pass this and converge on what precedes the close which it omitted? It is the less reasonable to reject this solution; as it is confessed that between the first and second Gospels there is a very general agreement in the words of the prediction, while in the third there are much more numerous deviations. To assume that a marked deviation in Luke is a comment on Matthew and Mark is of all explanations the least satisfactory; that it should supply what is lacking in the others, because in accordance with its own design, is as simple as sure, and worthy of the God who gave them all. The meaning of the “abomination,” &c., in Matthew or Mark is not therefore to be explained away by the compassing “with armies,” any more than “the holy place” points to the mountain on the east, or the “desolation” that which has now lasted almost eighteen hundred years.

But it is a total misconception that the denial of the absolute parallelism of Luke with Matthew and Mark involves the thought that no part of the prophecy relates to that destruction of the temple which was then imminent, for this never should have been a matter of hesitation to any believer. Further, it is puerile to say that the abomination (or idol) of desolation corresponds in identity with our Savior’s words a little before, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” This is no better than verbal trifling. Nor does the historical fulfillment of Luke 21:20 afford the least evidence as to the true and proper meaning of Matt. 24:15; for this is the question -- its meaning rather than its fulfillment.

It is a plain error that our Lord’s prophecy is professedly an answer to the specific inquiry about the destruction of the temple; for they say, “Tell us, when shall these things be, and what the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?” For larger and more remote events were thus in question. It is not a choice therefore between the views which look only at the next ensuing generation, or at the last generation before the second advent; for the truth is that, while all three Gospels
Part Five: Answer to Historicism -- The Second Advent

start from events at hand, and all close with the presence of the Son of man in power and glory, only Luke 21:24 gives us the transitional “times of the Gentiles,” during which Jerusalem is trodden down by them.

Again, it appears to me demonstrable that, as Dan. 11:31 refers to the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, long passed when our Lord prophesied on Mount Olivet, so the reference in Matt. 24:15, Mark 13:14, is exclusively, as well as certainly, to Dan. 12:11, and therefore an event not only not accomplished at the siege of Titus, but wholly future and bound up with the final tribulation and deliverance of Israel. It is ridiculous to identify, as some of the historianists do, Dan. 11:31, 12:11, for one is wholly past, and the other absolutely future, and neither of them in any way connected with Titus. It is allowed that the phrase, “in a holy place” (ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ τῷ θεάτρῳ), is not so precise as those in Acts 6:13, 21:28; but the other part of the clause is not “an,” but “the, abomination of desolation,” and means that idol which brings desolation on the Jews, their city and temple.

The true place of transition is then indicated in Luke 21:24, but this is an added statement, owing to the peculiar design of his Gospel, and in no way a comment on one word in Matthew or Mark. But the great and unparalleled tribulation in these two Gospels is clearly proved by Dan. 12:1 to be not a past but a future event, just before Israel’s blessing at the end of the age, and far more precise than the mere “days of vengeance” in Luke 21:22. His comparatively moderate terms, in verse 23, “there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people,” were historically verified, and are in the clearest contradistinction from the statements of Matt. 24:21, 29 and Dan. 12:1, which, beyond doubt, are future, and as yet unfulfilled.

It has not been adequately considered how completely Luke 21:32 settles the real bearing of those much-debated words, “This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.” As long as they were regarded only in the light of Matt. 24 and Mark 13, there remained room for doubt; and certainly there could not but be doubt without a just and sure understanding of their context; and this was the very thing most contested. Those who restrained the chapters to the apostolic period, or to the end of the age, interpreted the clause according to their respective theory. But the truth is larger than either of these human views; and when its extent and precision withal are seen, the light which flows from these words of our Lord is no longer hindered or perverted. To this end the third Gospel contributes invaluable help, not certainly by swamp ing the other two, but by the fresh wisdom of God communicated by Luke, making us understand each so much the better because we have all, and thus furnishing a more comprehensive perception and enjoyment of the entire truth.

Here then God has taken care for the first time to introduce “the times of the Gentiles” still going on after the Roman siege of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. Then from v. 25 we have the signs of the last days, and finally the Son of man seen coming in a cloud with power and great glory, proving the futility of the scheme which would confound Titus capturing Jerusalem (Luke 21:20-24) with the Son of man appearing in verse 27. But it is after this that we read in verse 32: “Verily, I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.” It is not till they “begin to come to pass,” of which we do read in verse 28, and a call to the faithful when they see it to “look up and lift up their heads.” This generation is not to pass till ALL be fulfilled (γενεα). No language can be more accurate. This Christ-rejecting, unbelieving, stubborn and rebellious generation of the Jews should not pass away till then. A new generation will follow. The expression has a moral, and not a mere chronological, sense. Compare Psa. 12:7 (Heb. 8) in contrast with the generation to come. See Psa. 22:30 (31), 31, (32). The clause therefore seems to be meant in its unlimited strength, and so put by the third Evangelist as to render all other applications impossible. Nor is there the least ground for taking it otherwise in the corresponding places of Matthew and Mark; but Luke demonstrates this.

The case then stands thus. On the one hand Matthew and Mark do not notice the times of the Gentiles, which Luke was inspired to present very distinctly as well as the successes of the Gentiles, not only when their armies conquered Jerusalem, and led the people captive into all nations, but also during their continued occupation of that city as in fact has been the case for 1800 years. On the other hand Matthew and Mark, but not Luke, notice distinctly the setting up of the abomination of desolation and the unequalled time of trouble just before the Son of man comes for the deliverance of the elect in Israel at the end of the age, passing at once from the early troubles in the land (while Jerusalem was still an object of testimony) to the last days, when it re-appears with its temple and the Jews there, but alas! the deceived of Satan and his instruments till the Lord appears in judgment. Hence it will be observed that there is no question in Luke 21 as to “the sign of His coming and of the end of the age.” In all this I see, not confusion, but the perfect mind of God giving what was exactly suited to each Gospel. It is the comment which confuses the truth, instead of learning from each and all. In Matthew and Mark the future crisis follows a preliminary sketch of troubles put so generally as to apply both to the apostolic times and to the earlier epoch when the Jews return and rebuild their city and temple in unbelief before the age ends: Matt. 24:4-14 (Mark 13:5-13) being the general sketch, and Matt. 24:15-31 (Mark 13:14-27) the crisis at the close or last half-week of Daniel’s unfulfilled seventieth week. Luke alone gives us anything like continuity in the very brief words of chapter 21:24, as he alone gives us distinctly in this prophecy the past destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, as he does also in {Luke} chapter 19:43, 44. {Luke} Chapter 17:22-37, I do not doubt, also refers to Jerusalem, but exclusively the latter day, when the Son of man is revealed, not when Titus sacked it. In that day there will be a perfect discrimination of persons in the judgment, which proves it to be divine, not a mere providential event however awful.
Chapter 10

The General Design of the Apocalypse

Objections Met

From early times scarce any consent has been more general than to view the Revelation as a comprehensive prophecy which extends from the days of the apostle to the end of time. A few, chiefly since the Reformation, would confine most of it to the fall of Jerusalem; a few more began to apply it to the end of the age, as the early fathers did. It seems desirable however to examine the question afresh with all brevity. There can be no doubt that faith in the future application has spread much of late years. It is the more incumbent therefore to examine what is urged by such as plead for the more extensive range of the prophecy throughout the times of the Gentiles since the days of the apostle. The objections usually pressed against historicalism appear to me of little weight.

I. The variety and even discordance of the popular expositors I have already allowed to be a feeble disproof. The truth might be in a few without being apprehended by most men or even by all true Christians. Spirituality of mind is needed to discern truth, nor is it difficult to muster objections to that which is most certain. How many saints are cloudy in their views even of grace as well as righteousness! How many fail to see intelligently the return and the kingdom of our Lord Jesus! Besides, the variety is not small among the futurists themselves. To be distracted by such clashing of opinions on either side is really to give up certainty as to all truth.

II. The adherence to a literal interpretation is necessarily absurd where the language of the book is beyond doubt figurative or symbolic. Now of all books of scripture, certainly in the New Testament, none so abounds in symbols as the Revelation. To insist upon a rigid literalism here must end in continual straining, disappointment, and error.

III. The same exaggeration is apt to appear in looking for events of a character wholly transcending the past. That such wonders do appear in certain parts of the Revelation is clear. It is unfounded to expect them everywhere.

IV. The attempt, not to run merely a parallel, but to assume identity between the prophecy on the mount and the seals, &c. of the Revelation, is unfounded. An analogy may be allowed, but no more. Such reasoning altogether fails to fix the time when the Revelation will be fulfilled.

But there are weightier grounds of a wholly different nature which may be now advanced. The Lord Himself in opening the book to John distinguishes “the things which are” from “those which must be hereafter” (or after these things” (Rev. 1:19)). “The things which are” comprise the messages to the seven churches. It is the church-period (Rev. 2 and 3). “The things which shall be after these” (Rev. 4ff) are the visions of God’s dealings and judgments on man’s ways in the world which follow that period till the end of all things. But “the things which are” may be viewed in two ways. They are either the churches viewed as exclusively in John’s time, and hence now past -- after which would begin to apply the prophetic visions of the rest of the book. In this point of view the historical school of interpretation ought not to be discarded as untrue or unprofitable. On the contrary I believe that God was pleased to use the book for the comfort of His saints both in their early trials from the hostility of heathen Rome and in medieval as well as later times from the persecutions of Babylon, the meretricious anticurch of the Apocalypse (Rev. 17). But in this point of view the prophetic visions must be allowed to be vague; and no wonder should be felt that discord abounds among the interpreters.

But there is a second point from which we may view “the things that are,” or the messages to the seven churches (Rev. 2 and 3). They have a prolonged and successive application whilst God owns anything of a church condition on earth. This He clearly does as yet; and according to this view chapters 2, 3, of the Revelation give the things that are still, and are not passed but rather fulfilling before our eyes. Till they are past, “the things which must be after these” (Rev. 1:19) cannot even begin to be accomplished. Then only will commence the making good of the prophetic visions in their full sense and application to the crisis which closes this age and introduces the kingdom. Of these seven, the first indicates the declension from first love which characterized the day when John saw the visions of the book; the second, the outbreak of heathen persecution which followed not long after; the third, the exaltation of the church in the empire under Constantine and his successors. Thyatira is marked by more tokens than one which prove that this state, which was
fully out in medieval times, is the first of those which thence-forward go on not merely successively but contemporaneously from their rise to the Lord’s coming. As Popery, though far from Popery alone, was therein found, so Sardis presents Protestantism; as Philadelphia, the reviving not only of the brotherhood with its love but of separateness to Christ’s name and word, while waiting for Him, so Laodicea concludes the seven with the self-complacent latitudinarianism of our day which takes shape and position, more and more as time goes on.

But it is all-important to the understanding of the general scope and design of the Revelation to see that, after these {starting with Rev. 4} there is nothing of a church character recognized in the book. “The things that are” will be then terminated. An entirely new state of things follows, visions chiefly of judgments on earth, or saints suffering, with testimonies and warnings from God, but never any instance assemblies or churches here below.

Indeed the case is far stronger than this. For “the things which must be after these things” {Rev. 1:19} (that is, after the church-state) open with a prefatory scene of the deepest interest in heaven, wherein is seen round the throne of God {Rev. 4} (which is neither that of grace as now, nor that of millennial glory, but of a judicial character suited to a transitional space between the two, the end of the age) the symbolic circle of the crowned elders in heaven and this in their full complement, which is never added to till the heavenly hosts follow Christ from heaven when the day of Jehovah dawns on the earth and the reign for a thousand years is begun. That is, the elders thus seen above show us the heavenly saints translated, and enthroned round the throne of God, 8 evidently corroborating and following up the previous fact that the church-state was done with and a new condition entered on, preparatorily to the kingdom of God in power and glory.

Entirely in keeping with this we hear henceforth of thousands sealed from the tribes of Israel {Rev. 7:1-8}, and, separately from these, of countless Gentiles brought out of the great tribulation (for so it is, not out of great tribulation as a general fact or principle, but out of that special time of trouble which we know from many scriptures will be at the close of the age) {Rev. 7:9-17}. There is no gathering more from among Jews and Gentiles into the church where these distinctions vanish. The seven churches in their protracted application had given that condition up to their last, seen on earth {Rev. 2 and 3}. God thence-forward works among Jews or Gentiles as distinct and with a view to putting the habitable earth under the rule of the glorified Son of man, the risen saints being on high, and some from Israel and the nations spared to enjoy the blessings of that day on earth; as He executes judgments first preparatorily though with increasing intensity under the seals, trumpets, and vials, till Christ with the translated saints appears in glory and reigns, judging the quick first, then the dead, after which is the eternal scene. Such is the general outline of the Revelation. In anything like a clear and comprehensive view of the book the futurists seem to be scarcely better than the historicists. Neither party knows what to make of the vision in {Rev.} chapters 4, 5, which follows the seven churches and introduces the strictly prophetic unfoldings of coming dealings with the world. Hence their views are almost equally uncertain. The key to the intelligence of the book lies in a right apprehension of this vision.

8. {The 24 elders include the OT saints also. They will be raised when we are raised (Heb. 11:40). The figure of the 24 elders seems derived from the 24 courses of the priesthood set up by David.}
Chapter 11

The General Design of the Apocalypse

Direct Arguments

It must be owned that the actual state of Apocalyptic interpretation is humiliating. The book has been treated with silent slight or turned into an arena for busy conjecture rather than found to be a rich source of blessing according to the promise of the Lord. Not that God’s grace or truth have failed, but that most had lost the blessing through mis-reading it. In the midst of unbelief, however, God has vindicated the value of His own word for those who have clung to it, eschewing either historicism or mere futurism. They have read it in faith, using not only the lamp of prophecy but the still brighter light to which the Christian is entitled as blessed in heavenly places in Christ. It is well then to bring to the test what men allege as to its character, and to examine fairly and fully whatever evidence scripture affords for a decisive judgment. It will be found impossible to have either a comprehensive view of its scope or a correct application of its parts, without a solid establishment in the gospel and an adequate understanding of our own special relationship as Christians individually or as the church of God. As being the closing book of the New Testament canon it naturally supposes acquaintance with the rest of revealed truth. None can truly appreciate the Apocalypse who has been used to misapply the Old Testament prophecies of Zion and Israel to Christian subjects, any more than such as fail to see the entirely new character of the body of Christ, now that redemption is accomplished and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Every one knows that the Fathers, so-called, entirely broke down, and most of them in this way, both in the mass of the older catholic bodies and in those which followed in their wake. No less have Protestants in general failed to recover the true character of the church, in consequence of confining their attention for the most part, even when orthodox, to truth for the individual, such as justification by faith and ordinary christian practice.

Let us turn then to certain arguments which are supposed to determine the true direction of the book. Does it spread over the entire period since the apostles [to the present, and even beyond] in its prophetic visions? or does it bear most strictly and fully on the closing crisis before the Lord appears in power and glory, though embracing this too and carrying us forward even into the eternal state?

I. The title of the prophecy, it is thought, points to the right conclusion -- “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” Some have imagined that these words denote simply the second coming of Christ, and would therefore limit the book to that great event, its antecedents and consequences. But this view is not more erroneous than to interpret the words as a removal, for the instruction of the church, of the veil which conceals the Lord now that He is ascended to heaven. Nay, of the two, the latter is much the most misleading; for the characteristic truth of the apostle Paul even as a part of God’s righteousness is that the Christian sees His glory with unveiled face. It was no insignificant fact that at His death on the cross the veil of the temple was rent from top to bottom. The Christian walks in the light even as God is in the light. He is brought nigh by the blood of the cross; and God looks for the fruits of light in all goodness and righteousness and truth. To make the Revelation therefore to be the unveiling of Jesus Christ in person would really be to deny that the veil was completely gone and known to be so ever since the cross and His ascension to heaven. The title then does not mean the removing of the veil from His person, but rather that unveiling of what is coming which God gave to Him, and which He communicated to His servant John and through him to us. But this leaves the question of the time still to be solved, save indeed that the closing words of the preface declare that “the time is at hand,” and not in course of fulfillment. The examination of the prophetic visions too confirms this; for each of them presents to us some distinct view of our Lord in heaven, and some fresh aspect of God’s providential dealings here below, but wholly different from what is found in the rest of the New Testament which directly applies to the church in its passage through the world. Further, we have already seen that Rev. 2, 3, does not suppose a chasm between the apostle’s day and the future crisis of the world, but rather bridges it over by a most instructive transition which furnishes light increasingly as God lengthens out “the things which are” -- that is, the seven churches or the epistles to them. They are not yet past.

II. The analogy of Old Testament prophecy tends rather to mislead than to fix the true character of the Apocalypse, for
the people of God then had to do with times and seasons in a way wholly different from us. There is contrast therefore really, rather than analogy, though one would not deny, as often remarked, the bearing of principles and help from them for Christian sufferers from the Apocalypse. But the fact that the Lord has accomplished redemption, sent down the Spirit, and is ready to judge the quick and the dead, shows the total difference from the state of things before His first advent. The analogy therefore wholly fails instead of being full or complete.

It is easy to assert that the church has derived such light from the Apocalypse as the early triumphs of the gospel, the downfall of Rome, the troubles and temptations which intervened to the church, and the final triumph of Christ’s kingdom. But such instances as these rather disprove than demonstrate the assertion. He who could apply to gospel triumphs the first seal, for instance (the white horse with its rider going forth conquering and to conquer), (Rev. 6:1, 2) has certainly derived little true light from the Apocalypse. And as to Rome, though Babylon (Rev. 17) be unquestionably its symbol, there is much to try and exercise the heart for those who are occupied with outward circumstances; for that “great city” is far from fallen yet, though fail it must in due time. One has no wish to doubt that more or less may have been gathered from the book as to intervening troubles and temptation in principle at least; but I fear that those who drew from it the final triumph of Christ’s kingdom have fallen into interpretations as unworthy as those of Eusebius, and this as time advanced, no less than in earlier ages. It would be easy, in fact, to show that the effort to apply the book, in its prophetic visions, to the course of the church on earth has led to little more than mistake in detail as well as wholesale. The church of God was meant to be from day to day expecting Christ. “Known to God are all his works from the beginning”; but He has carefully abstained from revealing to us that which might set aside the constancy of our hope. This was not at all the case before redemption. Even the rejection of the Messiah was a matter of prophetic date. Those who overcame during the various stages of the church on earth are seen translated to heaven and glorified there in Rev. 4, 5 before the properly prophetic visions begin to apply.

III. The special analogy of the visions of Daniel breaks down when examined closely. For though there be in his visions a scarcely broken succession from his day to the first advent, it does not follow that the visions of St. John must reach from the apostolic age (down to today) without break. In none is this more conspicuous than in the seventy weeks (Dan. 9), where we have continuity up to the death of Christ, but a distinct gap after it. The destruction of the city and sanctuary no doubt is recorded as subsequent, and a vista of desolation and war follows to the end; but otherwise it is all vague and unconnected with any date whatever. That it is after the sixty-nine weeks, and before the seventieth, is all one can learn from Dan. 9. There is no hint of time between; the last week remains to be fulfilled. Eighteen hundred years have already elapsed within that gap.

So it is with the Apocalypse. Its prophetic visions converge on the great future crisis, the accomplishment of the seventieth week, within which fall also “the time, times, and half a time” of Daniel. The resemblance between the Revelation and Daniel is found here only. That is, they do not resemble where the visions of Daniel are continuous, but coalesce after the gap for the end of the age. The analogy is that, while Daniel only gave succession up to Christ, both converge on “the time of the end.”

IV. The prophecy of our Lord must be perverted in order to apply the Apocalypse continuously from the Apostles’ day on to His coming. For in Matt. 24 the grand question is as to the consummation of the age and not the sequence of events before it. And in Luke 21, where alone we hear of the “times of the Gentiles,” we have no more information than the general fact of Jerusalem being trodden down by the Gentiles till then. We are next plunged into the signs external and moral which mark the end of the age -- “signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity: the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” It is after revealing all these events that our Lord solemnly declares, “This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.” This generation therefore lasts till after the second advent no less than the fall of the temple. It is a mistake that there is a twofold affirmation with regard to the times: the first, that all the events predicted concerning the fall of the temple should certainly be fulfilled in that very generation; and the other, that the day and hour of the second advent was at that time purposely concealed. One has only to read carefully our Lord’s own words in order to see that there is no such distinction and that the Christ-rejecting generation of the Jews was not to pass till all was fulfilled, including the second advent -- not merely till the temple fell. Scripture teaches nowhere that that day and hour are now revealed.

1. Hence there is no continuity in the Lord’s prophecy, any more than in the visions of Daniel, which justifies the name of a “law” and affords a presumption that the prophetic visions of the Apocalypse must stretch over the last 1800 years.

2. The Lord’s prophecy in Matt. 24, 25 consists of three main divisions: first, the Jewish part in chapter 24:4-44; secondly, the Christian part in chapter 24:45 to 25:30; and, thirdly, the Gentile part in chapter 25:31-46. The disciples who were then instructed by the Lord could fittingly represent the future Jewish remnant, as this they were at that time themselves before they were brought into church standing by known redemption and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Hence the argument founded on their Christian character to insinuate the propriety of prophecy about Christians and their circumstances all through entirely fails.

3. The mention of the “times of the Gentiles” in Luke 21 seems a slender ground for assigning to the Apocalypse an application to so many centuries instead of to the last
week of Daniel.

4. Nor does the resemblance between Rev. 11:2 and Luke 21:24 blot out their differences, still less warrant the conclusion that the Apocalyptic visions are the expansion of the earlier prophecy.

V. The presumption from the prophetic notices in the Epistles is equally slight. Thus, though the mystery of lawlessness already wrought, there was nothing in 2 Thess. 2 to indicate that either the apostasy or the manifestation of the lawless one will be before the time of the end; other scriptures prove that they will be "then" exclusively; with which the notices of this chapter quite agree. Still less force is there in 1 Cor. 10:1-10, where we have Old Testament facts used as types, which no doubt might apply then or at any time. But this is moral admonition, not continuous prophecy. Again, 1 Tim. 4 speaks only of "some" and "in latter times." It is no more the end of the age than a prediction ranging over all the times of the gospel. Solemnly true and needed as is the warning of 2 Peter 2:1-12, there is nothing here to decide the application of the Apocalypse all through.

VI. The distinctive character of St. John's writings is alleged to point to the wider application rather than to the crisis. Undoubtedly the choice of the penman was in the fullest harmony with the message to be conveyed; but there is also variety as well as a common principle. The Gospel of John, the Epistles of John, and the Revelation do not only come from the same writer, but manifest character of truth peculiar to themselves. To call his the spiritual Gospel (as by the Greek Christians of old το ἐν ἀγγελίῳ το κατὰ πνεύματος), as contradistinguished from Luke's, Mark's, or Matthew's, seems far from precision and rather derogatory to the others; quite as much so to contrast his Epistles with those of Paul. The Gospel of John shows us really eternal life in the Son of God, the glory of the Only-begotten who reveals the Father; the Epistles show us the effect of this revelation where faith received Him, "which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness passeth and the true light already shineth"; the Revelation, the results not only in the overcoming and glory of those who are His but in the iniquity, lawlessness, and judgment of those who believe not, that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. Hence it is that, while He is God and man in one person throughout all John's writings, He is more prominent as Son of God in the Gospels and Epistles, as Son of man in the Revelation. Authority to execute judgment is therefore given to Him (John 5:22, 23) on those who would not come to Him that they might have life; and thus there are two resurrections, of life for those that practiced good, of judgment for those that did evil, the turning-point being faith or unbelief in Him who is the eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. The crisis therefore falls in far more with this, the evident object of the Revelation, than any mere course of providential judgments spread over the continuous history of Christendom.

The opening verses of the book correspond with this; for if John is said to bear "witness of the word of God and the witness of Jesus Christ," it is qualified by "whosoever things he saw." That is, it is not the person of the Son as in the Gospel nor our possession and manifestation of the life that is in Him as in the Epistles, but visions. And when in the course of the prophecy Christ is named The Word of God (Rev. 19), it is evidently in destructive judgment whilst in the Gospel we see Him in the fullness of grace. With such marked distinctness does the Spirit guard us against wrong inference from the rest of John's writings, and condemn those who would foist in the miscalled spiritualizing of the Revelation. Details only confirm this, if we bring each distinctive mark of the Gospels and Epistles to test the prophecy.

1. To argue that, because the Gospel and Epistles dwell not on the external and transient and earthly but on eternal truth, therefore the Apocalypse cannot disclose outward signs and wonders from the end of the age onwards till eternity, is to fly in the face of the evident scope and contents of the book. It has been already pointed out that its character is judicial (not the revelation of life in Christ), and this also enjoyed by and manifested in the saints. In the Revelation we have first the churches judged by the Son of man; and this state of things being closed, the world judged first preparatorily and with increasing intensity till (with the risen saints) Christ appears to judge in person, first the quick in the reign for a thousand years, then the wicked dead at the end before the new heavens and earth in the final and fullest sense. It is admitted however that, as in 1 John 2 [:19] we hear of many antichrists even now, the forerunners of the Antichrist of the close, so the Apocalypse may afford light in a general way now, while it shines most distinctly on the great future crisis; and thus it is larger, as well as more exact, than either historicalists or futurists can see.

2. If both Gospel and Revelation open with the Lamb, each strikingly employs a different word, though it be about the same person: the Gospel, άμνος as expressive of God's grace in all its extent and in relation to sacrifice; the Revelation, άνάμνησις as the holy earth-rejected Sufferer, whose blood indeed has bought believers to God, but whose wrath is about to fall on a guilty world and the still guiltier apostates at His appearing till Satan himself perishes for ever.

3. The Gospel and the Epistles do suppose the Jews disowned for a new work of God (going on now); but even so not without distinct pledges both in type (John 1:45 to 2:21; 21:24-29) and in direct terms of mercy reserved for them (John 11:51, 52). The Revelation unveils the fresh working of God on their behalf when the present church-state is done with; and this both in Israel (Rev. 7) and in Jews (Rev. 14). It is as false to restrict it with the futurists to the narrow limits of Judea as to efface tho Jews from a distinct and precious portion in its predictions, as most historicalists do.

VII. The date and place of the prophecy are supposed to yield further and very distinct signs of its true meaning. It was revealed to the last of the twelve apostles, as the fullest evidence shows, under the last of the twelve Caesars. The first century was closing, the temple and city of Jerusalem
destroyed, the Jews dispersed. The gospel was in all the world, bringing forth fruit, and growing. The church gave its testimony to Christ in the various lands and tongues of the known habitable world. The Old Testament had borne witness to the rebellious iniquity of Israel and Judah, not merely in the worship of idols, but in the rejection of the Anointed of Jehovah, and had pointed out sufficiently the consequences, not only to the chosen people in judgment, but to the Gentiles in grace. The time was now come for a final revelation, which, first of all showing that Christendom would be equally faithless to its responsibility, next hides not the dealings of God which should succeed, whether preliminary and partial before Christ appears, or completed when He executes judgment in person; and this, not only on the quick {living} throughout the thousand years’ reign, but on the dead who had not shared the holy and blessed “first resurrection,” the wicked dead raised after it {Rev. 20}. That John stood in a relation toward the church similar to that of Daniel toward the Jews is plain, the latter having been a captive of the first Gentile empire [the Babylonian], as the former of the fourth [the Roman], neither of them occupied himself with the details of providence, both with the end of the age, as ushering in the rule of the heavens wielded by the glorious Son of man. Only as Daniel was given to predict the ways of God consequent on the ruin of the Jew, so John what was to follow Christ’s spewing out of His mouth the last of the seven churches {Rev. 3:16}. As the privileges of the church far transcended Israel’s, and the testimony for which the Christian is responsible was limited to no race, land, or tongue, instead of being cooped up in one narrow country and people, so doubtless the issues from God’s hand are incomparably graver, and proportionately extended; and these, therefore, it fell to John’s lot to have unrolled before wondering and aggrieved gaze.

If all the circumstances indicate a reference to the new economy rather than to those special Jewish relations which had been suspended, no less do they suppose that God is judging the failure of man under the gospel, and disclosing how He will take up all under Him, the second Man, who never failed. The prophecy therefore no more shows us Christendom the direct object of God’s dealing, than its Jewish prototype did the Jews. It points out what will follow, and as the future crisis was the main air of Daniel, so it is yet more effectually and fully of John; only John expands, as Daniel does not, not only into an incomparably vaster sphere, but also into the endless ages which follow the Lord’s return. Such in fact was the uniform character of prophecy in the Old Testament. There was a series undoubtedly, and each wrote from his own time as the starting-point; but not one of them was limited in his predictions either to events which occurred during his lifetime, or to the next main event of Jewish history. They all looked onward to the coming of Messiah, and most fully indeed to His coming in power and glory. So did our Lord at the close of His own ministry. It is a total mistake that He merely took up the end of their thread, and prolonged it to the fall of Jerusalem, leaving it for John to carry it on continuously throughout the centuries which have elapsed since. One can understand such theories where the heart is in the world as it is, and man therefore as he is possesses our admiration and our interest. Doubtless there is light for the faithful at all times, and especially in an hour of ruin, through the Spirit of prophecy; but being the witness of Jesus, that Spirit hastens the grand consummation when evil shall be judged righteously, according to the light given but despised, and the Lord Himself shall take the reins. If Christianity superseded the finally proved antagonism of the Jews to their Messiah, the corruption of Christianity gives occasion for God to indicate how He will replace the apostasy and man of sin by His kingdom at Christ’s coming, and the eternal state, when God shall be all in all. This widely differs from the Protestant scheme of the Apocalypse.

VIII. A guide or mark to determine the general scope of the Revelation has been drawn from the parties to whom it was first sent. It was given to John, and through him the seven churches of Asia were addressed. It has been argued therefore that, if the Apocalypse records the history of the church, the address to the Asiatic churches {Rev. 2 and 3} is most suitable, and in full harmony with the precedents of scripture; but it is equally incongruous if the main reference of the work be to a Jewish remnant alone during a few years at the end of this dispensation. The truth is, however, that the epistles to the seven churches are but introductory to the strictly prophetic part of the book, or “the things which shall be after” the things which are {Rev. 1:19}; and “the things which are” exhibit the churches coming under the judgment of the Son of man. Thenceforward we have visions of the world judged, and the most conspicuous absence of a church: nay more, the presence of Jews and Gentiles {who are} objects of divine grace, and this separately, instead of being united in one body. That is, the book, as a whole, in its predictions contemplates an entirely new state of things, as the result of the faithlessness of Christendom, and the removal of the faithful to heaven [at the pretribulation rapture], paving the way for the reign of the Lord and the glorified saints {when the millennial kingdom is established}. That state, however, is no return to a mere Jewish remnant, though such a remnant be one of its elements; but on the proved ruin of Christendom, as of Judaism, the visions show us God’s measures for investing the Lord with the world as His inheritance. We hear the first church threatened with the removal of its candlestick {Rev. 2:5}, we see in the last its setting aside with abhorrence as the Lord’s resolve {Rev. 3:16}; and this in order to make way for the visions of woe, not without testimonies of mercy, the process which introduces the First-born in judgment of the whole earth. Clearly it was meant that those in the churches, or a church position, should profit by all the communications of the book; but the book itself is the strongest proof that churches, or even Christians properly so-called, are nowhere contemplated in the scenes of its predictions. Its object is to reveal what follows in the world when those that overcame in the church-state are no longer on earth.

IX. The direct statements with regard to the time which begin and close the prophecy are another evidence of its true application. It was sent to show God’s servants “things that
must shortly come to pass.” “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” The motive is neither that the things are in course of fulfillment, nor that they are about the church. Compare Rev. 22:10. And this last is the more striking, because Daniel was told to seal his book even to the time of the end; whereas John, receiving still further and deeper details, was told not to seal the sayings of the prophecy of his book. The true inference is, not that there was a merely human or ordinary scale of time applied to either, but that since redemption and Christ’s session at God’s right hand, ready to judge the quick [living] and the dead [2 Tim. 4:1], the end of all things is at hand to John and the Christian, as it was not to Daniel and the Jew. Having the Spirit meanwhile, the Christian has divine capacity to understand all that the word, prophetic or not, reveals. It is no question of comparative distance or nearness merely, but of the immense change effected by Christ, who has brought all things to a point before God; so that the same apostle, John, could say, “it is the last time,” or “hour” [1 John 2:18]. This was neither manifest nor true when Daniel lived. [For Daniel,] A revealed series of events necessarily intervened. It was otherwise when John wrote. In both prophecies the Spirit had the crisis in view. None can conceive that the earlier events predicted by Daniel belong to the time of the end, or were for many days. “The last end of the indignation” has no reference to the siege of Titus, nor will it fall within the limits of the so-called christian dispensation. “The indignation,” it appears from Isa. 10, &c., is evidently God’s anger against idolatrous Israel; and “the abomination of desolation,” in Matt. 24 and Dan. 12, will not be till the end of the age in the sanctuary of Jerusalem. These allusions are demonstrably outside the times of the gospel; but the Christian is entitled to comprehend what the Jew must wait for. To us, therefore, it is always morally “the time of the end”; and nothing, accordingly, is sealed or shut up from us. It is an evident mistake that 1 Pet. 1:10-12 refers to these texts in Daniel, but rather to such as Dan. 2:34, 35; 7:13; 9:26, “the sufferers respecting Christ, and the glories after these,” which are now reported more fully still in the gospel, as some of them will be fulfilled only at the revelation of our Lord. Thus the contrast of the words in Revelation with Daniel’s lends no support to the hypothesis that even the seals apply to gospel times from John’s day.

X. The character of the opening benediction [in Rev. 1] bespeaks the true references. It is not from God, as such, or from the Father, as such, His special revelation in grace and relationship which we know as Christians. It is rather His name of Jehovah, hitherto made known to the children of Israel, now for the first time translated from the Old Testament idiom into Greek, and Hebraistically. This surely suits a prophetic book which was intended to unfold, not christian privilege or duty, but judgment on a world guilty of rejecting as well as corrupting Christianity, where God begins to prepare an earthly nucleus for the returning Lord, and this from Israel, as well as all nations, but expressly distinct from each other. There is a difference between the form of the name in Rev. 1 and in Rev. 4; but on this we need not enter, as being beside the present argument and purpose. It is undeniable, however, that He is not in either revealed in christian or church relationship, but in a form and character suited to One who is to act thenceforward as governor, not merely of Israel, but of the nations. In accordance with this, we do not hear of the “one Spirit,” as in 1 Corinthians or Ephesians, nor yet as the Spirit of God, or the Holy Spirit, but with a difference no less striking, “the seven Spirits which are before the throne,” a phrase which suggests His fullness governmentally, and refers to Isa. 11, but is never used when Christian standing is in question. So the characters of Christ Himself pointedly leave out what is heavenly and in church connection. It is neither priesthood nor headship; but what He was on earth, and there in resurrection, and will be when He returns. What He is displaying now on high is left out. Continuity is not in the least expressed; but rather a break from His resurrection, till He takes His great power and reigns. So with the associated title, “I am Alpha and Omega”; it may be of Gentile source, joined with one familiar to Jewish ears, and thus together most suitable to a prophecy which lifts the veil from the future crisis, when it is no longer that body wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile, but Christ is all and in all. Here we have only Jews and Gentiles after Rev. 6.

As to Rev. 1:7, it is in no way to be limited to Jews, whatever the resemblance to the Septuagint version of the words in Zech. 12. Indeed this is but one case of the general principle, that the Revelation, like the New Testament as a whole (save in application of fulfilled prophecy) enlarges the sphere, and deepens the character, of what is borrowed from the older oracles of God. But allowing that “all the tribes of the earth” should be here meant, rather than “of the land” merely, and as distinguished from “those who pierced Him,” it seems strange that the bearing of “every eye shall see Him” should be overlooked. For if the object had been to guard the reader from the vague providential line of interpretation, and to fix our attention on the Lord’s coming again to the earth, it could hardly be secured more plainly than by such a text. There is a larger and more comprehensive scope than in Old Testament prophecy; but it is in relation to the world, not to the church, and to the visible display of glory, not to the kingdom of God viewed spiritually. We walk by faith, not by sight. The book is for, but not all about, the church.

XI. The special occasion when these visions were revealed is supposed to be very significant of their bearing on the church rather than the Jews. For the apostle “was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.” Domitian was persecuting; the conflict was begun between the witnesses of Christ and the idolatrous power of Rome; John’s exile exemplified the warfare and suffering which was to continue for ages; as Rome is seen, near the close of the prophecy, drunk with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. Thus the book traces the moral war from first to last without token of any abrupt transition. Such is the reasoning. If the extremes are fixed, and the intermediate links many and various reasonable doubt of the continuity of the whole?

The truth, however, is that John is seen throughout as a “servant,” rather than a son or “child,” as in his Gospel and
Epistles; and the word of God and testimony of Jesus are narrowed to visions (“all that he saw,” Rev. 1:2) to prepare the way for taking in as servants those saints who could not be placed on the same ground as the members of Christ’s body. They will follow us on the earth, and will be His servants, having the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, when the Lord will have taken us to heaven. The Christian, like John himself, should seek to read the Revelation from his own standpoint of association with Christ risen; but the book clearly makes known other saints on a quite different footing throughout the prophetic periods. The inference drawn is therefore unsound. Rev. 4, 5 show us the church as a whole, glorified; and Rev. 6-18 others on earth who, though saints, are quite distinct from the church.

Doubtless the attempt to interpret “the Lord’s day” [Rev. 1:10] as the day of the Lord is mere ignorance, though men of learning have so argued. The force of that day really is, that, though John was speaking as a prophet of what is coming on the world, he did not forfeit his proper portion as a Christian. He was in the Spirit, and saw the visions “on the Lord’s day,” as the first day of the week was now called in virtue of Christ’s resurrection. But is it not almost equal ignorance to apply the sabbath in Matt. 24:20 to the past? It clearly refers to the future crisis, when Jewish saints must pray that their flight be not on that day nor in the winter. At that time the abomination of desolation will be their signal to escape from Jerusalem, according to the Lord’s warning [Matt. 24:15].

XII. The emblems of the opening vision are supposed to be a further key to the nature of the prophecy. The first, expounded by our Lord Himself, is the seven golden candlesticks [Rev. 1:12, 20], denoting the seven churches of Asia: a type borrowed from the Jewish sanctuary, but without a local center or a visible head, so as to suit the wider character and greater liberty of the church. If the candlesticks be symbolic, why restrain the ark, altar, and temple, with its outer and inner courts, to an outward sense? And so with the stars in Rev. 1. If used to denote living intelligent persons, why should the star of the third trumpet, for instance, denote merely a meteoric stone? Why not those spiritual realities which belong to the whole church of God?

The answer is plain and decisive. The Lord Himself draws, in Rev. 1:19, the line of demarcation between the opening vision, with the connected “things that are,” and the “things which are about to be after these.” Hence it is a rash assumption, at the very least, to say that the symbols abide the same in parts of the book so distinguished. If churches and their angels are found only in Rev. 1-3, disappearing absolutely from the prophetic visions which follow, it is natural that so vast a change must modify in a corresponding way the application of the symbols, though of course the essential idea remains. They cannot describe these spiritual realities which belong to the church of God, when it, as a whole, is no longer seen on earth. And, confessedly, quite different symbols denote the church in heaven. But we are not driven to the pseudo-literal alternative of two Levitical candlesticks in Rev. 11, any more than to one meteor in Rev.

8. We must interpret them in congruity with their context, not therefore in reference to the church, which is gone, but to the world, with which God is then dealing, whether among Gentiles or Jews. The star here means a fallen ruler, and in the western Roman earth, not supreme, like the sun, but subordinate; as the two candlesticks may be an adequate testimony to Christ’s priesthood and royalty among the Jews. But one need not dwell on details.

XIII. A similar remark is true of the allusion to the “Jews” in the first chapters when used to govern the application in the rest of the Revelation. Certainly the seven churches (viewed either literally as the past assemblies in proconsular Asia or as foreshadowing so many phases of Christendom till the faithful are caught and the Lord utterly disowns the last outward stage) suppose the title of Jews (“those that say they are Jews but do lie”) misused by those in Christendom who boast of antiquity and not present power in the Spirit, of succession and not grace, and of ordinances and not Christ; and just as certainly such a phrase could only be used during the Lo-ammi time of Israel’s rejection. But it is a hasty inference thence to interpret the prophetic visions when God begins to seal a people out of the twelve tribes of Israel, after the church is withdrawn from the earth.

XIV. It is in vain for the same reason to argue from the general character of the Epistles to the seven churches, for they stand in evident contrast as “the things that are,” or church-state, with the succeeding visions of the future, though no doubt a moral preparative for them of the highest value.

1. Thus the season of trial in the epistle to Smyrna might be blessed to the saints similarly tried during the prophetic periods later on; but there is the strongest possible internal reason why we should not apply these as the true meaning of prophecies which suppose the church no longer existing on earth, and new witnesses, Jews or Gentiles, succeeding who are expressly in a different relationship.

2. As little does the reference first to “the doctrine of Balaam” in Rev. 2, compared with the false prophet in Rev. 13:14-17; 16:13; 19:20, warrant the conclusion that the marks of a regular connection and sequence are herein given. Similar evil, though modified in form, is all that can be fairly drawn from the earliest and later passages. So it is with the types of the wilderness. It applies to us now; it will be as true, though in greatly altered circumstances, of others after we join the Lord above, before the kingdom be established in power and glory.

3. The mention of Jezebel in Rev. 2:20 and of her great counterpart in the prophetic vision (Rev. 14, 16, 17, 18) stands on just the same ground.

4. So does the local fulfillment of the opening predictions. They may be of profit at all times; but we cannot intelligently apply to the church what God predicted of His government of the world, or of witnesses raised up for that state of things.

XV. The nature of the prophetic scenery as described in the following chapters (Rev. 4, 5) yields abundant and irrefutable
disproof of the notion that the prophetic visions of the Apocalypse contemplate the church or its history on earth. For the purpose in hand there is no need of entering into the details of specific interpretation; but a few broad features may be briefly pointed out which are decisive against the notion in question -- a notion entertained by not a few futurists as well as by the Protestant school generally.

1. It is perfectly true that the opening of the visions is eminently symbolical. The living creatures, the lамph's of fire, the elders, the Lamb and the sealed book, the vials and the odors, all have this character, not to speak of the voice of thunder, the four horsemen, &c., in what follows. But it is a mistake that either the heavenly calling of the Christian claims especially such a veiled or emblematic mode of instruction, or that the end of the age must through all its extent see the cessation of silent mystery and the commencement of visible and material wonders. It is plainly enough revealed that it will merge gradually into a brief period in which the western powers will adopt a peculiar political order and partition with its suited chief, the north-eastern will advance for a final struggle, the Jews in their land and under their king (the Antichrist -- Dan. 11:36; 2 Thess. 2) be a main object of defense and attack, and Satan avail himself of the apostasy (2 Thess. 2) he has effected to reveal the lawless one in all power and signs and wonders of lying, God Himself sending those who believed not the truth a working of error that they should believe the lie. But these horrors do not begin at once, and the worst of them will steal over men by degrees. There is no such abrupt change as is conceived by such as oppose. On the one hand Jerusalem and the temple will be the scene not only of renewed and strange idolatry but of man arrogating the glory of God; on the other God will not leave man throughout the world without suited testimony and solemn judgment, increasing in intensity till the Lord appears in glory.

