The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Volume 2 (Prophetic 1)

John Nelson Darby

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Reflections Upon The Prophetic Inquiry And The Views Advanced In It

Editor's Note1

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book,” Rev. 22:18, 19.

The existing circumstances of the Church of God seem to call upon those who earnestly desire its welfare, not to hold back from expressing that which may, in any way, tend to the strengthening of faith and healing those divisions which, while they destroy charity, and the fellowship one with another that is proper to walking in the light, weaken the testimony which is held out to the unconverted, or to the inquirer, of the everlasting truth of God. It appears to me that, on the subject of prophecy (divisions on which now shame godliness), both those who hold and those who strenuously oppose views, which, for convenience’ sake, we may call Millenarian, are deeply culpable. Many have written on one side and the other ignorant of each other’s views, and precipitate and unwarranted in their inferences from them; and, while those who hold the views of prophecy, which have occasioned the controversy, have indulged in language utterly inconsistent with the spirit of their Master, those who are unconvinced by them, though charging this exclusively on the Millenarians, are themselves, it

appears to me, in no way free from blame. Superciliousness, distrust, and animosity, not perhaps so distinctly expressed, because new views are generally the most active and forward, but quite as evil in their character and spirit, have marked their conduct and language; while those who sought instruction, and to whom the others were debtors for it, have been hindered, perplexed, and repelled in their inquiries by the selfish precipitancy of the one and presuming ignorance of many connected with them, and the uncandid uninquiring rejection and denouncement of the other. There is no one at all observant of what is now existing, and interested in the strengthening of humble souls, but must feel the culpable responsibility in which many leaders of the professing church are involved.

There are some observations I would make on these subjects, being convinced of the extreme precipitancy in which many have written upon them; and I think that in such a time (though I am persuaded the purposes of God will eventually result, and His glory be manifested in our weakness), there should be a disposition to try more maturely the soundness of our views and statements alleged to be from Scripture, before truth and the value of the sacred Scriptures themselves are brought into question, perplexity, and disgrace, by the presumptuous and hasty pursuit, not of scriptural truth, but of our own untried thoughts, given out to a greedy public, glad of novelty, which has no requisition of sanctification attached to it, and ready to neglect their own souls for unfounded and idle speculations.

On the other hand, it is equally certain that the Scriptures of God have not been written to no purpose; that, as His provision for His saints, the prophetic like

all other parts of them have a sanctifying, strengthening and directing influence. What God thought it worth while to order and arrange, as ministering to the ends of His glory and man's participation in it, and to reveal (that is, to communicate, to man), as that in which He is concerned, must be surely worth while for man to inquire into and be informed of; and they seem guilty of presumption who would arraign the value and importance of what God thought fit to reveal. The fact of God's revelation to one who knows what God is (in a word, to a believer) is demonstrative evidence of its vast importance and his interest in it; and when it comes from God to man, is man to say it is not of importance?

These truly are the themes which have called forth most the admiration and praise of those who have seen God in them; nor can any one believe rightly in His saving love, who is not deeply interested in the manner by which its results are accomplished. The argument that prophecy is only available as an evidence of revelation after its fulfilment, not to reason upon general grounds, seems to have little weight. All the prophecies testify of facts which require a certain line of conduct, at or previous to their fulfilment; and though they are evidence of themselves as a revelation, and of the value of the prophesied fact, there are few instances of this being of importance after their fulfilment. Besides, many of them unequivocally relate to the closing period of the world; and it would be hard to say of what avail these could be for the purpose stated. And further, almost all which are considered as fulfilled prophecies by those who use this argument, were expressly delivered as testimonies to the consciences of men immediately concerned in them, previously to their fulfilments. Will any one say, that the

directions of our Lord to His disciples were of no interest, and not important to be understood previous to the destruction of Jerusalem, and merely that that destruction might accredit His testimony? Were Jeremiah's urgent remonstrances and warnings not to be inquired into before the Chaldeans took the city; and shall it be said that the solemn testimony to Israel put them under no responsibility, but were useless declamations, till the kings of Assyria had been the means of burying them in yet unveiled oblivion? There seems to be something of infidelity in all this. Or do they argue that God is less concerned in the Church now, or that the Lord now will not do good, neither will He do evil? Besides, they leave, arguing in the present time, a large scope of prophecy unfulfilled, which manifestly cannot be of any direct avail subsequent to its fulfilment; and yet they would afford us no assignable cause why it has been revealed at all.

But they say it does not tend to sanctification. But man is not a judge of this; he would still be sanctifying the Church his own way. I am persuaded that God never revealed anything without a sanctifying purpose; for His nature is holy, His purpose holiness; and I believe the sober and holy study of the word of God, as such, in His fear, will concentrate the affections upon Him, separate from the world, and give enlarged views of His kingdom, wisdom, and glory, peculiarly calculated to sink in our estimation this world—its glory, its strength; and to fix our minds on the Lamb's glory. There is in fact in these objections a tendency to depreciate the purposes of God in Scripture, to preserve the importance of man's little sphere of views.

On the other hand, the extreme precipitancy with which the subject has been taken up has led—which has given occasion to this part of the charge—to unjust estimate of the use, and value, and seasonable application of those truths. Men have sought to please themselves, instead of edifying themselves or their neighbours. Let men either inquire humbly, or use God's word to God's purposes, or else refrain from seeking to affect the minds of others. Loquacity or forwardness on religious subjects is a great hindrance to real edification. "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God," as those who have something to say on God's behalf, or else use the modesty which becomes those who only seek for truth. One other complaint is to be made against those who oppose these views, and it is a serious one. Instead of weighing what has been advanced by others in the spirit of serious inquiry, separating the chaff from the wheat, and willing to see the use which God might make of their brethren's testimony; jealous of the tone which they assumed, and hurt by their charges against them, they irritably threw the whole of their views overboard, without inquiring what the scripture itself said upon the subject; and then, to justify themselves, endeavoured all they could to shew, in the darkest colours, every part of the system, and bring up reasons against the whole. But if there be any truth in these things, they are defrauding themselves, and it is a poor compensation to prove their brethren wrong.

In many things, alas! we are divided enough—enough exposed to the enemy not to be opposed to one another in our very hopes. Surely they should give some just sense, if they think those to whom they are opposed in the wrong. For my own part, if I were bound to receive

all that has been said by the Millenarians, I would reject the whole system; but their views and statements weigh with me not one feather. But this does not hinder me from inquiring by the teaching of the same Spirit (which in measure, I believe, directed them) what God has with infinite graciousness revealed to me concerning His dealings with the Church.

I confess I think the modern writers on prophecy justly chargeable with following their own thoughts hastily, and far too much removed from the control of Scripture. They have got some general view, perhaps sound, of God's purpose. They take some text or prophecy as a starting point, pursue the suggestions of their own minds in connection with their general views previously adopted, but leave the results almost entirely untried by the direct testimony of the word, affording us theories, often enlarging when by a writer much imbued with Scripture, often of general soundness of view though replete with false statements: but, when not by such a writer, diverging into absurdities calculated to awaken the impatience of many and bring the truth of all into dishonour. In the meanwhile the Church is distracted. There is not a single writer whose writings I have seen (unless it be the author of one short inquiry) who is not chargeable with this fault. Some of the most confident really call for much reprobation. But good, I am persuaded, will grow out of it; and the very difficulties will call, under God's Spirit, the attention of the faithful servant of God: and while the precipitancy of the others will be repressed by the distinct manifestation of the error into which it has led them and the calm statement of truth, they who have hitherto rejected even inquiry will yield themselves to much which they have scorned,

and be humbled both to the acknowledgment of a common truth and the spiritual sincerity of many against whom they have been bitter, because they could not convince them, when in truth it was their own fault. I would call upon the servants of God to pray that He would guide and direct His church by His Spirit in these things in sober and subdued meekness, and it will surely be led into all truth. I shall take notice (with this feeling) of some things which seem to me illustrative of the unguarded, unscriptural statements many of which, I think, have dishonoured Scripture, and been spoken ignorantly: and I shall, secondly, propose some ground of inquiry, to those who have hitherto repudiated these views.

These views trench upon many habits in which religious teachers have for the most part been formed—many views in which they have long had their boast. No man likes to give up these: their relative consequence is lost; it is distinguishing to oppose them. “No man, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new, for he saith, the old is better.” Many of the subjects mentioned in the foregoing pages are of themselves of deep interest, such as the use of prophecy generally, and materially affecting the present views of men upon the subject; but it has not been attempted to dwell upon them at length here: other occasions, or a better instrument, perhaps may draw them out into more useful and instructive relief. My object is unpretending and simple, and I pursue it at once: it has been some time on my mind, though withheld hitherto.

The observations on the “resurrection from among the dead” published in the Christian Examiner (sound in criticism, and temperate in spirit, and calculated to be

useful) point out an instance of the extreme carelessness with which bold statements are made by Writers on these subjects: but having been there discussed, I omit it here.

There is an error of another kind, small in importance, perhaps, because of obvious correction, but illustrative of the way in which men inconsiderately make statements, when they fall in with their system, in the face of the simplest testimony of Scripture itself. In the third and fourth sermons on Daniel's vision of the four beasts and of the Son of man, by Mr. Irving, Zephaniah is stated to have prophesied before the carrying away of Israel captive; and it is assumed that they carried the book of that prophet to Nineveh, whereby Nineveh would know of its threatened judgments. The prophet addressed Judah alone, and expressly states that he prophesied in the reign of Josiah (that is, about one hundred years after the carrying away of Israel captive). The reason of the statement is, to shew that God gave testimony to Nineveh and her king, before He judged them. He certainly had done so previously by Jonah. The idea is a very laudable one; but, running away with it, we have the following passage in page 92: "Yet God suffered not such a city to perish without witnesses, but raised certain of the captivity to the highest offices in his kingdom," etc. "There can be no doubt, also, that the prophecies of Nahum and of Zephaniah, which almost solely concern the judgment upon Nineveh, and which were given before the captivity of Israel, were carried with the captives into Nineveh, and there more or less circulated amongst the Ninevites, and especially brought to the knowledge of the king himself; for God is very merciful," etc. They say much of taking Scripture as

it presents itself. Who could suppose that all that concerned Nineveh in the prophecy of Zephaniah was three verses, bringing it in amongst the many other countries which were to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar— the whole book being concerning him, Jerusalem, its present evil, and future hopes; and this, as we have said, a century after Israel was carried into captivity! We take it as shewing the extreme neglect of Scripture and even prophecy itself, the hurried pursuit of an object in the mind, something brought in at random to illustrate it, without any reference or mature weighing, whether it is really borne out by Scripture. I think the interpretation of Isaiah in the same page erroneous, and the occasion of the error the same: but as this might seem to involve interpretation, I do not say anything of it, though I think the case perfectly clear, and that the simple reading of prophecy will evince the total inapplicability of the alleged meaning. Another instance, upon which it is not proposed to dwell, but mentioned as occurring in the same book, is in a long dissertation to shew that the Greek empire was set up in order to give prevalence to the Greek language, which, though a collateral result, is, I think, a very confined view, and in itself exhibits the absorption of mind into its present idea, which I complain of as so injurious, and, in the case of Scripture, so very culpable; but it is there stated, that our Lord and His apostles always quote from the Septuagint. This is not the fact, as has been fully shewn.

Again, in the translator's preliminary discourse to Ben-Ezra, we have (p. 55), "And to this effect I understand Rom. 8:1, 'There is no condemnation' (krisis, i.e. judgment)," etc. The word is katakrima without a single

various reading in Wetstein or Griesbach. Doubtless he had in mind John 5:24, where it is krisis. If this were an isolated act of inadvertency, it might be well passed over; but it is evidence, and accumulated evidence, of great carelessness. And it is adduced on this account, that it is introduced by the author as determining the sense of an important passage, to which, at the time of stating it, it is evident, he could not have referred; not merely from the mistake itself, but because the whole passage (and this is the point I would urge) bears in a long train of argument upon subjects totally unconnected with the one upon which he is arguing, and in which krisis, in his view of it, would have no place or object. That which we advert to is not the casual mistake, but the drawing in a whole passage into a purpose beside its object, through absorption of mind, into one particular view.

And in this place we cannot pass over, though it cannot be treated as a mistake, passages in this preface highly injurious to the work and honour of Christ, and in it, the just, holy, and influencing comfort of believing saints. It is alike indicative of the same hasty pursuit of a single idea. I shall quote but one concentrating sentence—but the observations will apply to the whole spirit shewn from p. 55-65 of this preface. The haste, the very culpable haste (for the promises and hopes of God's people are not thus to be trifled with) is shewn in this. In evincing (the truth of which we do not now inquire into) that the resurrection at Christ's coming is the substantive hope of the Church, he attempts this by throwing every cloud upon the hope of the dying Christian. "Death," his words are, "is a parting, not a meeting; it is a sorrowful parting, not a joyful meeting; it

is a parting in feebleness and helplessness to we know not whither—into a being we know not what." This sentence is singularly unfortunate in its statements; and, indeed, Scripture and the hope of the gospel ought not to be thus made the slave of men's momentary thoughts. "I have a desire," says the apostle, "to depart and to be with Christ." Death to the believer is not a parting but a meeting, if our central and supreme affections are with Christ. I am not questioning here, be it remembered, the hope of Christ's coming, but Mr. Irving's statements respecting death. Death is not a sorrowful parting, but a joyful meeting; for it does not become us to sorrow as those without hope. For why? —they that sleep in Jesus go to Jesus, and God brings them with Him. For indeed "he that liveth and believeth in Jesus shall never die." If, indeed, he values earthly things more than Christ's presence, then sorrow will accompany his death. But it is the proper distinction of Christianity to have neutralised that power of death which Mr. Irving is preaching; "for the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law"; but both are dead to the believer in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ the Saviour. It is a parting not in but with feebleness and helplessness, we know whither—that is, to Christ. If He be true, we know whither we go, and the way. As to "a being we know not what," the Scripture affirms it of the state of the risen body, and of that only. "It does not yet appear," saith the apostle, "what we shall be," speaking expressly of that state. As to the promise, Mr. Irving is writing against his own opinions; for, if he hold that Christ will come again, he believes that He will bring His saints with Him, so that they which are alive and remain have no preference. He is indeed himself witness that Scripture is conclusive as to a paradise for the

separated spirit; but he says we know not what it is. Is there nothing, then, in being with Christ the Saviour, who loved us and gave Himself for us—that hope that brightened the thoughts and quickened the expectations of many a dying and many a martyred saint? Is there nothing in being with Him, to throw holy influence and triumphant character on the relinquishment of this yet evil and Satan-deceived world? Sure I am, there was that in it which made Paul prefer death to life; for death was no death to him, but parting from trial to Christ, from perseverance through surrounding evil to that blessed presence, where all doubt, sorrow, and death would have passed away to him for ever. He had a desire to depart and be with Christ; he was not comforted only by the building of God made with hands; for he was always confident, desiring rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.

We must say that this is a most unholy mis-statement of Scripture, and destructive of that which is the glory and influential power, as well cf the resurrection of the saints, as of their present hopes; and that, if the Lord’s presence be not a paramount blessing, prevailing over death now, it never will be at the resurrection, or at any other time. It shews the folly of man in his thoughts; for, in attempting to shew the importance of his views above another’s, the sole thing which is of power in those very views and can alone realise them is undermined and destroyed, and this in the face of the fullest and most anxious statements of Scripture, and to the dishonour of Christ and the faith of the saints of God. Satan reigns by death; Christ has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. And to argue from the circumstances of His death is folly; for it was because He so suffered, and

(having overcome in full conflict with the very power under which it is here stated we rest) rose again into glory, that we have not that trial, that we are delivered and triumph, and that its power is past away towards us. The observations from the Apocalypse are a total misapprehension of its force. This might call for much and varied animadversion; but my object is not to condemn or accuse (God forbid that it should be!) but precisely the contrary. But these are the sort of statements which have awakened the impatience of observant Christians, and occasioned a natural, though indeed an unjust prejudice against the persons who hold those views they are urged in maintenance of, and a hasty rejection (still more foolish) of the views themselves. For in this they are making themselves servants to the unguarded precipitancy of others, not judges of it, and masters of the truths which they confound with so many mis-statements. In a word, they are allowing Satan to do just what he meant to do by the partial ignorance of inquiring men. But it must be confessed, it is a bold word to say, that when Christ said to the thief on the cross, “To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise” —that which made Paul always confident, giving him, upon the common faith of God’s people, a desire to depart—that what the Lord comforted and assured the thief with, and the apostle built on, was, “a day of death, from sight of which the soul shrinketh, and a void beyond it, so vacant and unintelligible, as not to be available for any distinct end of faith, hope, edification, or comfort.” “And this notion of blessedness with Christ, upon our leaving this tabernacle, is a vague notion which Satan hath substituted.” Christ substituted it as something nearer to the dying thief, when he proposed that on which the writer so much insists; and

it was because it was a distant hope, and there would have been a vague void without this revelation, that we were given the assurance that that was revealed in great mercy, which is thus now thrown to the dogs. The hope of the individual is being with Christ; the hope of the church is His coming: doubtless the individual is deeply interested in this hope likewise. On the whole, throughout this preface, Christ's present glory is not duly seen, nor its perception by the believer as manifested by Him, as it is not to the world.