Let the reader remark the total change of scenery at this point. It is no longer the Son of man in the midst of seven golden candlesticks, nor the successive messages to the angels of these churches, but a throne in heaven, the prophet being called up to see and hear (Rev. 4). The actual or church state exists no more, giving place to “things which must be after these.” It is a question of government from heaven, and the throne one of judicial glory, not of grace as we know now; and hence out of it lightnings and voices and thunders, not the message of peace and salvation; and the saints now glorified surround it as the heads of the royal priesthood, no longer on earth as in Rev. 1:5, 6. It is a company, be it noted, complete from first to last (Rev. 4-19), so that for this as well as other reasons it cannot be separate spirits but glorified men. The seven Spirits of God, or the fullness of the Spirit in attributive power, are seen as seven lamps or torches of fire burning before the throne. There is no altar, as it is no longer a question of coming to God; and, instead of a laver with water to cleanse the defilements contracted by the way, there is a sea of glass in witness of perfect and fixed purity. The cherubim, or living creatures, are no longer two but four, and seraphic as well as cherubic, characterizing the throne in executory judgment according to the holiness of God. If the aim were to reveal a new state wholly distinct from the present, and a transitional relationship, before Christ and the risen saints come out of heaven to reign over the millennial earth, it would be hard to say how it could be made more apparent or unquestionable. In full keeping with this Christ is seen after a new sort as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, yet the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David: the holy earth-rejected sufferer, slain for God’s glory, who had bought a people to God by His blood, who alone could and does open the otherwise sealed book of divine purposes and plans for the deliverance of the world and reign of God; and the elders fall before the Lamb with vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5), clearly not their own but of others on earth in a different position from themselves in glory, as the visions that follow will confirm.

2. Equally true is it that the action of the prophecy is derived from the opening of the sealed book; and that the taking and opening of it is grounded on the personal power, worth, and victory of the slain Lamb. But on the face of the scripture the scene does not follow His ascension. It rather awaits the close of the church-state and our translation to heaven, when the present work of gathering the heavenly co-heirs with Christ is finished. This in no way treats the atonement of our Lord as for eighteen centuries idle and powerless, unless the forming of the bride of the Lamb be nothing; it shows on the contrary, that, so far from exhausting the virtues of His blood, fresh counsels of God, to us long revealed, are all in His hand and for His glory who will take the earth as well as heavens under His headship, and who, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believed (1 Thess 1:7, 8), will take all peoples and nations and tongues as well as Israel in chief under His sway. No Christian doubts the truth and importance of Matt. 28:18 or Phil. 2:8, 9; but the character or time of application is another question. And we may well doubt that these or any other texts determine that the Revelation sets forth in its visions the triumphs of the cross while the church is on earth, called as she is now to be the follower of Christ in His earthly shame and suffering.

3. Further, it is said that there is no event between the ascension of our Lord with His solemn inauguration in heaven and His visible return in glory, and especially now in the last days, which can claim to be the true commencement. But this leaves out the vision of Rev. 4, 5 in its evident import, especially as following up the sevenfold message to the angels of the Asiatic churches or the mystery of the seven golden candlesticks, and as introducing the predicted dealings of God with the world in the rest of the book. The throne of God assumes a
relation notably distinct from that of grace as we know it, and even from that of glory as in the millennial day; it is clothed with a judicial character akin to that which Ezekiel beheld when Israel was judged and carried into captivity, but with special features as must be in view of Christendom’s ruin and God’s judgment of the earth generally, and in particular of what had been faithless after such unexampled favors. And the absolutely new object seen on high is neither God’s throne with the cherubim or seraphim nor yet the Son of man long before ascended, but the twenty-four crowned and enthroned elders. It is strange that men should have all but universally overlooked so patent and grave a fact corroborated by circumstances already pointed out, which furnish a very defined starting-point from which the succeeding visions begin. To neglect this is to act the part of a voyager who should take his departure not from the main shore but from a floating bank of mist into uninterrupted fog.

For what worthy point of departure follows the seven churches of John’s day? It is wholly incorrect, as is thought, that till the return of our Lord (that is, to reign) all is one continuous dispensation -- one ceaseless progression of Divine providence. The translation of the saints to meet the Lord and be presented to the Father in His house before they appear with Him in glory for the government of the world is assuredly a fact and change of amazing interest. It had been not only disclosed by our Lord, but fully opened out by the apostle of the Gentiles in his earliest Epistles; and it is now put into its relative place by John in the grand systematic prophecy which winds up the New Testament.

The peculiar mode in which the Spirit here records it is worthy of all note as flowing from His own consummate wisdom; for there is no vision of the actual rapture of the saints to heaven when the Bridegroom meets them, as if it were one of many prophetic events like those under the seals, trumpets, or vials. It is the accomplishment of the Christian’s hopes, and in no way confounded with the subject-matter of prophecy, such as the appearing or return is, when every eye shall see the Lord and them in glory. It is a preliminary vision of the saints already in heaven after the church-state on earth is ended, and before the special judgments and transitional testimonies begin which terminate in the Lord’s coming out of heaven followed by the saints (Rev. 17:14; 19:14) already there since the end of chapter 3 as proved by chapter 4. His “coming” or presence (παρουσία) thus embraces and overlaps the day of the Lord, as it leaves room for the gathering of the saints risen or changed to Him with an interval in heaven, which the Apocalypse shows to be filled up by solemn dealings of God on earth mainly judicial but not without special mercy to saints on earth, both Jewish and Gentile, some of whom suffer to death as others are preserved for the kingdom when Christ and the glorified ones appear in His “day” to execute judgment and reign over the earth for a thousand years.

If “the second advent” be restricted, as it commonly is by almost all schools, to the day of the Lord, it leaves the fact of our seeing the heavenly redeemed under the complete symbol of the twenty-four royal priests from Rev. 4 entirely unaccounted for. Distinguish His coming for His saints and His coming with them, and all is so far plain; though it is easy to see difficulties and conjure up objections to the surest truth of revelation, or even of our being, and of the world around us. But the word of the Lord abides for ever. One may add too that the prophecy nowhere describes near its close (that is, in Rev 19 or 20) the removal of the saints to heaven: they follow Christ to the judgment of earth: they are with Christ in authority over the world (Rev. 17:14; 19:14); but how they got there so as to be in His suite in His day is not described.

It is evident then that the translation to heaven of the co-heirs, witnessed as a fact from the beginning of Rev. 4 is a fixed and clear point of departure, which the ordinary schemes of Apocalyptic students, Protestant or futurist alike, have failed to observe. It becomes then not only possible but easy to test the alleged fulfillment of the book. Before the seals or trumpets which prepare for the investiture of Christ with the inheritance, there must be in heaven an adequate answer to the plain facts, that churches are thence-forward seen no more on earth, and that a new company appear in heaven, never before seen there, under the symbol of the twenty-four elders. If men explain away or pass over so important an introduction as Rev. 4, 5 to the strictly prophetic portion of the book, they naturally confound our gathering to the Lord on high with the day of the Lord on the earth, and a moral or partial application of its contents with its proper meaning, to the utter lowering of the church’s calling, place, and walk, as well as hope.

XVI. The oath of the mighty angel is imagined to furnish another not less decisive mark of the historical acceptance of the prophecy: “in the days of the voice of the seventh angel the mystery of God shall be finished” [Rev. 10:7]. What it really says is that there should be no more delay, but under the last trumpet, which ushers in the end of man’s day, God would bear with evil no longer in the grace which works meanwhile for higher purposes. He would bring in the manifested kingdom of the Lord forthwith. Israel’s rejection and the times of the Gentiles may fall within “the mystery of God,” as well as the calling of the church; but not a word implies that the church was still on earth during the trumpets. Doubtless the trumpets are accomplished before Israel’s restoration, but not before Jews return to their land in unbelief, 9 set up their king, and other awful scenes of the latter-day wickedness ensue. Nor is there anything to intimate that the seals and trumpets measure the mystery of God, but

9. {The Jews in Israel today are there in unbelief. The prophetic regathering of Israel has not taken place: no, not in 1948 when the state of Israel came into existence. Cp., for example, Ezek. 20. The regathering of Israel will take place after Christ appears in glory.}
simply that it closes with the seventh trumpet, as one sees in
the latter part of Rev. 11. The world-kingdom of our Lord
and of His Christ is come. It is no question of secret
providence then, as it was during, and had been before, the
Apocalyptic period.

XVII. Concurrency for sixteen centuries, even if universal, is
but human opinion; and what is this worth in divine things?
It is but the recent tradition of the multitude; and in these
ages of declension, what can the maximum of such agreement
yield but the minimum of truth? It is the refuge of unbelief at
all times, and can never be right since Christendom went
wrong. One need not wonder at lack of intelligence during
many a century when even saints had lost the sense of eternal
life, of accomplished redemption, of standing in Christ, and
the varied energy of the Holy Ghost, not to speak of the
church as the body of Christ and the house of God. The
notion of a continued advance, slow at first but afterwards
steady and discernible, is a dream, more worthy of a mere
humanitarian progressionist than of one who looks for Christ
to receive the saints and judge the world and above all
favored but guilty Christendom. A symbolical history of the
church on earth might be founded with some show of truth on
Rev. 2, 3, not on what follows, which is expressly not “the
things that are” or church-state, but what must be after these
things, when the overcomers are all and “ever with the Lord.”

If people only saw the special calling and heavenly
character of the church, the Apocalypse from chapter 6 (and
indeed 4, 5) to chapter 19 never could have been supposed
to predict its course or circumstances on earth. Men have not
distinguished the various dealings of God; and hence, as
some scrupled not to apply Israel and Judah, Zion and
Jerusalem, in the Old Testament prophets, to Christianity or
the church, so still more fell into the kindred error of tracing
it here below throughout the prophetic visions of John. But
it is hard to conceive a fuller combination of evidence than
that which the book itself has just afforded us against the
common hypothesis, and in confirmation of our being on high
while the providential judgments of the seals, trumpets, and
vials intervene, till we follow the Lord from heaven to reign
with Him over the earth.

[Concerning the book of Revelation:]
- Its preface and its conclusion;
- the analogy of former prophecy and, most of all, of
  that book which it resembles so closely;
- the season and the place and the writer;
- the churches to whose angels messages were sent;
- the repeated declaration of the nearness of the time;
- the whole character of its introduction repeated often
  and in the most various forms;
- the plain contrast between the churches as the things
  that are” with those “which must be after these
  things”;
- and the intermediate vision of the elders in Rev. 4, 5
  respecting the heavenly redeemed in their complete
  and glorified state around the throne above,

seem to leave little question as to its scope to the believer,
unless he sacrifice the authority of scripture to the general
consent of Christendom during the very centuries when it had
lost even a clear and full gospel for the world and forgotten its
own privileges as well as responsibility to the grief of the
Holy Spirit. In truth no one is fit to form a sound and
spiritually intelligent judgment of the hearing of the
Apocalypse who is not clear as to salvation and the church, as
well as prophecy; and where were such to be found since the
second-century remains disclosed the early and utter ruin of
the christian profession? Neither antiquity nor consent, if
universal, can sanctify error, though they may expose to the
charge of rashness or even innovation such as go back to the
once-revealed truth. But wisdom is justified of her children.
Far from being self-evident, the mind of God in His word
cannot be severed from our practical state in fellowship with
Him. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of
light,” is a principle as true in scripture study as in walk; nor
could one wish it otherwise: it would be a premium to
unspirituality.
Chapter 12

On the Year-Day Theory

It has now been shown that, though there may be special characteristics in the symbolical visions of Daniel and the Revelation, there is no ground for the notion that they relate to gospel times, still less that they present the church’s predicted history on earth from the close of the Jewish dispensation to the second coming of our Lord. There is a transition of the greatest importance on which the details of these visions converge -- an interval which has for its main object to disclose the consequences, on the one hand of Israel’s evil and ruin, and on the other of Christendom’s. God has taken care that the church should not be without divine light on its path, but He has done so with perfect wisdom so as not to interfere with its own proper and peculiar privileges; whereas the interpreters of almost every school have sacrificed them to their theories, overlooking the true scope of the book.

It is quite true then that the difficulty is due, not so much to the various and complex nature of the symbols themselves, as to the spiritual condition of the readers and the moral character of scripture itself, judging as it does the degeneracy and corruption of Christendom. It carries the war at once into the strongest fortresses of ecclesiastical pride and Christian worldliness. The scriptures, predictive or not, which reveal Christ rejected on earth and glorified in heaven, are as obnoxious to professing Gentiles as those of His humiliation and cross were to the unbelieving Jews. In either case faith in God is called for; in the gospel especially unsparing judgment of self and separateness from the world. This is so distasteful to flesh that one need not wonder if souls shrink back from the truth which exposes their unfaithfulness, and either neglect the Apocalypse or take up schemes which allow more room, for human energy and distinction on the one hand, or for earthly ease on the other. If Christ’s glory were the one object, there, would be more simple subjection to the truth; and it would soon be seen that, as Daniel unfolds the times of the Gentiles on the proved downfall of the Jews, so John gives us the judgment first of Christendom, next of the world, though not without dealings of rich mercy toward the faithful at all times, to His glory who was cast out from the earth, and is now in heaven.

1. Let us proceed however to ascertain the truth or falsehood of the hypothesis called popularly the year-day theory, as one not only long held by Protestants but claiming of late to have its basis made sure and simple by scripture proof. It is supposed to rest on these maxims:

1. That the church was intended to be kept in the lively expectation that Christ who had ascended would speedily come again.

2. That in the divine counsels a long period of near 2000 years was to intervene between the first and second advents and to be marked by a dispensation of grace to the Gentiles.

3. That, in order to strengthen the faith and hope of the church under the long delay, a large part of the whole interval was prophetically announced, but in such a manner that its true length might not be understood till its own close seemed to be drawing near.

4. That in the symbolical prophecies of Daniel and St. John other times were revealed along with this, and included under one common maxim of interpretation.

5. That the periods thus figuratively revealed are exclusively those in Daniel and St. John, which relate to the general history of the church between the time the prophet and the second advent.

6. That in these predictions each day represents a natural year, as in the vision of Ezekiel; that a month denotes 30 {years}, and a time 360 years.

Such is the general nature of the theory and of its foundations. Its statement is supposed to remove at once the main difficulties that have been felt; as for example concealing the length of the delay when the knowledge might have been injurious, and revealing it when once it became a help to the church that it should be known.

The answer however is that, as Daniel contemplates manifestly only the Gentile powers of the world and Jewish saints, with the mass of the people apostate, so the Revelation does provide for the church’s direct instruction as such in the seven epistles of Rev. 2, 3 -- epistles which applied at once to the seven literally addressed assemblies of St. John’s day in proconsular Asia, but surely also meant in a mystery to embrace the successive need of saints on earth as long as the Lord has any here below possessed of similar privileges and with like responsibilities. It is only when these seven states could be looked back on as fairly developed that God permitted the evidence to be at all distinct and complete; that is, when the light derived from the messages would strengthen rather than weaken our waiting for Christ day by day. In this point of view we see that the direct bearing of the prophetic visions is on the same elements as in Daniel, Israel and the nations, with the aggravated guilt of having despised the grace proclaimed in the gospel as well as exemplified in Christ and even in the church while here below. The times ^10 and the seasons are, or ought to be, well known to us, but about the earth and the earthly people.

10. {"Times" refers to periods, especially prophetic periods; while "seasons" refers to the character of a period.}
Those who belong to heaven are not so regulated. The prophetic dates therefore are about suffering Jewish [sic] or their Gentile oppressors. Those who apply them to the church ignore its heavenly title, and the fact that, when they apply, the heavenly redeemed are demonstratively on high, not here below. We may dismiss the clashing of words between Mr. Mede or Dr. Maitland, their defenders or their assailants. Protestant or Romaniser, neither of them really understood the nature of the church as distinct from the Jew and the Gentile, and consequently they are almost equally dark as to the prophetic word.

II. On the nature of the evidence to be expected we need not dwell. It is freely granted that there may be a literality in interpreting no less spurious than the so-called spiritualizing. We have to weigh on the one hand whether the form be simple or symbolic: but we have to discern on the other whether a particular part belong to the vision or its divinely given interpretation, bearing in mind the fundamental fallacy of expecting no more from the words of God than from the writings of any man as such. Whatever is conveyed in a specially mysterious form should be weighed proportionately. The least change in scripture intimates an adequate design on God’s part.

III. The general character of the passages themselves has next to be considered. Do they occur in the explanation or in the vision to be explained? Are they worded in the most simple, equal, and natural terms; or do they bear plain marks of a singular, uncommon, and peculiar phraseology, perhaps even prefaced by words importing concealment?

The following are all the passages in Daniel and St. John to which the year-day principle has usually been applied:

- Daniel 7:24-26
- Daniel 9:24-27
- Daniel 12:10-13
- Rev. 9:5, 10
- Rev. 11:2, 3
- Rev. 12:6
- Rev. 13:6
- Daniel 8:13, 14, 26
- Daniel 12:5-9
- Rev. 2:10
- Rev. 9:15
- Rev. 11:9-11
- Rev. 12:14

That a mysterious character attaches to all or almost all these expressions of time naturally insinuates something more than the barely literal dates. The general application then of the longer computation may be allowed; but one must not thereby set aside the brief and definite periods of the closing crisis.

IV. The general symmetry of the sacred prophecies is supposed to yield a presumption as strong against the shorter acceptation of these numbers as in favor of the longer view. It is urged that, when a declaration of future events is attended also with one of definite seasons, one expects some degree of correspondence between the two parts of the revelation; and that scripture precedent confirms this; as in the one hundred and twenty years’ delay of the flood, the four hundred years and four generations of sojourn in Egypt, the forty years in the wilderness, the sixty-five years before Ephraim’s captivity, the seventy years’ captivity of Judah, the forty years of Egypt’s desolation, the seventy weeks before Messiah’s kingdom with its minor terms, the three days of our Lord’s burial, and the seven years to follow on Israel’s restoration (Ezek. 39). In these an evident proportion is held to exist between the time predicted and the event announced; whereas it is argued that in the twelve or more specified seasons which extend from Cyrus to the second advent, on the shorter reckoning all proportion is lost between the range of the events and the periods entering into the predictions: especially as features even on the surface suggest more than the letter. The answer is that, besides the principle of the break or interruption already seen to obtain in Daniel regularly, which leaves us free to take the times in their strictest force at the end of the age, there is no need to deny the Christian’s title to gather help all through from the great prophecies of Daniel and John which contain them.

V. The presumption drawn from the symbolical nature of the books is of a similar kind. Since the prophetic dates are found exclusively in those two books which possess, also exclusively, a symbolical and mysterious character, it is a sufficiently natural inference that those dates have themselves a covert meaning. This may be allowed if one do not get rid of the short reckoning which finds its limits within the last or seventieth week of Daniel. The reserve of that period (seven years) is surely significant.

VI. Again the dispensation as being one of mystery is pleaded. But the comparison of Dan. 12 with 1 Peter 1:10-12 conveys no thought of the peculiar reference of the times to us. “Prophets that prophesied of the grace toward us sought out and searched out concerning salvation, searching what or what manner of season the Spirit of Christ which was in them was declaring, while testifying beforehand the sufferings as to Christ and the glories after these; to whom it was revealed that not to themselves but to you they were ministering the things which now have been announced to you by those who preached the gospel to you in the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.” Here is no distinct assertion whatever that the times fall within our lines. As often noticed, there are three things: the predictions of old; the gospel now preached in the power of the Spirit; and the future manifestation of the Lord Jesus, when the promises shall be accomplished. It was revealed to them, not that the prophetic dates belong to our day, but that to us, Christians, they were ministering the things now announced by the gospel, not yet the glory in which Christ and we shall be manifested together.

To confound the mystery of God in Rev. 10 with Eph. 3 or even Rom. 11 is to display singular lack of discrimination; and this confusion is the reason for the hasty conclusion that the six trumpets and all the numbers connected with them must be contained within the limits of this dispensation.

VII. Their mysterious introduction is the last of the presumptions that the various forms of date in Daniel and the Revelation are not designed for the shorter periods, but in some analogical meaning which may restore their harmony with the wider range of the prophecies they belong to. But we have already conceded that a larger reference may be admitted if the distinct application to the future crisis be kept intact.
Chapter 13

The Year-Day Theory Continued

The general indications of a figurative meaning having been briefly discussed, let us now as briefly notice the special evidence for the year-day system.

I. The prophecy of “the Seventy Weeks” has always held the foremost place in the direct arguments for that view. It is clear that the Weeks in this case are not of days but of years; and it is hence inferred that, since all such predictions of time bear one common character, occur in the same prophets, and have the same general object, they ought to be explained by one common rule. But theoretic consistency has its snares as much as the inordinate love of variety; and it is dangerous in the revelations of God to reason from a special prophecy to others before and after wholly distinct from it. Were the supposed key given in the first of Daniel’s prophecies where dates occur, there might seem reason for it: or if it were given at the close, where dates abound, as an appendix of instruction. Whereas it is plain, on the face of the visions, that Dan. 9 has a remarkable isolation in its nature, and might therefore have a special form in this respect, as it certainly has in others. Were the time, times, and half a time, expressed in that way, the argument would be more plausible. It is rash to draw an analogy of sameness, from a single instance differently situated and characterized, to all that precede or follow. There are grounds in the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks which forbid the shorter reckoning; but this is not at all the case in any of the others. Hence the resemblance fails, and the reasons which determine in the case of Dan. 9 do not appear elsewhere.

II. The sentence of Israel in the wilderness is habitually cited as another testimony (Num. 13:25; 14:33, 34). It is plain that a retributive dealing with Israel in the desert is a slender ground for interpreting symbolic prophecies given many centuries after.

III. The typical siege of Ezekiel is another witness called to sustain the system (Ezek. 4:4-9). Here again we have to note that an argument is based on this, not for the dates in Ezekiel’s prophecy, where it is recorded, but for Daniel and John, where it is not. From such special instances, so carefully explained, it would seem safe to conclude that a day not so applied was to be taken literally, especially if given in the explanation and not in the symbolic form only.

IV. Another argument has been drawn from the words of our Lord given in Luke 13:31-38. But it must be owned that the color for giving this the definite meaning of three years is slight indeed.

Let us turn to the prophetic dates themselves which are in question.

V. The “time, times, and dividing of time” (Dan. 7:25), may be first considered, as it is thought to contain many distinct proofs to confirm the year-day theory, and to refute the shorter reckoning. The peculiarity of form is due to the prophetic style, which loves to arrest the attention of the reader, and to suggest matter for reflection, instead of limiting itself the phrases customary in common life. The comparison of the different phrases for the same period in Revelation makes it perfectly certain that three years and a half were meant, even if there could have been a doubt before, which there was not: Jews and Christians alike accepted the phrase as comprehending that space. It has been already intimated however, that there is no objection to allow of a protracted application in a general way, provided that the crisis be not set aside, as is done almost always by the historical school. And it may be that such a twofold reference accounts for the enigmatical appearance of this date.

VI. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar stands on exactly similar grounds. The seven times were assuredly accomplished in the seven years’ humiliation of the great Babylonian chief. It is possible that there may be a prolonged application figuratively to the times of the Gentiles from the beginning to the end of the four great empires.

VII. Without doubt the phraseology is unusual; but Mr. Mede, the greatest advocate of the year-day system, here allows that the vision applies to Antiochus Ep., and consequently views the date as a brief period only. It seems scarcely worth while to dwell on such assumptions as that the vision is of the restored sacrifice! before a fresh desolation!! including several centuries!! not only without scripture but against the text commented on. Such proofs might be multiplied, but where is their worth? I believe myself that the “many days” are not before, but after, the numeral period, and that here, as elsewhere, the vision concentrates on the close, though not without the accomplishment of grave facts comparatively close at hand.

VIII. The oath of the angel in the last vision, and all the attendant circumstances, are supposed to be in favor of the mystic view of the historical school, and against the brief crisis at the end of the age.
But why the solemnity of the oath should require the lengthy application to the past, and not the awful lawlessness of the future, seems hard to understand. That the deepest interest should converge on the out-burst of evil which brings the Lord judicially and in glory into the scene is most intelligible, and the desire be expressed to know how long such horrors are to last before the end come. To the prophet, intensely feeling for the Jews in their sorrow, and wholly ignorant of the present calling from among the Gentiles (not to speak of the one body wherein is neither Jew nor Greek but Christ is all), can anything be conceived more suitable? We may rest assured that 1 Peter 1:12 does not refer to this passage, for the apostle speaks about inquiry among the prophets, not, as here, the celestial beings whom Daniel saw and heard. Nothing can be clearer or more certain than the convergence of the thought here on the end. It is of this only that Daniel inquires, and learns that the words are sealed till then. The point is not the immediate history.

IX. The supplementary dates have been pressed into the same service, and with as little result in favor of application to the past. For, however sorrowful it is to see men so occupied with the world’s doings and sayings as to overlook the abyss that is opening, not only for the Jews but for Christendom, the Lord Himself directed attention to this part of Daniel in such a way as to make argument of small moment to the believer. Compare Matt. 24:15, &c., with Dan. 12:11. Whatever Antiochus Ep. may have done similarly (Dan. 11:31), it is certain that there is to be a future abomination of desolation set up in Jerusalem’s sanctuary, that a brief but unexampled tribulation will ensue, and that the Son of man will immediately after appear to the deliverance of His elect. The Lord does thus supply the ampest proof that the theory which shuts out the crisis is false, and that the end of the age is precisely the era when these things are to be fulfilled.

X. Of the cyclical character of the prophetic times I would rather avoid speaking. The truth needs no support from science. To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. Even the sturdiest advocates of the protracted and intervening application have to own here the literality of the specified times, where explanation too had been sought. The mention of so many days does not convey any necessary thought of a prolonged period, but of God’s gracious counting up the daily sorrow that must befall those who bore His name, and of the dishonor put on His own sanctuary and sacrifice, after they had too hastily assumed that He could own them as they will be then. The wicked will not care for this, but hail the abominations then to follow; the wise will understand and confide in the word of God which deigns to reckon up the time before deliverance comes day by day. An immense series of years would be cold comfort at such a time.

No doubt the two periods of thirty days, and of forty-five [Dan. 12] added to the thirty, are a supplement to the times already mentioned, but they are really connected directly with the date in Dan. 7, without any reference to Dan. 9 (though less obviously, I presume there is a bond between all, namely, the last half week of the seventieth, which is identical with the time, times, and an half, overlapped doubly by the supplemented twelve hundred and ninety and three hundred and thirty-five days, as we have seen). But there is no hint of a long period when these dates proceed, whatever the interval before they begin. Indeed our Lord appears to intimate the express contrary, when He says, “Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened; “and it is in reference to the same period that, in the Revelation, the devil is represented as come down in great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time. Does this look like more than a thousand years? Finally, the assurance that the prophet should stand in his lot in the end of those days does not imply that those days are themselves of a longer continuance than might appear from the letter of the prophecy. The long delay was before the days commence, not in their long continuance. The prophet knew well that he lived (then a very old man) at the beginning of the second of those four empires, though he might have no knowledge of the strange vicissitudes of the fourth, and of the mysteries which the New Testament would reveal in due season during its continuance and disappearance, before its revival, and the portentous crisis, terminating in its judgment, when these days have run their course, after which the prophet should stand in his lot.

Thus, even in the symbolic prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation, the point is not at all the course of secret providence in history of which men love to weave systems, but the announcement of divine judgment, when the overt unrestrained blasphemy of the powers makes it morally imperative on God’s part. This is the reason why scripture passes so curtly over the long periods of which the natural mind is so boastful, in order to fix attention on the closing scene when the responsible holders of authority come into collision with the God who originally delegated the authority. No one doubts the importance of what God works secretly; yet it is not of this that prophecy treats, but of His public infallitions when man’s evil becomes intolerable by openly denying God and setting up himself instead. And as secret providence is thus excluded from prophecy, still more is the church, whereby God now displays His manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph. 3:10). Even when He does deign to furnish light as to His working in the church during a day of decay, till the spewing out of its last form, He chooses seven existing assemblies, “the things that are,” as the means of it, so as not to falsify His own principles in the Christian’s constant waiting for Christ, and in our having a heavenly position in Him, instead of being an object of prophecy on earth. When the properly prophetic part of the Revelation commences, “the things which must be after these,” those who had enjoyed the church’s relationship with Christ are seen already glorified on high, and we return to Jews or Gentiles, unjust or righteous, filthy or holy, on earth. The bride is above during the visions of judgment, or at least their execution.

It is no question then of speculating about God’s ways, but
of submission in thankfulness, to His word who tells us the end from the beginning, and dwells not on the mere intervening stages which are noticed -- if at all -- in the most passing way, but concentrates our gaze on the closing conflict between good and evil, when Satan fights out his last campaign against the Lord and His Anointed, and we can the better discern by such an issue the frightful character of wiles which looked specious at an earlier day. The real difficulty to a spiritual mind would be to conceive the Spirit of God occupying, not merely the Christian now but even the godly Jew of old or by-and-by with Gentile politics and the details of their godless history. It is quite simple to under-stand that all the blessing is not introduced, when judgment intervenes first to destroy the beast and the false prophet, other enemies needing to be put down, other measures necessary to clear away evil and its effects, and that two or three months more beyond the three and a half years are added in this way. But that so seventy-five, or even thirty, years should follow the destruction of the beast and the anti-christ, before the full blessing of the millennium comes in, is a most unnatural supposition; yet it seems inseparable from, and therefore destructive of, the system which interprets these days as so many years.
Chapter 14

The Apocalyptic Numbers

Having briefly examined the reasoning of the historical school as to the numbers in Daniel, we may now consider those contained in the Book of Revelation. The same principle really applies to both; but it may be more satisfactory if we notice what is attempted to be drawn from them in detail.

I. The ten days’ tribulation in the message to the Smyrnenean angel comes first in order. Here it is felt that caution is needed; for men like the late Mr. E. B. Elliott would carefully eschew such evidence. It is well known that they deny the seven Apocalyptic assemblies to be types of the main varying phases of the church on earth [Rev. 2 and 3] till the Lord takes His own on high. Here therefore is a rent among both futurists and historicists, some on the two sides owning, many rejecting, the larger view of these churches. Yet there are those even of the latter school who, in accordance with the acknowledgment of their application to distinct stages in the church’s history, interpret these ten days {Rev. 2:10} of the ten years’ persecution under Diocletian, the most remarkable in the early times of the church. So, after speaking of the Seventy Weeks, the late Mr. G. S. Faber says:

We find likewise that the Apocalyptic ten days’ persecution of the church of Smyrna has been similarly proved by the event to mean, not a persecution of ten literal days, but a persecution of ten mystical days; that is to say, the persecution of ten years which is recorded by Eusebius, and Lactantius, and Orosius (Sacred Calendar, 1. 45, 46).

Homogeneity is supposed to require a similar construction of the various other numbers of these two prophets. It is notorious however that many, even in early times, interpreted the ten days of the ten persecutions down to Diocletian, as others recently in more general terms. The real thought appears to give the persecuted the comfort of knowing that it was limited, a meaning familiar to the reader of scripture from Genesis to Daniel. But on the prolonged scheme one need not set aside the general facts more than this.

II. The time of the locust-woe has next to be examined. Here the most natural allusion appears to be the ordinary period during which locusts live to ravage: so should the scourge symbolized by them last, and no such space as to wear men out. It is but a preliminary infliction, tormenting but not prolonged excessively. Greater judgments must follow: this is the first woe.

III. The time of the second woe, or Euphratean horsemen, is thought to afford another proof, though involved in greater difficulties from the various readings or versions.

The true text is that attested by the Alexandrian and Porphyrian uncials, supported by many cursives, versions, and patristic quotations: καὶ ἡμέραν. But N and the cursive Cod. Reuchl. omit these words, as does the Complut. Pol., most probably by oversight. The Basilian uncial however, and more than twenty cursives, before ἡμέραν intercalate εἰς τὴν, and six cursives (28, 38, 49, 79, 91, 96) τὴν only.

Hence Mr. Faber says in a note to page 420 of his Sacred Calendar, ii.,

The many erroneous versions of this passage have arisen entirely from improper punctuation. I read the original Greek, pointed as follows: Καὶ ἠλώθησαν οἱ τέσσερες ἄγγελοι, οἱ ήτοιμοιμένοι εἰς τὴν ὥραν, καὶ μήνα καὶ ένιαυτῶν, ἵνα κ. τ. Ʉ. The accusatives, ἡμέραν and μήνα and ένιαυτῶν, I consider as denoting continuance of time, and as depending, not upon the preposition εἰς, but upon the verb ἠλώθησαν.

Hence he would render, “And the four angels, who had been prepared unto the appointed season [which would require, rather κατόρθων than ὥραν] were loosed during both a day, and a month, and a year, in order,” &c. Another author of the same school prefers: Matthaei’s text, framed on the comparatively later, or Constantinopolitan, authorities, and

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11. The protracted view of the seven churches neutralizes Mr. E.’s primary objection to futurism – the supposed instant plunge of the Apocalyptic prophecy into the distant future of the consummation. For the seven churches are believed to bridge the space between the last apostle and the last or unfulfilled week of Daniel’s seventy. They fill up the gap between the vision of St. John and the removal of the saints to heaven, where they are seen in Rev. 4, 5 followed by the prophecies of God’s dealings with men, Israel, and the nations on earth (but never the church), in Rev. 6-18, till the Lord and His already glorified ones come forth from heaven to judge the quick, and reign over the earth for a thousand years (Rev. 19, 20), and the eternal state succeeds the judgment of the dead. The other objections of Mr. E. are of no force; for as many whom he would have called futurists do not identify the Apocalyptic seals with the early predictions of Matt. 24, so not a few historicists allow the literal Israel in the Apocalypse as well as a future personal Antichrist.
would translate, “the angels prepared for that hour, and (for) that day, were loosed both a month and a year,” evidently to fit in to the supposed period, so as to agree with the three hundred and ninety days of Ezekiel. However it is the less needful to refute this fanciful analogy, as the author himself appears to have abandoned it, and in a more recent work returned to the ordinary text and the common rendering. But it will be observed that all this shows the extreme precarioussness of the historical application, and of the effort to extract a chronological period for the Turkman woe, as we may see in the former case, where the school divides into the classes which see either one period of a hundred and fifty years, or two such periods in the same Saracenic woe.

The truth appears to be that in the vision the angels were loosed that were prepared against the hour, day, month, year fixed of God -- that is, it is an epoch rather than a period; and this is secured by a single article {the word “the”}, which brackets all together. As another remarks, had the article been repeated before each, the ideas of the appointed hour, day, month, and year would have been separated, not, as now, united; had there been no article, we might have understood that the four were to be added together to make up the time, though even thus the εἰς occurring once only would have made some difficulty; for the natural way of expressing such a meaning would be εἰς ὅραν, καὶ εἰς ἡμέραν, καὶ εἰς μῆνα, καὶ εἰς ἔτος. If this be so, we must conclude that this phrase in the second woe has no more bearing on the year-day question than the five months in the first. It may be added that, if an aggregated period had been meant, the natural order would have been the inverse of the actual one, for a year, and for a month, and for a day, and for an hour.

IV. The treading down of the holy city, and the related numbers, we have next to consider.

But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth” (Rev. 11:2, 3).

1. It is true that two distinct phrases are used to denote the time, and that neither is the usual phrase in common life. But that this points to the mystical interpretation desired, or accords with it only, is more than should be affirmed. One can understand the time presented in a different light from spiritual motives, and wholly apart from any question of disguising continuance of time. Indeed, if the object were simply the acting on the year-day principle, it would seem more natural to adhere solely to so many days, which is exactly what the Holy Spirit avoids. The variety of forms is therefore adverse to what is sought as evidence. Whether one apprehends justly or not the aim that underlies each variety may be questioned; but it is not a sound judgment that any, or all, of them can be counted inconsistent with the space of three and a half years. The usage depends on other and higher considerations than concealing a long space under an apparently brief one, though this be not absolutely denied. But who does not feel the propriety of telling us how His witnesses prophesied in sackcloth “a thousand, two hundred, and threescore days?” and so of feeding the mother of the male of might in a place prepared of God in the wilderness {Rev. 12}, though it be the same space which is styled “a time, times, and half a time” when she is said to flee there, and be fed, away from the face of the serpent? Within these extremes we have the forty two months, during which it is given to the Gentiles to tread down the holy city, and to the beast to practice or pursue its career.

2. Again, what is there, in the comparison of Rev. 11:2 with Luke 21:24, to prove, or even insinuate, that, because the treading down of Jerusalem stretches over the times of the Gentiles, therefore the treading down of the holy city in the Apocalypse must be equally spun out? It would seem more pertinent, on the contrary, to infer, from the limited terms of the Revelation, that the latter must be a brief space as compared with the former. The historical treading is as long as the times of the Gentiles, the symbolic and future is restricted to forty-two months.

3. Is it not weak to argue from the allusion to Elias, in the account of the witnesses {Rev. 11}, that the period is presumably twelve hundred and sixty years? Undoubtedly the time of famine in that prophet’s day is twice mentioned in the New Testament as lasting “three years and six months”; but the same term need not be used in a prophetic book if the time here were identical: other reasons, as we have seen, might operate to modify the expression. And, granting the typical character of his history, it is straining matters to infer that the time of the witnesses must be an immensely larger, as well as analogous, period.

4. In the gospel of Matthew three days and three nights are predicated of the Lord’s burial. This style of speech was according to Jewish reckoning, which counted even a small fraction of a day before sunset, or another after it, as a night and day respectively. The principle involved was that of a full witness to His death. In the Revelation it was no longer a question of this, but of such a computation as suits and is intelligible to men at large.

V. The wilderness abode is of the mother, not of the bride; of Israel, not of the church (Rev. 10:12).

1. The symbolical teaching therefore points away from the church to the ancient people of God, when they once more enter the field of divine dealing in the latter day; and thus the presumption is rather against, than for, the year-day.

2. The woman is no doubt a miniature, but of Israel at the end of this age; and thus the plainest consistency with
facts demands that the time should be taken in its literal import. See Dan. 7, 12.

3. The distinctness of the phrases denoting the same time in no way betokens a prolonged mystical period, their unusual form being due to reasons of a spiritual, and not merely a chronological, character.

4. Further, there is a most express intimation in Rev. 12:12, which seems to forbid the lengthening out of the times into a very considerable portion of the world’s history. The reason for the great wrath of the dragon is said to be because, when cast down, he knows that he has “but a short time.” It would require strong proof to show that this means, not three years and a half, but twelve hundred and sixty.

There is nothing in the Old Testament predictions about Israel which could lead us to gather that there will be again a delay of even forty years, as of old, in the wilderness, though we know from Ezek. 20 and Hos. 2 that God will plead with them there once more. There is quite a different object in such scriptures as 1 Cor. 10 and Heb. 4, which refer to the Christians apart from time, and not to Israel in the future crisis (as in Rev. 12), subject to times and seasons.

To say that there is a designed coincidence between this chapter and the texts in Numbers, Ezekiel, and Dan. 9, usually cited for the year-day, shows a warm imagination in quest of constructive evidence: what else? It is in vain to eke out an appearance of proof by alleging that, as the unbelief of Israel turned the forty days of search into forty years of wandering, so the similar unbelief and corruption of the church has turned the twelve hundred and sixty days expressed on the surface of the prophecy into those twelve hundred and sixty years of actual delay and desolation which lay couched beneath the expression, and have been slowly fulfilling into the course of divine Providence. This is rhetoric, not even logic, still less scripture. For the woman, mother of the glorified Man in Rev. 12, is beyond doubt not the church but the Jewish people -- first, as seen in God’s mind and purpose; then in the latter-day trouble through which she must pass, though strong and rapid means of escape from Satan’s murderous malice be provided of God. In short, the argumentative or rather fanciful application to the church is the merest and most fatal mistake, not of details merely, but of the entire object of the chapter.

VI. The close of the mystery of God, and the oath that announces it in Dan. 10:5-7, are supposed to supply another proof, less evident perhaps at first sight, but which on examination is said to be of the strongest kind, when compared with the parallel text in Dan. 12 [5-8].

1. It is true that this oath, in the most general view of its meaning, denotes the shortness of the delay, and the impending close of the mystery of God. “There shall be delay no longer.” But it is a mistake to think that this implies the six trumpets to have been really a time of long-suffering, still more that the previous delay in the course of those trumpets had been of long continuance, and, most of all, that this of itself can accord only with the larger interpretation of the times. Nothing hinders our believing that the time of longsuffering preceded the Apocalyptic judgments, that these follow in quick succession, but that the last introduces the reign of God when evil is set aside for the world finally.

2. The oath in Rev. 10 unquestionably resembles that in Dan. 12, though each has its points of grave distinction. But the more August and peremptory is that in the Apocalypse, the less does it lend itself to affording evidence of a chronological sort.

3. This conclusion is refuted by the words themselves. It is well known that the Authorized Version of the clause is untenable, suggesting an unfounded contrast of “time” with eternity as if instantly to follow, whereas a whole millennium and more must intervene. Besides, χρόνος is not used in this abstract way, but for a long or short space, a lapse or interval, and hence delay; and this as pointedly is contrasted with καιρός in Daniel, which means not mere duration of time, but a set time and hence “a year.” It is in evident allusion to Rev. 6:11, where it was told the earlier martyr-band that they must rest ἕν ἓρνον [μικρόν], a while, or space “longer”; whereas the oath now runs that χρόνος συκέτι ἑσται, “there should be no longer delay.” It is strange that Dean Alford, who agreed in this correction, should nevertheless have given, even in the third edition of his Greek Testament (1866), the same erroneous version as the Authorized; but he sets it right in his small Testament, compared with the Greek (1870), “there shall be delay no longer.” It has been objected indeed, that this does not convey the full meaning of the oath, and for two reasons: first, that the narrative in the following chapter implies some measure of delay, even after this announcement; and, secondly, that the analogy with the oath in Daniel is almost entirely destroyed. But the answer is, first, that the terminus a quo of no delay is the days of the voice of the seventh angel when he should sound the trumpet, as he was about to do, whereas the main part of the following chapter precedes the third woe, as any one can see by inspection; and thereon, when the second is past, follows quickly the seventh trumpet, which does introduce the closing scene forthwith; secondly, general scope and minute phraseology stand here in marked contrast, not analogy, with the oath in Daniel, as already noticed. A more correct and consistent version therefore cannot be looked for.

4. With these convictions we cannot but discard the strange rendering of “A TIME no longer,” a version which is contrary to all scriptural usage, and satisfies not a single condition of the text.

5. The use of the word in Luke 1:57; Acts 1:7; 3:21; 7:17; Gal. 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:1, is too obviously different to require detailed argument. Nor can any words either sanction or disguise the confusion of it with καιρός, as if
they could equally bear the same interpretation. Even the very few who contend for the interchange evidently feel the difficulty, which is in no way removed by their reasoning. For the contrast with the Apocalypse is evident in what follows: compare, Dan. 12:9 with Rev. 22:10. And the comparatively narrow compass of the oath in the Old Testament prophet is as noticeable as the breadth and depth of that in the New. The strict correspondence of the two oaths is therefore fallacy, so transparent that perhaps overzeal in controversy can alone account for the assertion. Nor again is it true that χρόνος and καιρός are so nearly allied in their meaning that the difference vanishes in a correct version. It is only to deceive oneself if one reasons from the four places in the New Testament where our translators have loosely given season for χρόνος, as in every one it should be while, or time, or space; equally so to infer from the sixty places where they translate κ. by time, that the distinction between them is evanescent. No scholar who has weighed this usage would deny their distinctive propriety in every instance, as the Christian ought to believe it, because he is certain of God’s wisdom in every word He has written. It is only a lax rendering therefore which seems to assimilate the two words.

6. But the absurdity of the effort will be made apparent if one were to give to Rev. 6:11 the sense sought to be imported into Rev. 10:6; and the stance ought to be the fairer test, inasmuch as the one may be justly reckoned to refer to the other. What would be thought, then, of imposing on the earlier text the meaning of resting longer for a year, be it of days or years, until both their fellow-bondmen and their brethren, who were about to be killed as they, should be fulfilled? Every intelligent mind would scout such sense of Rev. 6:11: yet there is as much, or as little, ground for so understanding Rev. 10:6. Not a single instance of χρόνος occurs in scripture approaching the desired meaning. The demonstration is complete therefore, that χρόνος lends no help to the scheme which denies the future crisis of three and a half years, and makes of it an interval of many centuries.