But, perhaps, we are passing our subject. I shall therefore next take notice, merely with this view, of a commonly current work, "The Cry from the Desert," in the hope that it may lead to a more accurate examination of Scripture itself, before any of the writings of men upon this subject are adopted or rejected. This is what I would press and urge upon every one: to apply themselves, for themselves, to the testimony of Scripture, to draw ideas simply and directly from this (and I can assure them, they will ever find them sanctifying ideas) but trust no man's mind, whether millenarian or anti-millenarian; to use the scriptural rule— "to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good"; to adopt nothing unexamined, and to reject nothing unexamined, however weak it may be in its positions. If taken in itself, it may distract; if it lead to the examination of Scripture, it may prove the indirect source of abundant knowledge and grace.

It is not my object to enter generally upon the character of this tract. I dare say the writer's mind aimed at more fully exhibiting the purposes of God; but by undue confidence, the result has been to overrun Scripture, and exhibit, as it appears to me, only his own weakness.

It is this I would deprecate. The energy of new apprehensions, doubtless, is often valuable; but in man's hands it often degenerates into the truthless and unprofitable display of crude conceptions of our own. Let us compare the following passages, after which we will enter into detail.

"I can readily conceive, however, that these accompaniments of the divinity, with all the attendant miracles with which the heavenly Jerusalem is surrounded, will never be exposed to the unsanctified gaze of any but the holy nation; and that, as I shall hereafter attempt to shew, only of its most holy and privileged orders. I cannot afford you a more simple or expressive illustration of this sacred seclusion of the heavenly city, than was afforded me in reading the very interesting narrative of Captain Hall's visit to the Loo Choo Islands in the Eastern Ocean, about four or five hundred miles south of Japan; wherein he states, that although he anchored off their shores for several months, and during that time had, by dint of the most confiding overtures, and the most unwearied perseverance, contrived to establish a friendly intercourse with the natives, yet, neither persuasions, entreaties, nor threats, could ever induce them, in their most unguarded moments, to allow him, or any of his company, to make any approaches into the interior of the country, where the king's palace was situated. Nay, so scrupulously jealous were they of Captain Hall's inquiries relative to the king, his government, or even his private establishment and family, that they would never enter into conversation upon the subject, and scarcely mention his name. I can, therefore, easily picture to myself that the more immediate residence,

the court of the King of the whole earth (to use an expression more familiar to our present conceptions), will be most sacredly guarded against the approach of any but the highly privileged nation; as it is written, 'Nothing unholy or uncircumcised shall enter therein.'"

"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 shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit, to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy 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, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east, three gates; on the north, three gates; on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a

chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Can anything more display or condemn the light spirit in which God's purposes are taken up, than the contrast of these two passages? How blessed and full of blessing is the latter! how full of sanctifying and exalting truths and images! His friend, however, suggests the difficulty: "If this be so, how can the kings of the earth offer him their homage?" He replies, "I have anticipated this objection, as I find it written in Ezekiel, that the prince himself shall worship in the temple: that is, worship God the Father. And as I will undertake to prove to you, the temple can only be erected in earthly Jerusalem, I thence infer, that the Prince will likewise there give his audiences, on set days, to the kings of the earth, who

shall hold their kingdoms there at his hand, and will there receive their gifts of fealty to their great Head." But this merely proves what we are here animadverting upon—the entire neglect of scriptural statements, and loss of scriptural objects, and their power, in the hasty pursuit of our own thoughts. The writer had framed his system of the two cities over against each other in the holy oblation, and he had to solve the objection, which he does, so as to relieve his own system from it as stated, but proving utter neglect of Scripture. For, instead of going there to receive their homage, the scripture states that the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honour unto it. I do not intend to pursue the comparison of the passages, for they are sufficiently obvious to the most unobservant; but I confess I pity the mind which could interpret the statement in the Revelation into a sort of box, in which the Lord was to be shut up to prevent anybody seeing Him; like a certain petty king whom Captain Hall went to visit. This may be immaterial; but I affirm that the scope of the statement, generally, is directly opposed to the scope and object of the testimony of God in the latter part of the Revelation, and flowing from simple ignorance of the intention, meaning, and principles of interpretation of the passage and book in which it is found. To make good this, I prefer to invite the minute comparison of others, than to introduce here my own, because my object is not to interpret but to comment on the neglect of scripture with which some pursue their own thoughts.

But besides the strange moral confusion as to the passage in the Revelation, and inconsistency too with the system the author affects (he must forgive me) to have gone so far into, his statement is entirely foreign

from the passage in Ezekiel. The passages are these, Ezekiel 45:6, “And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long, over against the oblation of the holy portion; it shall be for the whole house of Israel.” Compare this simple statement with the infinite conjectures of the wandering mind of the writer of this tract. Again, Ezekiel 48:15, “and the five thousand that are left in the breadth over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane place for the city, for dwelling, and for suburbs: and the city shall be in the midst thereof.” The whole division was to be profane for the city, etc. In a word, the east side was for the priests, the middle for the Levites next in order, the remaining five thousand was profane for the whole house of Israel, to have the city generally, its dwelling and suburbs. And this profane place (it is a simple mis-statement to say, that it was what was outside the city within this portion that was profane), this profane place which was the part farthest from the sanctuary, for the whole house of Israel is, we are told, the heavenly Jerusalem! It would be alike impossible and unprofitable to follow all the absurdities and direct contradictions to the text, which arise out of such statements. But there is great evil in them; they catch many that are unstable and unlearned, and lead the mind of any one who attends to them from following undistracted the purposes of Scripture itself. But it is painful, really, to dwell upon it. Let no man, however, think that he will be excused from looking daily for the Lord’s coming, because other men thus pursue their own errors. The Scripture is sent to them and to all.

It appears to me, that much of the crudeness of this pamphlet flows from ignorance of the true nature of the

Gentile and Jewish dispensations. The throne of David and the throne of His glory are different things, doubtless; but let us see how this subject is pursued by the writer. “There must be,” says he, “two comings in judgment; one before, one after the millennium: one to sit on the throne of David, the other on the throne of His glory.” But His sitting on the throne of David is not His coming in judgment at all, but the consequence of His judgment of the Gentile nations. But, as proof of the distinction, he refers to the attendants of the Lord—“one,” says he, “with His own glory and His saints, the other with the holy angels, and His Father’s glory.” The passage of Scripture in which this is spoken of furnishes no such distinction. He says, coming with His saints in His own glory is the first coming—coming with the angels in His Father’s, the second; the first applying to judgment of antemillenarians. See Mark 8:38. I find, “Whosoever, therefore, shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” Here, this so-called latter coming is expressly applied to those who have not owned Him during His humiliation; and the same observation may apply to Matthew 16:27. If it be alleged that this is at the raising of the rest of the dead, what shall we say to Luke 9:26? “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the angels.” And on the other hand, what shall we say, if we compare Jude, where He is said to come with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment on similar offenders? And not only does the voice of the archangel and the trump of God minister to the raising of the dead in Christ at what

this statement would call His first coming, but we are expressly told, in the epistle to the Thessalonians, that, when He comes, according to their views (on which we say nothing), antemillennially, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe, giving rest to those that have suffered with Him in His humiliation—the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels. It appears to me, that this also flows from ignorance of the plan and scope of Scripture, i.e., of the counsels of God in Christ our common Lord. But it proves neglect of Scripture. On the whole, a greater confusion of Scripture, and substitution of human conjectures and supposition, can hardly be supposed, than the latter part of the tract.

But our only endeavour must be to obtain tangible portions of it for the purpose for which I write this. The writer proves, from Isaiah 65:25, that the curse continues in the land of Israel, because the judgment, it is said, shall rest on the serpent— “dust shall be the serpent’s meat.” And as John had said, that there should be no more curse, not speaking of the land of Judea, nor of any place (unless it comprehend all places), but abstractedly and absolutely, but that the throne of God and the Lamb should be in it, in applying this “no more curse” to the city (I do not say erroneously), he says it must apply to the portion of land which is outside the city, and not in it at all, i.e., that part which was for the Prince. For he perceives no impropriety in extending it out of the city. For this “no more curse “means only that there shall be curse still all over the world, except a little portion of land in Judea, which, however, is not within the city, where the curse is not to be. We may remark, too, if the Revelation of John be thus applied,

the tract contradicts itself; for the throne of God and the Lamb has come upon earth before the third judgment of which he speaks and the city had the glory of God. And the throne of David and the throne of God are on the earth together; and the whole house of Israel have access to it.