VII. The duration of the sixth, or rather seventh, head of the beast (Rev. 17:6-11) has long been thought to furnish another reason for the longer reckoning. But the argument is a mistake. The sixth king, or form of Roman government, was the then existing imperial, as distinguished from the five already fallen; the seventh, when he came, was to remain but a little while, that is, as compared with the previous state. The eighth, who is also of the seven, is characterized, not by remaining a little while, but by going into perdition; let his remaining be ever so short is not the point, but his coming out of the abyss and going into perdition in a way altogether characteristic. What is there, then, in this really to confirm the year-day theory? The seventh head has a brief continuance, as compared with the preceding heads, and certainly the sixth or imperial; or with the eighth, and its awful source and end peculiar to itself! There is not a word implying that the time of the last must be greater than a few natural years.

This may suffice to show how little real ground there is to boast that the evidences for the year-day theory are full, clear, and unambiguous. The presumption is arbitrary that the dates have some secret meaning; and there is no such thing as a plain and certain key of interpretation appointed of God, which explains the transactions of modern history. When we proceed to look more closely into the particular passages where the dates occur, they appear to yield decisive opposition to the system which denies the brief crisis at the end of the age, and sees only the protracted history of Christendom, in their occurrence.
Chapter 15

The Year-Day Theory Concluded

The direct arguments for the denial of the future crisis, in order to make out the protracted historical reckoning of prophetic times as the true meaning of scripture, have now been briefly met; and many of the usual pleas have been shown to be groundless. But there are a few others, differing from those we have just noticed, which call for a short examination, especially as one cannot but reject the pseudo-literal narrowness of the futurists quite as much as the vagueness of their adversaries.

There is no need to dwell minutely on the conflicting theories on either side, which owe their rise to ignorance of scripture and of the power of God. A few remarks may suffice for the review of what remains to be noticed.

I. The uncertainty about the ten kingdoms does not seem so small a matter as the historicalists like to think, but the allegation against it of their adversaries is not an objection of much weight. It is plain and has been reasoned out, that the prophecy itself points to temporary changes by marriage or alliance in Dan. 2, and by uprooting of no less than three horns before the little horn which came up among the ten in Dan. 7.

There is a far graver obstacle to the providential scheme in the fact that, in the prophecy, the ten horns compose the instruments of the power of the fourth beast in its last phase; whereas in the history, which some regard as its fulfillment, they are the separate kingdoms which the barbarians, enemies and destroyers of the Roman empire, erected on the ruins. This is strengthened by the intimation of Rev. 17:12 that the ten horns of the close receive authority as kings one hour with the beast -- not especially at, or merely so, which would require the dative, but the accusative, for one hour (μιαν ὀραν). They have received no kingdom as yet: when the beast or Roman empire revives, they will. When the beast originally had its way, there was no such division. The Caesars governed an undivided empire. When the Germanic and other kindred hordes broke up the empire, they may have formed some ten kingdoms, less or more, in the West; but the empire was gone, save in name. There was no such thing as the co-existence of an imperial system with its head, and of these ten kings animated with the one policy and purpose of giving their kingdom to the beast. It will be so when “the beast that was and is not” “shall be present,” before he goes to destruction, God putting it into the heart of the no longer jealous Western powers to do His mind, and to do one mind, till His words shall be finished.

But this future condition is as far from the present or medieval division into separate kingdoms as the old undivided Roman empire differs from both. Now the Spirit of God in Daniel clearly contemplates as the full meaning of the prophecy the same state of things as John does in the Revelation, where there is an imperial chief directing the united energies of the ten kingdoms of the West, which, in any proper or full sense, is in neither the pagan times nor the papal, but in the future only. The utmost which can be allowed is, that the papacy may have shadowed in part the enormities of the little horn in Daniel, and of the beast in John; but assuredly the complete fulfillment awaits the final crisis, when that empire, which smote the Lord Jesus of old in humiliation, will rise again from the abyss to oppose Him as He comes again in glory {Rev. 13:3, 4; 19:19}, but must go into perdition. This is a far more serious objection to the system which sees only an immense web of providence, in past history, and it is riveted, not removed, by the most exact review of the prophetic word. Nothing that has already been exhausts the vision.

II. Much has been said of late for and against the true terminus a quo of the twelve hundred and sixty years. But some, who reasoned from its uncertainty to overthrow the historical school, seem to have misunderstood the meaning of the prediction. Thus, if the saints have been for ages given over to the blasphemous little horn of Dan. 7, it was thought incredible that the church should be at a loss when and how the change happened. Many, it was urged, assert that it is; others are as fully convinced that it is not; and nine-tenths stand silent, avowedly unable to give any opinion on the subject.

They may, or may not, be in the hands of the little horn, and he may, or may not, be wearing them out, for anything they know. They hope and believe that they are the saints, but whether the beast is making war with, and has overcome, them, they cannot tell; it is a deep, curious, and litigated question, and one on which, among so many conflicting opinions, they never pretended to form a judgment for themselves.
Dr. Maitland’s retort has embarrassed not a few. The fact, however, is, that the prophet means that not the saints, but the times and laws, were to be given into the hand of the little horn. God does not let His people out of His own hand. On the other hand, the giving of the times and laws into the hand of the little horn is a very different thing from the pope’s perversion of the prophecies, and wresting the promises of the future glory of the kingdom to the present grandeur and dominion of Romanism. And, whatever be the guilt of forbidding marriage to the clergy, or, yet more, of annulling the rebellious sin of idolatry by what we may call christening images, of heterodoxy and lying pretension in the Mass, of refusing the cup to or shutting up the Bible from the laity, and of sanctioning troops of false mediators in the worship of saints and angels and Virgin, it is not true that every feature of the prophecy finds its counterpart in the Roman papacy. It is in vain to say that the little horn claims the office of a seer, who has full insight into divine mysteries; and of a prophet, as infallible interpreter of the divine will. This is a true description of the pope, not of the little horn, which symbolizes a king, or rather emperor, not a bishop -- a king, small at first, but not always, before whom three of the ten fell, and who wields the force of all the rest, rising up to the greatest height of his power before he is cast down for ever by divine judgment, and the beast given to the burning flame. “Eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things,” in this horn, do not warrant the notion of an episcopal any more than of a prophetic dignity. The symbol attributes high intelligence to this Roman chief {the coming Roman prince of Dan. 9 and the first beast of Rev. 13}, as well as audacity of speech, which takes the character of blasphemous pride against the Most High. (Cf. Dan. 7:11, 25.) He assumes the power of changing times and laws {Rev. 13}, like Jeroboam (1 Kings 12). Only this will be done by the emperor of Rome dictating to the Jews in Jerusalem, and changing the divinely-enjoined feasts and institutions given to that people. One may compare with this the last verse of Dan. 9, where he is said to cause sacrifice and oblation to cease “in the midst of the week,” which would coalesce with the beginning of “a time, and times, and the dividing of time.”

Nor is it fair to plead the superior reasonableness of giving these predictions for many generations, rather than for one only. This is to make the actual circumstance outweigh the communication and enjoyment of God’s mind, and is opposed to all that is really spiritual. Our notion of utility is apt to mislead, guided as it ever is by mere reason. The question for a believer is the true meaning of the word, the intention of God Himself, which the Holy Spirit will surely unfold to those whose eye is, by grace, single to the glory of Christ. It does not commend itself to the ear of faith, when the effort is not to vindicate the prophecies from the guesses of men, but to reduce them to the same uncertainty as the twelve hundred and sixty days among historical commentators. Such reasoning ought to warn souls that it is the spirit of man which is at work, and not the Holy Ghost.

Ill. Of the repeated failures in the predicted close of the twelve hundred and sixty year-day system others have said enough. They are notorious. Yet they have found an apologist, who argues that these successive interpretations, mistaken as they were, are just what it was reasonable to expect. This might be, if prophecy were no such thing as God’s word, or if we had not the Holy Spirit of God to give us the truth of it. In human things man progresses gradually, and the sense of past failure stimulates to future success: is it so in divine things? Is it true that, only by such failure and men’s gradual approach to a correct view of the times and seasons, could the two main purposes have been fulfilled -- growing knowledge of the prophecy, with a constant and unbroken expectation of the Lord’s coming? To the Christian who repudiates the jarring schools of men it does seem no light instance of the irony observable here below, that Protestants should boast of a year-day theory, as applied to the time, times, and a half, which confessedly appeared about the year 1200; that they should avow the uncertainty of the ten kingdoms; and that they should cry up a few apparent successes, spite of a thousand mistakes, in their application.

The effort to retort failure on those who, from apostolic times, have been awaiting the Son of God from heaven, is as unworthy as it is baseless. For, while the apostle Paul, for instance, taught the saints to be, with himself, ever looking for Christ, there was the most complete care never to connect Christ’s coming for us with a single date. The times and seasons are, without exception, bound up with the trials and deliverance of the Jews, never with the church.

This, it will be seen and felt, goes to the root of the year-day system, when it takes the place of being the true and full aim of the Spirit in the prophetic visions. Hence, the more closely Daniel is searched, the more it will appear certain that the church is never contemplated as the object directly concerned in the scenes there disclosed to the view of faith. Again, the Apocalypse affords still more positive instruction, because therein we have a protracted scheme of the churches here below as “the things which are”; after which no such state is known any more, but a new company is seen for the first time in heaven, and the old distinction of only Jews and Gentiles follows on earth, with the most marked absence of the churches. Yet, singular to say, total failure in apprehending this, the broadest and weightiest lesson of the Revelation, pervades the opposing parties of futurists and historicists alike.

Nor is it here only that they are almost equally mistaken, but also in confounding the Christian hope with the prophetic word, a distinction which runs through the New Testament, from John’s Gospel, and before it, to the Revelation, but formally distinguished in 2 Peter 1, as in fact the apostle Paul does in 2 Thess. 2:1, 2; for he beseeches the Thessalonians by the coming of our Lord, which is to gather the saints on
high, not to be soon troubled, as though the day of the Lord were present -- that day of solemn judgment for the earth, and men on it, of which the prophets had very fully spoken. So the apostle of the circumcision reminds his brethren that we have the prophetic word more firm (that is, confirmed) by the scene witnessed on the holy mount of transfiguration, to which they were doing well in paying heed, as to a lamp or candle shining in a daisy place, till day dawn and the day-star rise in their hearts {2 Peter 1:16-20}. Those who knew Old Testament prophecy were thus encouraged in holding it fast; but it was at best a light for this scene, now wrapped up in gloom, but soon to enjoy the reign of Him whose right it is; and they should desire another light, as much brighter as that of day exceeds a lamp however excellent, and that too shining from, and centering in, Christ above, the day-star, whom we look for from heaven before the terrible day of the Lord come upon the world. The heavenly hope rising in the heart is thus wholly distinct from prophecy which tells us of the judgments which usher in the day of Jehovah on the earth. But of this most sure distinction, momentous as it is, not only for the affections but also for true intelligence, it would be hard to say which of the two contending schools is farthest from the truth. In general they are on the same ground of confusion in this respect, though most evidently wrong are they who are the boldest in saying, My Lord delayeth His coming. May neither of them say it in the heart, whatever be the faultiness of their systems!

Where is the scriptural intimation of gradually increasing light from prophecy to sustain the lively expectation of the Bridegroom’s coming for us? The analogy of providence has nothing to do with what is a matter of His word addressed to hearts animated with divine love and hope. To unbelief, no doubt, this may seem general and vague; not so to those who, with bridal affections, have the Spirit prompting the cry, Come {Rev. 21:17}. If it is a mere question of reasoning from a literal sense of the words, hope must wane away, and each succeeding generation feel less and less warrant for inferring the nearness of the advent. Hence the theory is that prophetic dates must dawn with a gradually increasing light in order to quicken the church’s hope, which had otherwise lapsed into more and more indifference; and it is confidently affirmed as a fact, that ever since the reformation those who have most studied the prophetic dates, as an actual chronology of sacred times, have been the main instruments in awakening the church to a lively expectation of the coming of Christ.

Very different is our Lord’s own representation. The virgins who at first went out with their lamps to meet the Bridegroom, while He tarried, all slumber and sleep. Surely this condition of slumber, as regards the hope of our Lord’s return, characterized Christendom long after the Reformation, and down till our own times. However this may be, at length follows (not prophetic research, but) a cry at midnight, Behold the Bridegroom! go ye out to meet Him. It is this really which accounts for the present activity of wise, and even foolish, virgins. The cry is gone forth, but it is at midnight, not the flattering notion of a time of increased light, gradually bringing in the day.

Certainly the prophetic word, when studied in faith, gives one to judge principles now at work, it may be hiddenly, by God’s revelation of their full fruit and of His public dealings at the end. The effect is to separate one to Himself from the scene ripening for judgment. But the coming of the Lord for His own is associated with His love, and the highest enjoyment of His glory with Him in the Father’s house, with moral feelings and practical effects of another character, higher and more intimate, far above the prophetic word and its solemn announcements, however right and glorious. To confound the Christian’s hope with prophecy, to supplement the state of the apostolic church with the fuller light of the present, to assert that the history of the year-day expositions accords in the closest way with these truths, like successive steps towards the just apprehension of the course of divine Providence, seems as distressing in its ignorance as in its presumption. It was a false alarm as to the day of the Lord, not excitement about His coming, which shook the Thessalonians. There is in scripture no protraction of His coming, always and only a lively anticipation of it contemplated, and this up to the last chapter of the Revelation, though we have there plenty of times and seasons revealed before His day. It is the year-day theory which tries to conciliate errors and simply misses the truth.

The supposed successes of Protestant interpreters call for few remarks here, though open to not a little assuredly. Sufficient it then to say, that the chosen anticipations drawn from prophecy, which have proved so singularly correct in their main features, are these:

First, about the year AD 1600 Brightman calculated in his commentary that the overthrow of the Turkish power would occur AD 1696. In the year 1687 Dr. Cressener renewed the prediction, placing the time a year earlier, but restricting it to the close of the year of the “Turkish encroachments,” or the last end of their “hostilities.” This is caught up as in almost exact accordance with history, because the year 1697 was marked by that most signal victory of Prince Eugene over the Turks, which has proved the final limit to their aggressions upon western Europe. Bengel and Fleming are brought in to swell the train.

Here are the words of Brightman (p. 171, ed. Amst. 1611):

The execution of the commandment lighting upon the year 1300, by due consent of all history-writers; when their domestical dissensions being appeased, and all consenting to the empire of the Ottomans, they might freely bend themselves with all their power to enlarge their borders, and some time at length crease out of their narrow straitness. How long time this power given to the Turks should continue is declared in the next words, prepared at
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an hour, and a day, and a month, and a yeere, which so
eaxt description perteineth to the comforting of the godly
whom the Spirit would have to know, that this most
grievous calamity hath her set boundes, even to the last
moment, beyond which it shall not be continued. Which
indeed seemeth to be the space of three hundred ninety
and six yeeres, every several day being taken for a yeere,
after that manner which was interpreted the mouthes before.

Thus he makes it out: from AD 1300 + 396 AD 1696; or
as he says on Rev. 20:3 (p. 650),

if we follow the reckening of the Julian yeeres, the
impius kingdom shall not be prolonged beyond seven
yeere; then utterly to be abolisht without so much as
the footsteps of his name after him.

It will be judged hence how far it is candid to say that
Brightman’s anticipation was verified. Was there indeed
such an extirpation of the Turkish name (not to speak of
1696, but) in 1697? Was it singularly correct in its main
features?

The fact is that Brightman taught that the thousand years’
reign began in the year A.D. 130, and that the first
resurrection belonged to the nations of Europe (p. 656); that
three hundred years had then passed since that resurrection
(p. 657).

We must also yet tardy some short space before that our
brethren the Jews shall come to the faith. But after that
they are come, and Christ shall have reigned some ages
most gloriously on earth by His servants in advancing His
church to most high honor above all empire, then also
all nations shall embrace true godliness,” &c. (ib.)

Hence Brightman was expecting the papacy and the Turk to
be utterly abolished shortly.

Until this victory be gotten, the church yet is in war,
liveth in tents, and sithen with many adversaries. But
after this war is finished, she shall keep a most joyful
triumphe, and shall rejoice with perpetual mirth. . . . The
truth shall yet reign among the Gentiles for seven
yeerths: how long afterwards among the Jews no
declaration doth declare (p. 658).

Is this the Protestant way of keeping the expectation of
Christ’s coming lively? It may be added in illustration of this
chosen expositor’s skill in prophecy, that he interprets
the destruction of Gog and Magog in Rev. 20 of the overthrow
spoken of in Dan. 11:45; 12:12; Ezek. 38:8;
when the hour, day, month, and year of the Turks’
tyranny shall come out, to wit, at the year a thousand six
hundred ninetyeth more or less.

Finally, Brightman held that the rising of the dead small
and great for judgment before the great white throne means:

. . . the full restoring of the Jewish nation” (p. 664).

But the strangest thing of all is that the very advocate who
cites Brightman’s deduction from Rev. 9:15, as a conclusive
answer to such as have declaimed on the total failure of these
prophetic times, had himself rejected the reading, and of
course the translation, of the text on which this anticipation
was based. Thus while Brightman adopted the common text
in that verse, which is essential to his calculations, his
advocate, at the time when he commended this calculation as
an instance of a distinct and accurate insight into what was
coming on the earth, adopted as preferable Matthaei’s
reading. This ought to have made no small difference if it
was a date. But we have already shown that it is not,
Brightman and his advocate being alike wrong.

Further, Dr. Cressener, like Brightman, looked not
merely for a grave check or severe defeat of the Turks, but
their then total overthrow, or as Cressener says in the
preface to his Demonstration (p. xx, London, 1690), “the
last end of all Turkish wars.” Was this a just estimate of the
battle of Zenta?

Secondly, Cressener in 1687 anticipated “that the true
religion will revive again in some very considerable kingdom
before the general peace with the Turks or eight years at
furthest.” “The next year seems in all probability to be a
year of wonders for the recovery of the church.” Will the
christian reader believe that all this is thought to have proved
singularly correct in the revolution of England, AD 1688,
and the peace of Carlowitz, 1698? Again, Cressener
conjectured that before 1800 Rome would be destroyed, and
soon after its chief supports, ecclesiastical and civil? Is this
correct too?

Further, R. Fleming, jun., in 1700 predicted that the
French monarchy, after having scorched others, would itself
consume before 1794; as Bengel thought that the papacy
would close its chief dominion in 1809. But surely,
whatever the coincidence in appearance, our minds must feel
that the grounds were as weak as the fulfillment was
imperfect.

His Apocalyptic Key, or “Extraordinary Discourse on
the Rise and Fall of the Papacy” (my copy is the reprint
in 1793 of the original published in 1701) pretends to no more
than “some conjectural thoughts on this head; for I am far
from the presumption of some men to give them any higher
character.” It may be added that in the same work the author
conjectured that a divine judgment to be poured on the
dominions belonging to the Roman See would begin probably
about 1794, and expire about 1848, which has been regarded
as no less strikingly verified than the former thought. But
what is the ground of these anticipations? His view of the
vials, which, according to him, suppose a struggle and war
between the papist and reformed parties, every vial being
regarded as the event of some new periodical attack of the
former on the latter, but the issue proving at length favorable
to the latter against the former.
Hence Fleming considers that the first vial began with the Reformation, and continued about forty years (that is, 1516-1556); that the second ran on thence about fifty years (1556-1617) to the confusion of Spain and partially of France; that the third closed with the peace of Munster in 1648 after Germany was humbled; and that the fourth expired with 1794.

The reason of which conjecture is this; that I find the pope got a new foundation of exaltation when Justinian, upon his conquest of Italy, left it in a great measure to the pope’s management, being willing to eclipse his own authority to advance that of this haughty prelate. Now this being in the year 552; this, by the addition of the 1620 [really 1260] years, reaches down to the year 1811, which according to prophetical account is the year 1794.

And this involves his idea that the state of Protestantism is what is set out in Rev. 16:10; namely, “Atheism, Deism, Socinianism, irreligion, profaneness, skepticism, formality, hatred of godliness, and a bitter persecuting spirit continue and increase among us.” But is it really the fact that the French monarchy, after scourging others, did itself consume by doing so, till it exhausted itself towards the end of the eighteenth century, as the Spanish towards the end of the sixteenth?

For my own part I cannot but agree with the more weighty commentators of recent times, that, if we are to apply the vials historically, the scheme of Fleming is a mistake, and that the vials, in a partial way at least, begin with the French Revolution instead of the fourth ending there and then. Napoleon answers thus to the scourching agent, and the blaspheming sufferers who repented not are chiefly the papal nations of the European continent. Further, it seems superficial to cry up his applying the fifth vial to the years 1794-1848; for unquestionably it is rather since than before that the pope has been so signally ruined in his temporalities, and this by Italy spite of France, of which the conjecturer had not the most distant notion. He had pitched on 1848, reckoning the 1260 years prophetically from 606 when the pope received the title of Supreme Bishop. Then would follow the sixth vial on Mahometanism or the Turks up to 1900, as the seventh up to 2000 by Christ’s appearance (though not personally) bringing in the total judgment of Rome, &c., with the millennium afterwards. The first and inevitable result of his system is to set aside the waiting for Christ and to make death the necessary expectation of the Christian.

Though we are not to live to see the great and final destruction of the papacy, the blessed millennium, or Christ’s last coming to judge the world, yet seeing death is the equivalent of all these to us, &c. (p. 82).

Is it not strange to hear such a conjecture cited as a witness of the value of the Protestant system by one who avowedly rejects his basis?

Is it right again, to notice the last instance, that one who was perfectly aware of Bengel’s chimerical system of Apocalyptic chronology, to which it may be doubted that he converted a single individual of sobriety, should deign to use an example which had no more solid basis than the prognostication of an astrologer?

Pious and learned as the prelate may have been, no one will think that such remarks are too stringent on his prophetic dates, when it is remembered that he started with the assumption that the famous number of the beast 666 in years = his allotted term of forty-two months. 13 Hence a καιρός = 222 and two ninths years, and of course 3 ½ καιροί = 777 and seven ninths; the little time of Rev. 12:12 (διήμην καιρόν) = 888 and eight ninths; what he oddly calls the non-chronus (or as he thinks in better Latin -- which may be doubted -- the ne chronus) of Rev. 10:6 = 1111 and one ninth; the μικρός καιρός of Rev. 20:3 = half a καιρός, strange to say, or 111 and one ninth; the millennium, or χίλιατέτης (though Brightman indeed makes two, the first of Satan bound, the second of the saints reigning) = 999 and nine ninths (sic); the χρόνος = 1111 and one ninth; the αἰών = 2222 and two ninths, of which he gives 3 ½ to the world, 7777 and seven ninths or 490 of his prophetic months.

As the result, Bengel in his eagerness for dates finds a chronus in Rev. 6:11 (that is, 1111 and one ninth years) from AD 98 (a rather early beginning) to 1289 or Innocent III.‘s crusade against the Waldenses. The first woe, with its five prophetic months = 79 common years, dated from AD 510 to 589; the second, with its hour, day, month, and year = nearly 207; from AD 634 to 840; the non-chronus from AD 800 to 1836, within which are placed the interval after the second woe (84-947), the 1260 days of the woman after the birth of the man-child (864-1521), the third woe (947-1836), the time, times, and half-time, with the beast and his number (1058-1836), the everlasting gospel 1614, the end of the 42 months 1810, the beast from the pit or abyss 1832, the general dates closing with 1836 when the mystery of God is finished, the beast destroyed, and Satan bound.

Apology is due for presenting such a mass of crude and unfounded or rather ill-founded speculation; yet this is the expositor whose opinion that the chief period of papal dominance would close in 1809 is not only cited for the censure of those who objected to the historical system, but said to have distinct grounds? The charge of delusion and falsehood brought against these estimates of the prophetic dates, unless advanced with important limitations, is said to be itself false and delusive. This is bold; when it is known that he who thus dogmatizes did not differ from but agreed with his adversaries that Bengel’s entire system of Apocalyptic dates has not an atom of truth in it. The Christian will judge from such specimens, which are no

13. Mensis est pars duodecima anni; annus habet 365 97/400 dies; dies habet 24 horas; et huius divisionis naturalis response propheticam. Porro, cum 42 menses prophetica sint 666 ⅔ anni communes, longitudo propheticae temporum bene dat sese. In summa, quodvis tempus commune ad tempus propheticum se habet, ut 190 10/21 ad 1, sive ut 4000 ad 21.” Gnomon in Apoc. xiii. 18.
doubt the best that could be produced to commend the popular scheme of prophetic chronology, that, if there is little to attract or reward in the expositions of futurists, there is nothing to trust for candor or correctness in the defense of historicalism. One may not look for depth or breadth of truth where the heavenly headship of Christ and the distinctive association of the church with Him are ignored if not denied; but it is painfully instructive to see how special pleading destroys common honesty, and not least in the things of God.
Concluding Observations

We have now briefly examined the leading assumptions of the historical school; we have tested what is peculiar to the system, and have given sufficient evidence to show its lack of spiritual intelligence, even when, as of late, reasserted with considerable confidence to oppose further light which God has caused to shine afresh from His word. The objections urged by the futurist party may not be always well founded; but a really close search into scripture will prove that they both err by their narrowness: futurism by slighting the prophetic light cast on the past; historicalism by still more serious oversight of what is coming; both by overlooking the heavenly glory of Christ and the church’s union with Him in it, as distinct from the past as from the future ways of God on the earth. The extreme advocates on both sides lead equally to unbelief through their one-sidedness. We have seen that the crisis at the end of the age, closed by the Lord’s appearing in glory, is the grand point in Daniel and the Apocalypse, as well as our Lord’s own prophecy; though there is also a passing notice of the older Gentile empires, to which the world-power was successively assigned by God, when the Jews had proved themselves unworthy by idolatry, as at length by the rejection of Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God. Finally, the year-day theory, when applied definitely and in detail now, we have seen to be as superficial as might be expected from its source in the dark ages.

It is in first or fundamental principles that these schools betray their character. Not only are they narrow, and thus short of the full sphere, but they ignore the divine center, and fail to distinguish the heavenly circle from the earthly one, the body and bride of Christ on high, from His people and kingdom under the whole heavens, though embracing all peoples and kindreds and tongues. No prophecy of scripture is of its own interpretation; isolate it, as the historical system in general does, from the future coming and kingdom of our Lord, the gathering point of the prophetic word in Old and New Testament, and the Holy Spirit’s object is missed, the key lost. You are no longer in harmony with His line and aim who inspired all. Judged by this divine criterion (furnished by the apostle Peter) historicalism is most faulty, though its rival is blamable enough for denying the use of the lamp throughout the night. The spirit of the world, ever magnifying man and the present course of the age, is the main hindrance; as the Spirit of God, who searches all, even the depths of God, alone gives us to know, by and in and with Christ, what has been freely given us of God, and this spoken in words taught, not by human wisdom, but by the Spirit, spiritual things being communicated in spiritual words.

Now Christ and His glory are ever before the revealing Spirit; and as His kingdom over (not Israel only, but) all the earth is what all the prophets attest, so the apostles point to His heavenly exaltation and His bride’s along with Him.

The obstacle to the truth, then, is far wider and deeper than any party question of polemical divinity; though no doubt, as some few of the futurists have been swayed by the (perhaps unconscious) desire of palliating popery, so many of the historicalists no less by their scarce too strong abhorrence of that soul-enslaving and idolatrous system. They seem both to have forgotten the maxim which the apostle John impresses on the little children, or the very babes of God’s family: “As ye heard that antichrist cometh, even now are there arisen many antichrists, whence we know that it is the last hour” {1 John 2:19}. The futurists think only of the coming antichrist, the historical school are absorbed with the many antichrists. The Christian should not forget, on the one hand, that even now there are many antichrists in being (antiquity being the worst possible disproof of opposition to Christ); on the other, that a great personal antagonist of the Lord is surely coming, of which the many that have been and are should be regarded as signs and precursors, rather than as the fulfillment.

It is confessed, even by the apostolic of ordinary views, that there was in the mind of many Christians an exceeding jealousy of all discussion on unfulfilled prophecy. It was thought to be speculative and uncertain, adapted to produce and foster a vain curiosity, and to divert the mind from the duty of practical religion. Hence arose a tendency to dwell only on unfulfilled predictions, to consider evidence as the main benefit to be derived from the study, and to proscribe all investigation of the future as unlawful and pernicious. It is owned that these notions were too defective, and too plainly opposed to the statements of scripture, to endure the test of a prolonged inquiry; and that thoughtful minds, however cautious and devout, could not fail to see that other purposes of equal or greater importance were to be answered by these sacred predictions, warning to the careless, instruction to the faithful, instruction in the nature and outline
of coming events, spiritual preparedness, &c., being real objects recognized by scripture itself, and only to be answered by unfulfilled prophecy. Thus evidence was seen to be only a secondary use for the conviction of the incredulous, while the purpose was the help of the believer to enjoy the confidence of Him who revealed all in His love.

Hence, as has been supposed, a natural recoil from the prevalent doctrine which had proscribed the study of unfulfilled prophecy as useless and dangerous, to the opposite extreme, which treated fulfilled prediction as powerless for instruction or profit; and hence also a tendency to transfer as many predictions as possible into the class of unaccomplished prophecies, which might thus be still available for the guidance of the church.

Far from any believer be the thought that the prophetic word has not a decided bearing on the divine side, as revealing God’s glory and ways, besides its reference to, or use for, the personal wants of man. All scripture has this twofold character, and prophecy among the rest. But it is not in general seen, whether by futurist or historiast, that the prophetic word treats of judgments and earthly blessing by God’s power and goodness, but does not as such unveil the depths of God now revealed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. (See 1 Cor. 2; 1 Pet. 1.) It was the prerogative of Christ the Son thus to communicate to His own, in contrast with a prophet or even the greatest born of women, who could not rise above the earth wherein he had his origin, while the Lord Jesus, coming from above, is above all, and testified what He had seen and heard, and the Holy Ghost taught all things about the truth which they could not then bear, besides bringing to remembrance all that Jesus had said. In the communion of this precious and special intimacy stands the Christian and the church; and hence their exceptional place in relation to the prophetic word, as we have seen in the end of 2 Pet. 1, where the apostle shows that the believers addressed should heed that word for this dark squalid scene, till daylight dawn and the daystar arise in their heart. Prophecy is an excellent lamp, but there is something yet brighter, the daylight of our heavenly association with Christ Himself on high, source and center of all, (daystar as He is here called), which is far better.

It is this which exempts the Christian from the system of times and seasons, though he is entitled to know them, but to know them as bearing on the earthly people, not on those whose portion is with Him whose light is brighter than the sun at noon. With this accords the fact, that, when we look into the saints contemplated in the details of Daniel, they are found to be Jews, and so are those in the Savior’s prophecy of the dealings with Jerusalem in the end of the age; only that we hear then of Jews and Gentiles now on earth, but at that crisis not of the church or heavenly saints, who are previously seen in the Apocalyptic visions glorified, and with Christ above, whence they come with Him in the day of His appearing.

No thoughtful Christian then denies the value of fulfilled prophecy as evidence of revelation. It was really in no small measure the forcing of prophecy to bear on what was not its object, and the popular effort to make it speak of the past and present in gospel times, which largely led to the reaction expressed in Dr. S. R. Maitland’s words:

We point the infidel to the captive Jew and the wandering Arab, but who challenges him with the slain witnesses? We set before him the predicted triumphs of Cyrus; but do we expect his conversion from the French Revolution and the conquests of Napoleon? We send him to muse on the ruined city of David, and to search for the desolated site of Babylon; but who builds his arguments on the opened seals of the Apocalypse? And why is this? I do not speak hastily, and I would not speak uncharitably, but I cannot suppress my conviction that it is because the necessity of filling up a period of twelve hundred and sixty years has led to such forced interpretation of language, and to such a constrained acquiescence in what is unsatisfactory to sound judgment, that we should be afraid, not only of incurring his ridicule, but of his claiming the same license which we have ourselves been obliged to assume. I firmly believe that the error lies in adopting an interpretation which requires us to spread the events predicted respecting three years and a half over more than twelve centuries, and which thus sends us to search the page of history for the accomplishment of prophecies still unfulfilled (Enquiry, pp. 84, 85. 1826).

It is not that one cites this futurist leader as laying down principles of sterling value; for his work was much more negative than positive, and he was as much as his adversaries under the idea that the main end of prophecy is to convict unbelievers.

The error lies in two things: first, unbelief of the authority of God’s word; and, secondly, ignorance of our privileges as Christians in the perfect favor of God, and unwillingness to accept the truth that the world is awaiting the suspended judgment of God at Christ’s return. Those who, justified by faith and in peace with God, stand in His grace and rejoice in hope of His glory, do not need evidence that the word of their God and Father is true, or that the providence of God orders all the varying plans and thoughts of men to the fulfillment of its own deep and wonderful counsels. And for him who knows what it is to walk in the light as He is in the light (the place of every Christian), it is strange doctrine to hear that fulfilled prophecies lend great help to our thoughts in seeking to attain this holy and divine elevation. It is really by faith of Christ, as possessed of His life and cleansed by His blood. What a descent from His presence thus to history, or the account of all the events of time under the light of the prophetic vision, good as it is; and how painful the effort thus to christen, if one may so say, all the main subjects of classical study and pursuit!

Again, to talk of the sure progress of all history towards its consummation in the kingdom of Christ is very apt to blind men to the fact, that “the times of the Gentiles,” under which we live, are really an interruption in God’s ways with men on the earth, a parenthesis rather than the orderly course of things, though a parenthesis since redemption during
which a mystery of the deepest grace and richest glory is revealed, a mystery great indeed as to Christ, and as to the church. When our Lord returns, the world will pass under the direct government of God, when Israel and the nations shall be blessed under the glorious Son of man, as of old all fell to ruin which stood on man’s responsibility. To blend in such prospects of glory with the whole range of history, to make all the events recorded by profane historians, and by the orators and poets of Greece and Rome, so many pledges to us of the everlasting kingdom, is to confound clean and unclean, and to verge on profanity itself, if it have any definite meaning.

In all this reasoning it is plain that the Protestant is no less dark than the Catholic in seizing the true and special nature of the church. This misleads both the conflicting parties; and it is hard to say which errs most from the truth. Thus we are told by the historicalist that there is in the full provision of divine truth in these fulfilled prophecies an unspeakable exhibition of God’s wisdom and love, who, knowing the weakness of our faith as to all the great blessings He has promised, by these connected and continual visions converts every event of providence when fulfilled into a new and fuller pledge of the mercies still only in prospect; and Babylon and Persia, Greece and Rome, Cyrus and Alexander, Antiochus and Titus, the powers that have oppressed or the conquerors that have wasted (not Israel or even saints among the ancient people of God but) the church! become tokens of the approach of Messiah’s triumphant kingdom. None can be surprised if there be the widest divergence in general doctrine, in worship and walk, in communion and hope, seeing that there is such total ignorance of the church in fact and character. The effect is disastrous in the extreme. As our special relationship to Christ at God’s right hand is unknown, so perpetual interest in all the events of past history takes the place avowedly of setting our minds on things above; so too boasting of the whole deposit of revealed wisdom successively unfolded from age to age forbids the sense and confession of our actual fallen estate, and the foreboding of the troubles (not of the Jews and Gentiles at the end of the age, but) of the church eclipses the continual looking for the Bridegroom as our proximate hope.

It is indeed solemnly true that there will be a judgment of the quick {living} as well as of the dead {2 Tim. 4:1}, and that the kingdom over the earth covers the space between for a thousand years; that the past is not something extinct and perished for ever, but that every actor shall give account, and every work be manifested before the Lord; but how this teaches us the perpetual interest of the church of God in all the events of past history seems an inference very wide of the premises. The value of Old Testament facts, as well as testimonies, we are best taught in the application of them by the Holy Ghost in the New; but this is a thing very different from our busying ourselves with all the events of past history, or the records of bygone days, as such.

We may notice too that, where the church of God is relegated to history for its moral lessons, the whole of revealed truth is classed under the law, the gospel, and the word of prophecy, ignoring those writings of the apostles which make known the mystery hidden from ages and from generations {Col. 1:26; see also Rom. 16:25, 26; Eph. 3:9}. Promises and law, gospel and church, might each and all be distinguished from the displayed kingdom of which the prophetic word speaks so fully. The Old Testament gives us the promises and the law; the New Testament, consequent on the work of the Son and the mission of the Spirit, gives us the gospel and the church; while prophecy is found in both, more largely in the Old Testament, when all blessing was future, more profoundly and completely in the New, where what is coming is treated systematically till the eternal day.

As in the New Testament we have the truth in Christ for the individual and the body, so we have not merely this evil or that, but all that opposes itself against the will of God, and this from the first to the last. Hence, whatever be the iniquity of the popish system, the Spirit testifies against it, and exposes, and forsakes, and discloses the second beast as distinct from the first, and Babylon so different from the beasts, that she becomes at last the object of destructive hatred to one, if not both. There the varying and opposed evils of men are seen successively, or together, falling under the righteous wrath of God and the Lamb; while the saints are seen as variously blessed according to the Father’s gracious wisdom, of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named.

Yet will it be found in practice that no one will be found intelligently to profit in any full measure by the Apocalyptic visions as a whole, who is not established in the riches of grace and the counsels of glory, and, above all, in that present sense of association with Christ in heavenly places, which is the central truth of the Pauline testimony. To those who by grace are thus fitted to weigh the book of Revelation, its visions are invaluable, and as instructive as they give solemnity to the spirit and joy to the heart. If the visions were fulfilled, they would be no more effete and worthless than the books of Moses or of the prophetical Judges that followed, which, if read in the Spirit, repay quite as richly, or more so, than the predictions of Isaiah or Ezekiel which remain to be accomplished. But they are, as we have seen, “at hand” in any full sense, not yet accomplished, and so in every way invite and will reward the reader with a double blessing from Him who promised it to such as read, hear, and keep the sayings of that book. To His name be all the praise and glory.
The prophecies of holy writ may be divided broadly into these two classes: those like Isaiah’s, which were addressed to the people of Israel while standing in recognized relation with Jehovah as His people; and those like Daniel’s, which suppose the Jews disowned for a season till grace restore them in the latter day, placing them under Messiah’s reign and the new covenant. Of old God had governed Israel as His people, and the pavilion of His presence in their midst was its sign. The present interval, humble to conscience and solemn to faith, is marked by the departure of the Shekinah till its final return never more to leave the city and sanctuary where the eyes of Jehovah rest continually; and during that space imperial authority is confided to four successive and well-known world powers, the great Gentile empires. This is “the parenthesis,” as it has been justly designated; and the term is so suited to maintain a true sense of the peculiarity of the interval, and to hinder forgetfulness of its total difference from the ordinary course of God’s direct government of the earth according to the great and regular scheme of prophecy, that it would be most unwise to forego its use because some do not, and others will not, understand it. The “times of the Gentiles” span this remarkable interval, begun by the captivity of Judah under the head of gold, and closed by the destructive blow which the returning Lord, the Little Stone cut without hands, will inflict on the iron-clay feet, reducing the entire image to powder, before the Stone itself expands into a great mountain and fills the whole earth. Then and not before will have come the world-kingdom of the Lord and of His Christ (Rev. 11:15-18; 19: 20).

It is very intelligible that the professing Gentile should revolt at the fact, plainly as scripture reveals it, that, whatever the deep ways and heavenly counsels of grace revealed since Christ came (the whole New Testament indeed), the Gentile empires have merely and precisely the function, under God’s sovereign will, of filling up the gap between Israel’s fall and their rising again. It is offensive to such as glory in the arts and letters of Greece and Rome, in the sciences and discoveries of modern civilization. Hence wounded feeling proceeds to worse daring, and profanely mocks at this view of the parenthesis, which is the sure representation of God’s word, as if it were no more reasonable than a dream of Arabian or Hindoo mythology. But it is foolish to kick against the goad: the fact, humiliating to Gentile conceit and call it as we may, is written indelibly in letters of light.

It is alleged however, in order to reduce the sharpness of the truth and its moral lesson, that, in a sense exactly similar, the whole Mosaic dispensation is itself a parenthesis between the times of the patriarchs and of the Christian church; while the millennium is another parenthesis between the dispensation of the Spirit (the reader must overlook so unintelligent a phrase) and the final glory, when the redemption is complete. Now, while in a limited sense this may be allowed of all economic or mediatorial dealings as compared with the boundless infinitude of eternity, the parenthesis was spoken of as such in respect of God’s government of the earth, whether partial or complete, past or future; which government all the faithful surely believe to be the only normal condition for the world since God deigned to make it His plan. Not only before the deluge but after it, till the call of Israel out of Egypt, God did not govern the earth in this way. Men previously had only to maintain His honor, as we see in Job 31:27, 28; but this was soon lost through idolatry, and Abram was called out, the nations being abandoned to walk in their own ways. Hence evidently the patriarch’s call was not God’s government of the world. On the contrary God, though He left Himself not without witness, as we see in the destruction of the guilty cities of the plain, would not then interfere because the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full {Gen. 15:16}; and the wandering patriarchs, so far as they were faithful, had in the land of promise not so much as to set their foot on, though we cannot but discern also, how God suffered no man to do His prophets harm, rebuking kings for their sakes.

But at the Exodus, as is known to all, God judged the nation that oppressed the sons of Israel and brought themselves out of the house of bondage as His people, in whom His government was to be exercised and His ways displayed. And so they were (not merely that secret and ceaseless providence of His which never fails), till by their persistent hopeless apostasy from Himself for idols, subsequently fixed yet more by their rejection of Himself in the person of His Messiah, they were in the just dealing
of God, after unwearied patience, set aside as no longer His people, though still providentially kept apart, until He resumes at length His immediate government of the earth \{in the millennium\}, He will in Christ returning to reign in the last days.

The gap then, since Israel became Lo-Ammi \{Hos. 1\}, till they are restored again and for ever as His people to His land, as the central sphere of His earthly government, is filled up by the four successive beasts \{Dan. 7\} or imperial Gentile powers \{Dan. 2\}. The regular course of earthly dispensations supposes the throne of Jehovah in Jerusalem; the removal of it when power was committed to the Gentiles is exactly a parenthesis as to His earthly government, which is true of Israel’s history neither before nor after these “times of the Gentiles”; for Israel is the exhibition, in the past of failure under law, in the future of power under the Messiah, in respect of God’s proper and immediate government of the earth, whereas the intervening Gentile period \footnote{The intervening Gentile period is called in Luke 21 “the times of the Gentiles.” This period is depicted by the image in Dan. 2, the four successive empires. This period occurs while God’s government is not found in Israel -- and is therefore referred to as an earthly parenthesis of judgment on Israel. When the smiting stone of Dan. 2 demolishes the image (the return in power of Christ (Rev. 19)), God will again display His ways in government in the earth through restored Israel. There is within this earthly parenthesis of judgment on Israel, another parenthesis, which W. Kelly has elsewhere called “a heavenly parenthesis,” referring to the calling of the church.} is its interruption, whatever the wonderful works of God in His grace meanwhile. Yet God has not lost sight of these parenthetical times, abnormal as they are, but inspired Daniel particularly in the Old Testament, and, John in the New Testament, to write of them, though in view of the blessing at last of the people still under rejection, as well as of the higher and larger things for which that rejection furnishes occasion. It is our Lord too, who in Luke 21 vouchsafed to us that very term “times of the Gentiles,” which is only another way of describing the parenthesis; though Christians, like the heathen, turn it into pride, overlooking its real nature and denying its importance. Nothing but this can account for their designating this period “the sacred calendar and great almanac of prophecy,” wholly slighting the fact that far the greater part of the prophetical word bears on the time when God governs the earth immediately from within His people restored and blessed \{in the millennium\}, instead of merely confiding authority meanwhile to powers which from first to last He calls “beasts” \{Dan. 7\}. The axe may boast against Him that heweth therewith; but saintly minds ought to know better than encourage it.

But it is not true that Dan. 2, any more than Dan. 7, contemplates, as the learned J. Mede fancied, a \textit{regnum lapidis}, as well as a \textit{regnum montis} \{Works, iv. 743, 744, ed. 1677, folio.\} It would be strange indeed if the dream of the...
applied it substantially as the futurists do.

The great pre-requisite for a safe and wholesome study of the prophetic word is a clear apprehension of the difference between the church called by sovereign grace for heavenly places in Christ and the immediate divine government of the world of which the Jews form the nearest circle on earth round the Messiah, according to the purpose and ways of God (Deut. 32:8). God has set aside the Jews for their rebellious idolatry and at last their rejection of the Messiah; but He will resume His government of them again, an immediate rule on the earth wholly different in nature, character, and results from the powers that be now, entitled though they are to our submission and honor, however little able to deal with the misery and corruptions of mankind.

Adversaries may talk of wiredrawn abstractions and baseless hypothetical systems; but they are themselves blinded by tradition and self-confidence to a change of the profoundest interest and of incalculable moment, against which no sophistry can prevail for those who bow to scripture. It is the more apt to deceive themselves and others where such unbelief works in men who deny not but hold Christ’s future reign over the earth in personal presence and power and glory. For this is the government of the earth or “the kingdom,” of which both Testaments speak, as distinct as possible from the calling of saints from among Jews and Gentiles to be the body of Christ, not of the world even now as He was not, while the anomalous bestial rule still goes on here below.

The truth of the {earthly} Gentile parenthesis {of judgment on Israel} does not make the scheme of God’s moral government a piecemeal and fragmentary thing; but a mass of confusion at issue with all scripture they make it who do not discriminate God’s calling of the church to heaven from His government by law on earth. Nor can any sentence be worse both in ill construction and violation of truth, than that which assumes one uninterrupted chain of divine government, and ignores the revealed facts of God’s rupture of His regular earthly government {i.e. the times of the Gentiles}, of an immense interregnum while the beasts rule, and of God’s final resumption of that government at the return of our Lord.

But if we limit ourselves to considering God’s moral government, its scheme is perfect. Part of it was to blind Israel, while another work proceeds in the richest mercy to the Gentiles. And prophecy reveals the judgments by which the whole result will be brought about according to God. Meanwhile His providential wisdom and power order all, whatever be the anomalies in the phases of the world’s history for nearly 2500 years; and we by His word and Spirit make good His will in the measure of our faith, while evil is not yet put down by the intervention of that power which will bring in the sabbatism that remains for the people of God. The confusion of thought, generally prevalent as to this arises from the supposition that God’s government has its results now, which it never can have till the manifestation of Christ, in view of whom and for whose glory all has been carried on. To look for its accomplishment in the absence of Christ is a fatal mistake. God’s people are not the sun in the solar system of His truth, or of His government; but Christ is. To substitute the first man for the Second is the constant effort and error of the natural mind. It is to prefer guesswork, founded on first appearances, to demonstrated truth; and to conceive the church to be the center of movement, instead of knowing it in the true Sun, Christ the Lord.

Undoubtedly the work which God has now at heart in the calling of the church, founded on the accomplished redemption of the Son, and accompanied, nay, effectuated, by the presence of the Holy Spirit, while the gospel goes out to every land and in every tongue, transcends all that ever preceded in His ways. But this in no way interferes with the fact that, as the calling of the church is a heavenly parenthesis, so also are “the times of the Gentiles” a still wider earthly one, which fills the blank in the earth’s history since God governed in the midst of His people under law, as He will by-and-by when they are under the new covenant.

This is so true, that we hear of the mystery as to Christ and as to the church, hid from ages and generations {Col. 1:26} -- hid in God {Eph. 3:9, 10}, not in scripture -- not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit. It is also said be made known by prophetic scriptures (Rom. 16:25, 26), but these are of the New Testament, and not of the Old -- a notion obscured by the English version -- “the scriptures of the prophets,” which is unequivocally incorrect, and naturally points to the well-known Old Testament writings and writers, 15 contrary to the express drift of the context. The apostle constantly cites the Old Testament prophets to vindicate what was not made known there, but what illustrated the truth when the mystery was revealed. Thus proofs of Israel blinded, and of Gentiles called, he does cite as accomplished in the mystery, but in no way as the revelation of it. How do they reveal Christ as the heavenly Head of all creation, and the church, Jews or Gentiles alike, as the one body, His body? But reasoning is needless; scripture is express that the mystery has now been manifested.

But it is no slight error that the church is connected with earthly arrangements as Israel was, and self-delusion to

15. Rom. 1:2 does prove that the gospel was promised before by God’s prophets; but the difference of phraseology answers to the difference of the subject-matter in Rom. 16:26. The mystery was hid, not promised, though now manifested by prophetic scriptures, and according to the commandment of the eternal God made known for obedience of faith to all the nations. It is ignorance to confound them.
confound this, with trials, helps, hindrances, and temptations here below, on the one hand, and on the other hand with preaching the gospel, going out to the heathen, social ties and duties, &c. When and how did God connect His church with the earth? Education and habit may account for such a statement; to faith the word of God never gave it. That historically the church thus fell is true; that Satan so sought, and succeeded in doing so, is plain; that in a measure of accomplishment it was predicted as the fornication of Babylon with the kings of the earth {Rev. 17} is not denied; but is the sufferance of such corruption to be regarded as His sanction? Is it the form of things produced by His will as that which He would thus make to answer His mind? The connection of Israel with the earth is God’s institution: is Babylon His institution?

Nor is our hope the second advent of the Lord to the earth, as Israel’s was His first coming; it is going up to meet the Lord in the air, and so being ever with Him {1 Thess. 4:15-18}. To be with Him in the Father’s house {John 14:1-3} is no question of dates or prophetic messages. How anyone could mistake the character of Rev. 1:7, for instance, would be a marvel if one did not know the power of prejudice. It is beyond a doubt the coming again of Christ in judgment, His appearing to the world, to the Jews that pierced Him, and to every eye, in contrast with chosen witnesses and the day of faith now; so that all the tribes of the earth (or land) mourn because of Him. Is it not strange to hear so solemn a warning styled the main object and desire; and that the apostle contemplates His coming as a whole but with especial reference to his own hope and that of his fellow-christians?

It is an ineffectual effort to reason from an assumed similarity where there is a real contrast. The heavenly character of the Christian and the church is unknown, yet the ascension of Christ and the descent of the Spirit do surely now make that character good to faith. God’s providence, though a very different thing from guidance in the Spirit, is most real now, as of old; but that secret control of all circumstances, so that all things work together for good, is quite distinct from the public display of His power of which prophecy treats. Some may have blundered as to the true bearing of 1 Peter 1:10-13; but it is well to heed the distinction there drawn between the predictions of the prophets, the gospel meanwhile declared in virtue of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and the full accomplishment at the appearing of Jesus. Receiving soul-salvation now, we await salvation for our bodies and the fulfillment of the glories predicted when He appears.

And this helps to the right understanding of Luke 2:32, as little understood by the Protestant [historicalist] as the futurist. It is a question, not of the church, but of the Gentiles, who were of old in the dark, as Israel now are, while Gentiles are brought to light. They have Christ now a light for their revelation, as by-and-by He will be the glory of God’s people Israel. He had overlooked the times of ignorance hitherto, but now enjoins men that they should all everywhere repent.

But it is urged that the church has come into the place of Israel, and that as an election was taken out of them, so now from among the nations of Christendom. This idea, however, in both its parts is erroneous. Secretly there was an election, not only from Israel, but from the Gentiles, as Heber, Rahab, Jonadab, &c.; but Israel was an elect nation governed and owned by God as His people. “My people” never means hidden election; it is the nation in speaking of Israel. But Christendom is not a nation elect or otherwise; in the greatest part of it is Babylon, even for Protestant opinion. Is Babylon elect as Israel was? Whatever might be the stranger spirit of pious Israelites, the elect people had their home on earth. It is a mischievous error, lowering to all christian life in worship and service, to confound our calling with theirs.

Nor is it the church, but the Gentiles, which are grafted into the tree of promise with the true of Israel. For, first, the church is not the “own olive-tree” of Israel; and, secondly, the believing Jews entered the church (see Eph. 2; 1 Cor. 12), as did the believing Gentiles, whereas they abide in their own olive-tree. See Rom. 11, a chapter which proves continuance in promise, but parenthesis in government, and quite distinct from the revelation of Christ’s body, where all is alike of grace and heaven, and above nature -- one new man {Eph. 2:15} as new to the Jew as to the Gentile. Blindness in part is happened to Israel until -- there the parenthesis ends; and so all Israel shall be saved {Rom. 11:26}. For there shall come forth a Deliverer out of Zion. We look for God’s Son from heaven {Phil 3:21} who will receive us to Himself where He is {John 14:3}. For our blessing characteristically is in heavenly places, as we are told in Eph. 1:3.

Indeed it is vain to reason on prophecy when it is taken as a basis that Christendom is God’s covenant people, and therefore that, as the earlier prophecies all centered around Israel, so do the later ones round the visible church among the Gentiles. Israel were then the covenant people, and so long as they thus remained, all divine prophecy clustered around them, from Moses to Malachi; but it is urged that ever since the days of St. John this privilege has been transferred from them to the visible Gentile church. The kingdom of God, as our Lord assured the Jews, has been taken from them and given to others. Hence the very same principle, which made all Old Testament prophecy center in the Jewish nation, requires that all New Testament prophecy should center around the Gentile church, the actual people of the covenant, who have been ingrafted in their stead, and the appeal to the Old Testament prophets to support an opposite conclusion must be utterly vain. Setting aside a main principle of God’s moral government,
and destroying a law of His revelation, to sustain a mere circumstance, it infers that God will leave His covenant people for near two thousand years without any distinct light of prophecy, because they always enjoyed that privilege in a dispensation of dimmer light and less abundant grace. Such is the argument in its most plausible shape.

But what proof, what sign, what appearance of truth, is there in such an hypothesis, traditional though it may be? When did God enter into covenant with the Gentiles? God has given Christ, the rejected Christ, for a light to the Gentiles, that He may be His salvation to the ends of the earth (Isa. 49:6); but He is (ver. 8) a covenant of the people, not peoples. Hence the Gentiles are never said to be grafted instead of the Jews. Generically they are grafted in with the Jews left there in the inheritance of promises, of which Abraham was the stock planted by God in the earth; and they are responsible for the maintenance of blessing. But no covenant was made with them. Even if Matt. 21:43 be certainly applicable, it is only to fruit-bearing, not to covenant, that it applies. And how can this be said of Christendom, unless Rev. 17, 18 be such fruit? But the fact is, that neither it, nor Deut. 31:21, nor Rom. 9:21-25, nor Rom. 11:11-15, say a word about the church coming into the place of Israel, nor of the church as such at all.

Again, it is beyond controversy that the church-state in the Revelation {Rev. 2 and 3} does not go farther than “the things which are,” in contrast with the future visions, or “the things which shall be after these,” and that its prophecies therefore do not center around any church or people of God whatsoever, but are occupied with judgments on the world, whatever may be the pledges of mercy to the sealed of Israel, or to an innumerable crowd out of all nations and tongues {Rev. 7}. There is no judgment (and the Apocalypse treats of judgment) on a covenant people of God; nor does a people of God on earth, in any case or way, form a center there. It is absurd to contend that the twelve tribes of Israel in Rev. 7 are Gentile, contrasted as they are with a great crowd out of every nation; and it is inadmissible that Christendom is God’s covenant people, unless Babylon be such.

Further, not only do Christians possess all the prophetic word, but they have ample and clear and direct light in the Gospels and Epistles (especially 2 Thess. 1 and 2 Timothy, and Jude) supposing the Revelation did not at all apply (which is not affirmed) beyond the wonderful messages of the Lord Himself in the seven Apocalyptic epistles. No one doubts for a moment the sovereign and moral government of God: but to identify this with His ways in Israel, as the popular argument already cited does, is just confusion and ignorance, whatever be the confidence of such as put it forward. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities” (Amos 3:2). All agree that Old Testament prophecies not only left room for the parenthetic interval or blank for Israel when they were Lo-ammi and Gentiles are called, but used pregnant phrases, whereby God’s ways might be confirmed when this state of things arrived; but they never revealed the mystery, which Paul did, while it was made known to all God’s holy apostles and prophets.

And here let me say, though it be only in passing, that the grave point in Eph. 2:20, 3:5, is, not that the apostles and prophets were necessarily the same individuals, but that they are here viewed as one common company, though distinguished in Eph. 4:11 and 1 Cor. 12:28, 29. The criticism that would separate them here is as erroneous as the interpretation that makes the prophets to be of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New, the one article expressly forbidding the notion of two distinct classes. So far is the church of God from being anterior to redemption, that its foundation is of the New Testament apostles and prophets. The mystery was hid from ages and generations previously. No prophet in Old Testament times revealed it. A blank was left for St. Paul to fill (Col. 1:26).

As to the utilitarian argument which has been applied to decide the bearing of the Apocalypse on history since St. John’s day, as against the crisis, it hardly deserves the notice of serious men. But as some may be influenced by what appeals to natural feeling, without an atom of spiritual weight, one may reply that, in pleading for a more exact fulfillment in the latter day, it is not denied that the book has been accomplished partially all through.

It is in vain to deny that in Protestant hands prophecy was valued chiefly as evidence by its fulfillment to convict the unbeliever, and that this disposed men to enlarge as much as possible the field of fulfilled prediction, in order to increase their arms against infidelity. Now no sober Christian denies this to be a use of prophecy, or its importance for its own end. The reasoning directed against the use of prophecy after its accomplishment was only against this use exclusively. People used very generally to say, as some do still, that prophecy was mainly, not to say only, useful as proof when fulfilled. This was false ground, injurious to saints, and dishonoring to God.

The design of God was (to cite Sir Isaac Newton’s applauded sentence), when He gave this book and the prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men’s curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but to the end that, after they were fulfilled, they might be interpreted by the event. Alas! how foolish in the things of God are the wise. The vast mass of prophecy warns of God’s final judgments as ushering in the reign of the Lord. The event will prove their truth, no doubt; but it will be to the ruin of those who did not foreknow and heed the warning. Thus the antediluvians may have argued, and perished in their unbelief. Not so Noah; by faith he, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house. Not so did Jehovah deal when
He said, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” And if he was the friend of God, what are we? and why has Jesus called us His friends? (See John 15). Did this include the apostles only, or has not one of these “friends” of Jesus, when treating expressly of the coming of the Lord, of the destruction of the world that now is, and of the new heavens and earth, said to us, “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware . . .?"

The men of those days, who had precious faith, did not wait for the events before believing; they did not use the prophecy as a mere confirmation of Christianity; they read, understood, and profited by its warning. The Spirit of truth, according to the Lord’s promise, showed them things to come; and they found the blessing of that sure word which shines as a lamp in a dark place. Sir Isaac Newton was not the least sagacious or sober of Protestant interpreters; yet even he asks us to abandon the gracious purpose for which God gave prophecy to His children, for the lowest application for which human incredulity can require it. Unquestionably prophecy is a weapon of divine temper to confound and, if grace work, to convince the skeptic (though we may question such an effect from the jarring notes heard on the seals, trumpets, and vials); but surely it is its humblest office, instead of being the only wise and all-absorbing one. May we not ask, “Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”

Again, when we find Tertullian applying the fifth seal to martyrs, as then in course of slaughter under pagan Rome, surely we may think that he did not understand its full bearing, without saying that such an interpretation was a delusion, destitute of one particle of real truth. Nor would one question that God honored the German reformer’s testimony against Babylon, founded on a later portion of the Revelation. Does this prove that Luther knew, or that we ought not to learn, a fuller development of the great whore, for which no room is left in the ordinary interpretation?

Singular to say, some who narrow to a single line the Revelation (the deepest and most comprehensive of all prophecies) think it certain that elsewhere, as in Isa. 2, for instance, the Spirit of God intended one reference as well as the other — first, an incomplete and figurative, then a complete and literal fulfillment; and yet they would repeat for the Apocalypse the error of the Futurists, though in an opposite direction. Thus the soundness of the principle is admitted by some on both sides. Apply it to the Apocalypse, and not only are men who stand for the future crisis, without denying the protracted accomplishment, justified by their censors, but the mere Protestant interpretation is condemned by the very reasoning meant to establish it on the ruins of futurism.

 Doubtless it is a canon with some whom Mr. G. S. Faber represented, that no single link of a chronological chain of prophecy is capable of receiving its accomplishment in more than a single event or period. But this is not true even of Daniel, who, as almost all antiquity saw clearly, makes Antiochus Epiphanes the type of a still worse personage at the end. And it would be strange indeed to contend that the final prophecy and profoundest of all should have a scope more confined than a Jewish one. Mr. Mede saw at length that the seven ‘churches’ {Rev. 2 and 3} had a double reference; he might have learnt to his profit that the prophetic portion is not less significant.

Nor is this the only inconsistency in such special pleading. For if the principal use in all cases is the manifestation of the divine glory in the foreknowledge, wisdom, and providence of God, whether before or after the fulfillment, if the use, whether of warning before, or of evidence after, fulfillment, is always secondary and subordinate, the utilitarian argument sinks into little. On this showing its grand object was as much attained during the seventeen centuries the book did not apply (if that ground be taken) as when it did. And is it not strange that the manifestation of the divine glory should be lowered to the foreknowledge, wisdom, and providence of God? One might have looked for some regard to His government in such a question, if righteousness and grace were too much to expect. Yet the reason of their absence is evident: they would suppose contrast of dispensation in principle, and intervention in power; and the wisdom of this age likes and bows to neither.

But, granting the divine glory, in an infinitely richer way than has been before alleged, to be the end, as of all God’s word and ways, so of prophecy which reveals the result of all and the judgment by which it will be effected, still it is so evident as to need no reasoning for the spiritual mind, that God’s direct practical aim in prophecy was the warning, instruction, and comfort of His own before fulfillment; and all Christians should be thankful to be recalled to this precious privilege, of which they had been long deprived. And assuredly the Futurists, spite of defects and one-sidedness and even errors, contributed to this end incomparably more than the Protestant school {historicalists}, engrossed as it used to be, and even now is almost entirely, with fulfilled prophecy.

It is plain that, if the early Christians had regarded the twelve hundred and sixty days as so many years, they must have anticipated such a lengthening out of the ages as the Protestant scheme contends for, which it is certain not one did, so far as we know. Does this, as far as it goes, tell in favor of futurism or historicism? It is no less plain that the times of Daniel in chapters 7 and 12 (taken up in the Revelation) suppose the Jews in their land and carrying on their worship, but hindered by the little horn — that is, not the long ages of their scattering, but when they return, though not yet owned as a nation by God. Confessedly the early writers on prophecy expected two actual witnesses,
and a personal Antichrist, an infidel domination and a fiery persecution of at least three and a half years, and this in Jerusalem at the end of the age whenever it might be. The soundness of all this may be questioned; but it is absurd to argue, as some do, that in these points (wherein, more than any others, they agree) the Fathers substantially approximate to the protracted (historicalist) view of the prophecy. The earlier and central chapters, not to speak of the closing ones, they applied in general as the Futurists do. Even if we confine ourselves to the future literal application, one cannot allow that it was useless. Was the blessed hope put before the Philippians, “The Lord is at hand,” of no use because it is still unfulfilled? Did the Christians then expect it not to occur till after so long a time? Has it been wholly useless? or is the imputation deplorably unbelieving?

Assuredly it is a mere reverie that the Apocalypse announced to every age of the church, and to each generation of believers, events that were really near at hand, or that in every later age it also contains many predictions already fulfilled, the fulfilment of which has been more or less clearly discerned by thoughtful Christians. The early writers, we have seen, applied the prophecy to a brief and terrible tribulation at the end. Then the whole mass fell into deep and deepening darkness. In the middle ages, when the Apocalypse was used, it was never an intelligent application of earlier parts of it, but, conscience being shocked and alarmed, an imaginative apprehension prevailed that Antichrist was come and the end imminent. It was the dread of being at the consummation which appalled men. That the church used it suitably from age to age, as it was developed into history, is a mere chimera, which can deceive no one acquainted with facts but only those who accept just what they like. If it be meant that the church ought to have so discerned the prophecy, it is a circular argument which amounts to something of this sort: --

If the church had held my view (which is demonstrably untrue), they would have profited by it as warning from age to age, and as evidence of things past and fulfilled. Since my view is right, it has been at least possible, and indeed highly probable, that many believers in every age should have been warned by it of imminent changes, and have had their faith in God’s word confirmed by many glimpses of its actual fulfillment.

Is this serious either as history or as logic?

Test the facts. If any part of the visions is fulfilled, the seals must have been according to the historic view. Is there a little of evidence that the seals announced to any age of the church any one imminent change therein supposed to be predicted? What single individual correctly interpreted a single seal beforehand? To this day the utmost variety of thought exists among the leading Protestants (historicalists) themselves, not in detail merely but as to their general bearing. Can none gainsay the conclusions of Mede or Vitringa, of Faber or Cuninghame, of Elliott or Keith? Can it be said that these men were captious and speculative like the Futurists, who rejected evidence, real and sufficient, if not of that sort which compels assent? Are they not all among the most trusty and familiar of the historical school, and as notoriously discordant in their views at the threshold? Yet of all parts of the book one might, on their principles, expect here the most of agreement, if not unanimity.

But enough. The grand fault of the considerations here examined is that, whilst God is at work to help on His children, they are an effort to lead back believers from that knowledge of the church’s true relation, as united by the Spirit, to Christ on high, which is the key to real intelligence in the Christian. It is not merely human reasoning to support what is partial at best, and often erroneous; it is decidedly antagonism to truth of the deepest moment for God’s glory, as well as the blessing of His saints. It is also ignorance of what scripture treats as the proper government of God in the midst of His people on earth when He will arise and inherit all nations. The importance of such prophecies as those of Daniel and John is great; but they must treat for the most part, even the latter, of the times of the Gentiles, not of the “kingdom” in any sense. To lose sight of this as Fathers and Protestants (historicalists) alike have done is fatal to spiritual intelligence on this subject.

The question here, as everywhere, is to whom the prophetic revelations apply, not to whom they are given. The revelation of what happened to Lot was given to Abraham, whilst the communication was made to Lot in time to deliver him out of the judgment, and this with precision as to the execution of it. So the Revelation says, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand.” The book was given, as all the scriptures, to the church of God, without distinction of Jew or Gentile -- there was none such in the body of Christ; and it could be given to none else.

On the other hand, there is this observation to be made respecting Daniel and the Revelation: that they are the revelation of the consequences, the former of Israel’s failure, the latter of the church’s failure, as witnesses of God here below. Hence we have a far more direct interest and more solemn responsibility, as to the contents of the Apocalypse than as to Old Testament prophecy in general, or even as to Daniel; while, as to times, scenes, and personages, there is doubtless much in common between the two books. But the Babylon on the seven hills [Rev. 17], which the apostle saw drunken with the blood of saints, is to us a thing of nearer and graver import than the great city which Nebuchadnezzar built on the plain of Shiner.

Furthermore, the time is said, and said repeatedly
(Rev. 1, 22), to be at hand; and this as a reason why its sayings were not sealed to John as they were to Daniel (12:4). 16 The work of redemption being done, Christ gone on high, and the Spirit sent down to be in the Christian and the church, the time of the end is always near to us, as the Lord is ready to judge the quick and the dead. Still the ground taken from first to last is, not that we are in the scenes of the prophecy, but that “the time is at hand,” not present. It is very possible that the prophetic warning it contains may be the divine preservative against the sins which at length draw down the closing strokes of God’s wrath on the apostasy of Christendom. Into this worst, this rebellious, corruption the professing mass sink during, if not before, the hour of temptation {trial} which is to try them that dwell on the earth {Rev. 3:10}. Out of this hour 17 the Lord has pledged Himself to preserve such as keep the word of His patience. The faithful, His church, will not be in that hour or scene. The Lord keep this promise, full of comfort, before our souls!

16. [The book is sealed for Daniel’s people, the Jews, until the time of the end.]
17. [“I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial . . .” (JND) does not mean keeping them safe through the trial. It states: “out of the hour of trial,” and quite clearly this is to be kept out of the time of the trial.]
Appendix B: The Jewish and Christian Expectation of Christ Briefly Contrasted

I am not without hopes that, under the gracious teaching of the Spirit, the simple statement of the distinction we are going briefly to examine may be blessed to souls. Happy is it when we are brought to ponder on the riches of grace which God has lavished on us, and that in the spirit of children, not desiring to prove our own notions, but to learn the thoughts, purposes, and ways of God; happier still when, in the communion of Him who dwells in us, our delight is to be shown, and to adore the Lord Jesus Christ in His various glory.

His various glory, I repeat; for this the natural mind relishes not, but it is exactly what the Spirit loves and leads into (John 16:13-15). Hence it is that unbelief the scripture is a blank without heights, without depths. The purity of its sentiments, and the simple grandeur of its style, may be allowed and admired. But there are no landmarks, no chart, no star of Bethlehem to direct and cheer the unbeliever’s way. His conscience is not in the presence of God, and therefore there is no true Christ in his heart. The Bible to him may be a very wonderful book, but this is all: if it seem to be owned practically as that which reveals the divine way of salvation, almost everything in it is made to bear on this one point. Warnings, threatenings, exhortations, invitations, instructions, commands, prayers, ordinances -- nearly all that Old and New Testaments utter is made to converge on what, to the flesh, really amounts to this -- God helping us by His Son and Spirit to save ourselves. From this quagmire God has mercifully extricated all His people; He has taught all His children, with more or less intelligence, to rest upon the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then it is that the vast field of the written word opens apace, the different displays which God has made of His character, and the effect of these dealings upon believers and unbelievers in the several dispensations, summed up in the person of Christ, whether viewed once here below, now in heaven, or by-and-by returning again. Thus the child, led of the Spirit, grows in knowledge, and begins to see the revealed past, present, and future, in their just proportions, because he begins to learn all in Christ, whose mind he has (2 Cor. 2).

Now it may be a narrow, but certainly it is an important, part of the things which differ that is suggested by the title to this paper. Nor would I pretend to sketch minutely the ways in which the estimate formed, by a godly Jew respecting Christ’s advent is distinguishable from the hope set before the church in His future presence. Let us content ourselves with certain, broad essential differences, which are nevertheless often confounded by Christians to the obscuring of their proper portion, and so far to the detriment of their souls. The testimony of scripture is so full and distinct, that little reasoning is necessary; still its importance may well demand ample quotations.

The advent of a glorious Messiah to the earth was characteristically a Jewish hope. I speak not of traditional fables, but of the truths which the Jews saw and held fast in their scriptures. To such believing Jews Messiah was the center and security of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; He was the accomplisher of all righteousness, blessing, and peace in their land -- Immanuel’s land. By Him they expected to be saved from their enemies and from the hand of all that hated them; that so they might serve Jehovah without fear all the days of their life {Luke 1:68-79}. He was to cut off all the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the righteous; to save Zion, and build the cities of Judah, that they might dwell there, and have it in possession, and thus the seed of His servants should inherit it, and they that love His name dwell therein. This, as is plain in the Psalms, is the character of the deliverance pleaded by the Jewish remnant -- not a rapture out of the earth, but a destruction of their enemies in it; a divine vengeance upon their enemies here below, not a gathering to the Lord in heaven. They looked, and will look, for Jehovah to go forth and fight against the nations He will gather at the latter end against Jerusalem; they will look for His feet to stand upon the Mount of Olives, and Jehovah shall be King over all the earth. There, with David their king over Israel, restored, as it were, from the grave, and Ephraim and Judah united perfectly and for ever under the rule of the true Beloved, they expect to dwell in their land, and the heathen shall know that God Jehovah sanctifies Israel when His sanctuary shall be in their midst for evermore. They might read of a Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, but their hope was the
presence and reign of the Messiah here below, in special connection with the Jewish nation and land. The following texts will still more plainly show the truth we have been stating:

Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa. 2:6-9).

For Jehovah most High is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet (Psa. 47:2, 3).

Great is Jehovah and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion: on the sides of the north, the city of the great God. God is known in her palaces for a refuge" (Psa. 48:1-3; 65; 67; 68).

He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him, and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised. There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be Jehovah God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things and blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and amen (Psa. 72:4-19).

I need not go more minutely through the Psalms, beyond directing attention to Psa. 128, as evidently in accordance with the remarks already made. So also Psa. 132:13-18. The inspired praises of Psalms 146-150 will then have their literal fulfillment. It is earthly joy under Messiah’s dominion, and all is in unison with the thoughts, feelings, associations, hopes, and triumphs of His people Israel.

The prophets are equally explicit.

In that day shall the branch of Jehovah be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: when Jehovah shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And Jehovah will create upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a defense. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain ( Isa. 4:2-6).

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this (Isa 9:6, 7).

One might transcribe almost all Isa. 11.

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together; they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And Jehovah shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out the land of Egypt (Isa. 11:4-16).

And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall
punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously (Isa. 24:21-23).

And in this mountain shall Jehovah of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and Jehovah God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for Jehovah hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is Jehovah; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For in this mountain shall the hand of Jehovah rest, and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill (Isa. 25:6-10).

He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit. And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship Jehovah in the holy mount at Jerusalem (Isa. 27:6, 12, 13).

Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off. Thine heart shall meditate terror. Where is the scribe? Where is the receiver? Where is he that counted the towers? Thou shalt not see a fierce people, a people of deeper speech than thou canst perceive: of a stammering tongue, that thou canst not understand. Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious Jehovah will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king: he will save us (Isa. 32:17-22).

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom, abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of Jehovah, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a feeble heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense: he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass, with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: and the ransomed of Jehovah shall return, and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isa. 35:1-10).

The whole of Isa. 60, 61 and 62 are closely in point, but can only be referred to now.

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying. There shall be no more thence an infant of days; nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of Jehovah, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith Jehovah (Isa. 65:17-25).

Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her; that ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you: and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of Jehovah shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies. For, behold, Jehovah will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will Jehovah plead with all flesh: and the slain of Jehovah shall be many (Isa. 66:10-16).
Jeremiah, the prophet of affliction, speaks no otherwise. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith Jehovah, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of Jehovah; neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more. At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers (Jer. 3:16-18).

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that they shall no more say, Jehovah liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but Jehovah liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land (Jer. 23:5-8).

To this we may add, as most express, Jer. 31-33.

For other prophets we need not cite express words: the following selected references may suffice. In Ezekiel the reader may consult chapters 16, 20, 36, 37, 39, 40-48; also Daniel 7, 8, 9, 12; Hosea 1-3; Joel 2, 3; Amos 9; Obadiah; Micah 4, 5; Habakkuk 3; Zephaniah 3; Haggai 2; Zechariah 2, 8-10, 12, 14; and Malachi 3, 4.

Another distinction which may be briefly noticed is, that the Jews had the revelation of outward circumstances and ordered dates whereby to regulate their expectations. We need do little more than refer to the communications of God made to Abraham in Gen. 15, as well as others subsequently, for illustrations of this.

Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years. And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge, and afterwards shall they come out with great substance (Gen. 15:13, 14).

Now it will not be disputed that the father of the faithful rejoiced to see Christ’s day, and he saw it, and was glad (John 9:56); but it was through, and at the end of, a long course of years and trying vicissitudes as regarded his seed. Abraham was in no way waiting for that day as if it might happen in his own life, or shortly after. He was perfectly certain that the day of Christ could not come for some centuries at least. Full well he counted upon that day bringing in deliverance to his family, and hence his joy. (See also Gen. 49:10.)

Again, passing over intermediate predictions, the word sent by Gabriel to Daniel is even more detailed, and with chronological points of a very defined character.

Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined (Dan. 9:25, 26).

Hence it is plain that, if we suppose a godly Jew of that age to have understood the prophecy of the seventy weeks, he could not expect Messiah to come and be cut off till the expiry of nearly five hundred years. Ignorance might seek the living among the dead, but no believer with intelligence of this divine prediction could possibly look for the arrival and cutting off of the Christ previously to the revealed epoch. It would have been faith in him to have said, “I expect the Messiah after so many years, not before; for so hath the mouth of the Lord spoken.”

With the church, on the contrary, the case is wholly different. Her hope is not the times of restitution of all things, but to be with the Lord in heaven as His bride: and as her hope is unearthly, so is it wholly unconnected with the times and seasons {Acts 1:7} which characterized the expectations of Israel. Not that we are ignorant of these dates and epochs; but we know perfectly that the day of Jehovah so cometh as a thief in the night {1 Thess. 5:2} -- a day of destruction whence there is no escape. But we are not in darkness that the day should overtake us as a thief. We are already children of that day, and when the day arrives we shall come with the Sun of righteousness {Mal. 4:2} who ushers it in. We shall have been with Him before the day breaks, for we know Him as the bright, the Morning Star {2 Peter 1:19}, and the morning star He will give to him that overcomes {Rev. 2:28}. Certain times and seasons, we are quite aware, must precede the restoration of the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1). Thus we know that one week remains out of the seventy of Dan. 9, when the prince that shall come -- a Roman prince -- shall confirm covenant with the mass of the Jews for seven years. But, like another traitor and son of perdition, he shall put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he shall break his covenant (Psa 55:20). The covenant with death shall be disannulled (Isa. 28). “In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” This is followed by the abomination of desolation for the allotted term, “even until the consummation.” (Compare with Dan. 9, 7:19-26.) “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Matt. 24:21). “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble: but he shall be
saved out of it \textsuperscript{18} (Jer. 30:7). “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book” (Dan. 12:1). The church knows these revealed periods, but knows them as connected, not with herself, but with Jerusalem and the Jewish people, Daniel’s people.

The church does not wait to be gathered under a Messiah on earth, but to be caught up to meet Him in the air, and be ever with the Lord (1 Thess. 4); with Him in His Father’s house; with Him when the successive judgments (symbolized by the seals, trumpets, and vials) are falling on the earth; with Him when the marriage-supper of the Lamb is celebrated above; with Him when He wars with the beast and the false prophet; with Him when we reign together for a thousand years; and with Him in the subsequent eternal state. “So shall we ever be with the Lord.” Surely it is a blessed hope that the appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ is to set to rights all things here below which are now out of course. Creation shall be delivered into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, and Israel no longer blinded but seeing. All Israel shall be saved when the Redeemer comes out of Zion, and turns away ungodliness from Jacob {Rom. 11:26} And if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? Yes, and if we look above, the long usurped possession of the air (Eph. 2:2; 6:12) shall be rescued from Satan and his angels; no longer shall he be permitted there to accuse the brethren of Christ in the presence of God (Rev. 12); no longer will there be conflict with wicked spirits there. That old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, shall be bound, and cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years, before the last vain struggle when he is cast into the lake of fire.

But not any nor all these things are our proper hope, which is to be caught up and to meet the Lord Himself (in the air and to be taken to) in heaven. As it is said in John 14: “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” Is this on earth, or in heaven? Is it merely the honors of a displayed kingdom? or is it not nearer and higher intimacy with the Son of God in the home of the Father on high? The disciples did not ask, nor did the Lord indicate, when these things should be. But in Matt. 24 He does give the sign of His coming, and of the consummation of the age. He is meeting the inquiries of the disciples from their own Jewish point of view; He enters into full particulars respecting Jerusalem, Judea, the temple, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, &c., which were but the beginning of sorrows. The end was not yet, nor should it come before the gospel of the kingdom was preached in all the habitable earth for a witness to all the nations. Then He describes minutely the particular marks of the closing crisis, up to His manifestation to all the tribes of the earth, or land, and the complete ingathering of His elect (Israel) from the four winds.

Of His elect earthly people this gathering must be; because when Christ, our life, appears, then shall we also appear with Him in glory {Col. 3:4} -- the church and Christ are manifested at the same time in glory; whereas the elect described in Matt. 24 are only gathered after the Son of man’s appearing, and cannot therefore be the church. All the context, the more it is examined, proclaims them to be Jewish disciples, who, at the signal of the setting up of the abomination, flee, and so escape the unparalleled tribulation of these days and scenes of the end; for their simple trust is in the man of God’s right hand, “the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself” (Compare Psa. 79, 80).

But the passage in John’s Gospel has nothing to do with Jerusalem, nor the earth, nor earthly circumstances. John never speaks of a special tribulation for Jewish disciples at a particular time and place, but of the constant tribulation we should count upon in the world at all times (John 16:33). So the coming is not merely deliverance to a persecuted Jewish remnant on earth, but to receive us to Himself in heaven, without one hint of time, place, or circumstance.

 Doubtless the church is to reign over the earth, the bright witness of the Father’s love; for the world shall then know that He loved her as He loved His Son, both being displayed in the same glory. And how blessed the ministry of the church in that day, serving the gladsome earth according to the grace which has called, kept, and glorified herself on high, the bride, the Lamb’s wife! We shall inherit the earth; we shall judge the world and angels too, in that administration of the fullness of times, when all things shall be gathered together in one in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth [Eph. 1:10]; even in Him in whom we also have obtained an inheritance. Joint-heirs with Him, we share all that He will rule as the exalted Man. And God has put all things under His feet. Though we do not yet see all things put under Him, we do see Himself exalted; and when the day arrives for Him to take the dominion, it will be manifested that He is head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all {Eph. 1:22, 23} The Old Testament prophecies are full of the earthly glory. In the New Testament we have the mystery of God’s will made known to us, involving the inheritance of things in heaven, as well as things on earth, and the church co-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ, as His body and God’s children (Eph. 1:9-14).

No prophets of ancient times had ever uttered such

\textsuperscript{18} {This means that Jacob shall go through it, whereas Philadelphia was promised to be kept out of the time of it (Rev. 3:10).}
thoughts. It is not merely that such a portion was not understood, but it was not revealed. It was kept hid in God, and now revealed {Eph. 1:9, 10}, we are told, unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. The old prophets had spoken of times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, when Israel, or at least a Jewish remnant, repent and are converted; they had largely depicted the times of the restitution of all things, when Messiah comes from the heavens which now receive Him (Acts 3). No doubt they foretold the rule of the heavens (Dan. 4), and anticipated the joy and peace of the world under that kingdom. But they never predicted, much less did they know, that Christ will have a heavenly body and spouse associated with Him, and enjoying all His love and glory in the heavenly places; though they did celebrate the time when the land shall be married, and Jehovah shall make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. The bride they sing of in the Canticles {Song of Solomon} and the Psalms is an earthly bride. Very different is the church of which Paul speaks in Eph. 5. Very different the marriage of the Lamb of which John tells in Rev. 19, as far above the espoused one of the Old Testament as the heavenly glory of Christ exceeds His earthly, though all be perfect in its place.

Further, be it noted that, whether it be deliverance in mount Zion and Jerusalem (Joel 2), whether it be judgment of the Gentiles in the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3), with both we find wonders displayed in the heavens, and in the earth blood and fire and pillars of smoke: the sun turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come. Nothing of the kind is ever connected in scripture with the catching up of the church, whose only sign is the descent of the Lord Jesus to summon her into His presence in the air. His descent, and her consequent rapture, are nowhere described as events which the world is to behold. To them that look for Him, Christ appears, but to none else, so far as scripture shows, until He is revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ {2 Thess. 1:7}. His public revelation, in order to judge, is called “the day of the Lord,” “the appearing,” &c.; and it is certain that many signs will precede that day, and manifestation to every eye. The apostasy must be ripe, and the Lawless One manifested without hindrance; and the great tribulation out of which comes the innumerable Gentile multitude of Rev. 7, as well as the future unparalleled tribulation in Judea.

Outward signs precede. But this is not all. “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt. 24:29-31).

But I would not dwell further upon these points of contrast, only praying that we may remember, day by day, that our place, the church’s only right and befitting place, is to wait for Christ from heaven. It is not judgments that we expect to be in; it is not the hour of temptation we have to await and dread (Rev. 3:10), for we shall be kept out of it in the grace of Christ. Our business is to wait, as a heavenly bride, for our heavenly Bridegroom. Those who link the church with earthly circumstances will be misled in their ways now, and at times pass on miserably disappointed. Not so the hearts which the Spirit directs, animates, and sustains in the longing cry, Come, Lord Jesus. May it be so with us, beloved, increasingly as the moment, unknown to us, draws nearer! Amen.
Appendix C:

Remarks on 1 and 2 Thessalonians
Connected with the Revelation

As further evidence of the immense importance of rightly seizing the Christian hope, not only for the soul’s fellowship with the Lord but for the due intelligence of prophecy, I present to the reader two letters I had from the late Mr. E. B. Elliott in 1851. From them it is plain enough how very defective were his views, not merely in detail but fundamentally; yet was he the acknowledged leader of the Protestant [historicalist] school in our day. But the reader will judge for himself, perusing first the paper which was given him to read, and his remarks with my comment; for I regret that I am unable to furnish the answers sent at the time.

There are few simple-minded Christians who, in searching into the prophetic word, have not felt the difficulty of reconciling the undoubtedly normal posture of the church in daily waiting for Jesus with the long train of successive events presented in the Revelation. The principle, if not the measure, of the difficulty is the same, whether you understand the Revelation to be fulfilled in a brief eventful crisis, or to extend over a course of many hundred years. In either way, I cannot truly expect Jesus from heaven from day to day if I am looking out for a series of numerous, and some of them unprecedented, and all of them solemn, incidents to occur on earth, the gradual and accumulative evidence of His approach.

But it is certain that in the apostolic times, when the grace of God was proclaimed in its real power and freshness, when His word was most prized and best understood, and when it produced its loveliest effects, the saints were habitually expecting Jesus to come. In Him they had redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and they knew it. They were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise {Eph. 1:13}. Were they therefore satisfied? Was not the Spirit Himself, blessed divine Comforter though He be, yet was not He the earnest of still greater blessings? Doubtless they received Him as the Spirit of sonship, and not as a spirit of bondage unto fear (Rom. 8); but, instead of His leading them into rest and contentedness here below in the absence of Jesus, in the same chapter it is said: “Ourselves also, (besides the groaning creation) which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” It is the groaning of those who are justified by faith and have peace with God. It is the groaning of those who have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, and bearing witness with their spirit that they are the children of God. It is the groaning of the adopted, earnestly yearning for the full results of adoption: of those who, because they have known God’s grace in redemption forgiving their sins, look for more, for all, -- for the redemption of the body in the actual presence of the Savior, that they may be like Him and with Him for ever.

The aim, however, of these remarks is not to prove that the personal coming of the Lord was the hope of the church -- proofs easily found elsewhere. My desire is rather to convince those who know what is and was meant to be the hope of the church, that God by no concurrent or subsequent revelation ever interfered with the practical power of that hope. That He might give fuller details as to the growing iniquity of man, of the Jew and especially of the outward professing body, and as to His own judgments upon each before the millennial reign; that He might describe in greater minuteness the circumstances of that reign and the events that succeed it, is not only possible but that which He has done. But that He, on this or any other theme, corrects in one part of His word what is affirmed in another, is that which every Christian ought surely to repudiate from the bottom of his soul, in whatever modified form it may be insinuated.

The word of our God needs no apologies from man. Unhesitatingly believed, every part of it will be found to be perfectly true, though (from the narrowness and imperfection of our apprehension) patient waiting on God is necessary to avoid the systematizing of the human intellect, and to discover in what order God puts things together. Haste in deciding such questions only leads to forcing scripture, which will not yield; and hence the danger of framing one-sided hypotheses, which are only tenable by shutting the eye to the plainest scripture which contradicts them as hypotheses, though there may be elements of truth in them.