Again, the writer states, “that the Gentiles, which are to have their lot in the land of Israel, are those who are expecting the Lord’s personal coming,” etc.; and that he does apply their being changed to giving them a long life during the millennium. But he does not apply the coming, on which they are to receive that change, to the first coming; i.e., before the millennium, or at least, when they are to be caught up into the air. That is, in order to satisfy his view of the Gentiles who are to live in the land of Israel, he think that he and his friends are to be the favoured persons, but as Paul says, that “we which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord “are to be caught up; and, as he wishes not to be then ever with the Lord, but to live in Judea or the land of Israel, he settles that this means two comings, and the catching up must belong to the latter, and the change does not mean from corruption to incorruption, but merely from a short life to a long one. “For,” says he, “if not, where else are we to get people to bring the Jews home? Wicked Gentiles would not do it.” In the first place, it appears that the Jews are brought home before the appearing of the Lord; in the next, why not? Cannot the Lord make any nation minister to the deliverance of His favoured people, whatever their own objects and state may be? And such seems to be the very tenor of prophecy—that is shall be an imposed service; and the

writer and his friends must leave it to those whom God chooses.

But let us compare Paul's statements. There are two prominent ones—one in i Corinthians 15, the other 1 Thessalonians 4. "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. 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. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So 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.

0 death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." How refreshing is it to turn to Scripture! The force of this is, I think, too evident to need comment.

We shall all be changed though we all do not sleep (1 Cor. 15:51), i.e. we, who are not asleep, shall be changed. There is a necessary common result to be produced on all, in order to their entrance into the kingdom of God; we shall be changed alike and equally, though we shall not all sleep. We who do not sleep shall

yet be changed. Not to enter further here on this deeply interesting passage, I turn to 1 Thessalonians 4:13: “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. 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 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.” We, says the apostle, are not to account ourselves better off than those that sleep, as if we should see and meet the Lord and not they. “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord”; that is, that when Christ shall come, the dead in Christ shall rise first, before we are caught up, and then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them. In the English there might, perhaps, be an argument on the force of the word ‘together,’ but as placed in the Greek there can be none. The catching up of the saints is not spoken of in connection with the destruction of death, as the writer states. The substance of 1 Corinthians 15 applies to believers only. There is, therefore, no ground of difficulty from the existence of death during the millennium, as to the application of the above cited passage. And it is remarkable that in the next page, the language of it is put into the mouths of the risen saints, as spoken on the day of the first resurrection, to which

in this page the writer says it is wholly inapplicable, because death remains. In fact, it appears to me a confusion of the Jewish and Gentile dispensations—the hinge upon which the subject and the understanding of Scripture turns. Here I complain not of error, but of a neglect of the substantive force of the direct testimonies of the word of God, to meet the views drawn from elsewhere and pursued in the mind beyond the testimony of the place itself; and of consequences being adduced as necessary, according to man's mind, other scripture being made subservient to these, instead of stopping at the direct testimony, till other passages give additional light, or, at least, connecting deductions by these passages admitted in their own force. This is alone a great hindrance to knowledge, and practically setting up men's thoughts (ignorant, foolish man!) above the word of God.

This book is, indeed, a sample of the evil likely to attend upon what is valuable in these inquiries, from crude thoughts untried by Scripture, attached to opinions urged as new to the credit of the writer, which are now familiar to everybody, without any new development of the mind of God in the Scriptures, and assuming a title pretending to speak from God, while it speaks only from man, and that crudely, and does not apply the great facts of these revelations to the correction and improvement of men; but instead of that, uses the notions of them to exalt the holders of them into the only favourites of heaven—thinking everybody is scorning them, whereas, in fact, they are becoming worldly, through their popularity and self-complacency. It is not the inquiry into these subjects I deprecate; but men's imposing upon others conclusions not drawn, but distracting others,

from the scriptural statements of the same truths. I am free to confess that I find the records of God full of consolation, enlarging instruction, holy and sanctifying exhortation, and warning. What God has revealed to man must be the saints' delight to know, and must sanctify them more wholly, because it reveals more of the character of God. His revealing it is itself witness of its purpose and (blessed for ever be His name!) so has He in the Lord Jesus identified Himself with man, that there is nothing of His acts that He does not reveal by His servants the prophets. Yea, all the things that He does in the Lord He makes a common subject with His people for His sake. Nay, all that He has is now largely opened; even the store-house of His eternal wisdom, and glory, and purpose in the Son is now opened and declared by the revelation of the Spirit, as the scripture, in many places, testifies to our joy and comfort. Who shall shut it up?—Who dares to do it? Rather let us open our mouth wide that He may fill it. But let no man mix or dissolve the streams of life by strange introductions of human mixture. Truth is the instrument of holiness; and error and weakness, to say no more, of moral conduct will ever be found to attend each other. I say, seek the truth: I say, let not men crudely impose unsound thoughts and distract the church.

One subject yet remains on which I shall shortly touch. In a deeply interesting and, I think, profitable and timely sermon of Mr. Irving's, I found the following passage on false accusers. After stating that it meant the spirit of accusation generally, he says, in the "Last Days," p. 204, "It may therefore be laid down as a general principle of doctrine, that as the law of Christian life is love, so the law of Christian life when love is rejected or maltreated

is forbearance, forgiveness, blessing, and intercession with God. As the office of the Christian Church on earth, is to preach, and to minister the grace of God unto all men; so also is it her office to make continual intercession before God for those who reject His offered grace, and trample under foot the blood of His covenant. And, of these two functions, the, ministry of free grace, and the ministry of intercession for free grace rejected, if I were asked which is the more important, I would answer they are equally important to the integrity of love and the demonstration of divine grace; but of the two, that which is the highest and noblest exercise of love is surely intercession for him who hath spurned our love."

What shall we say after this, when we consider their own writings? They have come forward to the bar of public opinion (see "False Accuser," pp. 208-10), and avowedly descended to fight their accusers on their own ground by public accusation. I feel unwillingly entirely to detail here the language and statements of the article on the Theology of the Periodical Journals. I think Mr. Malan right, and I think Mr. Erskine (though in many respects useful, and that extensively) is entirely wrong, if judged properly by Scripture, and wrong for pursuing his own thoughts without just subjection to Scripture, conceiving them new, when many, very many, have held them faithfully without mistake. I am not an advocate of the religious world; but neither can I attach myself to those who becoming, in fact, an isolated corner of the religious world, and setting up for the best and soundest part of it, fall into at least the same faults which they reprobate in no very courteous terms. They charge the editors of some journal with ignorance of their trade (no

very courteous expression); but, while doing this, they should not have misstated the expressions of Erskine, in a way, too, which shew them either falsifiers, or else ignorant of the great principles on which their trade (if they will have it so) turned. Mr. Erskine, they say, wishes to state this highly important fact, namely, that by the incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity, the whole creation (i.e., limiting the word ‘creation ‘to this planet and the beings who inhabit it) is become beneficially interested in the work of Christ. This is certainly a very obscure and unintelligible proposition, and not Erskine’s, nor representing his views. This fact, they say, he expresses by saying, “that the world is pardoned by the incarnation of Christ.” But the proposition attributed to Mr. Erskine, whencesoever drawn, is not so expressed by him. He says that “All are pardoned— believers are a little flock.” If he had said the world was pardoned (though I should have thought it an error) properly understood, I could have made an allowance for obscurity of expression; but he says all, i.e. all men, are pardoned; and on this the whole argument of the Morning Watch depends. The Reviewer was occupied with his own views, but there is not the slightest ground in Mr. Erskine’s book for the position he takes. Righteousness is a scriptural as well as conventional term: I do not recollect that Mr. Erskine ever touches upon this, or uses the word. Scripture does; and this renders his whole view defective, however excellent as an individual.