To apply this to the matter in hand, it is undeniable that

19. {Adoption is not the new birth; it means sonship, having a place of acknowledged sonship.}
the apostle Paul (to say nothing of others) invariably speaks of the coming of the Lord to take the church to Himself as that which might be at any moment, however Jesus might tarry; but no necessary detention -- no chain of occurrences involving a period virtually -- no certain lapse of time -- is ever presented to the church as keeping Him in heaven. On the contrary, if he writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15), it is: “Behold, I show you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” Admitting that “we” is a representative word, not the persons addressed merely but those standing in the same privileges: still, will any one say that the apostle or the Corinthian saints knew that the moment would be deferred till they had fallen asleep? Was it not calculated, beyond all cavil, to keep them in simple constant expectancy of the Lord? And the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1), who were trained, from their birth to God, in looking for their Deliverer, were they mistaken enthusiasts? Or did not the blessed work of the Spirit in their case consist in turning them from idols, not only to serve the living and true God, but to wait for His Son from heaven? Did that wise and faithful servant, who knew what it was to mingle the service of a nurse with the affectionate care of a father -- did he consider that blessed hope to be unsuited food for such babes? So far from it, that when he writes to them supplying some things that were lacking, the Holy Ghost impresses this great doctrine in so repeated and different modes as to demonstrate how cardinal a truth it is in the mind of God, and how influential as regards the walk and communion of His saints. It ramifies both epistles, being not only found at least once in every chapter, but in some chapters occupying the most conspicuous place. (See 1 Thess. 1:3, 10; 2:19, 20; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:1-10, 23, 24; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; 2:1-12; 3:5.) They had rejoiced in this hope of our Lord Jesus Christ from their earliest Christian career; they had patiently continued it through the Spirit, and the blessedness of such patience was sweet to the absent apostle, even as their work of faith and labor of love. True, they needed further light as to its circumstances, and the Lord granted it. So immediately were they awaiting the Lord, that the decease of some of their number plunged them into sorrow -- not, I apprehend, that they for a moment doubted of the salvation of those who were gone. No one knowing the gospel in word only (much less knowing it in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as it came to them.) could have such a doubt. But they feared that death had severed their departed brethren from the glorious hope they had so brightly burning before them, of being caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. They were gone -- doubtless were happy; but would they not be absent from that crowning joy for which they themselves were waiting? Here was the place, if they had been mistaken in so waiting, to have corrected it. Here was the place for the apostle to say: We have been all wrong in living with our eyes heavenward till the Son of God comes to take us to Himself. He is not coming soon. We need not expect Him, for many ages must expire before He comes. Besides He has already given you some, and He now adds more signs of His advent. You have not seen these signs yet. You must wait for them, and not for His Son. But there is the exact reverse. The Holy Spirit deliberately keeps them in the same attitude of waiting which He had previously wrought, and sanctioned in them, though He gives them a comfort of which they were ignorant as to their brethren who had been put to sleep by Jesus. “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [that is, go before] them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

But it may be said, If the Holy Ghost did not here correct the excited notions of the Thessalonians, He did in the second chapter of the second epistle. I answer that the true question is, Does the Holy Ghost correct Himself? He may supply that which is suited to correct the undue sorrow of the believers in one epistle, or their fears in another epistle; but I insist upon it in the strongest manner, that, if the church is set in the position of waiting for Christ’s coming in one part of scripture, no other part can possibly alter such a position. It is necessarily right, whatever increase of instruction may be given. Let us only be well assured in the perfectness of every word of God, and we shall soon see how little the passage warrants the notion that the apostle Paul, in the second epistle, dissuades them from expecting Him, whom the first epistle had confirmed them in expecting.

In the first place, it is generally assumed that the day of Christ (or “of the Lord,” for this is the true reading) is identical with “the coming (παρουσία, presence) of our Lord Jesus Christ” in the verse before 2 Thess. 2:1, 2) But it is a groundless idea. If it be affirmed, let proofs be adduced. It is quite clear to me that the day of the Lord is a distinct though connected thing. In its full, ultimate sense, and no one disputes that such is its force here, it supposes the presence of the Lord; it is the judgment consequent upon that. But the presence, or the coming of the Lord, by no means necessarily supposes judgment. Is there a word of

20. Nothing, it has been observed, more strongly proves the church’s constant expectation of the presence of the Lord for it, uncertain when this was to be, than the fact that it needed a particular revelation to individuals (such as to Paul and Peter) about their departure first, which so far modified their individual apprehensions. The general expectation of the church was not affected thereby.

21. Τούς κοιμηθέντες διὰ τού Ιησοῦ. So the Vulgate, eos qui dormiunt per Jesum.

22. So all the critical editors known to me, such as Griesbach, Knappe, Scholz, Lachmann, Tichendorf, &c.; and this wholly upon external evidence.
judgment, or wrath, or destruction, expressed or implied in the full description given in 1 Thess. 4 of the Lord’s coming for His own? So when the apostle says, “what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy” (1 Thess. 2:19, 20). Where is the word of judgment on evil? On the other hand, when the day of the Lord occurs, it is, whether used in a full or limited application, habitually connected with judgment and its consequences (compare 1 Thess. 5:24; Zeph. 1-3; Zech. 14; Mal. 3, 4). I conclude therefore that, though the coming of the Lord may include the day of the Lord, as the whole includes a part, the coming of the Lord {1 Thess. 4:15-18; 2 Thess. 2:1; etc.} is in itself presented in an aspect of grace, not of judgment, and that the terms and things are not be confounded.

In the second place, while it is true that the day of the LORD cannot come before the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin arrive {2 Thess. 2:3}, which are to be judged in that day [of the Lord, at its beginning], yet is there a serious error in the English rendering of the last clause of 2 Thess. 2:2, “is at hand.” The word usually rendered “at hand,” “near,” or “nigh,” is ἐγγύς or ἐγγίζω, as is known to scholars. The present word ἔναστημι, on the other hand, is never so rendered in the New Testament, save in the passage before us. On the contrary, occurring several times, it is used invariably in a way which excludes the possibility of such a rendering (more especially when it is, as here, in the perfect tense).

Let us briefly examine.

1. The first occurrence is in Rom. 8:38. It is evident that here ἔναστώς cannot mean things at hand. It is contrasted with μελλόντα, that is, “things to come.” It signifies only and emphatically “things present,” and is so rendered in the common Bible.

2. See the same words and the same contrast in 1 Cor. 3:22.

3. Again, in 1 Cor. 7:26, διὰ τὴν ἐνεστώσαν ἀνάλκην is properly translated “for the present distress.” A distress not actually come, but only at hand or coming, would spoil the meaning.

4. The next is Gal. 4, “this present evil world,” the only possible meaning of the word here. The next world, or age, will not be evil, and therefore “at hand” or “imminent” is shut out.

5. Compare also Heb.9:9, εἰς τὸν καιρὸν τὸν ἐνεστηκότα “for the time then present,” not “at hand,” which cannot be the true force. All these are instances of the same tense as 2 Thess. 2:2.

6. The only other occurrence is 2 Tim. 3:1, ἐνυατίσθονται, in the future middle. Here the English version renders it, “shall come.” Still the meaning indubitably is not “shall be at hand,” which could have no point, but “shall be present.” To be impending merely was little: the grave thing was, that perilous times should be actually there in the last days.

It may be concluded therefore, from an induction thus complete, that in all the other instances the Authorized Version is right, but in 2 Thess. 2:2 it is wrong. It is not conceivable to uphold both; so that, if right in 2 Thess. 2:2, the version must be wrong everywhere else. But we have seen, from the intrinsic meaning of the word, as well as from the sense imperatively demanded by the context, that in all the other cases the translators are justified. They are therefore mistaken here, and the proper rendering, in conformity with their own translation of the word in the same tense elsewhere, ought to be “as that the day of the Lord is present.”

The Thessalonian saints had from the first known much affliction. They had notoriously suffered from their own countrymen, and this to such a degree that the apostle, in his earnest and watchful interest about them, sent Timothy to establish and to comfort them concerning their faith, that no man should be moved by these afflictions. They knew that “we are appointed thereunto.” Nevertheless, they needed comfort. The apostle had warned them before, that “we should suffer tribulation, even as it came to pass, and ye know.” “For this cause when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter tempted you, and our labor be in vain.” But Timothy brought good tidings of their faith and love, and the apostle could break out into thanks and joy for their sakes before God, and he lets them know it in his first epistle.

The tempter however was not to be discouraged nor diverted from his wiles. They had been already taught that the Lord Himself was to come, and the saints, sleeping or living, were all to be changed, and be caught up together to meet Him in the air, and so to be ever with Him. They also knew that the day of the Lord (or Jehovah) was one of destruction and terror, unlooked for by the world: “Yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night” {1 Thess. 5:2}. Accordingly he appears to have distracted the saints by the harassing statement that the day of the Lord was actually there {2 Thess. 2:2}, thus seeking to rob them of all profit and joy in the persecutions and tribulations which they were then enduring. Nor let any think it strange, if, in a time of perplexity for the world and persecution of the church, the fears of saints might be wrought upon; particularly as they knew that the day of the Lord in the Old Testament by no means necessarily implies the personal presence of the Lord, though it looks onward to that anticipatively. (Compare, for

23. Since the above was in print, I have had the opportunity of examining “Le Nouveau Testament de notre Seigneur Jesus Christ, traduit en Suisse, par une Société de Ministres de la Parole de Dieu sur le texte Grec recu” (seconde édition, &c, 1849), where the original is rendered, “Que le jour du Christ est là.”
instance, Isa. 13, where God’s judgment of Babylon and the Chaldeans is so designated: “Howl ye, for the day of the Lord is at hand; 24 it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty,” &c. (See also Joel 1:15; 2:1-11; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:7, 14, 15, &c.)

In the second epistle, the Holy Ghost conveys the needed instruction. “We ourselves,” says the apostle, “glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer; seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe 25 (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day” [2 Thess. 2:4-9]. The time of retribution is not when Jesus comes [for us], but when He is revealed. For though at His coming the church is caught up, there is nothing yet of a retributary character. It is favor, not a process of judgment. Whereas the revelation and the day of the Lord are, as is manifest, associated with judgment, and hence there is the public award of God then for the first time manifested to the world; “seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed.” Doubtless there is a tribulation, and even the great tribulation, in the time of Antichrist, previous to the revelation of Jesus; as obviously there is rest to those who sleep in Jesus now, and there will be rest in a fuller sense when our bodies are changed, and we are caught up to be with Him. But both are wholly distinct from the divine retributary tribulation and the rest here spoken of. It is the day of punishment with everlasting destruction to the adversaries, as it is the day when Christ comes, not to present the faithful to Himself, nor to take them to mansions {abodes} in the Father’s house, but to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all that believed. For when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory [Col. 3:4]. It is the public judicial dealing (not the hidden joy or blessedness before then, or afterwards), which here enters into the scene.

Next the apostle turns to the source of their agitation. “We beseech you, brethren, by 26 the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and 27 our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled.” Assuredly, the consolation administered here is not that Christ’s coming was a distant thing! Can it be that theologian upon theologian has desired to make of this fancied long and far-off absence of the Lord a balm for the tried and fearful? Can it be that the poor church has but too willingly sipped the cup, and, heedless of His words, cheers herself on the delirious career of worldliness and folly, and of faithlessness to Him? “Lord, how long?”

Not so the Thessalonians. Full well they knew that His coming was to end their sorrows and crown their joys. Under apostolic guidance they had looked, and the Holy Ghost had commended their looking, for Christ. Was it not the part of the evil servant to say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming? {Matt. 24:48}. But Paul was a blessed faithful servant, and never says anything of the sort. He uses the fact of the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him as a comfort against the anxiety created by the idea that the day of the Lord was already arrived -- nay more, as a proof that such an idea was false. His ground of trent may be twofold. He urges a reason connected with the Lord and heaven, and a reason connected with earth and the man of sin. There must be our gathering together which that day is characterized as conveyed in the A. V., but two

24. The words in the LXX {Septuagint} are ἐγγὺς γὰρ ἡμέρα Χριστοῦ. Will men defend a version of 2 Thess. 2:2 which makes the Holy Spirit contradict there what He has unequivocally affirmed in Isa. 13:6? The Septuagint and the Greek Testament are in harmony here. It is the English version which is at fault.

25. It is not one only doubly characterized as conveyed in the A. V., but two classes discriminated by the articles repeated in the Greek. It should also be “believed” and not “believe.”

26. The authorized version appears to be substantially right in thus translating ὑπὲρ, when we hear the context in mind. Such is the rendering of the Vulgate as well as of Luther. Professor Scholfield also, though choosing the sense “concerning,” because of his interpretation, admits the sense “by” to be “an unquestionable one.” The fact cannot be disputed that “on account of,” “for the sake of,” are most common renderings: this sense of the word, connected with expressions of prayer and entreaty, being pretty nearly equivalent to our “by.” None of the passages, such as Rom. 9:27; 2 Cor. 7:4; 9:3; Phil. 1:7, cited by Rosenmuller, Schleusner, Macknight, Whitby, or Elliott, is apposite, because not one occurs after such a verb as ἐρωτάσθω. Let an instance be produced of ὑπὲρ after a word of beseeching, where it can be rendered in any other way. In certain cases it is used, as Plavorius says, ὑπὲρ εἰς τὸ πρεσβεύειν, but not I believe, in a connection parallel to the present, where it assimilates to προς as Stephanus observes, and translates it “per. ut Greg. ὑπὲρ Ἑρωτοῦ δέδομεν τὸ προσεύχεσθαι πρὸς Χριστὸν. Sic. II. ω. Καὶ μὴν ὑπὲρ παρασοχὴς καὶ μητέρας ἕκομοι Λύσσος, καὶ τέκνων.”

27. The “by” ought to disappear from our English version, because there is only one article, which unites the two things, Christ’s coming and our gathering together to Him as one associated idea, instead of separating them as is done by introducing a second “by.”
that is called God, or object of worship; so that he th sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” [2 Thess. 2:3, 4]. But the apostasy was not then come, nor the man of sin revealed, and therefore the day of the Lord, the day of vengeance upon these evils, is yet to come. “And now [if one may translate the apostle’s word a little exactly] ye know what hindereth that he might be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work: only there is one that now hindereth till he be taken out of the way. And then shall that lawless one be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the appearing of his coming” [2 Thess 2:6-8].

No! the Thessalonian believers were not mistaken in waiting for the Son of God. It is not wrong to believe that “the Lord is at hand,” (ἦλθεν ὁ Κύριος) as the apostle pressed upon the Philippians when drawing to the close of his career. It is not wrong to stabl ish our hearts because the coming of the Lord draweth nigh (ἐγρήγοροι, James 5:8). Nor does the language of the Spirit in the passage before us depict excitement from a too eager anticipation of this glorious event -- alas! that Christians should suppose we could too earnestly desire it. The expressions in v. 2 denote fright and agitation. The enemy sought to instill the idea that the day, the judgment, was come, and that they were obnoxious to its terrors. Where then was their hope to be caught up to the Lord and to come along with Him? Would it have been sorrow and fear if Christ had come and they had been translated to meet Him in the air? Rather would it have been their chiefest joy, as it had been the object nearest their heart since their conversion. Their faith was growing exceedingly, and the love of every one of them all toward each other abounded; and, far from weakening that which he had already taught, the apostle prays for them in the last chapter of the second epistle, that the Lord would direct their heart into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ. That is, he confirms them in their expectancy of the Lord.

But the deceiver had affrighted them, not of course by presenting the coming of the Lord as an imminent thing, which was what the Holy Ghost had done, and which is for the church a hope of unmingled comfort, but by the report that the day of the Lord was actually present -- “a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.” The apostle had already told them (1 Thess. 5) that they were not in darkness, that that day should overtake them as a thief. The tempter disturbs and confounds them with the thought that, as a thief, it was really come upon them; using it would seem some false spirit, or word, or letter [2 Thess 2:2], to give to it the color of the authority of Paul himself. And how does the apostle defend them from such assaults of others, and fears of their own? For, let it be repeated, it was not high-wrought feeling as though Christ were at hand, but terror arising from their giving heed to the false representation that the day of the Lord was present, and they in tribulation on earth, instead of being caught up to Jesus above. The apostle at once brings them back to the coming of the Lord and their gathering together unto Him [2 Thess. 2:1] as their ground of comfort and protection against the alarms of the day of Jehovah. As if he had said: the Lord Himself is coming, and you will be gathered to Him. When His day comes, you will be with Him. You are the children of the day: you will come along with it, for you will come with Him who ushers it in. You therefore need not be troubled; be rather in peace. That day is not come. You will go to meet Him whom the church knows as the bright, the morning star (Rev. 22:16, compared with Rev. 2:28); so that, when the day breaks and the Lord appears, you too will appear with Him in glory. You will introduce the day together -- that day of retribution, when those who trouble you shall have trouble, and you, the troubled, shall have rest 30 with us, when Jesus is revealed from heaven, with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance.

In harmony with this, it is written in 2 Thess. 2:8, that the lawless one will be destroyed, not simply by the coming of the Lord, but by a further step of it, by the appearing or manifestation of His coming. 31 This scene is given at length in Rev. 19:11-21, where the seer beholds, in the prospective vision, the heaven opened, and the rider, the Word of God, upon the white horse, issuing to judge and make war. “And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” -- the righteounesses, not of angels, but of saints (compare Rev. 19:8). The saints are already with Him. They follow Him out of heaven, as His army. Christ therefore must have come before this to take them to Himself, for they have been with Him in heaven and leave it together, preparatory to the battle with the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies. This then is not merely the coming of Christ. It is Christ appearing, and we with Him in glory. It is His revelation from heaven, taking vengeance. It is the day of the Lord, when sudden destruction comes. It is the shining forth of His presence, or the brightness of His coming, which

28. All editors of note omit ὃς Θέον, that is, “as God.”
29. There is a link of importance missed by the English translators between the mystery of lawlessness already working, and the lawless one who is yet to be revealed. The germ was there in the midst of professing Christianity, which was at last to issue in so portentous a conclusion.
30. [2 Thess. 1:7 does not state that the “rest with us” begins when the Lord appears in glory, as posttribulationists claim. The text tells us that we will be at rest then. Our rest begins at the pretribulation rapture.]
31. The word “coming” here and frequently elsewhere, is παρουσία which denotes not barely the arrival (like the verb ἐγρήγοροι in scripture, and like the substantive ἔλευσις in Greek ecclesiastical writers), but the circumstance or state of being present; that is, “presence.” Nevertheless, as the presence of a person, who is now absent, necessarily supposes his coming, the latter is often and fairly enough given as its English equivalent, though the former is the full meaning.
Part Five: Answer to Historicism -- The Second Advent

Matt. 24:23-31 falls in with this view: “For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.” It is His coming in connection with His earthly rights. Rejected of this generation as the Christ, He comes as Son of man (in which capacity He is never presented as coming to take the church). “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” The elect, here gathered together by the angels of the Son of man from the four winds, are demonstrably not the church, because they are gathered subsequent to His appearing.

The church, on the other hand, had been translated before. For when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory {Col. 3:4}. Our manifestation in glory cannot be after His manifestation. Christ and the church are manifested together. Hence the signs specified in this chapter {Matt. 24} are to elect Jewish disciples indices of His appearing. They are not to be regarded therefore as interfering with the posture of the church in continually waiting for the Lord from heaven. They are signs for a remnant in special relation with Judea, who will be awaiting the coming of the Son of man. No signs of this or of any other description were ever put before the church, as such, whereby to judge of the near approach of Christ to take her to Himself. On the contrary, what the Holy Ghost taught the church is, to a simple mind, inconsistent with such indications: she was to be expecting always because she knew not the moment of His coming. The apostle (1 John 2:18) would have even the babes to know that it is the last time {hour}; and this, not from the spread of the Spirit of Christ, but from the presence of many antichrists. But, although they had heard that the antichrist should come, no signs to be seen, no evil to reach its climax, no specific tribulation, are ever put before them, as events necessarily retarding the coming of the Lord to take the church. For the bride, the one heavenly sign is the presence of the Bridegroom Himself. But for a converted remnant of Jews, of whom the Lord has graciously thought in the instructions of Matt. 24, there are signs which will be given before the coming of the Son of man.

Now it is precisely here that the Revelation affords so distinct a light, showing us the position of the church in heaven, Christ having come and taken her to Himself, and afterwards, during the interval of her absence in heaven before she appears along with Him, God’s dealings, testimonies, judgments, and deliverances, on earth. The epistles give us simply the fact of the rapture of the church, but did not inform as to the length of the interval before the appearing and the kingdom. That such an interval existed might have been gathered; but whether long or short, or how filled up, does not appear in the epistles. The Revelation furnishes that which was lacking upon the subject and connects, without confounding, the church caught up to the Lord on high, with certain witnesses to be raised up during the closing term of the age on earth before He appears in judgment.

As for the relative bearings of the different portions of the New Testament, it may be said in general that the Gospels have a character peculiar to themselves. It is not certainly an exclusively Jewish condition, neither is it a proper church condition, but a gradual slide, in John more marked than in the others, from the one to the other. The Lord Jesus, rejected, was with His disciples here below. The Holy Ghost, who of course was then, as ever, the faith-giving quickening agent, was not yet given, that is, in any new unprecedented way, because that Jesus was not yet glorified {John 7:39}. Hence the disciples, although possessing faith and eternal life (John 6:35, 47, 68, 69), were not yet baptized by the Holy Ghost into one body (compare Acts 1:5 with 1 Cor. 12:13). In a word, the church was not yet built nor begun to be built: “Upon this rock,” says the Lord, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18).

But the Acts historically, and the epistles doctrinally, point to a different state of things as then existing: Jesus absent and glorified in heaven; the Holy Ghost present and dwelling on earth in the saints, who were hereby constituted the body, the church. Christ had taken His place as head of
the body above, and the Holy Ghost sent down was gathering into oneness with Him there, into membership of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Such is the mystery of Christ which it was emphatically given to the apostle Paul fully to make known. And as the Gospels may be regarded as the preparatory transition out of Jewish relations to the blessed elevation on which the church rests, the Revelation answers as the corresponding transition from the church one with Christ in heavenly places, by various steps or stages, down to those Jewish relations which for a time dropped out of sight in consequence of the calling of the heavenly body.

The doctrine of the church is clearly at the root the ONE HOPE, which is found in the intermediate part of the New Testament. For along with the truth of the peculiar calling of the church, as the body commenced by the descent and indwelling of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and thenceforward guided and perpetuated by Him -- along with this truth, it will be found that the peculiar aspect of the coming of the Lord, for which I have contended, stands or falls. None of the school of interpreters commonly called “the Protestant school” {historicalists} understood by the church anything more, at best, than the Augustinian notion of an invisible company from the beginning to the end of time. None of them therefore has an adequate idea of the new and heavenly work which God began at Pentecost by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. The consequence is that, if they read of saints in Daniel, in the Psalms, or in the Revelation, they are at once set down as of the church. If they read of “this gospel of the kingdom” in Matt. 24, or of “the everlasting gospel,” -- it is to their minds the same thing as what Paul calls “my gospel,” the gospel of the grace of God preached now. Hence follows, and quite fairly too, a denial of any speciality in the walk and conversation of the saints since Pentecost, and a general Judaizing in doctrine, standing, conduct and hopes. It is also a simple and natural result of this, that all Protestant interpreters, if they admit a personal advent at all to introduce the millennial reign, present as the hope of the church which is, in fact, the proper expectation of the converted Jewish remnant, namely, the day of Jehovah, the Son of man, seen by all the tribes of the earth, coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

Nor is the truth of the church unknown to the Protestant interpreters only; it is equally an object of dislike to many of the Futurist school. And it is my conviction that the two baleful heresies which have brought such shame upon the revival of prophetic study towards the beginning and the close of the last twenty years, are intimately connected with the rejection of this grand truth. For an error touching the church cannot but affect Him whose personal presence is what is so essential to it; and that which dishonors the Spirit goes far, in the long run, to disfigure or deny the person and work of Him of whom the Spirit is the vicar.

In the epistles, it is beyond doubt that the church is continually addressed, as if there were no understood, and fixed or necessary, hindrances to the rapture at the coming of the Lord. How could this be if the church be the same body as those saints who are described in Daniel, the Psalms, &c., as being destined to certain fiery trials still future from a little horn and his satellites who are yet to appear? How comes it that the apostle Paul, when he speaks of the coming of the Lord, never hints at this tribulation, as one through which the church must pass; but always presents the advent as an immediate thing which might occur from one unknown moment to another? That the apostle Paul understood the just application of these prophecies, better than any since his day, is that which few Christians will question: they were scriptures long revealed and familiar to Jews; and the Lord Jesus, in Matt. 24, had very significantly linked His fresh revelations upon that occasion with the predictions of Daniel. Yet the Holy Ghost, in His constant allusions in the writings of the apostles to the anticipations of the church, never once refers to these terrible circumstances as a future scene wherein the church is to enact a part: on the contrary, the way in which the coming of the Lord is put before the church, as a thing to be constantly looked for, seems incompatible with it. We have examined the only statement in the epistles which might appear to interpose such a barrier, and we have seen that, so far from contradicting the thought of immediateness, the apostle seeks to relieve the Thessalonian saints from all uneasiness about the day of the Lord and its troubles, by the blessed hope of His coming and their gathering unto Him, which are in his mind indissolubly bound together: a gathering unto Him which must be before He appears to the world, and judges it, because He and they are to appear together. It is certain, moreover, that there must arrive the apostasy and the revelation of the man of sin (not before the coming, but) before the day of the Lord.

The prophecy of Daniel had already revealed the leading features of the interval during which “the prince that shall come” plays his terrible role. “And he shall confirm a covenant” (see margin and compare Isa. 28:14) “with the many” (that is, of Daniel’s people, the Jews) for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations there shall be one desolating, even until the consummation” (or consumption, as in Isa. 28:22), “and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate.” (Dan. 9:27). That this prince is not “the Messiah the prince” is manifest, not only from the fact that the former is described as one “that shall come,” after the latter has already come and been cut off, as is plain from verse 26, but also from the certainty that “the prince that shall come” is the prince of the Roman people: his people “shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.” We know who destroyed Jerusalem and the temple -- the people of this future prince. The latter part of verse 26 does not continue the thread of the history, further than the general expressions “and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are
determined.” In the last verse we are transported to the epoch of “the prince that shall come,” and his actions during the last week of the age. This period is shown to be broken into two parts, during the former of which, according to covenant, Jewish worship is resumed, but “in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease.”

If Dan. 7 be consulted, it will be seen that there is a certain little horn rising after the ten horns of the fourth Roman beast, before whom three of the first horns fell -- “that horn that had eyes and a mouth, that spoke very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows” (v. 20). “And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High [or of the high places] and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand, until a time and times and the dividing of time” (v. 25). Is it not evident that in Dan. 7 is a horn or king whose blasphemous pride brings judgment upon the beast, or Roman empire, and whose interference with times and laws, that is, with Jewish ceremonial order, continues for three years and a half? and that for the same space of time, or the last half week, “the prince that shall come,” the Roman prince of Dan. 9, overthrows this ceremonial worship?

But the Revelation not only takes up the last half of Daniel’s week (Rev. 11-13) but shows what is the place of the church during this period -- a truth which it was not given to the Jewish prophet to reveal, because it was that which supposed and fitly followed the revelation of the mystery hidden from ages and from generations. Paul had shown us the church waiting for the presence of the Lord. What is it that the Holy Ghost adds by John? What is the great outline given in the Revelation?

After the vision of the Lord Jesus, in Rev. 1, we have “the things that are,” epistles to the seven churches (Rev. 2 and 3), so conveyed as to apply not only at that time but as long as the church subsists on earth, and then the properly prophetic part, the things which should be after the church-condition had passed away. Throughout the prophetic portion of the book the church is never described as being on earth. At the close of Rev. 3, it altogether disappears from earthly view; and, instead of its course being any longer traced here below, a door is opened in heaven and the prophet is called up to see the things which must come to pass after these, that is, after the things which are, or the church regarded in the completeness of its varying phases on earth. Besides other things (the throne and One that sat upon it being the center of the vision), John sees, not seven candlesticks, but, suited to the new circumstances of heaven, four and twenty thrones, and upon them four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment and upon their heads golden crowns (Rev. 4).

Here we have, in vision, the place and functions of the church after it shall have been taken up to meet the Lord, and before its manifestation with Him in glory. And for this simple reason, that the way in which He and they are here represented emblematically is totally different from what is revealed as connected with either, when the moment comes to leave heaven, for the purpose of judgment upon the beast, &c.; or from what is revealed touching the reign for a thousand years subsequent to that judgment: that is, in Rev. 19:11 and 20:4-6. Nor can the scene in Rev. 4, 5 be interpreted consistently with any view, save that of the church being actually caught up and completed in the presence of God. It is quite a distinct thing from our sitting in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 2:6): this is the subject of the epistle to the Ephesians. Neither is it the same thing as the boldness which the partakers of the heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1) have even now to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.

Such is the subject of the epistle to the Hebrews, where the high-priesthood of Jesus is dwelt on at length, and the liberty which we have in consequence to draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith; for it is still faith, and not actual possession, however it may be, through the power of the Holy Ghost, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The purpose of Revelation is to disclose the dealings of God, whether the facts be expressed or understood, but dealings which involve a certain condition of things, which was future if considered in relation to the circumstances looked at in the epistles, as actually subsisting at the time -- the things in short which must be after these. Nor can this chapter (Rev. 4) be supposed to describe the blessedness of the spirits of the saints previous to the coming of Christ for the church, because the departed who are with Christ could not be symbolized by twenty-four elders; that is, by an image evidently borrowed from the full courses of Jewish priesthood. The whole church, and not a part only, is comprehended in the symbol. But this can only be after the dead in Christ rise first, then we which are alive and remain, are caught up together with them in the clouds, and so are ever with the Lord. Accordingly here they are represented in heaven, the Lord being also there, and although made kings and priests even when on earth, still the time is not yet come for the exercise of government. In beautiful harmony, therefore, with this peculiar and transitional period during which they are removed from the world, they worship above. But the saints below are not forgotten. Those above have golden harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they sing a new song, celebrating the worthiness of the Lamb to take the book and open the seals, not only because He was slain and had redeemed themselves, but had made them, that is, these saints, to their God, kings and priests. They should reign over the earth. The fulfillment is seen in Rev. 20:4-6: the reigning with Christ not merely of those symbolized by the elders, but of the Apocalyptic saints also.
Moreover, it is clear on the one hand, that the lightnings and thunderings suit neither the day of grace nor the millennial state. Earth is certainly not yet brought under the power of the blood of Christ, when these symbols will find their accomplishment. On the other hand, it is equally clear that there are saints on earth, while the twenty-four elders are before the throne above. That is, it is neither the millennial nor the present state; but an intermediate period of peculiar nature, in which we have the throne, not of grace as now, nor of displayed glory as by-and-by, but clothed with what has been justly termed a Sinai character of awful majesty attached to it.

But those above exercise their priesthood in the presence of God as the full completed church. Hence the symbol of twenty-four elders round the throne, at a time when, as all confess, earth is still unreconciled, however there may be, in the next chapter, the anticipative song of every creature. If this be true, it follows that the Lord’s coming to meet the saints takes place between Rev. 3 and 4 (if the thought be pursed, which I doubt not, that chapters 6-19 will be fulfilled in a rapid crisis), room being left there for the coming described in 1 Thess. 4 and elsewhere. Then the main action of the book goes on subsequently to the removal of the church, and after this another character of testimony from that of the church properly is announced, and God Himself is revealed in ways different from those which He is displaying now; that is to say, not as showing the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus, but in the chastening judgments of the seals, trumpets, and vials, preparatory to the great day of the Lord which Rev. 19:11 ushers in. On this state of things Daniel compared with the Revelation will be found to cast and to receive much light, for it seems plain that the saints of the Most High, or heavens, of whom we read in Daniel 7, identify themselves with the saints who suffer under the beast, after the rapture of the church and, before the Lord’s appearing. They keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, which, be it noted, is the spirit of prophecy, and though they are not of the twenty-four elders, they will have their blessed and holy part in the first resurrection. And here let it be remarked, that the term has nothing to do with the question whether all are raised at the same time; it simply describes the condition of those who rise and reign during the thousand years, as distinguished from those who do not rise till that period is ended. How true this is, is manifest from the fact that Christ has part in the first resurrection, who nevertheless rose before the church more than eighteen hundred years {ago} at least. Hence the thought is not forbidden of certain saints being raised who stand and suffer after the church is gone.

The symbol of the twenty-four elders continues unchanged throughout the course of the book, till Rev. 19. They enter into God’s ways and judgments, as interested in whatever affected His glory, as may be seen in Rev. 4, 5, 7, 11, 14, 19.

But in Rev. 19 there is a striking change. After the opening scene of the rejoicings over Babylon the elders no longer appear, but the time for the marriage being come (and how evidently the church therefore is still viewed in the Revelation as unmarried), the bride, the Lamb’s wife is announced as made ready.

The heavenly joy and the Bridegroom and His bride being thus incidentally glanced at, He takes a new aspect, for the day is about to break upon the world; and so do we, for we will have gone long before to be ever with the Lord, and if He is about to appear, so are we along with Him in glory. Hence, in Rev. 19:11, the prophet sees heaven opened, and a white horse, and He that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. In unison, therefore, as He thus comes to smite and rule, the armies which are in heaven follow the Lord of lords and King of kings; and they that are with Him are called and chosen and faithful, which expressions are sufficiently clear to determine who are meant by the armies, if any one should have a doubt. It is the church which was in heaven following Christ in the capacity of His hosts, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Contrasted with the marriage supper of the Lamb, all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven are invited to the great supper of God. The prophet sees the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse and His army. The result all know.

Next follows the angelic binding of the dragon for a thousand years, and the parenthetical revelation of the sitting on thrones, or at least, of the living and reigning with Christ during that period, of such as had part in the first resurrection. They will not cease to be priests of God, though their office may be discharged in a different way from what we saw as to some of them in Rev. 4 and 5, but they all reign with Christ for a thousand years {Rev. 20}.

It is a prominent feature of the book, that in it is traced the sovereignty of God, not only in His purposes regarding the church properly so called, but in His gracious ways with an election from among Jews and Gentiles subsequently. Thus, after the church is seen in its completeness in heaven, under the symbol of the twenty-four crowned elders (Rev. 4, 5), we hear in Rev. 6:9-11 of saints suffering, yet crying for vengeance; and the announcement to them that they should rest yet for a little, until their fellow-servants and brethren, doomed to be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. Vengeance should not arrive till then. These are evidently not the church, but saints on earth after the church is in heaven, whose sufferings and cries to the Lord accord much with the experience detailed in the Psalms. Still, whether Jewish or Gentile, they are not named here.

But in Rev. 7 we have distinctly brought before us a numbered company out of all the tribes of Israel sealed with the seal of the living God, and after this an innumerable
multitude out of all nations, &c., who are characterized as coming out of the great tribulation, and as having washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. These bodies are evidently distinguished from, if not contrasted with, each other: and they are still more markedly shown to be different from the church; for we have the facts not only of a certain defined tribulation out of which these said Gentiles come, but of the elders, that is, the confessed symbol of the glorified being still represented as a separate party in the scene 33 (ver. 11).

Under the trumpets again we find the prayers of saints alluded to, who are of course supposed to still be on earth (compare Rev. 8:3, 4, with 5:8), and an implication of the sealed Jewish remnant being in the sphere, though saved from the effects of the fifth trumpet (Rev. 9:4).

In Rev. 11 are seen the two witnesses, prophesying in sackcloth, and killed. In Rev. 12 the woman is persecuted by the dragon, who wars with the remnant of her seed that keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, which is accomplished in the beast of Rev. 13 who makes war with the saints and overcomes them.

Rev. 14 is clearly a sevenfold sketch of the dealings of God, which brings the crisis to a conclusion: the hundred forty and four thousand associated with the Lamb on Mount Sion; the everlasting gospel summoning all to fear and worship God because of the proximity of His judgment; the fall of Babylon; the declaration of torment to the bestial worshipers; the blessedness from henceforth of those dying in the Lord: the harvest of the earth, out of which were redeemed the one hundred and forty-four thousand, as the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb; and lastly, the vintage of the earth. The reader has only to weigh verses 12, 13, in order to have the foregoing remarks confirmed. Even here we have the patience of saints described just before the harvest; the portion, too, not of the church (for we shall not all sleep), but of a special class of saints here below, while the church is hidden above.

In Rev. 15 (preparatory to Rev. 16, that is, the seven outpoured bowls of the wrath of God), is heard the song of the conquerors of the beast, celebrating the works of the Lord God Almighty and the ways of the King of nations. Compare also Rev. 16:5, 6, 15; 17:6; 18:4-6. To those who kept the word of Christ’s patience (Rev. 3:10) the promise was to be kept (not in or during, but) out of the hour 34 of trial, out of that fearful tribulation which is in store for the dwellers upon earth.

In the preceding scriptures it is clear that after Christ has fulfilled His promise in the translation of the church to heaven, there are saints on earth, both from among Jews and Gentiles who suffer throughout the tribulation. And these Apocalyptic sufferers are described in Rev. 20:4, as having part, equally with the church, in the first resurrection. For that text discloses first, the general place of the glorified in the millennial reign, “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them”; secondly, those killed in the earlier persecutions of the book (Rev 6:9-11), “And I saw the souls of those that were beheaded because of the witness of Jesus, and because of the word of God”; and thirdly, the later witnesses for God, “and those who had not worshiped the beast,” &c. (Rev. 15:2). 35 Those saints who were called and suffered after the rapture of the glorified, are emphatically mentioned, because it might have appeared that they had lost all by their death. Not members of Christ’s body before He comes for the church, they share not in the rapture; not protected from death during the prevalence of the beast, they cannot be the living nucleus of Jews or of Gentiles, saved to be the holy seed on earth during the reign of Christ. They suffer, are cut off, but are not forgotten. “They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

Thus the truth brought to light in the epistles to the Thessalonians, is assumed in the view which the apostle John was the honored servant to enunciate, namely, the blessed condition and holy employ of the church round the throne and the Lamb, after the removal from earth, but previous to the appearing with Christ in glory.

The central part of the Revelation then appears to corroborate on an irrefragable basis, the truth that the church will be taken away and fulfil the symbols we have been noticing, previous to the day of the Lord, during the same time that other saints are still groaning and shedding their

33. I cannot concur in the view put forth in the most voluminous and elaborate comment of modern times upon this book; namely, that the sealed hundred and forty-four thousand are identical with the innumerable palm-bearing multitude; the latter embodying the idea of the different generations of the former into a corporate form (for the idea of the church being one body here below by the presence of the Holy Ghost is utterly denied and unceasingly distorted in this system of interpretation). But Mr. Elliott allows that the twenty-four elders represent the church in the character of a royal priesthood. No one denies that the church in different scenes may be set forth by different symbols. But how comes it, not only that these distinct symbols are in the same scene, but that one of the elders is found explaining who, what and whence the multitude are plainly distinguished from, if not contrasted with, each other: and they are still more markedly shown to be different from the church; for we have the facts not only of a certain defined tribulation out of which these said Gentiles come, but of the elders, that is, the confessed symbol of the glorified being still represented as a separate party in the scene 33 (ver. 11).

34. [We are to be kept out of the time of it.]

35. [It is observable that the OT saints did not appear in W. Kelly’s comments. The first resurrection includes them. They are in the first grouping – and are included in the symbol of the 24 elders; i. e., the 24 elders symbolize the heavenly priesthood, including O. T. saints who will be resurrected at the time of the rapture (cp. Heb. 11:40). Eventually the symbol of the 24 elders is dropped and the bride is distinguished from those invited to the marriage (cp. Rev. 19).]
blood like water here below (Psa. 74, 79).

Such seems to be the main key which unlocks an important portion of the book and confirms the view, so sweet to the renewed mind, of going to meet the Lord without one earthly obstacle between: keeping unblunted the point and energy of a truth only revealed in the New Testament. For the Old Testament spoke of His coming with all His saints, not for them; of His appearing in glory to the confusion of His enemies, and not of His descending to meet His friends, when we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed and caught up together in the clouds. And hence it would seem, the emphatic language of the apostle, conscious that God was by him revealing a new thing to faith. For in 1 Cor. 15 he says, “Behold I show you a mystery”; and in 1 Thess. 4, “This we say unto you by the word of the Lord.”

How sweetly do the closing appeals tell upon the heart of him who has an ear to hear! “I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the bright and morning Star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come.” It would be to lose the blessedness of keeping the prophetic sayings of this book, to have any other thought than that Jesus is coming quickly (Rev. 22:7). It is well to read in their light the signs of the times: knowing the closure, we can thus detect the principles now at work. But it is a mistake and a misuse to construe of such signs obstacles to the coming of the Lord: to say, until I know the arrival of this or that precursor, I cannot in my heart expect Jesus. Blessed be God! such is not the language of the Spirit. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Are these the words of mere feeling, unguided by spiritual understanding of the mind of God? As a fact, we know that the Lord has delayed; but He is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering toward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But who will say that it is conceivable to be looking for the Lord, wholly uncertain of the time of His advent, and at the same time have the revealed certainty of a number of events which determine the year, or, it may be, the day?

That Jesus will arise, the Sun of Righteousness, with healing in His wings (Mal. 4), is clear, and we know that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13). But this same Jesus is more than the supreme power of righteous government on earth. He is known to the church, at any rate, as the bright and morning Star. Blessed light of grace, ere the day breaks, to those who watch for Him from heaven during the dark and lonely night! “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.”

“He that testifieth these things saith, Yea, I am coming quickly. Amen! come, Lord Jesus.”

Here are the letters with remarks on each:

**Letter I**

Sept. 1, 1851.

Dear Mr. Kelly,

I have read your paper on 2 Thessalonians 2. I cannot but think that it would be advisable to express your views more simply and plainly for uninitiated readers like myself. If I rightly understand you, the sum and substance of your view and argument is to the effect following: --

The Thessalonian Christians could not be distressed or affrighted at the thought of their Lord’s coming being at hand. It was the chief object of their hope. Nor does the passage in question imply anything of the kind. First, “the day of the Lord,” spoken of in it as ἐνεστῶς, is not identical in sense with the παρουσία, or coming of the Lord, spoken of in the verse preceding, being only that part of the era of His coming which is devoted to judgment, a previous epoch and act of it being that of His gathering of His saints to Himself. Secondly, ἐνεστῇκεν does not mean, and may not be explained in the sense of being near, or at hand, but only in the sense it bears elsewhere, of being actually present. Hence, and from these two premises, it is to be inferred that the trouble of the Thessalonian Christians arose out of the idea of the latter part of the era of His coming, that of judgment, having come, and consequently of their having not had part in the previous gathering of His saints to Him.

Supposing this to be your meaning, it of course follows that they thought St. Paul, as well as themselves, to have been similarly overlooked by Christ, and left to the trials of the judgment-day. Is this credible? Is it not enough of itself to set aside the interpretation?

But what, then, of the ἐνεστῆκεν? Is not its proper meaning, “is present?” No doubt, just as παρέστη, and such similar words, mean “is present.” But they are words which, in every language that I am acquainted with, are susceptible, if the context requires it, of the meaning, close at hand. I have little doubt that my friend, Mr. Kelly, when looking out from some height in Guernsey [where we both of us were at the time of the correspondence] for the steamer, in which he was expecting a friend, has sometimes, when he saw her steering into port, made use of the common exclamation, “Here she is!” And what would he have thought, had a friend who heard him looked carefully at every part of the ground within twenty yards of the speaker, and said, “She is not here!” “The Master is here” (παρεστήκη), said Martha to Mary, in John 11:28; and yet, adds verse 30, “Now Jesus had not yet come into the village,” that is, the village where Martha spoke to Mary.

Thus our translators seem to me to have been perfectly right in translating the word ἐνεστῆκεν as they have in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, the day of the Lord there spoken of being clearly that epoch of time which would be marked by two grand events -- one of mercy, one of judgment, the gathering of saints to Himself, and the destruction of the man of sin -- as may undoubtedly be inferred from comparison of verses 8 and 1.

As to the words, σαλευθήσητε ἀπο τοῦ νοοῦ and θροεσθει, they are surely most naturally to be explained, not as meaning “frightened,” but of that agitation of mind and feeling which would indispense them to the calm and proper discharge of the common duties of life. Compare, in Matthew 24:6, the μὴ θροεσθε. I see nothing whatsoever in this inconsistent with the looking unto the coming of the Son of God. And I am sure I should feel somewhat of its indisposing effect to the
common routine of daily duty, had I the fixed persuasion that the Lord had appointed to take me to Himself on the morrow of the present day, whether by the stroke of death, or by His own personal advent.

Yours very faithfully,

E. B. Elliot.

Is it not singular that a paper which many comparatively unlettered Christians have found clear and helpful should have been unintelligible to, and misunderstood by, a man of Mr. E.’s caliber and attainments? Why was this? In my opinion his own erroneous system of thought, along with the lack of the habit of expecting in the word of God perfect accuracy and nice shades of difference, apparently made not the style only but the subject and the evidence difficult to his mind. It is well to note this, the blinding effect of error, even on a saint, as I do not doubt my friend was. How many suffer thus, as little as he suspecting the true cause!

If the words of the apostle in the text most under examination are to be accepted simply and fully, it is certain that the source of agitation and trouble for the Thessalonian brethren, alleged by the Holy Spirit, was the statement, imputed to the apostle himself, not that the Lord’s coming was at hand, but that His day was actually there. This is as unequivocally the sense of the apostle’s very precise language, as it is the certain truth of God. He is not conjuring them by that concerning which he was about to teach them, but, on the contrary, he entreats them, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him (which he presents, not as two distinct objects, but as a united idea before the mind by the one article, τῆς), that they should not be soon shaken in mind (“from their mind” may be literal, but is not idiomatic English), nor yet troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as by us [that is, as if it were by us], as [or to the effect] that the day of the Lord is present. That is, he entreats them, by or for the sake of our blessed hope in Christ, who will gather us to Himself on high, that they should not be soon disturbed, or thrown off their balance, nor yet alarmed by the report, falsely attributed to him and a higher than him, that the day of the Lord, the day of judgment for man and the earth, was actually come.

This I believe to be the only possible sense of the verses, which also maintains the force of each clause and word as precisely as it exhibits a wise and worthy aim in the sentence as a whole. Mr. Elliott’s view confounds that hope by which Paul is beseeching the brethren with the dread scene of judgment, which had been misrepresented and misunderstood as [if it had] already arrived. The true view sustains the Authorized Version of ὑπέρ, “by,” which is not only grammatically tenable but exegetically demanded here, if not elsewhere, in the New Testament. It was not the παρασκευά but the ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου, which had been misused; and the comfort of the Lord’s coming is employed as a motive and means for counteracting the uneasiness created by the false representation that the day was there.

No doubt the preposition may, and does often, mean, “in regard to,” or “on behalf of,” a little stronger than περί. But the question is the meaning of ὑπέρ, neither in itself, nor in other constructions, but with such words of entreaty as ἐρωτάω as distinguished from ἐπωτάω περί, where the sense of “in the place of,” or “instead of,” is excluded, as here. To me it appears that the precise meaning of ἐπ. ὑπέρ in such a case as the present, can only be “by reason of,” or briefly “by,” and, if motive be made more prominent, “for the sake of,” or briefly “for.”

Now the apostle had been setting out in 2 Thess. that retributive hour of God’s righteous judgment, when He will render tribulation to those that trouble the saints, and to the troubled saints repose at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on those that know not God, and on those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. It is His coming, not to receive the saints, and present them to the Father in His house above, but to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that believed in that day. It is, beyond question, that day of ever-lasting destruction from the Lord’s presence and the glory of Him might, the day of the Lord, which was said (on the Spirit’s warrant, and not a revelation only, but a pretended Pauline epistle) to have even then set in [arrived], so that the saints in Thessalonica were shaken in mind (which is the true English idiom, as ἐπι τού νοὸς is the Greek), and troubled. Clearly therefore the contradistinction comes out more and more plainly. It was not the excitement of a premature hope, but the agitation and fear produced by the rumor, and on quasi-apostolic authority too, that that terrible day had really begun. The apostle beseeches them, by the comfortable hope of the one, not to be soon shaken and troubled by the false cry that the other, the day of judgment on the quick {the living}, was come.

Mr. E. reasons against his supposed necessary but inadmissible consequence, that the Thessalonians must in such a case have thought that they, and Paul too, had been left behind by Christ at the first act of His coming, and exposed to the horrors of the second. But it is entirely a mistake, and his own solely. The Thessalonians had no adequate light up to this second epistle on the relative order of these events. From 1 Thess. they knew of Christ’s coming (1 Thess. 4), and of the day (1 Thess. 5); but they may, till they got the second epistle, have thought, as so many Christians do even in our day, and did in all ages, that the tribulation of the last times precedes the translation of the saints, and that His day therefore accompanies, if it too does not precede, His coming. Even Bengel affirms the whimsical idea, refuted by this very chapter, that the appearing of our Lord’s coming may happen before His coming itself. Now the nature of the thing, as well as its accompaniments, bear a testimony exactly opposed. For the Lord might come without appearing to every eye, but He could not appear
without coming. Just so we read in the first verse of this chapter that He will come and gather unto Himself the saints; whereas it is not His coming, but the revelation or appearing of His coming, which is to destroy the lawless one or man of sin. Such is the true moral order, and proved by other scriptures also, as Rev. 17:14; 19:14. He first receives His own, His friends, to Himself by His coming or παρουσίας; He afterwards executes judgment on His enemies by the appearance of His coming, τῇ ἔπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ. The glorified saints are with Him when He brings in the day, following Him out of heaven as His hosts or armies (Rev. 19:14), before the judgment of the beast and the false prophet, instead of being caught up coincidently with it or after it. Hence, when Christ our life is manifested, it is written that then shall we also be manifested with Him in glory {Col. 3:4} (not translated to heaven then or subsequently).

Plainly then the Thessalonians had not the least suspicion that Christ had come and taken up the apostle or any one else, nor is this at all the delusion which the apostle is refuting, but what was not at all unnatural for any like them ignorant of the mutual relation of His coming and His day. They feared that that day of darkness and clouds had dawned; and the agitating influence of this the false teachers sought to bring on their souls, availing themselves of a pretended communication of the apostle. We can readily understand that the Christians then were troubled by a panic which has often repeated itself since, even to our own day. One sees in the Old Testament the judgment of a city or land (as in Isa. 13 or 19) called the day of the Lord on Babylon or Egypt. So might these unscrupulous teachers seek to use the afflictions of the Thessalonians, which even in his former epistle the apostle feared might furnish an occasion to the tempter. And this apparently they did. See (they might have said) what troubles overwhelm us! It is the day of the Lord already begun. The apostle corrects this -- first, by the motive of our hope, the Lord’s coming to gather us unto Himself; and, secondly, by elaborate proof, not that His “coming” may not be at any time, but that the “day or appearance of His coming” cannot be till the apostasy (for it is much more than “a falling away”) and the man of sin be revealed, which that day is to judge. It was now for the first time 36 to be inferred that the coming precedes the appearance of His coming, 37 as it was afterwards still more manifestly shown in Rev. 4 compared with Rev. 19, 20.

And this is corroborated by every word in detail, as well as by the general issue. See the violent but ineffectual effort to get rid of the force of ἐνέστηκεν the word so unfaithfully rendered “is at hand” by our translators, and even so inconsistently with their own rendering of it in every other occurrence of the same form. Indeed Mr. E. is obliged to own its proper meaning to be “is present” But, argues he, so it is with πάρεστιν, and such similar words. “They are words which in every language that I am acquainted with are susceptible if the context requires it, of the meaning, close at hand.” And then he illustrates the case, with his usual ingenuity, from the language of common life, which he endeavors to confirm by John 11:28-30.

But it is not true that the meaning of “presence,” is interchangeable with mere “nearness” in any language; they are different ideas, and are expressed by distinct words. We have seen that the New Testament occurrences of the word ἐνέστηκεν do not sustain this notion; nor do any in the LXX, any more than the instances in Liddell and Scott’s Lexicon, as the Dean of Rochester has allowed to me. It is wrong therefore to give pending, save in the sense of present, begun, if “pending” will bear it. It is time present, not instant. And so of all exact versions now, German or of English, as of Meyer, Dean Alford, Bishop Ellicott, &c.

But what strikes one as peculiar is, that Mr. E.’s illustration and use of John 11 proves nothing, save against his argument. For, according to his own showing, the person or thing had actually removed from the place where either had been, had traversed the space that separated, and had arrived at the place where the person was whom it was proposed to reach, though not to the precise spot on which he stood. To take the case used, my friend would have really steamed from England (or France, as it might be), crossed the sea, and entered Guernsey roads, when one might exclaim of the packet [ship], Here she is! So in the scripture cited: our blessed Lord had left where He stayed two days after receiving the message, had traversed the way which constituted the distance thence to Bethany, and had reached the locality or district, though not yet in the village.

Now it was precisely the error of those who were then misleading the Thessalonians to say that the day of the Lord had thus come, ἐνέστηκεν. Mr. E. wishes to show that they taught it would soon be coming, or was impending, a sense in which neither πάρεστιν nor ἐνέστηκεν is ever used in any correct writing, sacred or profane. A vast change is supposed to have taken place in both cases, which it is his thought and aim to deny. There is therefore not the least ground for his reasoning in the text or the illustration. They destroy his own argument, and leave our translators wholly unjustified in rendering ἐνέστηκεν “is at hand.” Even if the laxity of common life allowed of our saying, Here he is! when he had not begun to move from a distant land (which is the true way of stating the question, not when he had come to the immediate neighborhood though not the exact spot), how strange that such looseness of language should be transferred to an apostle’s inspired repudiation of an error!

Nor is there, so far as I am acquainted with the subject,
the smallest ground from scripture to affirm that the day of the Lord includes the gathering of the saints to Christ, though Mr. E. ventured to say that clearly it is thus marked. Not so; the day of the Lord brings judgment on man’s evil on earth, and is never said to gather saints to Christ in heaven; and the comparison of 2 Thess. 2:1 and 8 proves the difference of “the coming” from “the manifestation of the coming” or day of the Lord. Where are the scriptures which connect the gathering of the saints to Christ with the day of the Lord? I know of none. It is assumption and error.

Again, it is unfounded that σαλευθήκειν ἀπὸ τοῦ νοὸς and θροείσθαι have the most distant reference to the excitement of hope, as the ordinary misinterpretation implies; they mean just such disturbances of mind as in Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7. Mr. E. says “not as meaning frightened”; but far better scholars than he say the express contrary.

The verb θροείσθαι, derived from ΘΡΩΕΙΜΑΙ, and connected with τρέω; compare Donald. [Cratyl. sec. 272] properly implies ‘clamorem tumultuantem edere’ (Schott), and thence by a natural transition that terrified state (τάραγε (ζεοθεί ζοναρας), which is associated with, and gives rise to, such kind of outward manifestations” (Bp. Ellicott’s Comm. in loc.).

To suppose the Christian’s joy in the anticipation of meeting the Son of God, the Bridegroom of the bride, to be expressible by the same terms as those of perturbation or alarm which might be produced by hearing of wars and rumors of wars, affliction, tribulation, &c., is not to me the evidence of a sound judgment in divine things, but of the reverse. And I trust the Lord was better to my late friend ere he was called away than to leave him under that lack of peace and happy expectation and rest in His love, which his last sentence discloses. Indeed it is the conviction that this confusion of the day with the coming of the Lord is as destructive to the soul’s enjoyment of the Lord, as it is to real intelligence in scripture and notably in the prophetic word, which makes one feel the importance of showing how it wrought even in so pious a soul as the late Mr. E. B. Elliott. Need there be any delicacy now in using his words for the profit of the living?

**Letter II**

Sept. 5.

Dear Friend,

You ask, with the emphasis of italics to the question, where are “the scriptures which connect the gathering of the saints to Christ with the day of the Lord?” I should suppose 1 Cor. 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16; may be regarded as obvious examples in point. It is to the day of our Lord Jesus Christ that the Corinthians are to be preserved blameless. It is at the day of Christ that the Philippian converts are to be the boast of the apostle Paul. And so on.

Thus I see nothing in your remarks to alter my opinion as to the παρουσία of Christ, the day of Christ or day of the Lord being used with reference to the same era in 2 Thess. 2.

Nor, again, do I see reason from your remarks to doubt of the parallelism of παρεστί και εκενσίν, or of the θροείσθαι in Matt. 24 with the same word in 2 Thess. 2:2. And the argument you urge, from the fact of unstable men having been drawn by heretical teachers into heresy, to the fact of faithful believing men, like the Thessalonian Christians, being seduced into grievous heresy, seems to me unmaintainable.

Thus, on the whole, I remain in the clear conviction that the usual view of the apostle’s meaning in 2 Thess. 2:2 is the correct one.

But, dear friend, I like to dwell on the points in which we agree rather than on those on which we differ. I trust I may be found united with you in “the day of Christ.” And in that hope I beg you to believe me

Yours very sincerely,

E. B. Elliott.

We leave to-morrow morning. I write this, as I may not find you at home when I call to take leave. I return the books you were so kind as to lend me, with my thanks, retaining what I think you kindly allowed me to retain.

* * * * *

My remarks on the second letter need not be long. Not a single word in a single text referred to by Mr. E. connects the gathering of the saints to Christ with the day of the Lord. We have in 1 and 2 Cor. 1 their manifestation as unimpeachable in that day, and the apostle’s joy in them then, whatever the exercises and need of patient grace now. Still less does Phil. 1:6, 10 touch the question, which is rather Paul’s confidence in God’s completing in them the good work begun unto (or, as we say, for, and even against) that day; but not a hint of “gathering” them to Christ then. Again, Phil. 2:16 is the earnest desire of the devoted servant of Christ that the saints at Philippi should be a boast for him in Christ’s day that he had not run nor labored in vain. In short, the manifestation of our responsible walk and services, and hence the joy and reward of faithfulness will be in that day; but of our gathering to Christ in these texts (no doubt the most apt Mr. E. could find) not a whisper. To my mind the serious thing is the insensibility of such a man to their force. For the same confusion which made him imagine that these texts connect the gathering of the saints to Christ with the day of the Lord prevented him from even comprehending the bearing of 2 Thess. 2:1, as distinguished from 2 Thess. 2:2 and 8.

The argument I urged on Mr. E. from 2 Tim. 2 must have been somewhat to this effect. It is evident that later on Hymenaeus and Philetus, and the like, had, as to the truth, so far missed the mark as to say that the resurrection had taken place already. They probably resolved it into resurrection with Christ (or possibly “higher life”) as a present state, denying the true and blessed hope, and so had settled down into a life of ease, a millennium now, instead of awaiting Christ from and for heaven in suffering and testimony.
meanwhile. Thus was the faith of some overthrown. And so, in all likelihood, it may have been in Thessalonica. The misleaders were really bolder there, since they alleged the Spirit, nay, a word, and even apostolic letter, for the alarming impression that the day of the Lord had arrived. But it is as easy to conceive a quasi-spiritual or figurative force given to that day as to the resurrection, and real believers being upset by either. I can only suppose that Mr. E. did not take in the idea; else he must surely have admitted that the analogy is plain, and not maintainable only but rather irresistible, unless I greatly deceive myself.

One thing is certain, that, even among real scholars, not to speak of enlightened Christians, “the usual view” of the last clause of 2 Thess. 2:2 is now abandoned generally as incorrect and untenable in every point of view, Mr. E. being one of its latest defenders among men of any weight. The “usual view” had so filled my friend’s mind, that he never could get a clear apprehension of the overwhelming weight of proof against it. Another “usual view,” endorsed even by Hammond, Bishop Newton, Paley, and others, that the clause before the last means that the Thessalonians were misled through a misconstruction of the first epistle of the apostle is of less consequence but equally mistaken. It was a suppositional epistle, forged to convey the error that the day of the Lord was present. Such is the only meaning fairly deducible from the words, ἐπιστολής ὡς δὲ ἠμῶν, and so even Chrysostom, πεπλασμένην [ποι πρῶτην] ἐπιστολήν ἐπιδείκνυον ὡς ἀπὸ τοῦ Παύλου. (Comment. in Epp. Pauli, Hom. iii., v. 465, ed. Field.) As to this point the late Mr. G. S. Faber is quite right, I see, in his “Sacred Calendar,” iii. 436, 437.

Our proper hope is the Lord’s coming to receive us to Himself, and to be with Him in the Father’s house. We shall also appear with Him in glory, and reign with Him over the earth. But, in order to appear with Him when He appears in glory, scripture shows that we shall be caught up to join Him above. Then that a very grave work in judgment, but not without mercy, for Jews and Gentiles, proceeds on earth, while we are with Him there, is taught in Rev. 4-19, before He appears, and we with Him, in glory and to judgment.
Part Six:

Miscellaneous Texts and Subjects

Israel’s Millennial Temple
(Ezekiel 40-48)

In the last section of the Book of Ezekiel the orderly arrangement of the restored nation of Israel is foretold along with a view of the sanctuary of Jehovah in the midst of the holy city, Jerusalem, then to be seen in all its millennial beauty and holiness.

And I think there is no reasonable ground whatever for assuming that hitherto these prophetic chapters have in any degree been fulfilled. I deny entirely that they have any direct application to the Christian Church. I also deny altogether that the chapters may be understood to have what is called a spiritual significance.

In these denials I am not referring to the whole of Ezekiel’s writings. Truths having a general application are found in previous chapters. For example, Jehovah’s promise that He will sprinkle clean water upon the house of Israel, give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them (Ezek. 36:25, 26) is of wide application, including the present day. Indeed, I have sought to preach the gospel from it, although I have not attempted to do so from the valley of dry bones!

As to these closing chapters of Ezekiel, I am convinced that there is no possible way in which they can be applied to the spiritual blessings that by faith we have found to be embodied in the church, that is, found to be in Christ Jesus for the possession of the church. And I will give reasons to support this view.

Jehovah’s New Temple in Jerusalem.

The central feature of these last visions granted to Ezekiel was the return of the Shechinah of Jehovah to dwell again in the midst of His people in Jerusalem (Ezek 43:1-6). As related in his first chapters, the prophet had seen the abandonment of the city of Jerusalem as the abiding-place of that glory on earth. Now he holds the return of the glory-cloud of the God of Israel “from the way of the east,” a sight never known in this world since the day of the captivity of Jehovah’s people in Babylon.

The prophet began to see these “visions of God” when among the captives by the river Chebar in the land of the Chaldeans (Ezek. 1:1-3). Ezekiel says that in these visions “brought He me into the land of Israel,” that is, Ezekiel was merely transported there in spirit. The apostle John speaks similarly in the Revelation: “I became in the Spirit on the Lord’s day”; “he carried me away in spirit to “a desert”; “he carried me away in the Spirit, and set me on a great and high mountain” (Rev. 1:10; 17:33; 21:10). So we may say that it was the power of the Spirit of God that brought Ezekiel from the land of the Chaldeans to the land of Israel (Ezek. 40:2).

Then we learn that Ezekiel was shown a man who measured the various parts of the buildings the prophet saw. He names the outer court and the inner court, the wall and the windows, and the chambers, with which the structure was abundantly supplied. We have also the porch with two tables on one side and two on the other for slaughtering the burnt-offering, the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering, with other tables, making eight in all. Details are also given of the apparatus for other sacrificial service (Ezek. 40:5-43).

At the close of this chapter, we learn of the accommodation in the building made for the priests who had charge of the house and of the altar. There were two chambers or cells, one at the north gate and one at the south gate. The prophet was told what branch of the Aaronic family will occupy these cells for the millennial temple-service.

The sons of Zadok will be chosen in that day for approach to Jehovah in ministry (Ezek. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11). This was the branch of Aaron’s line that came forward in the day of David (1 Chron. 12:28). For hundreds of years the wrong line had usurped the high-priesthood. Eli belonged to the younger branch of Aaron’s family which unlawfully possessed themselves of the high-priesthood in spite of Jehovah’s solemn promise to Phinehas (Num. 25:12, 13). But there was a restoration in the person of Zadok in David and Solomon’s time, for Jehovah is faithful in spite of man’s failure and enmity. And in the latter day of which Ezekiel speaks, we find the sons of Zadok will reappear in the priestly line, and Jehovah’s original “covenant of peace” with Phinehas will be maintained (Ezek 40:44-46).

Is this merely a Symbolic Vision?

Now I take it the language of this chapter is not merely figurative in meaning. There will be literal priests of Aaronic descent who will offer literal sacrifices as stated. Whether people understand it or not, the word of God on this matter is perfectly plain. Difficulties only arise because so many reason solely from the Christian thoughts and Christian
truths. But is God to have none but Christians in His purposes and future dealings?

Further, is not God to be allowed the liberty of acting according to His own counsels and plans for His own people, whether earthly or heavenly? Is it not possible for Him in the future to accept sacrifices and offerings in an appointed place? I am convinced that it would be rank apostasy for a Christian to offer sacrifices and burn incense. On this ground, many feel that those chapters in Ezekiel ought not to be taken literally for the church, the Christian body. This is true; but why should they not be for the nation of Israel when converted and settled in the holy land?

When the nation repents and receives the Messiah Whom they crucified, but Whom God has glorified, they will no longer pervert but obey what God has established by His word. The sacrifices to them will be memorials of Christ’s one sacrifice, the burnt-offering from one point of view, the meal-offering from another, the sin-offering another, and so on. I take it, therefore, that these scriptures in their strict literal import apply not to the Christian assembly, but to Israel in the future, and indeed to the Gentile nations of that day also.

The New Testament scriptures that are often used to deny this interpretation are those addressed exclusively to present day Christians. They say that the Bible says, There is no more offering for sin (Heb. 10:18, 26). But this scripture applies to Christians not to the Jews. The Jews will have the remission of their sins, but they will have also sacrifices appointed as reminders of the one effectual sacrifice, of Christ, offered and accepted once for all.

I know it has been said that the offering of millennial sacrifices would be a going back in the ways of God. But this is not true. The sacrifices of Israel in the future will differ fundamentally from those in the past. Those of old were types of what Christ was coming to do sacrificially, but in those future days they will be the appointed types of what Christ has accomplished by His single sacrificial offering and death.

Thus, the establishment of sacrificial testimony to the atonement made by Christ through His crucifixion and death will ensure a continual tribute of praise to the Messiah of Israel throughout His millennial reign. The revival of sacrifices and feasts in Jerusalem will not be a retrograde step in the divine dispensations for this earth, but will rather mark the climax of His dealings with the present heavens and earth, when “all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto Jehovah” (Psa. 22:27).

Then, after the measurements of the court and the porch (Ezek. 40:47-49), dimensions of various parts of the temple and the sanctuary are given in the next two chapters (41, 42:20). Much silver and gold were used in the construction of the tabernacle in the wilderness, and of the temple by Solomon; but both metals are absent from Ezekiel’s description of the future temple. This absence, however, does not absolutely imply that neither metal will be used.

In Ezek. 41:22, it is said of the table of wood upon which the showbread was displayed before Jehovah, “This is the table which is before Jehovah.” (This designation also occurs in Mal. 1:7, 12). In Ezek. 44:7, the fat and the blood of the sacrifices are spoken of as Jehovah’s “bread.”

In ch. 43, Ezekiel records his vision of the return of Jehovah to the earthly city of His choice. Having described his sight of the temple-buildings (40-42), he now describes the glory of God coming to fill them. “And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east. . . . And the glory of Jehovah came into the house by the way of the gate whose front was toward the east. . . . and behold the glory of Jehovah filled the house” (Ezek. 43:2-5).

Moreover, the prophet learns that this restoration of Jehovah’s presence will not be of temporary duration, but will last for ever: “Son of man, this is the place of My throne, and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever; and the house of Israel shall no more defile My holy name” (v. 7).

Details follow of the “law” of the house, as well as of the altar and its ordinances. It is confirmed that of the Levitical priests, those of the seed of Zadok will be chosen by Jehovah to draw near to Him and to minister unto Him (v. 19). For the sacrifices and consecration offerings will be required before the burn-offerings are offered and blood sprinkled upon the altar for seven days. “Upon the eighth day and onwards the priests shall offer your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord Jehovah” (vv. 8-27).

A Prince of the House of David

At first, the prophet saw the gate open, but now he sees it closed. And he brought me back toward the outer gate of the sanctuary which looked toward the east; and it was shut” (Ezek. 44:1). By His own sovereign right Jehovah, the God of Israel, had entered the sanctuary to dwell there. And the glory of Jehovah filled the house of Jehovah.” By Jehovah’s command, the gate was to be shut, and no one was to enter by it, save the prince, who should sit in it to eat bread before Jehovah; “he shall enter by the way of the porch of the gate, and shall go out by the way of the same” (Ezek. 44:2, 3).

It is important to observe that Israel in the millennial kingdom will have a prince upon earth who will go in and out of the sanctuary. Who is this prince? Certainly not the Lord Jesus, the Messiah Himself. He will be the earthly representative of Jehovah and His Christ, and of Him we learn more in chs. 45 and 46. Doubtless he will be a direct descendant of David, God’s chosen king of Israel. In ch. 46, he is associated with the people in their sacrificial offerings to Jehovah.

This chapter to the end (Ezek. 44:4-31) deals with the ordinances of the house and the priesthood. The Lord Jehovah rebukes the iniquities of the past in connection with His sanctuary where above all other places on earth His holiness should have been upheld. The past failures of the Levites and the priesthood are recounted as a solemn warning
for the future. Sundry regulations are also given for the conduct of the priests, the sons of Zadok, who will be chosen to present Jehovah the fat and the blood of the sacrifices (vv. 15-31).

Ezek. 45 introduces a feature in the division of the holy land during the millennium, which will be a new one. “When the land is divided by lot for inheritance, a portion shall be presented to Jehovah for a heave-offering. This will be the “holy portion of the land.” It will be reserved for the service of the priests who do the service of the sanctuary (Ezek. 45:1-4).

Further details follow of the future agreements to be observed for the various services of the sanctuary (Ezek. 45:5-17), and these are followed by details concerning the sacrificial offerings to be made at the various feasts of the year (Ezek. 45:8-46:24). There were to be offerings on the first day of the first month in the year to purge the sanctuary. On the fourteenth day of the same month they must keep the Passover, a feast of unleavened bread for seven days; and the prince also must offer the appointed sacrifices (Ezek. 45:8-24). On the fifteenth of the seventh month the feast of tabernacles was to be kept with the appropriate offerings (Ezek. 45:25). No reference is made to the day of atonement on the tenth of the seventh month.

It is remarkable that no mention is made of the feast of weeks or Pentecost. Its absence from the list of feasts seen in Ezekiel’s visions is an indication that it relates to what will be Jewish and not to what is Christian. The result of the Spirit’s descent at Pentecost was that believers from every nationality were baptized into one body, national distinction disappearing. But in the millennium, though the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, Israel and the Gentiles will retain their separate nationalities. This is beyond question, but the absence of the feast of weeks from Ezekiel’s list is often overlooked.

In Ezek. 46, the visions seen by the prophet relate to the prince, to the people, and to the priests in their worship. The ritual for the new moons and the Sabbaths is also revealed.

The rules applying to the prince are noticeable. In Ezek. 44:3, he has the right of entering and of leaving by the gate of the sanctuary, and also of sitting there “to eat bread before Jehovah.” No one else uses this gate but himself, for he is the prince of the house of David (cp. Ezek. 44:2-3). But on the feast days he goes in for worship with the people in order that he should not exalt himself overmuch. “The prince shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate . . . and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate” (Ezek. 46:2). He thus takes his place with the people of Israel in rendering homage to Jehovah.

It is evident that we could not apply this regulation for the prince to the Lord Jesus without irreverence. But the prince is His delegate, and in that office he is alone, yet as one of the chosen nation of Israel he takes his part in the offerings and sacrifices of the people.

Then again, the same distinction is observable in the regulation for any disposal of the prince’s property (Ezek. 46:16-18). The prince’s inheritance shall be to his sons, and shall remain in the family. If he bestows any property to his servants, it must return to the family in the year of jubilee. It is impossible to think of such a rule applying to the Lord Jesus. It applies, however, throughout the millennium kingdom to His representative on the earth, who will be a scion of the house of David discovered and brought forward by Jehovah, as He discovered the sons of Zadok in the Aaronic line, and rewarded their faithfulness to Him (Ezek. 48:11).

Lastly, the prophet sees the cooking places or kitchens where the priests will boil the sin and the trespass offerings, and bake the oblations for the sacrificial meals of the people (Ezek. 46:19-24).

The Flow of Healing Waters

Ezekiel is next shown a remarkable phenomenon in the land of Israel which will characterize the introduction of millennial blessedness with its mitigation of the primeval curse (Ezek. 47:1-14). The prophet sees a miraculous stream of waters issuing from the threshold of the house and flowing eastward towards the Dead Sea, changing the face of the countryside from barren desolation to luxuriant fertility (Ezek. 47:1-9).

Previously to Ezekiel’s vision, the prophet Joel had foretold the coming of these miraculous waters: “a fountain shall come forth from the house of Jehovah, and shall water the valley of Shittim” (Joel 3:19). A later prophet also spoke of the same millennial marvel: “It shall come to pass in that day that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the hinder (western) sea: in summer and in winter shall it be” (Zech. 14:8). Like material blessing will of course spread from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. The Dead Sea and its neighborhood represent symbolically the utter ruin which man by his sin brought into the world bestowed upon him as his dominion (Gen. 1:28-30). But “the wages of sin is death.”

However, then “it shall come to pass that every living thing which moveth, whithersoever the double river shall come, shall live” (Ezek. 47:9). The fish of the sea shall also be multiplied. But not every part of the earth will be fully restored by the “healing waters.” “Its marshes and its pools shall not be healed; they shall be given up to salt” (Ezek. 47:11). The fullness and absolute perfection of the new heavens and the new earth in the eternal state will not be realized during the millennium. Here we read of the “great sea” and of “the great multitude of fish”; but no sea will exist in the eternal state when God will tabernacle with men; the present earth with its land and sea will then have passed away for ever (Rev. 21:1-3).

A New Distribution of the Tribes

The close of the Book of Ezekiel describes a fresh division of the land among the twelve tribes of Israel (Ezek. 47:13-48:35). In the millennial kingdom, the tribal inheritances
Note on the Same Subject

The future temple will have double-leaved doors instead of a screen, and a veil then renewed. Yet the sons of Israel and even the prince have no entry into the house only the priests. There is no question of going within. Still the differences are marked and instructive. There will be no evening lamp; for Jehovah their light is for ever risen upon Zion. No candlestick is needed any more, but the altar within is Jehovah’s table; and no high-priest ministers. There is no Pentecost any more, for it is already consummated in the church. There is no Feast of Trumpets, for the earthly people have already been summoned and gathered; and there is no longer an Atonement day for the work was done, and the people had afflicted their souls when they looked to Him Whom they pierced. The Red Heifer disappears. But the Passover abides as the memorial of redemption, and the feast of Tabernacles will mark their place and blessing. The altar of holocausts or burnt offerings has an absolutely central place, though of course outside the sanctuary; for seven days atonement is made for it; and on the eighth onward the priests offer Israel’s burnt offerings and peace offerings. Sabbaths and new moons are still celebrated as witnesses of rest come and of Israel’s regaining their place. No table with the twelve loaves is seen, for Israel’s tribes were them selves before Him; no candlestick, for the True Light was seen. In the Holiest is no sign; no ark is needed; Jehovah fills the house alone.

From unpublished MSS. Taken from The Bible Monthly, vol. 26 (1952).

The Little Horn of Daniel 7

Q. -- Can the little Horn of Dan. 7 be the last Roman Emperor? Is he not rather the Jewish Anti-Christ? On the one hand the ten Horns are not the beast, nor is the little Horn which comes up among them, and destroys three of the first Horns. And as the Beast was destroyed because of the great words the Horn spoke, their distinction is clear on the other. Taking the little horn as the Wilful King, or the Anti-Christ, he is the Beast’s minion, and corresponds more with the Second Beast of Rev.13. He has, all cunning (eyes like those of man), pleases the Beast, and represents him, though a distinct personage. (condensed from) L.P. A. -- It is quite true that John’s Anti-Christ (or wilful king of Dan. 9:36 et seq.), being the subordinate of the Beast as to earthly power, is the Second Beast or false prophet [of Rev. 13:11-18], the highest pretender to spiritual eminence and energy, answering to the man of sin in 2 Thess. 2. They are, one no less than the other, worshiped, and they perish together in the lake of fire (Rev. 19). But the Roman empire, or first Beast of Rev. 13, has a chief; and this clearly the little Horn, which came up after the ten, dispossessed three, and became the dominant power, to which the rest gave their kingdoms as vassals. Dan. 7 alone gives the historic details. It is the once little Horn become great, whose pride and blasphemies brought judgment on the imperial Beast as a whole. In the Revelation, which gives character rather than history, it is the Beast that said and did what its last ruler said and did. Compare Dan. 7:8-11, 20, 21, 24, 25, with Rev. 13:4-7. This solves the difficulty. The Revelation therefore does not distinguish this last Horn as such like Daniel, but attributes to the Beast in its last form what Daniel predicated historically of the little Horn. So true is this, that Rev. 17:11 identifies the Beast or Roman empire with the eighth resurrection head, which answers to Daniel’s little Horn; and in v. 12 takes no notice of the then fallen Horns. John speaks of the characteristic ten Horns. There is the clearest guard against confounding him with the second beast, the lawless king in Judea (Anti-Christ).

There is no doubt that the Roman imperial Horn is said to have “eyes like the eyes of a man”; but this only symbolizes his extraordinary intelligence and insight humanly. The second Beast pretends to give breath and speech to the inanimate, as well as to call fire from heaven in the sight of men -- the crucial proof of Jehovah as God against Baal in Elijah’s day. Again, it is certain that the Roman prince in Dan. 9 causes sacrifice and oblation to cease in the temple; so that his thinking to change times and laws was quite consistent with Dan. 7, instead of bringing the Anti-Christ into what belongs to the Roman power. But as they are confederates, it is easy to identify them mistakenly.

We must also beware of the still more prevalent confusion of the little Horn of Dan. 8 with either the Emperor in Rome or the Anti-Christ in Jerusalem. He is the
enemy of both, being “the Assyrian” of the prophets in general, and the “king of the north,” whose last doings and end we read of in Dan. 11:40-45. He is destroyed no less signally than the Beast and the False Prophet soon after their awful catastrophe.

*The Bible Treasury, New Series 2:32.*

**Daniel 7:1, 6, 17, 24**

The book of yours which I have by me is, *Lectures on the Book of Daniel*, second edition.

Q. 1. I cannot reconcile some passages in it with Scripture.

On page 103 I read:

“The first was like a lion and had eagle’s wings.” There, beyond question, we have the empire of Babylon (and on page 33) Babylon was first made an empire of in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, who here includes, as it were, those that were to follow.

Surely the description in Dan. 7:2, 3, “... behold the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from the other” in no way applies to Nebuchadnezzar’s accession to the throne of Babylon. Was not his father Nabopolassar king of Babylon before him?

Q. 2. In pages 106 and 107 Alexander’s (the Grecian) kingdom is represented (you say) in the vision by the Leopard which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads. [You add] There you have not so much what was found in Alexander himself, but rather in his successors.

Why do you say so? The scriptures must be correct. The leopard appeared with four heads, not with one which was replaced by four, like Alexander’s one kingdom which was divided into four! The interpretation of this vision in Dan. 7:17 (“These great beasts which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth”) was given within some three years of the fall of the Babylonian empire. And yet you say,

“The first was like a lion and had eagle’s wings.” There beyond question we have the empire of Babylon (p. 103).

The interpretation given to Daniel says “shall arise,” while the Babylonian empire began (p. 33) in Nebuchadnezzar some (?) sixty-six years before.

J. S. O.

A. 1. The book of Daniel is itself the nearest and weightiest help to explain the difficulties of its several parts. Thus Dan. 2 and 7 reflect light one on another. There is a manifest unity in the colossal image seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, which has its answer in “the four great beasts” that “came up from the sea” in Daniel’s vision during the first year of Belshazzar’s reign. In the visions all were thus seen at once, though in historical fact they were to succeed each other; as the rest of the chapter would plainly enough indicate. It was not a question of what Babylon had been, or of Nebuchadnezzar’s succeeding Nabopolassar, but of God’s gift of world-empire to these four successive powers. They begin with Nebuchadnezzar, and are terminated by the judgment to be executed on the final form of the fourth or Roman empire by the Stone cut without hands, i.e. God’s kingdom wielded by the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven. Nabopolassar was doubtless king of Babylon; but in no way head of the image or imperial system which commenced with his son Nebuchadnezzar, to whom God gave this place expressly. He, not his father, could say though arrogantly, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built?” as he built enormous besides. His foreign conquests were great, yet less momentous than his energetic home policy. But his overthrow of the Jewish kingdom in its last stronghold was the turning-point, and in him the Gentile imperial system began. Dan. 2:37, 38 affords light clear enough for beginning with Nebuchadnezzar and excluding his father or any other before him; as no reasonable mind doubts the parallelism of the two chapters. Compare Jer. 27, Ezek. 12.

A. 2. Here the comparison of Dan. 8:21, 22 simply and fully solves the difficulty as to Dan. 7:6. So one must say because scripture so explains. The later vision of Dan. 8 beast on important details of the second and third powers, laying aside all reference to the first and fourth in Dan. 7. “It is written again” is of the greatest moment when “It is written” is misapplied. Scripture is everywhere consistent as well surely correct. The fourth beast appears with ten horns; yet we know from other scriptures that these mean ten kings at the very close of the last empire, in no way that they were so found when that empire first began. The same remark applies to the four heads of the leopard or Macedonian empire. Each vision gives characteristic differences without in the least implying that they all appeared from the start. Other or subsequent statements correct such an inference as unfounded and contrary to fact.

So “shall arise” in Dan. 7:17 must in fairness be taken as a whole, connecting the three powers to come with the Babylonian though already in being and tottering to its fall. To construe the words with such rigid technicality as to exclude the Babylonish empire from answering to the lion with eagle’s wings is, not a difficulty for my exposition, but really a setting of Dan. 7 in opposition to Dan. 2 and a groundless upturning of the plain fact. From a full consideration of these scriptures I hold that truth calls one to interpret the “four kings” which “shall arise” as comprising the beginning to the end of these earthly bestial systems, but not so as to exclude the first beast from Nebuchadnezzar’s day; for this would set scripture against scripture and thus disproves itself as erroneous. “These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.” One cannot fairly use this to deny retrospect, but must include Babylon from Nebuchadnezzar. For the object is to give the imperial system relative unity; whilst “the first” and “another,” &c. in vv. 4-7, gave also succession adequately,
as indeed had been done yet more plainly in Dan. 2. Dan. 2:11, 12 contrast a prolonging of the three previous beasts after the loss of dominion; whereas the fourth is utterly destroyed when it ceases to be an imperial power at the close. Scripture therefore sustains the statements questioned, without meddling with the ordinary version of the passages; it shows that the difficulty lies rather in divorcing one text from another, instead of receiving all. Scripture cannot be broken. The prophetic manner also must be borne in mind. *A priori* expectations of what or how God should reveal are sure to be disappointed. Our blessing is to own His wisdom and goodness in what He gives or withholds. The Holy Spirit, as He wrote all in view of Christ’s glory, so works in giving us to expound aright just go far as we have His glory in view, the true safeguard of explaining aright.

Even the incredulous Gibbon in his Letter to Bp. Hurd (Hurd’s Work, V. pp. 365, 366) says,

The four empires are clearly delineated, the expedition of Xerxes into Greece, the rapid conquest of Persia by Alexander, his untimely death without posterity, the division of his vast monarchy into four kingdoms, one of which is mentioned by name, their various wars and intermarriages, the persecution of Antiochus, the profanation of the temple, and the invincible arms of the Romans are described with as much perspicuity in the prophecies of Daniel, as in the histories of Justin and Diodorus. From such a perfect resemblance the artful infidel would infer that both were alike composed after the event.

He argued that the author of the Book of Daniel was too well informed of the revolutions of the Persian and Macedonian empires, supposed to have happened long after his death; and that he was too ignorant of the transactions in his own times: in a word, that he was too exact for a prophet, and too fabulous for a contemporary historian.

It is enough to reply that the book is no less distinct in Dan. 9 about Christ’s death and the destruction of Jerusalem; and that the alleged contemporaneous history is declared to be at “the time of the end” when Israel are to be delivered, and therefore, as future, necessarily unfulfilled prophecy. Hence, to say “fabulous” is not only premature but ignorant, as it will be surely proved to be the baseless scepticism of Gibbon, in the wake of Porphyry. But even they took no exception to the Four Empires as laid down in Dan. 2, 7, and saw no such force in Dan. 7:2, 3, 6, or 17, as to enfeeble that interpretation. Now there was no empire of Rome until long after the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, where it pleases unbeliever to imagine the writing of the book of Daniel. Yet the book not only speaks of a fourth or Roman empire, but dwells with peculiar fulness on its last phase, not yet accomplished, when its blasphemy is to draw down the holy vengeance of the Son of man. Then will follow, not the white throne judgment when the wicked dead shall arise from their graves for judgment, but the kingdom which He shall previously exercise over all peoples, nations, and languages. This therefore clearly presupposes the earth, when it shall be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea. Indeed even before that kingdom the latter part of Dan. 11 shows us “the time of the end,” in which Antiochus Epiphanes has no place whatever. But three kings figure: “the king” (Dan. 11:36-40) in the land, who will be so distinct from the then “king of the north” and the “king of the south,” that they will both attack him at the same time. Dan. 11:41-45 are occupied exclusively with “the king of the north” in that future. day, who becomes an especial object of divine wrath as “the king,” we know from elsewhere, will have been before him. Thus minutely writes the prophet on the solemn crisis at “the end of the age,” which future detail is clearly after the gap where Antiochus Epiphanes and the Maccabees are done with.

*The Bible Treasury* 15:367, 368.

**The Little Horns of Daniel 7 and 8: Not the Same**

Q. -- J. C. asks whether the little horn of Dan. 8 is distinct from that of Dan. 7.

A. -- First, the very language differs. The prophet, who wrote in Aramaic from ch. 2:4, returned to Hebrew after ch. 7. The course of the four world-powers is given in a most instructive two-fold form, one Nebuchadnezzar’s vision (2), the other Daniel’s (7), with corresponding differences, in the language of the first empire, the captor of Judah. The chapters between contribute important moral features needed to fill up the divinely given picture. From Dan. 8. we receive special details which concern the Jews, which are accordingly given in Hebrew.

Secondly, Dan. 8 deals with the second and third of the world-powers, Med.-Persia, and Javan or Greece the first great ruler of which was to have his vast kingdom broken into four in due time after his death, and of course with inferior power. One of these was to meddle disastrously with the Jews and their religion and worship above all, whether in the type that is fulfilled, or in the antitype of the latter time “when the transgressors are come to the full.”