But the Morning Watch, prepossessed with its own views, and willing to have Mr. Erskine as a client or ally, has wholly passed by the whole question raised on his book, and not stated his assertions truly but as

partisans, and stands itself on a level with the worst conduct of those it accuses. They themselves shall be witnesses. “The editors,” they say, i.e., journals opposed to their views, “having refused to debate the subjects like scholars, like gentlemen, or Christians, have chosen their own ground, namely, that of personal claim to public confidence; and into that arena of their own selecting, we must descend after them.” And so indeed they have, and I sorrow for it, for I doubt not they would much edify the church; but they have to learn that Satan can use their weakness, as well as that of their offending brethren. “And what shall we say then, if the church, forgetful of Christ’s office of intercessor, and of her own high vocation to continue the same in the midst of an offending world, should take upon herself the office of accuser, and retaliate the injuries which she receiveth, instead of meekly bearing and being willing to forgive them? What if the church forget, even among themselves, the offices of neutral forbearance and forgiveness, and rage towards one another with even more bitterness and cruelty than those who care for none of those things? What if the writings the most religious should be the most vindictive, and the society the most religious should be the society most full of judgment and accusation? Then were it not a proof that God’s ordinances were changed, that His light was hidden under a bushel, that the salt hath lost its savour, and that the name of God was blasphemed amongst the heathen because of His people, and that the last days were come, and that destruction was about to begin at His own house.”

But having closed this part (painfully imposed) of my subject, I turn to the more grateful part—proposing

some questions, and making some observations, in the hope that it may lead some to consider topics, which, when calmly and scripturally considered, I am persuaded lead to sanctification and the edification of those that are gathered. All truth must be so: the simple question is—is this God's revealed truth or not? If it be, it is worse than idle to say it is not calculated to sanctify. In fact, I do not understand the meaning of this. It is a charge against God, the revealer; and comes ill from those who have been combating justly upon opposite grounds the abominable fraud the Roman Catholic priests had perpetrated in keeping away the Scripture, the words of God generally. Is it that they are to be the judges of what, and how much, instead of the others?

We would ask then, first, why did God reveal all these things, if they are not fully to be inquired into? This I admit, that the statements of the same general truths are of different use and application, and the eagerness of those especially interested in prophecy, and the hasty taking up of the subject by many going beyond their measure, has introduced a very unseasonable misuse of prophetic subjects. But I must add the indiscriminate opposition of others has given great occasion to it. Thus the fact that there will be a separation of judgment between the just and the unjust, is one which concerns man as man, and may be addressed to every soul, and especially to those wholly ignorant of divine things, and the unconverted; while the manner in which the Lord will do it, His peculiar favour and timely interposition for His people— all these, as shewn in His dealings, belong to those from whom, as His suffering people, He will not hide the thing that He will do, who share in it by faith as

friends of God, strangers with Him, and whose support it is.

But the question has been raised as to the facts revealed; nor have all, perhaps, judged rightly as to the use to be made of them. But their general debate has been forced by the non-reception of them by many who have a name in the Church under the low state in which we all stand. This was, perhaps, to be looked for; and the testimony of the manner even of judgment, calculated to awaken many out of sleep.

Next, I would ask, if the spread of Bibles and missionary exertions is to produce, by itself, the millennium, what is the meaning of unclean spirits like frogs gathering all the kings of the earth and of the world to battle to be destroyed, and that then Satan was to be bound, and the thousand years commence? Again, they will admit, that these operations are effectual through the agency of the Spirit of God as a substitute for Christ. What distinction does the scripture mean by Christ's reigning upon the earth (His kingdom of this world), and the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His glory? If we suffer with Him (as we do, while we are actuated by the Spirit of God in the midst of a carnal world) we shall also reign with Him. This, evidently, is a state of things essentially distinct from His reigning, as they conceive now; for it is a time of suffering. It cannot mean in heaven, or after the end of all, for then the Son will have delivered up the kingdom. And if they say it is by the prevalence of righteousness in the millennium, though that would be hard to shew, how would that affect us according to their view who before then are dead? Besides, are all the wicked to be converted? Is temptation to be removed? No outpouring of the Spirit

does this. Are all to be regenerate? For according to their views, the operation of the Spirit is still the only instrument. How is the Spirit now only an earnest till the redemption of the purchased possession, if He be then the only operating agent? But it will, perhaps, be said to be heaven. We have seen its characteristics are inconsistent with that. Is Christ, in a word, to have any other share in the triumph of the church than He has now, when the Spirit is His substitute? And let me here ask as to one point on which many feel so strong difficulties: Is there anything inconsistent, if there be a period when the church shall be triumphant, and the saints partaking of the full joy appropriate to the prevalence of their principles by a complete change in the state of the world? for this must be admitted (or there could not be the change from suffering to triumph) that those who have been long suffering for the same principles, who have borne tribulation and sorrow, while that was the portion of those who loved Christ, should also share with their Lord in the hour when what they had so ardently suffered for should be accomplished? Such is my idea of the first resurrection.

I believe that Christ also (who unquestionably has a distinct kingdom from the Father, though, of course, it is God’s kingdom) will put forth His power for the removal of evil; that Satan will be hindered from deceiving the world; that it will cease to be a season of tribulation and sorrow and trial, and that instead of the thorn shall come up the myrtle, and that there shall be a complete enjoyment of the blessings which are the church’s inheritance; that this will be upon earth (the Jews being restored, the temporal promises being ever theirs, not the Gentiles’; but that these shall enjoy the common

blessing with them, as companions in this universal joy). When Christ's kingdom shall have by His power prevailed over evil, those of the Gentile dispensation who have been faithful in the time of trial, shall (the dead being raised, and the living changed) be partakers (reigning with Christ) of the common blessing. Death, whose power in their bodies they had to suffer in their day, being perfectly overcome, as to them they will be as the angels of God in heaven; being counted worthy to obtain that age. There will necessarily be no separation between those who are thus partakers of the blessings, and those who are God's on earth. During this period there will be therefore no trial: before they are admitted into the heavenly state, Satan is loosed again, and the trial proceeds by temptation. In a word, the millennium may be considered as a restoration of Paradise under the second Adam,2 the restoration of communion between earth and heaven so long interrupted (Christ having destroyed them that destroy the earth). I would suggest, too, that the instrument by which the work is to be accomplished cannot mean the dispersion of scriptural truth. It is not the sword of the Spirit, but one proceeding out of the mouth of Christ, sitting on a triumphal horse, wherewith He should smite the nations. It is treading the vintage of God's wrath. It is a destruction which will give seven years' firing from the weapons cast away. It is an invitation of all the fowls of the air to feast upon the sacrifice which God Almighty was about to make; a taking to Him His great power and reigning; a time when, God's judgment being in the earth, the inhabitants of the world would learn righteousness: and it was by these judgments that the heathen were to be converted. We take the broadest points, because the others may be said to involve

interpretation, though to us they are equally plain and perhaps more deeply interesting.

Again, if we consider the stone which became a mountain and filled the whole earth, it was upon smiting the image, and making it become as the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, so that the wind carried them away and no place was found for them. This is evidently by destructive and dissolving judgments, analogous to the character of its objects (to wit, the Gentile dispensation, and power); and it was by no ordinary providential instrumentality, for it was a stone cut out as without hands. Further, it was not by the progressive growth of anything, that other obstructing principles passed away; but some extrinsic power, not of or in the image yet analogous in the nature of its operation, and yet turning out to be the fulness of the Lord's power suddenly appearing to destroy the image at the end of its time; and after the image was totally dissolved, it then became a mountain and filled the whole earth. "In the days of these kings," saith the Spirit, "the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."

Let not an anxiety for missionary objects hinder the acceptance of the truth. For no strong motive for missionary exertion exists with the antimillenarians, as with those who believe God's judgments are presently coming; for that belief urges them to special labour for the gathering in of God's elect to the knowledge of the refuge, before the scourge sweeps the earth, to preserve them that have believed. If the reading of Griesbach be right, the distinction of the earthly kingdom is put beyond controversy; at any rate the testimony of a reign

of Christ's power (distinct from the operation of the Spirit alone) is surely too prominent an object in the scripture to be overlooked. One remark I would make; and it is one which struck my own mind long before the detail of millennial views opened themselves to it. There is not an epistle in the New Testament in which the coming of the Lord Jesus is not made the prominent object of the faith and hope of believers, for which they were to wait; and, observe, which characterises distinctively those who should partake of His salvation. Now the expectation of it is put out of view and depreciated really as much as possible. It was a deliverance here that the church expected, so much so that the Thessalonians seemed to have considered those who died before it came to have failed in obtaining it. It was to be a time of rest by the appearing of Jesus Christ removing the persecutors and ungodly; and now it is thrown aside, because it is connected with that which is confessedly the rest of the Church. It is also that of which Peter speaks: he says there is sensible evidence directing the church so to look for it. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we have declared unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in

old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." And this could be revealed as a day-star in their hearts.