Thirdly, the empire of Babylon, the lion-like beast with eagle’s wings, had a unity peculiar to itself. The Med.-Persian (a bear in ch. 7, a ram in ch. 8 with two high horns of which the higher came up last) answers truly and solely to the second of these world-powers, which, fierce and devouring in general, was mild and generous toward the Jews, as indeed was the notable horn of the Macedonian power, Alexander the Great. In this third empire the marked and settled partition after its founder’s death was four-fold, which no historian can question.

But the no less marked division of the fourth or Roman power is into ten horns, of course contemporary, with one small at its rise which plucks up three by the roots, as remarkable for its intelligence as for its pride and
blasphemous audacity. Here however we are in presence of that which awaits its fulfilment, even admitting a partial application to past history. For that horn by its lawlessness brings on, not providential loss of dominion as in the case of the earlier beasts, but direct, distinctive, and divine judgment at the appearing of God’s kingdom in the person of the Son of man. How can these things be? The Revelation answers by the rising again of the fourth or Roman empire, when its imperial head (slain unto death) is healed to the wonder of the whole world (Rev. 13:3), the beast that was, and is not (its present negation), and shall be present, having emerged from the abyss. For it will be the brief destined hour of the dragon’s wrath, power, and authority. Here also is shown that the Roman beast had distinctively seven successive forms of government or heads, besides (at the close, if not before also) ten contemporaneous horns or kings. Cp. Rev. 17:8-12 with Dan. 7.

Clearly then it is no question in Dan. 8 of the Roman power of ch. 7, whose last horn, little at first, greater afterwards, is to wield and direct the whole force of the empire, so as by his blasphemies to meet destructive judgment from God. He will be the immediate precursor of the Son of Man’s coming in his kingdom. Even the unspiritual Josephus could not but see this, though he was prudent enough to be reticent on a future so repulsive to his Roman patrons. But Dan. 8 speaks not of the west but of the east, even of the Graeco-Syrian king dom and its persecuting profanation in the person of Antiochus Epiphanes, of whom we have ample details in Dan. 11:21-31. Indeed the prediction is so exact as to surpass what any ancient historian extant furnishes; so much so that the heathen Porphyry betook himself to the same refuge of unbelief which the destructive critics of late days affect -- the pretense of a writer in Maccabean times, who personated Daniel in Babylon! The vision in Dan. 8:9-14 dwells on what is now history; the interpretation, in 23-25, mainly on what is yet to be fulfilled.

It is well to observe that Dan. 8:11 and the first half of 12 are really a parenthesis. The change of gender “he,” faithfully owned in the A. V., is slighted in the R. V. Its aim seems to have been to make the personality stronger, and here therefore to refer rather to the antitype than to the historical horn, which before and after the parenthesis is called “it.” In the interpretation nothing is said of the “2300 evenings-mornings,” or 1150 days, and of treading down the sanctuary, which may therefore be accomplished already. This period is known to be approximately near: none can deny its absolute exactness, of which the believer is sure. Prophecy interprets history, not the converse. The one is absolutely reliable, as from God; the other imperfect at best, often partial and prejudiced, too often adverse to the truth. The historical horn did not play the Solomonic part of “understanding dark sentences” to deceive the Jews, reserved for the antitype, who is also to be “mighty, but not by his own power.” This can hardly be said of Antiochus Epiphanes. The future apostate ruler of Turkey in Asia, the enemy of Israel, will be sustained by a mightier monarch still farther north. See Ezek. 38, 39.

As to unfulfilled prophecy, superstition (slave of tradition) is dull and dark, rationalism is blind and hostile to God. Superstition is not faith and therefore incapable of understanding beforehand; rationalism is in principle antagonistic to the truth, for it denies that prophecy is ever specific, and especially on the remote future. Hence, as superstition is unbelieving and unexercised, so rationalism offers nothing but futile interpretations to blot out the glorious future of God’s kingdom by any little earnest in the past. But this falls so short as to give the willing impression that the prophets exaggerated or lied, like the poets or politicians of the day. Who but the unintelligent could confound the little horn of Dan. 8 with that of ch. 7? or either the western or the north-eastern chief with the willful king, to reign at the time of the end in Palestine, described in Dan. 11:36-39? The last no doubt is the Antichrist, here viewed politically, in 2 Thess. 2 religiously as the man of sin opposed to the Man of righteousness, Who will appear from heaven to destroy him. There are many antichrists; but this does not justify the pretentious ignorance of scripture, which jumbles all three into Antiochus Epiphanes. For he was but a type of the final representative of that power, the enemy of the Antichrist whose ally is the last chief of the Roman empire: all to perish for ever in the day of Jehovah. 

The Bible Treasury 19:207, 208.

Daniel 8:14

Q. -- Dan. 8:14. The meaning of this verse is enquired; and the question is raised if the “2,300 evenings-mornings” apply to the desolation since the Roman destruction of Jerusalem under Titus.

F. F. T. (Dublin).

A. -- It helps to clear the book and its particular visions if we observe that the last Beast in Dan. 7 is the western Empire; and Rev. 11-13, 17 enables us to say the Roman Empire revived but pointedly distinguished from Babylon the Harlot, viewed as a great city as well as the great corruptress of Christendom. Here the Beast and the ten horns, his vassal kings, unite to destroy; but they are themselves destroyed by the Lamb when He returns with His glorified saints from heaven (Rev. 17:4, 19:14). No ingenuity can make these revealed facts fit into the Protestant interpretation, as I showed many years ago in reviewing the last edition of Mr. Elliott’s Horae Apoc. before he died.

One main defect of that hypothesis is that it neglects the final future crisis for the Jewish people and the land before the Lord appears in glory and judgment. Another is that the proper Christian and church hope is not appreciated by this school, but mixed up with the Jewish. The times and seasons, which wholly pertain to the earthly people, are misapplied to Christians. These are not of the world and are called to be ever expecting the Lord Jesus, to take them to
Himself and the Father’s house, before the unaccomplished measures of time begin to apply to the Jews and the powers of the world at the end of this age.

This chapter however brings to light a power in the east, not Roman, but from the Seleucid quarter of Alexander’s divided empire. And we have to distinguish the general vision of which v. 14 forms the close from the interpretation which deals with the future catastrophe and goes from v. 19 to v. 26. For the interpretations given by scripture add fresh light, and enable us to discriminate the part accomplished in Antiochus Epiphanes from the final enemy of Israel in the N.E. Of him we hear much in Dan. 9, “the king of the north” at the end, who is to be judged no less awfully than the Roman emperor of that day, and his antichristian colleague, the false prophet-king in the land. This N.E. power is the same predicted by “the Assyrian” of Isaiah, Micah, and other prophets.

There are no dates attached to Nebuchadnezzar’s vision of the four great Gentile empires raised up successively on the apostasy of the Jews, and set aside by the kingdom of God figured by the little Stone. But in the corresponding vision of the four Beasts, judged and superseded by the universal kingdom of the Son of man when the saints of the heavenly places appear, and the people of those saints, we have the well-known formula of “a time, times, and half a time,” i.e. three years and a half, during which times and laws will be given into the hand of their western enemy. Dan. 8. is occupied with the east, and “the daily” is taken away “by reason of transgression”; and the peculiar term occurs of “2,300 evenings-mornings,” which I see no reason to doubt was literally accomplished in Antiochus Epiphanes of whom we hear so much, in Dan. 11:21-32. But the special object is the enemy “at the last end of the indignation.” In Dan. 9 we have another sort of computation -- by “Weeks,” or periods of seven years; and there the Roman capture of Jerusalem is plainly set out, though in the general interval without date after the cutting off of the Messiah. But the last week, severed from the chain, awaits its completion in the doings of both the Western emperor and his eastern antagonist at the end of the age. In Dan. 11:36-39 the Antichrist (who is to reign over the land and be the object of attack “at the time of the end” to both the king of the south and the king of the north) is seen. And the last chapter gives a variety of dates but all bearing on that future crisis, our Lord in Matt. 24:15 directing particular attention to verse 11.

The Bible Treasury, New Series 1:319.

Translation of Daniel 9:26, 27

Q. -- Dan. 9:26, 27. Is Young’s version correct, or that of the A. and R. Versions? The latter substantially agree; but Young changes the sense by confounding Christ with the one who confirms in v. 27. Have the English translators forced the Hebrew? or is Young without warrant? I greatly desire information.

G. A. S. -- N. J., U. S. A.

A. -- There need be no hesitation in accepting the general sense of the A. V., modified by the Revisers. The article of reference is due to “sixty-two weeks,” after which Messiah was to be cut off and “have nothing,” as the Genevse E. V. had already rightly said. But the force of the next clause is utterly missed by Dr. R. Young. It really means, “And the people of the prince that shall come [in contrast with Messiah the Prince already come and cut off] shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood [or overflow], and even to the end war -- desolations determined. And he [the coming prince] shall confirm a covenant with the many [the apostate mass of the Jew] for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause sacrifice and oblation to cease; and because of sheltering [lit. wing of] abominations [or idols] a desolator, [shall be], even until the consumption and that determined shall be poured out upon the desolate.” So in fact the Roman people (not yet their coming prince) did come, and destroy the city and the temple [or holy place], followed by a flood of desolations on the guilty people and on Jerusalem for ages. But the time hastens, when the thread must be resumed and the last or postponed week of the 70 be accomplished. Then the coming Roman prince, in his incipient form, shall confirm covenant with the ungodly majority of the Jews, “the many,” but break it by putting down their worship, and protecting idolatry and the Antichrist as we know. from elsewhere. This will bring on the closing scenes of the Assyrian, or king of the north (Isa. 10, 28, 29; Dan. 11:40-45), “the desolator”; and the last word of predicted judgment will be accomplished on Jerusalem. The death of Messiah broke the chain; but that closing link has yet to be joined, and all will be fulfilled in due season. The attempt to foist in the gospel is baseless. To translate the last verse, as Wintle does, following ancient versions, may be grammatically possible, but is unaccountably harsh, if not absurd: “Yet one week shall make a firm covenant with many, and the midst of the week shall cause the sacrifice and the meat offering to cease” &c. With what propriety or even sense could “one week,” or its half, do these remarkable things? The coming Roman prince is to confirm a covenant with “the mass” of Jews for seven years; and then breaks it when half the time expires. How strange to attribute either to the Messiah! “The many rejected Him and shall receive the Antichrist. “Many” and “the many” are by no means to be confused in Daniel, any more than
elsewhere. Translators (the Revisers among the rest) have not heeded the distinction, nor have commentators generally.

It is the few, or the remnant, who receive the Messiah in faith, and in due time (when their wicked brethren, “the many” meet their doom) become the “Israel” that “shall be saved” (Rom. 11:26). This plainly and powerfully refutes the assumption that the last verse alludes to Christ’s covenant. It is rather a covenant with death and hell; as Isa. 28:15 also lets us know. This will be for seven years, but broken.

The Bible Treasury 20:255, 256.

Daniel 9:27

I believe that it is impossible legitimately to connect the death of the Messiah with the Covenant confirmed with the mass, or many, for one week (i.e. 7 years) in this passage: and that for several reasons. First, the Messiah was already regarded as “cut off” at the close of a previous division of the weeks, viz. after the first 7 + 62 = 69 weeks = 483 years. Secondly, the disastrous end of the city and the sanctuary is supposed to have come before the seventieth week begins. (Compare the conclusion of v. 26.) After the Messiah was cut off and before the last week, it will be noticed by the careful reader that there is an interval of indefinite length, filled up by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and a course of war and desolation which is not yet terminated. Thirdly, after all this, comes the last or seventieth week, which has to do with Antichrist as clearly as the first 69 weeks bring us down to Christ’s death, the interruption of the chain being left room for, and supplied in the latter part of verse 26. Fourthly, it is clear that when the Messiah has been cut off, another personage is spoken of as “the prince that shall come, whom it is absurd to confound with the Messiah, because it is His people who ravage the Jewish city and sanctuary: that is, it is a Roman prince, and not the promised Head of Israel. Fifthly, as this future prince of the Romans is the last person spoken of, it is most natural, unless adequate reasons appear to the contrary, to consider that verse 27 refers to him, and not to the slain Messiah: “and he shall confirm covenant” (not “the” covenant, as the margin shows). Sixthly, this is remarkably strengthened by the time for which the covenant is made (confirmed), namely, for seven years, which has, in my opinion, no sense if applied to anything founded on the Lord’s death, but exactly coincides with the two periods of 1,260 days (Rev. 11) and 42 months (Rev. 13), during which the Roman beast acts variably in the Apocalypse. Seventhly, it is yet more fortified by the additional-fact that, when half the time of this Covenant expires, “He shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease,” just as might be gathered from Rev. 11 and other Scriptures.

Christian Annotator 4:71 (1857).

The Antichrist

Daniel 11:36

“The king,” in Dan. 11:36, is, without doubt to my mind, the political side of the same Person whom St. John designates religiously or irreligiously as “the Antichrist.” It is clear from Daniel that his seat of power is “the Holy Land” the object of attacks at the close from the powers of the South and of the North (i.e. Egypt, Syria or Turkey of our days). However, his destruction is reserved for the Lord Himself, appearing from heaven (2 Thess. 2:8, Rev. 19:20). It is of the Syrian power (whoevery then may hold it) that the last verses of Dan 11 speak. He also falls by Divine judgment (see Dan. 8:25, 11:45).

The relation of Daniel to the Revelation is a wide subject; but this I may briefly say, that, as Daniel reveals the results of the failure of the earthly people Israel, so Revelation presents the consequences of the failure of the heavenly testimony through out Christendom and the world at large. This remark may help to show the analogy and the difference between the two prophecies. What the former was to the Jew, the latter is to the Church.

Daniel 12:11, 12

I do not think that this passage has the slightest reference to Antiochus Epiphanes; but I am of opinion that Dan. 11:31 was accomplished then, and of this the first and second books of Maccabees treat. Of course there is a strong analogy between the two texts and the evil described, as there will be between that which Antiochus did and “the king” who is to perpetrate even greater abominations in the latter day. It is of this last only that Dan. 12:11, and to this text, not to the former, our Lord referred, in Matt. 24:15. For, clearly, a future scene of iniquity is predicted in the gospel; and this, necessarily, sets aside reference to a monarch who died more than a century and a half before the Lord was born. May I add to Mr. E. B. Elliott’s remark about the absence of the article in Dan. 12:11, while it occurs in Dan. 11:31, that there is this difference also: the text in ch. 11 strictly means “the abomination of the desolator” (polet. part.), whereas in 12 it is simply desolate, making desolate, or, of desolation (kal. part.). Both forms occur in Dan. 9:27, which strictly runs, I suppose, “and for the wing (i.e., protection, or overspreading) of abominations (idols), there shall be a desolator, even until the consummation, and the decreed sentence be poured upon the desolator.” It is quite impossible to maintain that this was accomplished in the siege of Jerusalem by Titus; for in no sense were the 1290 days (taken either as days or years) followed by the final and eternal blessing of Israel, which the prophecy imports. It is to a future crisis, then, that the prediction applies; and even Mr. Elliott, keenly opposed as He ordinarily is to futurism,
allows that these dates may be, as I am entirely persuaded they will be, literal days. The symbolical adjuncts of Dan. 7, 8 are wanting: all here is conveyed in plain and unfigurative terms. Compare with this Matt. 24:22, and indeed the context before and after, which, though partially accomplished, awaits the same times for its fulfillment. The 30 and 45 days, in addition to the 1260, may refer to the ingathering of the Jews and Israel, or, to other changes, after the power of evil is overthrown, preparatory to complete blessing

*Christian Annotator* 3:272 (1856).

**Many:**

**Daniel 12:2**

Many Christians . . . apply this passage to a literal resurrection. But they are involved in difficulties, from which ingenuity essays in vain, as I think, to extricate them. Instead of commenting on what appears to me mistakes, let me state my firm conviction that a national resurrection of Daniel’s people, i.e. Israel, is in question here, as in Isa. 26 and Ezek. 37. This being understood the entire context is plain. It is at the time of their deepest distress that Michael stands up, and not merely are all those elect Jews delivered who have been glanced at in the previous parts of this prophecy, but many who are dispersed, as it were buried, or at least slumbering, among the Gentiles, awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Compare Isa. 66, *sub finem*.) Then follows the peculiar blessedness of the “Maschilim,” i.e. the understanding ones, that instruct the mass in righteousness, who, instead of going out like the moon, though it may appear again, shine as the stars for ever and ever. This figurative application of a resurrection to Israel’s circumstances at the close of the age, is of course perfectly consistent with a real bodily resurrection of saints before, and of the wicked after, the millennium, as in Rev. 20:4-12.

I am aware of the assertion that the phrase נַעֲלֵי-עַםָּם is never used elsewhere in Hebrew as distributive of a general class previously mentioned. But I believe it to be unfounded. The reader has only to examine Joshua 8:22, and he will see that the pronoun is used in a similar way, Israel being the general class, and the same expression as here taking it up distributively. Accordingly, our English Bible in both cases, and in my judgment rightly, translates “some and some.” Of course, it is not denied that in certain circumstances these and those would well represent the meaning. My opinion is that the other is an equally legitimate rendering, wherever required by the context, as I conceive it to be in both the texts cited. And such, I find, is the view of the Vulgate and Luther as to Dan. 12:2.

Again, I have no sympathy with those who apply this verse to mere temporal deliverance. But it is not a necessary inference, on the other hand, that the words “eternal life” imply a resurrection-state. People forget that the saved Israelites in question are supposed to possess eternal life, which certainly may be before any change as to the body. It may help some readers to notice a somewhat parallel case, both in good and evil, as respects the Gentiles in Matt. 24:46.

Plainly, they are the nations at the beginning of the millennium discriminated as sheep and goats, and dealt with by the king without delay. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” So, when Israel reappears in that day, sad examples are to whose worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh; while others are to be brought an offering to the Lord, who shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. These awake to everlasting life; the others are abandoned to shame and everlasting contempt, apart from the question of [literal] resurrection. It will be a time, not of national deliverance merely, but of signal mercy and judgment from God; and this for Israel after their long sleep among the Gentiles, as well as for such Jews as will have figured more in the previous crisis in the land. The Maschilim seem to be a special class still more distinguished (Dan. 12:3).

*Christian Annotator* 2:378 (1855).

**Zechariah 12**

. . . The “idol shepherd” is Antichrist, whom retributive judgment is to raise up in the land of Judea in the last times. “If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” He shall in the end suffer the sternest vengeance of God. This is no modern opinion. . . .

There is no reason that I see for identifying the stone in Zech. 12:3, with that in Matt. 21:44. The former evidently means Jerusalem itself, the latter the Lord Himself in two positions answering to the two advents. First, in His humiliation, He is a stone as it were in the ground, and whosoever shall fall on it shall be broken,” verified in all unbelievers, but especially in the Jews; next, He is exalted to heaven, and coming again in power and great glory, He will execute destructive judgment — on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” (Cf. Dan. 2, 7; Rev. 19). “A burdensome Stone” is another idea, and will be true of Jerusalem in the latter day, when the Assyrian heads a great Gentile confederacy after the Antichrist is disposed of, which is the subject of Zech. 12:2-6, 14:1-3: also Isaiah, Micah, Daniel, and other prophets, treat of this closing king of the North.

There is no intermingling of the Church or Christian body with the subjects of this prophecy. There may have been some partial application in the past, as there will assuredly be a complete fulfillment in the future; but it is Judah and Jerusalem that are in question, whatever profit the Church or Christian may and ought to draw from this as from all Scripture.
The double reference of John 19:36, and Rev. 1:7, is simply to link both advents into the prophecy, which mainly bears on the second, but presupposes the first, “They shall look on me whom they have pierced.” But Rev. 1:7 is so far from intimating a general conversion of mankind previous to the return of the Lord, that it plainly enough insinuates their then unbelief, for “all kindsred of the earth shall wail because of him.” He will be unwelcome to them.

The mourning of godly awakened consciences, when Jehovah-Jesus is seen, to the final deliverance of Jerusalem, and the total overthrow of all their Gentile foes, is most strikingly described in verses 10-14, but it is in terms which exclude the revival in Ezra’s time, save as being a feeble earnest. Each felt alone with the Lord; and those families are specially named who represent prominent classes in Israel from the beginning, and throughout their history.

Christian Annotator 3:76 (1856).

Matthew 13 and the Present Hope

Q. How may Matt. 13 be reconciled with 2 Thess. 2, upon the following points? In the prophetic teaching of the Lord Jesus, when on earth, in Matt. 13, there is no present hope, but a prolonged exhortation, at the end of the age, when the wheat is gathered into the garner; whereas, in the teaching of the Holy Ghost from the ascended Lord, the Church is besought “by the coming of the Lord and our gathering together unto him,” as a present hope. Were the Thessalonians “wheat” -- or rather are Christians, as such, in Matt. 13 as well as in the epistles? If so, how can the same persons have a present hope, and a protracted one? B.

A. I am not aware of anything that justifies the contrast thus drawn between the parable of the wheat and tare-field, and the instruction in 2 Thess. 2 and elsewhere. The angelic intervention under the authority of the Lord is to gather together first the tares and bind them in bundles with a view to their yet future destruction, before the wheat is gathered into His barn. why should this be styled a prolonged expectation? Why should it interfere with the constant hope of the coming of the Lord to receive us to Himself? This parable, like all others, is constricted, as it appears to me, expressly to keep up the habitual looking for the closing scene. One could not collect from it anything to forbid that first generation of disciples expecting to be called away to their heavenly mansions. Of course, the same thing applies to all that followed. Thus I see no reason to doubt that the wheat includes the Thessalonian believers with all other Christians. “In the time of harvest” is not a single point of time with previous events protracting the hope, but the general season of gathering in the saints, executing judgment on the tares already disposed by the angels with a view to it, and then the appearing of the saints in glory, which closes this age and introduces the new one.

The Ten Virgins

Matthew 25:1-13

Mr. Weekes’s interpretation appears to me not merely to rest on insufficient and misapplied evidence, but to contradict the general teaching of God’s Word. Whether the lamps had gone, or were only going out, makes no real difference as to the grand teaching of the parable; and, as far as this goes, either the one or the other is quite compatible with the absence of oil. Mr. Weekes’s statement that the foolish “have some oil” is most objectionable: not a word implies it; nay, what is said both by the wise virgins and the Lord would imply the reverse, even if we had not the plain and positive declaration that the foolish “took their lamps and took no oil with them.” Why might not wicks be lit, and relit, without oil? I agree with Mr. W. that “are going out” is a more correct rendering than the ordinary version; but it in no way shows that the virgins had oil, or that they were more than professors without the Holy Ghost, though responsible for and designated according to the position they assumed. As to the unconverted being called “virgins,” there is no more difficulty there than in the “servant” of the preceding parable. In either case they took that place, and were judged accordingly. There are Christians who love Christ’s appearing in the midst of much ignorance as to its details. There are professors who talk much of the Second Advent, and hold it to be premillennial. But I assuredly believe that the former, if they are alive and remain till the coming of the Lord, will be caught up to meet Him, and that the latter, if they abide unregenerate, must have their portion outside, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

As unfounded is the idea that ταυρέματι in 1 Cor. 15:23, means “company,” “band,” “regiment,” while fully admitting of course that such is a frequent signification in profane authors. But here the context is decidedly adverse, whether τὰ τέλος be applied, as by Mr. T. R. Birks, to the wicked dead, or, as by Mr. W., to Christians instructed in the Lord’s second coming and kingdom. All or most of the versions at all known and accurate (as the Syriac Vulgate, Beza, Luther, De Wett, Diodati, Martin, Ostervald, the Lausanne, &c.) seem to agree with the authorized version in giving “order.” Indeed, the way in which our Lord’s resurrection is introduced appears to me of itself to exclude such a translation; for His resurrection is the first step, which perfectly agrees with “order,” but not with “company.” Again, such a view necessitates the harshest possible construction of “the end” (to τέλος), which, by a figure, must be tortured to mean the good (or bad) who are raised then; whereas, in truth, it is most plain that “the end” is really after the kingdom is given up, and, a fortiori, subsequent to all judgment. The white-throne judgment of the dead is one of the closing acts of the kingdom, after which cometh “the end.” Lastly, it would be incongruous to suppose with Mr. W. that after “they that are Christ’s” rise, another regiment of Christ’s should remain to rise. Not a class, but an epoch, is meant by “the end”; an epoch subsequent to the
resurrection of the wicked and their judgment.

\textit{Christian Annotator} 3:174

\textbf{Does the Parable of the Ten Virgins Refer to the Jewish Remnant?}


A. -- It is a mistake in interpreting scripture to conceive that similarity in one point or more establishes identity, many of which however striking would be of no weight against a single irreconcilable difference. The context (and not verbal analogies even if far stronger than in these instances) is alone decisive. It is worth remarking, just to shew how precarious this ground is, that a well-known living commentator and critic contrasts Matt. 7:23 with ch. 25:12. The truth is, that in the day of the Lord all will be judged who have not been saved, and on similar though not identical grounds; for the Lord will deal with Jew, Gentile, or Christian profession on their own footing, but in His light. The passage in Luke is proved by the context to be the judgment of the Jews who refused the urgent proffers of Jesus. The passage in Matt. 7 need not be so restrained, though no doubt applying there and then. But the parable of the virgins, both contextually and in its own statements, applies not to the Jews (who have already been fully treated of in the preceding two chapters, nationally and as a remnant), but to professing Christendom consisting of disciples real and unreal. The Jewish remnant will be rather the earthly bride than virgin \textit{going out} to meet the Bridegroom; neither will they from the first possess the gift of the Spirit (the “oil in their vessels”) like the wise virgins; nor will any of them be “foolish” like these, but “the wise”; nor will they go to sleep during their awful hour of trial.

\textit{The Bible Treasury} 7:64.

\section*{1 Corinthians 6:9

\textbf{and Partial Rapture}

Q. -- Does not 1 Cor. 6:9 with many like scriptures warrant the inference that Christians who fail in faith or fidelity will be excluded from inheriting the kingdom of God, though saved at the end from the second death?

\textit{Mathetes.}

A. -- In no way is this true, but wholly opposed to the mind of God in His word, and productive of nothing but confusion like any other serious error. On the face of this text itself, how can any taught of God allow that one born of the Spirit is to be classed among the \textit{ἀδικοί} or unrighteous? Compare also the rest of the verse and the following verses, where not failure in a believer is in question, but unqualifiedly wicked characters are denounced, with the very different statement that “such were some of you, but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Take one of the strongest apparently for such a construction, Luke 12:45, 46. “But if that bondman should say in his heart, My lord delayeth to come, and begins” &c. We may see from the corresponding parable in Matt. 24:48 that it is no case of a believer excluded but of an “evil” servant, a hypocrite. Nor indeed need we travel beyond the further words of Luke to arrive at the same fact; for his lord is said to cut him in twain and appoint his portion with the faithless (ἀπίστων). Will the Lord so deal with any born of God? It is indeed a far other lot than missing the reign though blessed for eternity, a portion assigned to not a single Christian in a single scripture. That the language of our Lord, and also for the apostle in this Epistle and elsewhere, implies it of \textit{professing} Christians is true and solemn. “That bondman,” in fact, seems expressly intended to warn of this tremendous issue.

But Christians in the genuine sense, as the query supposes, stand on other ground. If they discerned themselves, they should not be judged. If they grow careless in self-judgment, the Lord does not fail to deal with them. Yet when judged in this way, they are chastened by the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the wold, as say the scriptures in the text queried. The doctrine behind the query is wholly false and evil.

\textit{The Bible Treasury}, New Series 1:352.

\section*{Saints and Believers

\textbf{2 Thess. 1:10}

Q. -- 2 Thess. 1:10. What is the difference of \textit{saints} and \textit{believers}? and why is the Lord to be \textit{glorified} in the one and \textit{admired} in the other? I have asked a good many, and all see the difficulty: if you could throw a little light on it, I should be very thankful.

\textit{E. C.}

A. -- The careful reader will note that two classes of enemies are brought before us in v. 8: those that know not God, Gentiles; and those who, if they could not in the same way be said to be ignorant of God, do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jews. They were both such as should pay the penalty of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His might, when He shall have come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all that have believed. It is not the moment of the translation of the saints to heaven, but of the appearing or day of the Lord, when He shall come, not to receive them to Himself, but “to be glorified in his saints.” This, however, being comparatively vague -- for He might be glorified simply in their glorification, and this wholly outside the ken of the earth, -- we have greater precision in the next clause, “and to be wondered at in all that have believed.” Here display to
The Bible Treasury 6:336.

**The Catching Up of the Man-child -- Revelation 12:5**

Q. -- Rev. 12. Is the man-child caught up to God and His throne yet future? If so, how do we account for no mention of death and resurrection? 

A. -- From Rev. 11:19 is a fresh start in the book, as the seventh trumpet in a general way brings us down to the end. This closes the first volume of the Revelation. The second, beginning with that verse which should introduce ch. 12, tells us, not of “a door opened in heaven,” but of “the temple of God that is in heaven opened.” God’s ark was seen now, the ark of His covenant, though there followed, not only lightnings and voices and thunders, but an earthquake and great hail also. Then were seen signs in heaven: the mother, not the bride, (with supreme government, reflected authority subordinate, and full power in man) yet in travail; and the dragon, wielding the power of the Roman empire, and seeking to devour her child destined to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But the vision omits that work which is the basis of redemption and divine right, and at once shows us Him caught up on high, whilst the woman flees into the wilderness for 1,260 days. It is a mystical presentation of Christ with Whom the church is hidden, as in O. T. figures, caught up to heaven, without date, save that the woman’s flight into the wilderness is measured out, during which she is protected but has in no way the glory and power on the earth that is to be her portion. But heaven meanwhile is cleared of the great enemy and his angels; which is plainly future, and cannot be till after the rapture of the saints on high. The accuser of the brethren is not yet expelled. For the N.T. recognizes that our wrestling is against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavens. But Satan and his emissaries shall surely be cast down, never more to regain access there as now; and the contest for the earth is decided in due time, when He Whose right it is shall unite heaven and earth and all things under His away. Thus the ascension of Christ is mystically identified with that of the heavenly saints; just as what is said of Messiah in Isa. 1 is applied to Christians in the later verses of Rom. 8. Still more easily is this understood in the symbols of a prophetic book like the Revelation. The signs being seen in heaven does not mean that the object in view is heavenly for the woman any more than for the countless crowd of Gentiles in chap. vii. The mother is as clearly the earthly people, as the heavenly bride is the church.

**The Fall of the Dragon and His Hosts -- Rev. 12**

Q. -- Matt. 24:29. Is there any ground to identify the shaking of “the powers of the heavens” (or, as in Mark 13:14 the powers that are in the heavens”) with the fall of the dragon and his hosts from heaven in Rev. 12? The time does not at all agree. If not, what is meant? 

A. -- The difficulty suggested as to the date can have no place whatever. Other questions may arise as to the force of words. In Rev. 12 Satan is cast down, clearly before the last great tribulation, greatly enraged, because he knows he has but a short time, and persecutes the woman for the time, times, and half a time. In the passage in the gospels, where the mark of time seems precise (Matt. 24, Mark 13), the shaking of the powers of the heavens is after the tribulation. That is, the casting down of Satan in Revelation 12. is before, and introductory to the last tribulation; in Matt.24 and Mark 13 the shaking of the powers of the heavens is after the tribulation.

Thus, as events, they have nothing to do with one another. In Luke 21 the expression is vague and gives a general ground for what happens.

The enquiry then is simply, without any reference to the fall of Satan from heaven, what these terms mean.

It seems to me that in Luke there is mixed metaphor; in Matthew and Mark it is more in the style of O. T. prophecy. I have little doubt that the scene will be as mixed as the metaphor -- terrible signs actually given (compare Luke 21:11); and, besides that, an actual disruption of all existing powers, and terror on every heart, with the tumultuous swellings of peoples. Compare Psa. 93 where I do not believe it is mere literal waters. Further, I find in Dan. 8:10 the host and the stars clearly refer to rulers (Jewish priestly rulers) on the earth. Now I do not doubt the shakings and subversion of the future (before the great and terrible day of the Lord) will be much greater and more terrible than what is in Daniel 8; but this gives an inlet into what those expressions mean. I would not confine this tremendous breaking up of existing powers and rule to Jewish ones there, though it is in Dan. 8, because Gentiles and Jews are all mixed up together, the sacrifice taken away, and idolatry
come in. But there will be more than a revolution -- a subversion and upsetting of all manifested and organic powers. There is an analogous upsetting of all powers in Rev. 11, supposed by the inhabitants of the earth to be the great day of the Lamb’s wrath, which it is not, but only a precursor of it. I refer to it to show that such subversions of all constituted powers are so spoken of, without any raising of the question whether Satan is cast down from heaven or not. This is before the trumpets and the vials; the end of the last tribulation comes after it -- somewhere at the end of the second woe-trumpet, and then God’s judgment by Christ Himself. The beast and the final tribulation are a special subject, besides the general government under which these, shakings come; and they are so given in the Apocalypse. The general government of God applies to the nations at large; the beast is in connection with the rejection of Christ and enmity to Him. They go on concurrently, but the latter is a special matter.

The Seven Heads and the Seven Kings -- Rev. 17:9-11


A. -- One of the most important helps everywhere for right interpretation is a firm adhesion to the context. In the present case the object before us is the Beast or Roman Empire, which the Holy See beholds in its last form before it goes into perdition. The seven heads are doubly interpreted. They are seven mountains (or hills), whereon the woman sits (cp. v. 18). Rome is the seat geographically, not Jerusalem, nor the plain of Shinar. But they are seven kings, or differing forms of ruling power. The Beast is thus distinguished. There had been, 1. kings; 2. consuls; 3. dictators; 4. emperors; 5. military tribunes; who held successively and constitutionally the imperium. And these five were fallen. The sixth was actually then in power -- emperors. The seventh had not yet come; and it was to be transient. “And the Beast that was and is not, himself also is an eighth, and is of the seven; and he goeth into perdition.” Thus the context fixes the heads, not only in connection with a Roman seat, but to the peculiar and complete changes of its ruling powers, explaining that the last is an eighth, and yet one of the seven. It is the imperial form, which had been wounded to death (Rev. 13:3), revived by the dragon as the resurrection-head of the empire rising up at the close against the risen Lord of glory. The introduction of other kingdoms or empires, south, north, and east, long before the Roman empire began, is out of the way imaginative; still more so the strangely unconnected episode, as that of the queried list of kings. Even in the heads, as here mistakenly separated from the kings, to make apostate Israel the seventh head of the Roman empire is a singularly wide if not wild conjecture. Hengstenberg followed by the late Dean Vaughan so took six of the heads, but the seventh to be the ten horns in a cluster! a not much happier guess than Israel, though somewhat more homogeneous. The context suffices to correct all such thoughts. The proposal was to explain the seven heads, which we have in vers. 9-11; then the ten horns, which follow in vers. 12-14.

The Bible Treasury, New Series 2:15-16.

Fine Linen
Rev. 19:8

Q. Rev. 19:8. What is the meaning of the inspired explanation of the symbolical “fine linen?” B. A. Observe, first, that it is said to be the righteousness “of saints,” not of God, but of His people. Secondly, it is not exactly their righteousness, but their “righteousnesses” (δικαιοματα). This it is impossible in any just sense to understand of the righteous standing which is made ours in Christ. God’s righteousness in Him is the same for all saints. But each saint here will have his or her own righteousness. Hence it is no question of taking up the saints to heaven, which will be the crowning act of grace, nor of our presentation in the Father’s house way suitable to His grace. We must therefore distinguish between the white raiment of Rev. 4 and the fine linen of Rev. 19. The one was the clothing of pure grace, the fruit of divine righteousness in Christ. But in ch. 19. it was given to the bride to be arrayed in “fine linen” which is expressly said to be the saints’ righteousness. It is in view of our appearing with Christ before the world, and consequently when all the rightful results of the ways of the saints shall be manifested.

The Bible Treasury 7:160.

Translation of Revelation 20:5

Q. T. C.J. (N.Y.) sends Zion’s Watch Tower, Vol. 4, No. 12, and asks whether the following paragraph (p. 2, col. 2) is true. “It is an important scripture; and a line on the subject would be appreciated by many of us.” Rev. 20:5, first clause, which reads, “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished” is the subject of dispute. We showed conclusively that the above text has no support from any authority older than “the middle of the fifth century.” It is not found in any of the older MSS. -- it is not in the
Syriac -- and the confessedly oldest, most complete, and best of all Greek MSS. of the New Testament, the Sinaitic -- does not contain those words. It is wanting too in several of the more recent MSS., among which is the Vatican, No. 1160, a MS. of special clearness and harmony with the most ancient ones.

The criticism, there need be no hesitation in saying, is unfounded; of which there can scarce be conceived a better proof than the fact that out of more than 500 editions of the Greek New Testament not one known to me exhibits the text desired. All present the clause which these manuscripts and the Syriac V. omit. Every editor of the most ordinary information knew of the various reading in question; yet not a single man of judgment has ever doubted that the omission is an error owing to one of the most fertile sources of variants, *homoeoteleuton*, as it is technically called. The clause before (end of v. 4) closed with the words γίλαξ ἔτη; and so does the first clause of v. 5. This naturally misled the eyes of weary scribes. So the critical editors in all lands and times have judged. But it “has no support from any authority older than ‘the middle of the fifth century’!” Can the Ed. of Z.W.T. have weighed his own words? There is but one MS. of the Revelation older, the Sinaitic; which is often and notoriously faulty, and no where more so than in this Book. Thus in Rev. 20 only. ἐκ τοῦ οὐρα and so in v. 1 is omitted; the precisely same sort of error as in 5 occurs in its form of v. 2, 3, from αὐτόν to αὐτόν being omitted. In v. 6 it adds καὶ in error. In v. 8 it omits wrongly τῆς γῆς τὸν; and it wrongly adds πάντα, and καὶ after M. In 9 there is the corrected insertion in error of ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, and in 10 ἄτου is falsely repeated. In 11 there is the mistake of ἐπανω for ἐπ’, as the article is wrongly dropped from 12, with ἔπι for ἔνωπιον, with the absurd correction of both inserted later. In 13 is the misreading against all authorities of κατεκρίθησαν. In 14 καὶ is added wrongly and ὁ is wrongly left out. In 15 the future supplants the aorist. Now large as this list is, all the blemishes of the Sinaitic text of this one chapter are not here registered, but enough surely to prove how little the real character of that document is known, and how precarious it would be to demand support from authority older than the middle of the fifth century.

Next, though the Peschito Syriac was made in very early days, we have no MS. of any great antiquity; and even if we had, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, with Jude, are supplied from a later version, and the Revelation from a copy in the Leyden library, whose age is so uncertain, and character of text so doubtful, that it ranges very low indeed in a critical point of view.

The Alexandrian Uncial (A) is a capital authority as to the Rev.; and so is the Eph., Reser. of Paris (C), but here we do not hear its voice after 19:5. But the Alex. is, like it, of the fifth century and is supported by the Basilian Vat. 2066, a MS. of far greater weight than the cursive 40 (=Vat. 1160), by an adequate number of cursives of which more than twenty have the same defect here as N. All the ancient versions, save de Dieu’s Syriac, confirm the clause, as well as the early commentators, Greek and Latin.

Further, the clause is so entirely in keeping with the context that, if we had not these words at the opening of v. 5, the same truth is conveyed, or supposed, by the first resurrection of the righteous who reign with Christ for a thousand years (vv. 4–6), followed by the little while of Satan’s last deceit and war of the external nations, and the standing before the great white throne for eternal judgment of the dead, who had had no part in the resurrection of life and glory.

*The Bible Treasury* 16:96.

**Where Will the Heavenly Saints Reign? Revelation 20**

Q. -- A friend of mine says that the living and reigning with Christ refers to those beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and cannot apply to a reign on earth. It is, he says, a vision in heaven. Would you kindly refute this error in “The Bible Treasury” for August? Yours truly, A SUBSCRIBER.

A. -- The reign of Christ and the glorified saints is heavenly, but over the earth. Only the old Cellists, and their modern followers, treat it as “on” the earth, as is wrongly said in the Authorized and even the Revised versions of Rev. 5:10. The local dwelling is properly ἐν, the sphere of rule is ἐπί, a distinction maintained in Hellenistic Greek, as in the Septuagint and the Greek New Testament. The vision being “in heaven” determines nothing as to actual place, as we may see from Rev. 12 and elsewhere. Nor is it confined to those beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, but comprehends, first the general body of saints in those seen seated on thrones, then those beheaded, and lastly such as refused the worship of the beast and his mark. The first general class was already risen; the two other companies only now lived, in order to reign with Christ, as all of course are to do. “Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? . . . Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:2, 3).

*The Bible Treasury* 16:128.

**Application of Revelation 22:17**

I do not wonder that Mr. Haskins finds difficulties in accepting the interpretation of those who apply this verse exclusively to the Lord, or to sinners. The truth is, that the former portion refers to the one, and the latter to the other. Nothing can be sweeter nor clearer, when seen. Jesus had just announced Himself as not merely the root and the offspring of David, but the bright and morning star. Immediately the Church, with the bridal affections, says, Come. It is the Bridegroom that thus awakens her desires that He should
come. He is the first object of the heart, and lest it should be thought to be a thought to be a mere human, unsanctioned longing, it is added, "the spirit and the bride say, Come." But there are many who have heard His voice and been washed in His blood who yet feebly know their privileges in Him; they little if at all appreciate what He is as the Bridegroom, what they are as His bride. Are these to be silent? Nay, "let him that heareth say Come." They may know His love but imperfectly: but let them not fear to say, Come. But does not such a hope, such a waiting of the heart, hinder one's yearning after poor souls? Enemies have said so; mistaken friends may have thought so; but God links the two most blessedly together. If the bride, if the individual saint, owe the first love of the heart to Him who is coming to meet us in the air, so much the more can we turn round to the needy world and invite him that is athirst to come (not to say, Come, which to him, indeed, were but judgment). Nay, even if I meet a soul who perhaps has not yet known deep soul-thirst, yet is willing, I can bid him freely welcome, "whosoever will let him take the water of life freely." It is a perfectly beautiful scene, which the Lord grant us better to know and enjoy by the Holy Ghost!

Christian Annotator 3:51 (1856).

Will the Church
Escape the Great Tribulation?


As this pamphlet has been sent for notice, it is almost enough to say that it is Newtonian {B. W. Newton} prophetically, with the ignorance of the distinctively intimate as well as heavenly relationship of the church to Christ, which characterizes that school. The author must be strangely unacquainted with "Dissenters," if he believes that what he calls "the secret-rapture view" originated among people most of all indifferent to the church and its hopes, as well as to prophecy; perhaps he only means persons who left the English Establishment, or, who, at any rate, were outside it.

He is also surprised that truth so important should only of late have been learnt from scripture. How could Mr. Shackleton expect such a thing in the early fathers, if he is really acquainted with their writings? Which of them escaped the Galatian leaven? Even it is remarkable that this Epistle {Galatians}, which aims at clearing the churches of that country from a misuse of the law -- the bane of the patristic writings generally, is precisely that in which the apostle never speaks openly of the Lord's second coming. What was the use to those who had lost the virtue of His first coming? The Reformers were too absorbed in contending for justification, as well as against Popery, to search into prophecy or the church. And what real advance has been made since? I fear there has been in general a departure from much that was then recovered. Our appeal must therefore be to scripture only. The fathers invented the miserable system of expunging Israel and Judah from 0. T. prophecy: for them, all was "the church"; and so with most Anglicans, and almost all "Dissenters," to this day. Their lucubrations therefore about the Antichrist and the great tribulation are worthless. The Protestant scheme went farther astray in denying the individuality of the Antichrist, as well as his literal place in the temple at Jerusalem in the consummation of the age, and converting the days into nothing but years. But both alike Judaized the church by blotting out Israel's true hopes, through misappropriating Jewish scriptures; and Mr. S. is not clear of this error, through which he is bitter against those who would distinguish what is Christian from Jewish.