I would remark here that the students of unfulfilled prophecy are too apt, I think, to overlook the present power of the Lord's resurrection, and thus give a handle to the objections of, I must say, the adversaries to the coming of the Lord Jesus. To the apostles and the saints who judge justly, the apprehension of His glory was the evidence of both, nor can they be separated without injury to the truth and misapprehension of the counsels of God.

This is what is doing too much now, and it is a great evil and greatly opposed to Scripture. We ask then, is the church to look to the coming of Christ as the prominent object of faith, or is it not? And why? What do the Scriptures teach us in this respect? Do they or do they not teach us that the happiness of the earth is to be brought about by the special intervention of God in judgment? Is His coming one calculated to quicken their faith—to make them zealous and constant for Him in their labour here—to separate them from their attachment to this present evil world—to lead them to be practically holy in this, where Christ is to visit them, instead of making death a sort of practical sanctifier, as some do?

Another subject is the restoration of the Jews to their own land. The calm and judicious Lowth, in a day when nothing but the force of Scripture influenced him, could not withhold assent from the directness of the testimonies to this. I shall advert merely to some testimonies respecting this point, scattered through all

Scripture, as it appears to me, and resting on the whole plan of God's dispensed purposes. Zechariah prophesied after the restoration from Babylon. Let the promises in chapter 10 be weighed, in which He declares that He will bring Judah and Ephraim again to place them, and break down the pride of Assyria, etc. This evidently must refer to some period to come, nor can any figurative interpretation of it be given which the language does not repel. We may remark, also, the special promises in Hosea to Ephraim or Israel as distinct from Judah—promises never yet fulfilled. But let us hear Amos: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God." It is manifest that nothing can meet this promise but a restoration not yet fulfilled.

So Zephaniah 3:14, "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Sion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that

are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for 1 will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord." Ezekiel 34:27, and Isaiah 49 are not less strong; but I refrain from commenting on them, as they would lead to general inquiry and interpretation. And my own conviction is, that the return of Judah was but for the accomplishment of the promises relative to our Lord's first coming; and that, in the broad sense, Israel has been in captivity from Babylon until now: this, however, I do not press. Doubt has been started, on this subject, whether Israel was not corporately restored with Judah. The burden of proof evidently rests with those who say he was. But the Lord seems carefully to have secured the negative by the repeated use of Benjamin and Judah, as those specifically who were the restored people. The only ground which is alleged directly to this point, is Ezra 2:59: "And these were they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, and their seed, whether they were of Israel."

As to Anna the prophetess, and many other passages adverted to, none prove—many go to disprove—the corporate restoration of Israel to their own land. Their individual junction to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin goes as nothing to prove their corporate geographical

restoration, but the contrary. If, therefore, there be any promises to this effect, they remain to be fulfilled. In fact, this was nothing more than happened to them in the days of Hezekiah, and related to religious fidelity, not temporal restoration by God; and so throughout: the passages may be found in Prideaux, under the proper date. This, however, is merely a collateral point, though I think a plain one. If there be a direct testimony that Israel shall be planted again in their own land, and never plucked up, it is plain it has never been fulfilled. The more the extended prophecies on this subject are considered, the more will it be found connected with the promises of God in the latter day as regards the blessings of the church, and the circumstances which attend it.

Nor, indeed, is it apparent how the former verses of Deuteronomy 30 can be fulfilled without it, nor without the excision of the Gentiles as a body, which is another inquiry we would make. Is there not a time of the Gentiles which is to be fulfilled, when blindness will depart from Israel? and is there not then in this chapter an explicit promise of their restoration? But is it not expressly stated, as Paul left it in conditional assertion, that the Gentiles would be cut off, that God would plead against all nations? Is not the apostasy of the Gentile church as plainly stated as possible, and its consequences? Men say that this applies to Popery; but it is called “the vine of the earth,” a figure well known in Scripture, as importing the dispensation of the church generally. And the unclean spirits who are to gather the kings of the earth, do not gather them against the Lamb by the instrumentality of Popery only, but of the love of power and atheism. Popery is statedly merely one of

those principles which are to be the instruments of bringing men to judgment.

“They answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.” If these things be so, there will be a direct manifestation of Christ, of the judicial power of the Lamb, quite distinct from any of the present expectations of those who reject the study of prophecy. When John saw heaven opened and beheld a white horse, and He that sat upon him called Faithful and True, and in righteousness doth He judge and make war—when he saw the Person and glory of the Word of God, it was the revelation of something wholly different from the secret operations of the Spirit of God; and it was something characteristically different from previous providential judgments. These had been hail, and thunder, and lightning, and earthquakes; but this was a manifestation of Him who had been long hid behind instruments, who had governed the world as one that apparently suffered His church to grow up and spring He knew not how, because the harvest of the earth was ripe. The ordained government of the earth and the operation of the Spirit of God was that by which He has ruled the church hitherto; therefore it was a suffering church. Now He was Himself manifested in His power, and therefore the church became triumphant.

No one can read the Revelation without perceiving the intended contrast, so to call it, nor other prophecies without seeing how the whole system of God’s dispensations arrange themselves round this great fact. The Son manifested to tread the winepress of wrath is not the Spirit subduing willing souls by the gospel. The operation, everywhere given, of the gospel, is the

gathering out of souls before the wrath come, nor is there a testimony of, nor the revelation of the universal spread of the knowledge of the Lord, as far as my recollection serves me, which is not directly accompanied by, or rather conversant about, the judgments of an adverse power, or the declaration of the special blessings to the house of Israel, whose receiving shall be as life from the dead. I would here just shortly refer to Psalms 72, 108, and the consecutive Psalms from 91-100. To those who may be interested in the inquiry, Malachi 2:3 may also be consulted and recur again to the prophecy of the stone cut out without hands, and Daniel 7.

There are many passages more fully opening the subject, but perhaps not so strongly leading a previously unconvinced mind, as these. It would have been my own delight (oh, how much more so!) to have rather followed, in inquiry, the opening of Scripture as to the ways and promises of God as our God. Oh, high and holy place! unworthy we, utterly, to have it, enjoying the confidence, because the mercy, of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. I mean not of myself, but with the brethren in the Lord. But they have forced upon me the necessity of other inquiries. In the suggestions I have made to them, I have only put the questions in the broadest terms, on which Scripture throws a glare of light, which, as far as I can see, cannot be struggled with, if we pursue our common attainments, walking by the same rule, and minding the same thing; if in anything we be differently minded, God will reveal this also unto us. Let me beseech the brethren to be thus minded. Let me beseech those who yet stand out against these truths, to inquire for

themselves, to lay them to heart, to submit themselves to the word, not to throw scorn (I pray them to forgive me for thus speaking) on any part of the testimony of God before they have inquired the purpose of it and their own concern in it. Are they not every way debtors to do this? Let those whose minds are open, pursue, with humble desire, inquiry into the Lord's mind. We are surely all interested in knowing that. Let us pursue it as learners in the fear of God, not as speculators; as those who see that God is great in His glory and righteous in His judgments, and one that judgeth the earth and holdeth the waters in the hollow of His hand. The Lord has revealed much, all that man can comprehend; and it belongs to us and to our children, that we may keep the sayings of His book. There are those, doubtless, who will please themselves, and not seek the church's good; but such shall bear their burden, whoever they be. In many things we all offend. I pray God to give His grace to bear one another's burden, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Oh, blessed time, when the church should care one for another, as fellow-sufferers or fellow-heirs, as He did, who needed none of their sympathy, or had but little of it when needed, and who knew no want, no necessity but the necessity of love. May we be found labouring in this spirit when He shall return! Oh, may His people be perfected in Him, one and all! His grace and the knowledge of His glory be with them in every place. And to Him be praise and dominion and glory according to His Father's will. Amen.

The writer, believing that in the rapid accumulation of inquiry he could add but little new to the investigation of this subject, has refrained from trespassing upon others. In truth, he finds more pleasure in the discovering of the

ways of God which feed the soul, than in struggling to convince others of them. He would only press subjection to Scripture on the one side and on the other: but if occasion seem to call, he will, with gladness, resume the subject, in communion with the church. In the meanwhile he begs to propose three questions on another subject, if any may undertake to answer them.

Does it not appear from Scripture that all persons who went out to preach the gospel to unconverted persons, went out unsent by the apostles, or any other minister in the church of God, led only by their knowledge of the great atonement, or the direct appointment of the Spirit?

Is there any instance of the apostles, or other ministers in the church, ever having sent out any person for the purpose of preaching to unconverted persons?

Is not such mission (looking at it as an authority to do so) inconsistent, essentially, with the nature and possibility of their testimony?

1 Dublin, 1829.

2 This expression is inaccurate. It is by redemption and power, not by innocence. Moreover, Satan will be bound.

On “Days” Signifying “Years” In Prophetic Language

Editor's Note3

1830.

To the Editor of the Christian Herald.

Sir,—The following remarks on the statements of Mr. Maitland, in the Morning Watch, and of R.D., in the Christian Examiner, were written in short intervals of constant occupation. If correct, they will at least prove the hastiness of the statements alluded to; and the latter part (though I feel it to be even more imperfectly pursued than the rest) may direct inquiry to what, to me at least, is a very interesting topic: the nature of the last assault and taking of Jerusalem; or, in other words, the head to which the enemy arrives previous to his destruction. I should be glad to pursue this at another time; but must, at present, only subscribe myself, Yours, in Christian truth, J. N. Darby.

In order to understand any prophecy, it is of the utmost importance that we should study it with a disposition to believe, joined with a strict trial of the evidence in favour of any given meaning. That is to say, we should be ready, on sufficient testimony, to accommodate our understandings and perceptions to ideas not analogous to those of our ordinary experience. With such a temper of mind, we are, under God, likely to profit both ourselves and the church, in the prophetic inquiry; whilst, on the contrary, we can make little or no progress in studying any prophetic record, if consistency with our previous apprehensions and prejudices be our

test and trial of the new ideas with which we meet. To make agreement with previous ideas (as is the common practice) the necessary evidence of the justness of any view is indeed to prohibit the impression of any new truth upon the mind; and, on the other hand, assumption without evidence is the opening an admission to falsehood. A disposition to believe may, by some, be called credulity; but the credulity (if you will so have it) which consists in a disposition to receive on new testimony that which is inconsistent with human experience, is right before God, and is but another name for faith; howsoever foolish it may be among men, with whom guilt and deceit have made wisdom to consist in the knowledge and suspicion of evil. Evil cannot justify us in unbelief, though it may have habituated our minds to indisposition to receive even God at His word. This judging by what we have, instead of receiving what we have not (after simply trying it by the word and the testimony), is, indeed, the great moral hindrance to our perception, as well as to our receiving the strength of the power of God. Such was the spirit of the Sadducees —such was the mind of Thomas and is of unbelief, at all times. “How is it that ye do not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.” Not to lengthen out the statement of these general principles, nor to enter upon a disquisition on the slowness of man’s heart to believe, I proceed to the consideration of the question raised, as to days meaning years. And first, I would remark, that the question seems to me to have been very imperfectly discussed. To adduce the evidence of Lexicons was not well either in the Morning Watch or by R.D., as they contain no evidence of weight, but a mere statement of the thing inquired into, given as a meaning, because so supposed in the passage in question. This,

therefore, I dismiss, after observing (with a view to mark the extent to which this confusion, between use and meaning, may be carried) the quotation of R.D. from the Critici Sacri, which is made to prove that it means years, as well as weeks of days. “Hae hebdomades intelligentur de annis.” (The force of the word Hebdomades is as well known to be seven days as the word week in English.) Such a quotation as “These weeks are understood of years” would be strange evidence in proof of the English term “week “meaning seven years, as much as it does seven days! But let this pass. Again, R.D. says he does not understand certain assertions made in the Morning Watch. Now though I mistrust, as R.D. does, my knowledge of Hebrew, these seem to me perfectly intelligible, though, at the same time, to have been advanced so entirely without inquiry as to throw considerable discredit upon the assertor of them.

The assertion is this, that “Seven (the numeral) and its derivatives are always feminine”: therefore he would conclude against Mr. M. that seven days (shabeth yomim) may, indeed, stand for a week, but that his reasoning can have no application to seventy (shibim), which, as the numeral is always feminine, cannot mean seven years as well as days. Now, the passage in Daniel ought to have kept him from such a mistake; for he is proving that shibim cannot be a numeral, because it is masculine, in a passage in which the very word confessedly means seventy! Strange, indeed, must be the structure of the mind, when it can produce reason in the Hebrew for seventy weeks, to shew, as to the second, that it cannot be a numeral, because it is masculine, when the first was admitted to be seventy!—the points, if referred to, not affecting the question of

the masculine termination. On the other hand, Mr. M. is without ground of inquiry; for if the Hebrew word have no technical or conventional meaning, it would not be sevens at all, according to the Hebrew idiom, but seventy; so that we must admit the conventional meaning, and inquire what it is. But to shew the carelessness of the assertion of the Morning Watch in this, we may remark, besides the contradiction in the very passage in question itself, that the masculine form is constantly used for seven. At a distance from books, and exceedingly engaged, I would yet, from cursory reference to Scripture, mention the following:

Whenever (how frequent this is, need not be stated to the reader of the Old Testament) the word for times (pa'amim) is used (or sheba used with that force), it is always masculine: it would be endless to quote passages.

It is masculine with years, in Genesis 5:7; so again chapter 29:18, 20; with kine, Genesis 41, eight times over; with sabbaths, years, times, Leviticus 25:8; with abominations, Proverbs 26:25.

There is the same diversity in gender, in the sense of "sufficiency," as may be seen. (Isaiah 23:18, "sufficiently" (f.); Ezekiel 16:49, "fullness" (f.); Genesis 41:29, "plenty" (m.).) Whether there be any rule in the Hebrew, I am not prepared to say, nor could I at this moment inquire; others perhaps may do so profitably and throw light on the inquiry by it. Nor is there any more reason, that I can see, produced for saying sheba'oth means sevens and not weeks, save that he has settled it beforehand. He is equally unfortunate in the remark as to Ezekiel 45:21, 25, for in verse 23, as to the

former, we have seven days (sheba'ath yami), and as to the same feast of passover, or unleavened bread sheba'ath ha-yami, the very words on which he rests his distinction as to verse 25. That shebu-a and shebu-im are used for week and weeks, I think may be asserted from the case of Genesis 29:27, 28, week, and Leviticus 12:5, weeks, the latter of which is as conclusive against Mr. M.'s assertion, as the passages above quoted and the one in question in Daniel are against the Reviewer. On the other hand I would remark, that seven weeks of years is never used in the form given in Daniel, but seven sabbaths of years, seven times seven years. I would just remark also, that the uncertain habit of expression as to week' seems traceable, perhaps, in the Greek of the New Testament.

Having disposed of the question raised on this passage, as far as the consideration of the evidence and argument already adduced, and having, perhaps, suggested occasion of inquiry, I would leave it, thinking with Mr. M. that it does not very materially affect the question.

There are two or three principles which I would lay down in proceeding to the more general consideration of the question before us.

First, in prophecy, when the Jewish church or nation (exclusive of the Gentile parenthesis in their history) is concerned, i.e., when the address is directly to the Jews, there we may look for a plain and direct testimony, because earthly things were the Jews' proper portion. And, on the dontrary, where the address is to the Gentiles, i.e., when the Gentiles are concerned in it, there we may look for symbol, because earthly things were not their portion, and the system of revelation

must to them be symbolical. When therefore facts are addressed to the Jewish church as a subsisting body, as to what concerns themselves, I look for a plain, common-sense, literal statement, as to a people with whom God had direct dealings upon earth, and to whom He meant His purposes concerning them to be known. On the other hand, as the church was a system of grace and heavenly hopes (though God indeed overruled by providence in respect of His ultimate purposes concerning it, it was neither the visible object of His dealings upon earth, nor had an admitted interest in, though acted on by them), it is addressed by an exhibition of their moral character, and is symbolised by analogous agencies.

Secondly, intimately connected with this (because the history of the Bible is the history of the Jews—for history is the relation of facts on earth, of which the Jews are the portion of God's agency and as to whom we know it was ordered), is another principle, viz., that wherever Scripture affords the history of a fact, there we may expect it to be distinctly and literally declared or predicted in prophecy. When the Scriptures do not extend to the giving the history (which is evidently the case after the fact of the restoration of the Jews from Babylon, save the fact of the Lord's coming to offer Himself, and perhaps we may add the outpouring of the Spirit), then we must expect it to be declared only symbolically, i.e., appropriately in its moral character; and hence, partly, the partial obscurity of the seventy weeks of Daniel, because they were no regular recognised portion of the Jewish history, but a sort of anomalous period for the coming of the Lord.