In vain you adduce some absurd individual, who counted 2 Timothy Jewish, and only Eph. and Col. applicable to the church. After knowing the Christians to whom he seems to refer widely and well for more than forty years, I can affirm that no such folly has ever existed among them to my knowledge, without denying the fact of Mr. S.'s unhappy experience. The only writer I ever heard of that applied all the Rev. to Jews was an English clergyman. Mr. S., one presumes, allows that Israel and the Jews as such have a large place in the book. Does he hold that God carries on the church on earth at the same time that he works savingly in that nation as a distinct object? Surely this were confusion and error. That God should save Gentiles as such, simultaneously with His renewed dealings with the chosen people, is exactly what the Rev. attests; whilst all this time the church is never spoken of as on earth, but its symbol is seen in heaven. Here all is harmony, yet so little does Mr. S. understand the matter, that he cites Mosheim and Milner against Origen's allegorising; whereas be ought to know that, whatever their differences in detail, all three (with the mass of medievals as well as moderns) agree in the blinding error of putting the church, instead of Christ, as the object of the divine counsels in scripture. Take Christ as the true center of all, and room is left for the Jews, and the Gentiles, as well as for the church of God, each in its own time and true relation to Him. Then Zion is Zion, and the church is itself. None more opposed to the vicious spiritualizing of Mosheim, Milner, Origen, and the theologians generally, than those he combats.

If Mr. S. desires to read an anticipative answer to almost all his arguments in his pp. 15-83, he can find them in the B. T. 1 (second edition) 203, 218, 231, 232, 243, 249, 259. Let me, if I may, recommend to him, however, and others also, the only satisfactory course: instead of arguing, to read, with prayer and care, scriptures which treat of the future tribulation, with this question throughout before God: -- Of whom in each passage does the Holy Spirit clearly speak? After all, the texts, as has been shown in this journal already, are neither many nor obscure: Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21; (and Mark 13:19); Rev. 3:10, and 7. Now, beyond controversy, the first four treat only of the Jews, and the sixth expressly of the Gentiles; whilst the fifth, which alone certainly speaks of the church, gives the promise of being
kept, not in or during, but “from the hour of temptation,” which no doubt includes the last tribulation.

Let Mr. S. shake off his new bias and face these scriptures with simplicity. He will not then misapply John 17:15, to deny the plain force of Rev. 3:10; nor will he confound the sheep and the goats with the brethren of the King {Matt. 25:31-46}, still less with the glorified saints; and he will get to understand the translation of 2. Thess. 2:2 exhibited by the Revisers and all scholars, instead of giving it up as “almost unintelligible.” The apostle beseeches the saints for the sake of (ὑπερ) the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him (Whom they were waiting for, as the bright object of hope), to the end that they should not be quickly shaken, nor yet troubled, by any kind of influence, as that the day of the Lord had set in (or is already come). This, and this only, is the true meaning; which Mr. S.’s mistaken theory prevents him from even apprehending. It is the effect of error to exclude the truth. Where God’s word is thus made null and void, it ought to raise in a grave spirit the fear of being under some withering tradition of man.

_The Bible Treasury_ 16:223, 224.

**The Two Parts of the Lord’s Coming**

Q. -- Can the Parousia (Coming in Person) of the Lord be separated from His Epiphaneia (shining upon); or from His Apokalupsis (Revelation)?

A. -- Without doubt, the first is distinct in character and even in time, if scripture is to decide, as it surely ought. Add two other words, Hemera (day) and Phanerosis (manifestation), to give a substantial form to the verb often used in this connection. For the truth is that “coming” or “presence” (παροσία) as applied to the future of our Lord does not involve display [in glory, at the appearing], unless modified by other links such as “Son of Man,” as in Matt. 24:27, 37, 39), or by a term which openly adds it (as in 2 Thess. 2:8), or by facts like 1 Thess. 3:13. These accompaniments unquestionably intimate not “presence” (προσωπα) only, but its display. Now such texts as 1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 7:6, 7; 2 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 1:26; 2:12; as well as the 2 Thess. 2:8, simply prove the general fact of a personal arrival or presence; and 2 Peter 3:12 is not exactly our Lord’s own coming, but that “of the day of God,” though no doubt our Lord will then have come also.

It is not contested that Parousia is applied very frequently to our Lord’s coming again, as in both Epistles to the Thessalonians, in the First to the Corinthians, and in those of James, Peter, and John. And all admit that Epiphaneia means “appearing” (as it should be in 2 Thess. 2:8), and apokalupsis “revelation,” both applied often to the manifestation of the Lord, like φανερώ, in His “day.” But how do these scriptures prove to a demonstration that Parousia is not distinct in character as well as time from the words indicating display? Mr. B. assumes, but never even approaches, the proof. He marshals the various occurrences, and forthwith states his conclusion without a reason. What is the worth of this?

The intelligent reader sees that, where grace is in question, the coming, or presence, of the Lord is set out; where responsibility and its results, it is “the appearing,” “day,” &c. This disposes of Mr. B.’s first effort at an argument in p. 15, whilst the revelation of Christ will still be the full favor of the saints in its display. Instead of confounding Christ’s Parousia and the connected gathering of the saints unto Him in 2 Thess. 2:1 with the Epiphany of His Parousia which annuls “the man of sin,” the pointed difference of the phrase ought to have led him to distinguish them. If His coming to gather the saints together to Himself were necessarily visible, where is the force of adding _the appearing_ of His coming (2 Thess 2:8) when it is a question of destroying the Antichrist? But there is much more when we take in the light afforded by the second verse, and the context generally. For the error which the Thessalonian misleader taught was that “the day of the Lord was actually present.” This the apostle dissipates, first, by beseeching them by, or for the sake of, the Lord’s coming (παροσία) and our gathering together unto Him; secondly, by the declaration that that day was not to be unless the apostasy first came and the man of sin were revealed, whereas a hinderer acted as yet till he should go. Mr. B.’s confusion not only makes the added epiphaneia {v. 8} meaningless, if Parousia in itself is a display, but it renders the motive, urged in v. 1 against the delusion of v. 2, not only powerless, but unintelligible. For if the Lord’s coming and His day coalesce, as they do absolutely in Mr. B.’s view, there is no sense in the passage: whereas to recall the saints to their hope was calculated to guard them from the false rumor that the day had set in. Then we have the plain disproof that follows: the cup of Christendom’s iniquity was not yet full, as it must be before the Lord Jesus judges it (not at His coming, but) at the appearing of His coming. What he calls “the secret rapture” deserves to fall, if assumption, and arguments like these {of Mr. B.}, dispose of it completely.

Mr. B. has to learn that Matt. 24, 25 is a large prophecy, which deals with the Jews first, with Christendom in the central parables, and finally with all the Gentiles alive in that day. Hence “Son of man” (Christ’s judicial title) is His title with the Jews and the Gentiles, but disappears in the part that relates to the Christian profession. The critics, (Tregelles, like the rest) little knew the service they were rendering to the truth in striking out the spurious clause at the end of Matt. 25:13. The Parousia of the Son of Man is judicial for the earth; the Parousia in 1 Cor. 15:23 is to

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1. {S. P. Tregelles was a posttribulationist and supported B. W. Newton in the Plymouth controversies, who taught that Christ was at a circumstantial distance from God.)
raise the saints that sleep for heaven, though all admit they will be manifested with Him in glory at that day. Mr. B. also ignores the fact that the “shout” of the Lord in 1 Thess. 4 is word quite peculiar and of special relationship, as of an admiral to his sea-men, or of a general to his soldiers. There would be no propriety in employing such word if it were a shout for everybody. It is no question of shaking earth and heaven, though this will be also; and it is amazing to see Psa. 50:4, 5; Jer. 30:30; Hos. 11:10; and Rev. 1:7 classed with so wholly different an aim. Those that come out of the great tribulation in Rev. 7 are expressly distinguished from the elders and the four living creatures, who symbolize (one or both) the saints seen glorified in heaven from Rev. 4 and onward. And Rev. 20:4, in the grand description of those saints who share the First Resurrection, gives three classes: those already enthroned (embracing the 0. T. saints, and the church), who followed Christ out of heaven; the early Apocalyptic sufferers (Rev. 6:9); and their brethren who were to be killed as they, after the Beast and the False Prophet ravaged beyond example, as we see also in Dan. 7. “The consummation of the age,” in Matt. 13, is not an epoch, but a period or season, in which distinct operations take place, beginning with the severing of the darnel and the gathering from the field of the wheat, and ending with the burning of the darnel, the lawless ones, when the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, that is, in the heavenly sphere which sovereign grace gave them to share with Christ. The just application of Luke 21:25-36 will be manifest from the context, and is in perfect accordance with the title of the Son of Man seen coming in a cloud with power and great glory. If we fail to distinguish things that differ, only confusion and error can ensue.

The Bible Treasury 16:222, 223.

When Will the Saints be Caught Up?

Q. -- Will the saints be caught up before Lord comes in glory and the tribes of the earth mourn because of Him?

1. Matt. 24. Here there is no hint of the Church’s escaping the great tribulation, except by sudden flight; nor of any other παρουσία except that which we are to expect after the tribulation. (See vv. 23, 27, 29.) Nor of any gathering of His elect unto Him except in v. 31, after the great tribulation. In vv. 32, 33 we are directed to “know that it is near, even at the doors, when we shall see all these things,” i.e., those which are described in vv. 7-29.

2. 1 Thess. 4. The living will not be changed before the dead in Christ are raised (v. 15); then (1 Cor. 15:51) we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (literally, for the trumpet shall sound) -- all, not same only, of those who believe. And the trumpet mentioned in Matt. 24:31, when all the elect are to be gathered together, cannot be subsequent, or the other would not be the last trump.

3. The caution of 2 Thess. 2:1-12 seems to imply that the Church must witness the full revelation and επίτροπος of the wicked one, and then expect the immediate coming of our Lord.

It is true, we are to be continually looking for the coming of our Lord; but is this inconsistent with the expectation of a previous tribulation?

Q. Q.

A. -- The Old Testament saints and the Church, which is being now formed by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, will be caught up to meet the Lord before His coming as Son of man in power and great glory, when all the tribes of the earth (or the land) lament. This necessarily follows from the doctrine laid down in Col. 3:4 compared with 1 Cor. 15:23, 1 Thess. 4, 2 Thess. 2, and other scriptures, and from the prophetic intimation of Rev. 4, 5 compared with Rev. 17:14, 19:14. For if Christ and the glorified saints appear together at the self same time in glory, it is evident that the saints must have been caught up, changed into His likeness, before that common manifestation of Him and them. Besides, the Revelation indicates their presence above, after their translation there, and before their appearing along with Him, under the symbol of the crowned and enthroned elders, who are seen in heaven when the seven churches disappear (Rev. 2, 3), and before the pre-millennial judgment of Rev. 19, and the millennium of Rev. 20. This interval is occupied here below by God’s preparation of Jews and Gentiles (separate from the glorified) who will be to His praise on earth, as the Old Testament saints and the Church will be in heaven when the administration of the fullness of times is put under Christ, the Head of all things heavenly and earthly.

1. This helps to render Matt. 24:15-41 perfectly plain. Certainly there is no hint of the church’s escaping the tribulation by sudden flight here; for those spoken of are a remnant of converted Jews who will be found in Jerusalem, in connection with the temple and the Sabbath in the latter day. What possible ground is there to predicate this of the Church of God, which is neither Jew nor Gentile, and which, save at its first origin, is found everywhere under heaven? What reason to take it away from the last days of this age, when God will again be savingly at work among the Jews in their land, protecting a remnant from the last fiery tribulation which the Antichrist will occasion, and fitting them as a people for the Lord, when He comes for their deliverance in the clouds of heaven, and the mass being apostate will be filled with terror and mourning and shame at His sudden glory which flashes on the world? That the elect of Matt. 24:31 cannot possibly mean the Church is evident, if it were only from the passage itself; for the sight of the Son of man appals all the tribes before He sense His angels to gather these elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now if you apply this to the same scene and persons as Col. 3:4, you set one scripture against another -- the unerring proof of error. Distinguish between the saints
already caught up, to be glorified with Him on high, and these elect gathered from all places of their dispersion here below, to be blessed under His reign here below, and the balance of truth is preserved. No doubt, the gathering of the elect here, then, is after the great tribulation, but it is also after His appearing. It is therefore not the Church which appears with Him when He appears in glory, and which is promised (in Rev. 3:10) exemption not only from the place and circumstances of the great coming temptation, but also from its hour. The signs are, as usual, for the Jewish saints, who were wont to ask such things as evidence of the approaching accomplishment of their hopes.

2. 1 Thess. 4. No one contends that the living will be changed before the dead in Christ are raised. It is clear that, the latter being raised, and we who are then alive being changed as they, all together will be caught up to the Lord.

The “last trump” of 1 Cor. 15 is an allusion to the final signal of the break up of a Roman camp for its March. It has nothing whatever to do with the loud sound of trumpet in Matt. 24 (with which cp. Isa. 27:13), any more than with the seven trumpets of Rev. 7-11.

Undoubtedly when the Lord at His coming or presence (παρουσία) gathers the changed saints to Himself in the air, it is all, not some only, of those who up to that time have believed (compare πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύσασιν in 2 Thess. 1:10. But how does this present a difficulty to such as see from Scripture that others subsequently are to be converted, kept through the tribulation and blessed in the millennial kingdom of the Lord?. It is the quiescent’s system which is at fault, not leaving sufficient room for all the elements, and of course therefore both leading to confusion in the various parts, and presenting a defective result. 1 Cor. 15 presents (and so I may add 1 Thess. 4) our last trump, because the question is of the risen saints; Matt. 24:31, presents, if you will, the last trump of the Jewish saints then scattered over the earth. How does this identify the two, even if the trumpet in Matt. 24 had been styled the last trump, or “his elect,” were called “all the elect,” neither of which is the fact? Is it a contradiction if the historian speaks of the last trumpet sounding for the tenth legion in Gaul, and of the trumpet gathering the twelfth legion in Syria?

3. 2 Thess. 2:1-12 cautions us against the error of those who confounded the coming of the Lord to gather His saints on high with His day upon the lawless one. The misleaders of the Thessalonian believers sought to alarm them by the false cry that the day of the Lord was already present (ὅτι ἐννέα και ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου). This the apostle dispels, first, by a motive of consolation for the heart, as well as, secondly, by an express prophecy. First, he beseeches them, by the coming of the Lord and their gathering together to Him, not to be shaken or troubled by this pretence (for which they feigned a revelation and even a letter of the apostle). The first act of the Lord, bound up with His very presence, is the translation of His own beloved ones to Himself. But, secondly, that day (mark, he does not say the Lord’s παρουσία, but His day) should not come till the full development of the evil which His day is to judge.

The mystery of lawlessness is now restrained: when he who hinders its outburst is withdrawn, then shall be revealed the lawless one whom the Lord Jesus will destroy by the breath of His mouth and annul by the appearance of His coming. Observe the striking difference between the terms in vv. 1, 8. When it is a question of gathering the saints, the phrase is simply His coming or presence; when it is a question of His day or dealing in judgment with the lawless one, it is the shining forth of His coming -- not παρουσία only, but ἐπιφάνεια ἡς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ. The real caution of the chapter would have preserved the quiescent from an error kindred in principle, though not in form, to that which wrought among the Thessalonians. We are then to be continually expecting the Lord, apart from either external signs or the final great tribulation, which Scripture connects with others, not with us, after we have been translated to heaven.

The Bible Treasury 6:159, 160.

When Are O. T. Saints Raised?

Q. -- When will the Old Testament saints be raised? Are they included in “them that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:23), and raised when the Church is caught up? (1 Thess. 4) in which case they would be said to “sleep through Jesus,” and to be “the dead in Christ.” Or, do they wait some little time longer, and only raised on the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15-19), where “thy servants the prophets” are spoken of together with others (the seventh trumpet being the final one of this dispensation, and thus in keeping with the word to Daniel in ch. 12:13, “Go thy way till the end be; and thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days”)? And still more striking is that which Job says (ch. 19:25-27), “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth . . . in my flesh shall I see God.” Was not this expecting Him on the earth, as Christ will be in the millennium? (Zech. 14; Acts 1).

H. W. T.

A. -- I see no reason to doubt that all saints who have died will be raised up when Christ comes and changes us, the living, that remain to the moment of His presence, and both shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. “Those that are the Christ’s,” in 1 Cor. 15:23, seem to me a category put in an expressly large style so as to embrace the saints before the Church as we as such as compose it. Compare Heb. 11 {40}. And this is confirmed by the special communication which begins at 1 Cor. 15:51: “Behold I shew you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Here there is a secret beyond the Old Testament which revealed no more than the resurrection and the coming with the Lord in the day of His appearing. (Job 19, Zech. 14). But the
Looking for the Appearing

Q. -- If the Church is with the Lord, caught up to Him at His coming, how can any Christian love or look for His subsequent appearing? 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Tim. 4:8; Titus 2:13. So 1 Thess. 2:19, 23 seem to teach, not a secret previous coming for Christians, but the same as 1 John 2:28; Rev. 1:7; Mark 8:38. So that revelation, appearing, and coming seem to me synonymous and synchronical. A resurrection from out of the dead and a change of the living saints visibly going up to meet the Lord seems to me a more sober idea, if I may speak, and to do less violence to ordinary scripture statement, than a secret rapture, which seems to be both unnecessary and based on a very few and not very distinct scriptures. They are all (as I think) the same event, though many acts are folded up therein.

J. L.

A. -- The presence (παρουσία) of Christ is His coming, or rather state of being present, in contrast with His absence, and is in itself equally compatible with being visible or not at His pleasure (as we see after His resurrection). The solution of the question depends on other scriptures and cannot be decided by the bare word “coming” or “presence.” One of these scriptures is the comparison of 2 Thess. 2:1 with v. 8. On the face of it, verse 1 binds together His coming or παρουσία with the gathering together of the saints to Himself. This is the motive for comfort against the terror of the day of the Lord, which the false teachers were seeking to bring on the souls of the Thessalonians. The false rumor that His day was actually arrived, or present (ἐνεργησθηκεν), was effectually dispelled by the sweet information that that day of awful associations for the world should not be there before the full development and open display of that lawlessness, which was already at work in secret ways. For the day of the Lord is ever the predicted period of judgment on man’s evil, which it is to put down and cleared away, in order that the good of God’s kingdom may be no longer hidden or hindered but shine out to His everlasting praise. Hence it is said that the lawless one (for so it will end) shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall consume with the breath of His mouth and shall destroy, or annul, by the appearing of His coming with the Lord’s presence to assemble His saints to Himself, but with His judicial action on the Antichrist.

Plainly, the coming or presence of the Lord is the great general truth. It embraces indeed His appearing as one of its acts or characters, but it includes much more. Hence, when precision is sought (as here to counteract a false impression, which the enemy sought to endorse with the apostle’s name), we have the παρουσία distinguished from the epiphany, or shining forth of that παρουσία. Now it is evident that, if the coming of Christ necessarily implies visibility to all the world, there is no force in the distinction; if, on the contrary, He might come to gather His saints without appearing to any beyond themselves, and then subsequently cause His coming or presence to be manifest in the destruction of the lawless one, nothing can be more appropriate or exact than the phraseology here employed.

The Bible Treasury 7:80.
There is no difficulty, accordingly, in apprehending how Timothy or others could be exhort to make manifest their appearing, spite of the gathering of the saints on high previously. The act of translating the saints above is no open vindication before the world either of Christ or of themselves; the appearing, revelation, or day of the Lord is this precisely. Not till then will the madness of the world’s hostility against Jehovah and His anointed be proved. Hence, when it is a question of exhorting to earnest, devoted, holy labor and endurance, scripture habitually speaks not of the coming simply but of the appearing of Christ. Then will be the reward of toil and suffering; then must the haughty world be humbled, apostate Judaism and Christendom be judged, and righteousness be established over the earth, the glorified saints reigning with Christ over it, and the Jews restored to their promised supremacy and blessedness here below. This makes evident the reason why the hearts of the saints, in present sorrow and shame, feeling their own weakness and the temporary triumph of the enemy in the world, are always urged to look on to the appearing of Christ. Their own removal by His coming does not, could not, satisfy the desires of those who are bent on the making good of His glory universally, and the final total overthrow of Satan, and the blessing of all creation.

This, then, in my judgment, entirely and simply meets the scriptural statements which speak both of the Lord’s coming and of His appearing, &c. Timothy is enjoined to keep the commandment, laid on him by the apostle, spotless, irreplaceable, until the appearing of our Lord, which in its own time the blessed and only Potentate shall show (1 Tim. 6:15). It is a question of responsibility in service; and this attaches, not to the rapture of the saints at all, but to the manifestation of Christ. When the Lord appeared the first time, God’s grace was made manifest, and life and incorruption were brought to light by our Savior. When He appears again, glory will be revealed; fidelity during His absence will be no longer a matter of denial, detraction, or debate, and evil will hide its head. A faithful royalist could not be satisfied till not merely the arrival of the exiled king, but his coronation and the public exercise of his prerogative. Still more evidently does this principle apply to 2 Tim. 4:8: “Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me in that day; and not only to me, but also to all that love (καὶ ἐν τῇ ἡγαστηρίῳ, characterized by their love for) His appearing.” That this demonstrates the justice of what has been already remarked, I need scarcely say. The coming of Christ to receive us to Himself and be with Him in the Father’s house would not at all suit the requirements of the passage; because that is the pure fruit of His own grace, ² removing us into the scene of His Father’s love and glory, but in no way vindicating His servants, by a just requital of all faithful there is a reward for the righteous; verily He is a God that judgeth in the earth. Rapture to heaven previously would not meet this exigency, though, of course, perfectly consistent with it. We must believe all that is revealed, not a part only; and a main point of real progress is that we learn to distinguish things which differ.

Titus 2:13 quite falls in with the two texts we have examined, the only question being whether “that blessed hope” does not look rather to the point of personal joy when we are caught up to be with the Savior, and “the appearing of the glory” to the later and public display. If so, this scripture would connect the two things, as one combined object in the mind of the Spirit, leaving it to be decided by other testimonies whether the two things happen at the same time or with some interval.

In 1 Thess. 2:19 and v. 23, it is simply a question of Christ’s presence or coming, entirely independent of manifestation. The first scripture is the expression of the apostle’s affections for the objects of his devoted labors. Circumstances might and do separate them now for a little in person, not in heart; but they should be together before our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming, “our glory and joy. This would not cease but, on the contrary, appear when Christ is manifested, but the fact is before the apostle; and this is true at the coming of Christ and even before His manifestation, of which nothing is said here. So in 1 Thess. 5:23, he prays that their whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, if verified then, this would be also true at His appearing; but the other sufficed and indeed was more comprehensive. On the contrary, where it is a question of the world being judged (as in the beginning of the same chapter), “the day of the Lord,” and not simply His coming or presence, is spoken of; for that necessarily supposes judicial action and display. So even in 1 Thess. 3, where we have the coming of our Lord with all His saints, not them caught up to Him, as in 1 Thess. 4, in order to God’s bringing those who sleep with Him.

But John 2:28, Rev. 1:7, and Mark 8:38 are wholly distinct in tone from the simple presence of the Lord and His saints. In the first of these texts, manifestation is express. It is a question of the workman not being ashamed before Him at His coming, through the souls they labored for abiding in Him now. The coming of the Lord alone would not decide this, and therefore manifestation is added. Again, Rev. 1:7 has nothing to do with the translation of saints to heaven but is the solemn threat of impending judgment for the world, especially for Israel (i.e., those who pierced Him). “Every eye shall see him,” defines the character and time most fully. So Mark 8:38 describes the Lord coming with His holy angels in His quality of Son of man which notoriously attaches to Him as executor of judgment (see John 5).

I cannot doubt, therefore, that coming or presence is

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² (The rapture is not connected with rewards; the appearing will be the day of manifestation of faithfulness.)
never in itself synonymous with appearing, revelation, or manifestation. This does not decide the question of their agreeing or differing in point of time. But it tends so far to maintain the definiteness of scripture language, which is indispensable to all real intelligence and progress in the truth.

That the removal of the saints from earth to meet the Lord does not synchronize with their appearing in glory along with Him, is, to my mind, certain from a variety of scriptures. First, Col. 3 declares that when Christ, our life, appears, “then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” The context would convince any fair mind that rigorous precision is here intended. The basis is the identification of the Christian with Christ. Is He dead and risen? So are they. Is He now hid with God? So are they now with Him. But this will not be always. He is about to be manifested in glory: when He is, then shall they too be manifested in the same glory with Him. This is decisive against the hypothesis of Christ first appearing, then translating the risen and changed saints, and bringing then and thus His day on the world. For in this case, Scripture must be broken, as Christ would have appeared in glory without His saints and before them. Their rapture (to use a word which used to be more familiar with divines than it seems to be of late) cannot then be when He is manifested; for they are all, Christ and the saints, manifested together.

Besides, the same result follows from the scriptures which speak of His coming with the saints. They must have been, then, caught up before in order to come with Him.

Further, the great book which puts together in an orderly way so many elements scattered over the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the final prophecy of the New Testament, has it no light for us on this vexed question? Much every way, but this chiefly - that thence we learn how the saints are seen glorified in heaven under the symbol of twenty-four elders not to speak of the four living creatures from Rev. 4; that they are seen there kept out of the hour of temptation which comes on all the world to try them that dwell on the earth; that during this hour God works in Jews and Gentiles, who alone are spoken of as being on earth, without a hint of the Church or churches after Rev. 3 (save in the exhortation at the end when the prophetic part is concluded); and that when the Lord does come to judge, the saints are with Him, and come out of heaven, not from earth, for the closing scene, when executing vengeance on them that know not God and them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus, He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed in that day. Then and not before, will be the public retributive dealing of the Lord, when His saints shall be vindicated and their enemies shall be troubled worse than any tribulation they inflicted on the faithful. The Lord’s coming simply to receive the saints to be with Himself above is no doubt the joy of grace; but it is not all, and does not supersede the importance of the scene of manifestation (which is itself a part of His coming or παρουσία), when all questions of responsibility in good or ill will be solved and made apparent.

The best sobriety of the saint is to believe the scriptures -- not some, but all; sacrificing the truth neither of our manifestation and reward when Christ comes in judgment, nor of the scenes of horror, when God will give the Jew and man in general to taste the result even in this world of rejecting the true Christ and receiving the false one; but when He will make ready once more, by an Elijah testimony, a people prepared for the Lord on earth, that when He does appear in glory, He may have not only a risen glorified Bride with Him, suited to the heavenly places and the Father’s house, but also an earthly people, the nucleus for the blessing of which will follow the execution of judgment on all His enemies. It is the same παρουσία but ἡ π. as such, and ἐπιθανεία τῆς π. are quite distinct in character and time.

The παρουσία of the Lord, then, is not a mere act of coming, but the state of being present in contrast with His absence. The epiphany or shining forth of His παρουσία most naturally intimates that this presence in itself is not necessarily visible.

The Bible Treasury 6:239, 240.

The Bride

Q. 1. -- Was not the truth of Christ and His members -- one body -- the mystery hid in past ages and revealed to Paul?

2. -- Was the truth of “the Bride” a mystery? Was it hid in the Old Testament? Is not Rebekah a type of “the Bride”? Was not Eliezer forbidden to take a Gentile bride for Isaac?

3. -- Where is the Church -- the body -- ever spoken of as “the Bride”?

I. W. S.

A. 1. -- The mystery hid from ages and generations consists of two parts:

1. the supremacy of Christ over the entire universe of God, of all things, whether in heaven or on earth; and

2. of the Church, His body, composed of Jews and Gentiles baptized by the Holy Ghost, united to Him as head over all. It was revealed to the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, but in fact revealed by Paul to us.

2, 3. It is evident from Eph. 5, Rev. 19, 22, that the figure of the Bride, the Lamb’s wife,” equally applies to the Church. Eve, in Gen. 2, and Rebekah, in Gen. 24, &c., revealed nothing of the mystery. They told their own profitable tale of old, but nobody ever did or could draw from them alone the union of the Church with Christ in heaven. When the truth of the Church, Christ’s body and bride, came to view, then these scriptures yielded a further deeper meaning in God’s wisdom, though even then the union of Jew and Gentile in one new man, the body of Christ, the head of all things in heaven and earth went far beyond any or all these types. But the reference is distinct in Eph. 5 to Adam and Eve on this point. “It is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” The point forbidden in Gen. 24 is not a Gentile bride, but a daughter of the Canaanites (i.e., the type of a wicked spirit in the heavens). In Eph. 5 the point is the wife or bride as
much as the body.

That there will be an earthly bride, according to the Psalms, Prophets, and Canticles, does not clash with the truth that there is a heavenly bride, married to the Lamb before the appearing of Christ and distinct from the blessed guests who are to be at the supper (the Old Testament saints, I suppose). Rev. 22:17 is conclusive to my mind that “the bride” of the Apocalypse is none other than the Church, now waiting for Christ with the Holy Spirit dwelling in her and prompting the precious word, “Come.” Far different will be the relation and attitude of the Jewish remnant, before the Lord appears for their deliverance.

The Bible Treasury 5:320.

America, Australia, etc., in the Coming Crisis

Q. -- What will be the position of the Continents of America, Australia, &c., with their populations in the coming crisis? Will they be under the Roman Beast?

A. -- I am not aware of any distinct reference to the continent of America in the scriptures. But in a general way it appears to me that “the waters,” on which the great Harlot Babylon sits (as in Rev. 17), include its population on all sides of the world. It was, we do not doubt, peopled not only by migratory hordes of Chinese, &c. across Behring’s Straits, but by Icelanders, Norwegians, &c., who are believed on sufficient grounds to have made their way there little after A.D. 1000, and therefore many centuries before its discovery by Christopher Columbus, who opened it to the enterprise of Europe.

But it seems plain that the American or the Australasian lands and races cannot find themselves under the Roman Beast. For it, as I understand, is exclusively western, and does not comprehend even Greece or Macedonia, still less the properly Medo-Persian or Babylonish empires. Hence in Dan. 2 the gold, the silver, and the brass, are seen at the end when Judgment falls, no less than the iron and clay, the symbol of the Roman empire. Cp. also Dan. 7:12. It is an error to make the range of the Beast, and of his Jewish ally, the Anti-Christ, universal. We must leave room for a great adversary in the king of the north or the Assyrian, and for Gog, the chief of the Russian races, behind that king, and after him.

It may however be well to add that the late Mr. E. B. Elliott (in the Horae Apoc. ii. 73, fifth edition) imagined that there is a more direct allusion to the discovery of America, if not of Australasia, in Rev. 10:2 (latter clause). He naturally says little, and is somewhat indefinite, but as usual confident. It is the end of footnote 3, though the reference in the General Index might lead one to expect more. “Dr. S. R. Maitland thinks it strange that no notice should have been taken in the Apocalypse of the discovery of America, supposing it a prophecy of the history of Christendom. (Remarks on Christian Guardian, p. 120). If I am correct in my understanding of the vision before us, the supposed omission does not exist.” This is all the notice I can find in his four large volumes.


Abraham and Christians

Q. -- Will you do me the great favor to direct me as to the reconciliation of your views of the parenthetical nature of the Christian Dispensation with the passages in the New Testament which seem to teach that Abraham and Christians are one in relation to all the benefits that flow from the mercy of God through the Redeemer? If the Scriptures alluded to did not seem so plainly to contradict your distinction of heavenly and earthly, I could adopt your view. But with only the light I have now, there is nothing for me but painful uncertainty. Lexington, Va., Dec. 30.Fl881M.

A. -- The passages of the New Testament to which our correspondent refers are doubtless such texts as Rom. 4:11, Gal. 3, and Heb. 11. The reason why they are supposed inconsistent with the special privileges of the believer now, is that the distinctive place of the Christian, and yet more the church, is not apprehended. People seem that to be born of God, and to be justified by faith, are the sum and substance of present blessing. But it is not so. All saints are necessarily born of the Spirit. The baptism of the Spirit was never enjoyed till Pentecost; and on this depends the body of Christ. Compare Acts 1:2 with 1 Cor. 12:13. And the gift of the Spirit, as thus over and above the new birth, as it could not be before redemption, was to be the permanent privilege of the Christian. The comforter or Paraclete was to abide with the disciples forever. Even as to justification by faith, Rom. 4 makes this difference between Abraham and us: he believed that God was able to perform His promise; we believe on Him that raised up from the dead Jesus our Lord, after accomplishing His work in death for our offence. The Old Testament had promise; we rest on accomplishment; so that there is a grave difference at the threshold. Then Gal. 4 shows that even the true saints of old were in servitude; but that now it is a question of the adoption of sons, the Spirit of the Son being sent forth into the hearts of the sons, crying Abba, Father. The inheritance of promise is common ground; but this quite consists with fresh and inferior {sic, superior} blessing consequent on redemption. If we think not of the individual, but of our corporate relationship, the difference is at least as marked. The olive tree of testimony according to promise is not at all the same as the house of God, or the body of Christ. There is continuity in the olive tree, even if some of the natural branches were broken off for unbelief to let in the Gentile wild olive graft; and the Gentile, if not continuing in goodness, is to be cut off, that God may ingraft again the natural branches no longer abiding in unbelief. “And so all
Israel shall be saved” {Rom. 11:26} in the depth of God’s wisdom and mercy. But this is quite distinct from Eph. 2, where the two are formed into one man, in which is neither Jew nor Gentile; and we are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone. During the Old Testament the middle wall was not broken down, nor were both made one. Even in the Lord’s ministry here below, “Go not,” said He, “into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not”: dead and risen, He sends them to any or all. How could the house be even begun before the foundation, not of prophets and then apostles, but “of the apostles and prophets” whom the ascended Head gave as gifts? And the body is formed in union with Him by the Spirit sent down from heaven.

Thus, if there are benefits which all saints enjoy from God’s mercy through Christ, which is thankfully owned, there are fresh and unspeakably great privileges which flow from redemption, and the presence of the Holy Ghost, who associates us in unity with Christ on high. In these last lies the peculiar blessings of the Christian and the Church. When Christ comes, the worthies of faith will, no doubt, receive the promise; but God has none the less provided some better thing for us {Heb. 11:40}, though we and they shall together enter on glory in that day.

The Bible Treasury 14:32.

Earthly and Heavenly Spheres During the Millennium

Q. -- It is acknowledged that the Lord will reign in Zion (Psa. 2, 99; Isa. 2, 8, 12, 24, &c.; Zech. 2, 8, &c.). Yet it is drawn from the N. T. that His or our especial scene of glory will be in heaven. How can this be?

R. -- Few truths are more important, whether one thinks of Christ or of the church. It is a question of the purpose of God, hidden in the ages and dispensations, but now brought to light formally and fully by the apostle Paul. Take Eph. 1:9-11 as a grand unfolding of it, where we learn that for the administration of the fulness of the times (or seasons) God will gather together (or head up) in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him in Whom also we obtained (or were given) inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. This rises incomparably beyond the kingdom in Zion, or the yet larger dominion of the Son of man, both of which will assuredly be accomplished “in that day.” It is even beyond all the promises to which the O. T. saints have just claim, and wherein no disappointment shall ever be. But grace gave to the apostle to reveal the divine counsel of setting Christ at the Head of all creation, the Heir as the Creator of all, now His (as the Epistle to the Colossians shows) on the ground of reconciliation. He is thus constituted the glorified Head over all, as we now know by faith. And “that day,” which proclaims Messiah’s reign over the land of promise with Israel renewed as His people, and all nations and tribes circling round Israel and subject to the Son of man, will make known the still more wondrous glory of our Lord over all things heavenly, angels, principalities, &c., with the church in the same glory His bride as now His body.

When this characteristic truth of the N. T. dawns on the soul, a crowd of scriptures confirm it. Thus in Matt. 6 our Lord taught His disciples to pray for “Thy” (i.e. the Father’s) kingdom to come, as well as His will to be done on earth. The Father’s kingdom is as distinctly heavenly as the Son of man’s is earthly: so Matt. 13:41-43 clearly proves. The risen saints shine as the sun, which is not earthly, in their Father’s kingdom; whereas the Son of man by His angels executes judgment on all offences and unrighteous persons in His kingdom as manifestly on earth. But it will be the day for His exaltation manifested on high as well as here below, being the Son of the Father and set by God over all things heavenly and earthly.

Then John 14 is unmistakable that our special hope of blessedness is not merely reigning with Christ, as all suffering saints shall, but that He is coming to receive us to Himself in the Father’s house where He now is. And the great N. T. prophecy shows us (Rev. 21:9 to the end) the bride the Lamb’s wife the center of heavenly and universal glory; as the O. T. is equally clear that Zion will be for all the peoples of the earth, then owning Israel to be the seed which Jehovah has blessed and set at the head of all nations under the Great King, Himself Jehovah-Messiah.

So Rom. 8:16, 17, designates the Christians as God’s children. “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” This goes far beyond the earth; as Rom. 5:17 cannot be limited to the millennial reign.

Again, 1 Cor. 6:2, 3, teaches that we shall judge the world -- nay more, judge angels. And 1 Cor. 15:48, 49, distinctly calls us even now “heavenly” in title, after the pattern of the Heavenly One, and points on to our bearing that heavenly image, as we have now borne the image of the earthly (Adam’s). But instead of gathering up other intimations, look at the glorious type of that day furnished by Gen. 14 where Melchizedek meets Abram victorious over the foe in the hour of their short triumph and pronounces him blessed of the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth; as he blesses the most High God Who had delivered his enemies into his hand. Christ is even now, as the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches, priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek; but He will exercise its privileges in the blessings of that day of blessing. One might add many a glimpse in the types of Joseph, and of Moses, as well as in that of the sanctuary. But enough is said to show the blank left by looking no higher than the earth for the Lord in that day. If nature abhors a vacuum, the Christian in hope awaits glory in the heavens for Christ and the church, while fully assured that glory of Jehovah and the knowledge of it shall...
fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

The Bible Treasury, New Series 2:79-80.

Millennial Conversion

Q. -- Where in the Psalms or Prophets is justified the belief that there will be conversions in the Millennial age?

J. C. J. (U. S. A.).

A. -- Almost every where that we find the work of divine goodness contemplated. Take Psa. 2:12: “Kiss the Son, lest he be angry... Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.” All conversions past, present, or future, are in this way and no other. They alone are the righteous who fear God then as now. The gospel, which actually goes out in indiscriminate grace, the apostle vindicates to the Jewish objector in Rom. 9, 10 by testimonies from the Law, Psalms, and prophets which anticipate that day. It will be the harvest. We are but a sort of first-fruits, though called to “some better thing,” as Heb. 11:40 speaks, as compared even with “the elders.” But the ingathering great as to extent awaits that day. All must bow to the Lord, “King over all the earth,” as well as “Head over all things”; but all are not converted even then, as Isa. 65 shows, and on a large scale Rev. 20:7-10. They will previously have rendered but a feigned obedience. Cp. Psa. 18:44.

The Bible Treasury, New Series 2:240.

The Separate State

And the Resurrection

When we have learned a truth, even in power from God, such is the narrowness of the human mind, that we are in serious danger of making it a shut-door against other truths, and thus of stopping short of the largeness of God’s thoughts. Indeed, the more important a truth, the greater is the peril of its becoming all-absorbing. “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, (blessed, divine remedy!) whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” {John 14:26}. “When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth” {John 16:13}.

Thus, when Jesus, after speaking of the many mansions in His Father’s house, and of going there to prepare a place for His own, said: “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there may ye be also” {John 14:3}, it is clear that He did not mean death, nor the end of the world, nor the destruction of Jerusalem. He who was going away promised to come again: if it was a real, personal departure of Jesus, it was to be as real and personal a return, not to reign over them in their place, but to take them to His place, that He and they might be there together. Right, therefore, it is, that our hearts should feel that our going to Him is a thing very distinct from His coming to receive us unto Himself in such sort as this.

Again, our souls may have drank somewhat into the triumphant strain of the Apostle, when he cries: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” {1 Cor. 15:55}. Hades is not our joy, but He who has won the victory—He that liveth and was dead, and behold He is alive for evermore, and hath its keys! It is true that the Christian can say that all is his, life or death; still, death is not, and ought not to be, the object of his affections. Christ is the Bridegroom; not Christ known after the flesh, for henceforth know we no man thus: we know Him the risen man, the Lord from heaven. And by the energy of the Holy Ghost, knowing Him risen, we long for that which will but speak His worth, His power, His glory -- above all, His love. We long for His coming and for the resurrection -- the resurrection of them that are Christ’s, at His coming. Happiness, no doubt, it is to be rid of this clog and burden, this body of sin and death -- happiness far deeper is the assurance that we depart to be with Christ; but, led of the Spirit, we long for His triumph, for His joy. Our death and consequent separate state, however to us “far better” through His grace, is far from being His triumph No! it is “when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory” {1 Cor. 15:54}.

Nevertheless, let none depreciate the blessed portion of those who, absent from the body, are present with the Lord. When the word of truth in its fullness and simplicity is respected, this may not be touched. To the dying thief, who prayed the Lord to remember him when He should come in His kingdom, Jesus said: “Verily, I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise” {Luke 23:42, 43}; that is, He proffers something beyond and better than he asked, something which, to the renewed mind, is more prized than any outward governmental display, however glorious -- the joy of being with Christ Himself, and that very day too, without waiting for His coming in His kingdom. I do not mean, nor believe, that, in the kingdom, the element of the presence and companionship of Christ will be wanting, nor can it be supposed that we shall be less able to appreciate this blessed association, when that which is perfect is come. Surely not. Yet, strictly, it is not what constitutes the character of the kingdom, for it existed, as we have seen before the kingdom, and it will continue after the kingdom shall have been delivered up. But when one has felt even a little of the affections of Christ, it needs few words to show that no conferred honor, no recompense, however right, (and God forbid that we should disparage the recompense of such a Lord!) can approach the joy of being near Him, and with Him, and, blessed be God, for ever!

The saints, then, which sleep in Jesus, (or rather who were put to sleep by Jesus τοὺς χομισθέντας διὰ ταύτ~ '
death shall not be able to separate from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. so Stephen, stoned, calls and says, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” {Acts 7:59}; and Paul could say “to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” “. . . For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better” {Phil. 1:21, 23}. There was not, and could not be, a doubt, whether to choose death or resurrection. The hesitation was about “living in the flesh,” not about resurrection, which was incomparably more blessed than either to live or to die: “if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead.” To abide in the flesh might be more needful for others; but as far as the servant of Christ, individually, is concerned, to depart and to be with Christ is far better. (Phil. 1.) Nevertheless, the third chapter of this same epistle declares that we have another and sweeter hope. We look for the Savior from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ; who, instead of giving to our spirits only the joy of being with Him, shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself. And the Apostle, in 2 Cor. 5, speaking of Christian position and judgment as to these things, utters our confidence and willingness to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord, though, even here, he shows that there is another thing closer to the heart. “We groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven . . . For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed (i.e., death and the separate state,) but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life” {2 Cor. 5:2}: the result and complement of the resurrection of Christ. “If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies because of His spirit that dwelleth in you” {Rom. 8. 11-23}.

The Prospect 1:16.

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3. It cannot mean ‘who have slept because of Jesus,’ as some have supposed, thereby wrongly confining the first resurrection to martyrs. If so, the Greek must have been διὰ τῶν Ἰησοῦν, or τῶν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, So in Rev. 20:4, there are thrones and persons sitting on them, as well as the beheaded witnessing class, and those who had not worshiped the beast: that is, the text supposes and speaks of others besides those who suffer unto death.
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