Thirdly, the Spirit loves to contemplate the desolation of the Jewish people—the prevalence of necessary wrath—and, by consequence, mercy on the believing remnant of the seed of the Lord—as but for a moment; and hence the reason why it is shortened into days. To one familiar with Scripture and the expression of God's mind and feelings, then, no proof, save appeal to themselves, need be made of this: it is an interesting, and, may I add, affecting circumstance of considerate kindness. He avenges speedily, though He bear long with them, as it might seem, and we are not to learn why He so bears. We know what to count it.

The proof then that prophecies of literal days have been fulfilled in literal days, and that years have been prophesied of as years, would prove nothing as to the prophecy in question; for first, if the principles above laid down be correct, the difference is accounted for; and, in the next place, a prophecy confessedly literal (for its literal accomplishment is given, or the days may mean years, and the proof fails) can be no evidence of the meaning of the word when used typically and confessedly in a symbolical prophecy. Their meaning days in such a case would be a positive anomaly, just as much as their not meaning days in the other; for they are used here manifestly in a symbolical way, and all their accomplishments are symbolical. The question is not, therefore, whether a day ever means a day, when used in Scripture or in prophecy, confessedly literally expressed (as evidenced by a literal fulfilment, evincing that meaning), but what is its force, when used as a symbol in a confessedly symbolical prophecy? The consideration of the mind of God, as adverted to in the third principle afore stated, will give us a full

apprehension of the reason of the statement, when we consider the value too it was to the Church—the principle of the “yet a little while,” and the moral gap unfilled up by any events which made the time included in the 1260 years of this prophecy. As to the event not satisfying us in fulfilment, neither did the Lord’s coming; and I would remark that there is no remarkable event of such external magnitude in the world’s eye as to fix the mind on its evident fulfilment; and as to the former, to this day the terms of the seventy weeks are as much discussed and in the dark as the 1260 years, save that we, by habitual belief, have recognised Jesus the Lord, as the Messiah.

R.D. therefore is not right as to two believers in revelation not disagreeing in the broad features of the seventy weeks. We could not disagree as to Jesus being Messiah, or we should not be believers at all, and Daniel names the Messiah as the terminating epoch; though in this all interpreters are not agreed, but carry it on to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; but as to the rest, no two independent thinkers, hardly, agree in their computation—some of learning at this day, going back to Cyrus’s decree, and cutting off a century in mass from the ordinary dates of the Persian history. R.D. would find also that in Hebrew (though I say not that the idiom is precise), yarmin, days, is also used for a year, and from year to year, as evidently in other passages, so evidenced to be in 1 Samuel 1:3, 7.

I would further remark, that the passage from Ezekiel is not so without force, as is supposed, when the real question (too much overlooked by R.D.) is considered, viz., the typical or symbolical force of a day; for then we have a symbolical action indicative of years, defined in

time, marked by the term days, so that as to the principle of symbolical diction, it is an expressive instance; and the other case, though not so strong, is analogous and confirmatory.

Let us now, having considered the ground on which such a symbol stands, consider the instances in which it is used. If R.D. affirms that the use of the term month is entirely distinct from that of day, and that there is no argumentative identity with the statements in Revelation before him, I shall not argue the point. I do not say that there is no reason for difference—for I am inclined to think that there is, and perhaps see the reason of such difference, in some degree. But as to the limit of time, to me it is obvious they are identical. If so, contrary to the assertion of R.D., we have a prophecy in which such an enumeration of days for years is agreed on by all commentators (amongst the Protestants at least), namely, the continuance of the conquests of the Saracenic comet. I suppose there is no prophecy in Scripture which, as far as commentators go, has been more uniformly interpreted, or universally acquiesced in by inquirers at large. Nor am I disposed to think, that the Euphratean horsemen are less susceptible of determinate calculation of time, though I admit the date has not been received with equal uniformity.

Let us now consider the same symbols in Daniel. I certainly am disposed to think that the term times in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32, used as to Nebuchadnezzar, has reference to the bestial dominion in the world; and the language of Scripture as to the dominion of Nebuchadnezzar so tallies with the rightful dominion of Christ as to confirm this idea, but it is impracticable to pursue this here, nor does it affect the present inquiry

sufficiently directly to claim definitive investigation. As to “time, times, and dividing of a time,” we have this distinctly referred to the power before which the three horns fell; that is, we have three times and a half, or 1260 days, ascribed to the little horn which rose up behind, or amongst, the three horns (of which I believe there never has been any doubt in applying it to the Papal power); and there is a particular characteristic to be observed in him—that he is to make war with the saints and to prevail against them, wearing them out— a statement which I do not find applicable to the final apostasy.

Here then we have evidence of this expression being used as a symbol, contrasted, as in distinct perspective of some long continuance of time, during which there is a prevailing power wearing out the saints of the Most High; not in its character of infidel apostasy, leading all forward, but in its specific one of casting down three horns. Again, I apprehend, the end of the vision must be accounted from the commencement of its subject matter, and its computation must be (when the time is referable to a particular fact within the prophecy) from the date of that fact; or otherwise (when the vision is said to continue), from the commencement of its subject matter generally. If this be so, we have a date of 2,300 or 2,400 days (the readings differ) as the continuance of Daniel’s vision of the ram and the he-goat, with its territorial reference to the covenant of Israel. And accordingly he says, “Shut up the vision, for it shall be for many days.” If this be not a just reasoning, the passage must apply to the possession of Jerusalem by its last enemy for upwards of six years—an interpretation which does not seem to me to coincide with the tenor of scriptural

declaration; nor do I think it consistent with the genealogy of the little horn, which would then mean the power or person vulgarly called Antichrist. We have therefore again the term of days used for a long continuous period, ending in the cleansing of the sanctuary, and brought into perspective before the mind of the Spirit to the prophet, and thus shortened in its symbolical expression.

Daniel 11 and 12 I shall not attempt to interpret. But the interpretation must be either given to Antiochus Epiphanes, and the taking away of the daily sacrifice be a thing yet future; or the 1290 days be a long period of time, whenever it commences or concludes, and the 1335 end with Daniel standing in his lot. Besides, can R.D. shew any instance of so unusual a practice as the use of the term “days” for a period extending beyond the limits of a year? Does not this itself point to some meaning or intention concealed under this form?

We may now proceed to the passages in the Revelation. Does R.D. believe that the Lord Jesus meant the church of Smyrna to have tribulation just “ten days “literally, or ten years? We have already adverted to the Saracenic and Euphratean invasions, which he would find difficult to interpret on his literal system. The next is, that the holy city should be given to the Gentiles 42 months (the well-known period of 1260 days, a symbolical prophecy, and containing in the term evidence of some unliteral meaning). In the meanwhile the witnesses are to prophesy 1260 days, more appropriately thus marked, because it shewed not merely its continuance but its constancy also. This, be it observed, is something previous to the seventh trumpet; and, however the date may be disagreed on, I undertake to say that, as to the

subject-matter, no prophecy in Scripture has received more uniformity of interpretation. And, observe, it ends by their being slain by the beast out of the bottomless pit. Now in chapter 13 we have a beast who continues precisely the same period, recognized to be in power (under the form of the ten horns being crowned, i.e., the Roman Empire in its divided state) by the northern nations under the papacy, as may be plainly seen in chapter 17. Take these things together and we see—not to advert to the three days and a half—a connection with Babylon and the papacy during these periods, which brings them, in addition to the difficulty of making days symbols of days, to be a continuous period when the woman rides the beast (not, is devoured by the horns), and therefore is a continuous period of some such length as is generally supposed. In a word, we may, I think, state it thus: The mystery of Babylon and the papacy have no place in the prophets, or the 1260 days mean years. A difficulty in date does not affect the moral evidence of the subject-matter of the prophecy; for difficulties may he at the door of ignorance as well as inconsistency.

It would be inconvenient here to enter into further detail. The true question to be discussed is, whether the papacy, as such, has any place in the prophetic writings or not, or merely infidelity. If it has, it appears to me that no doubt remains on the question; but I refuse no light on its special application to the last infidel state, though I deprecate a morbid disposition to apply all things to our own times. I rejoice, however, in the discussion, not merely in that it will throw light on Scripture by consequent research and inquiry, but that I am persuaded that this will lead more (for such I believe to

be the truth) to the deep conviction that we are within the verge of the end of all, so as to be daily looking for the Lord, i.e., to be caught up to meet Him in the air in order to His judging of the nations. Amen. Amen.

* * * * *

3 [The early part of this tract being of some interest in a critical point of view, it is republished, though the latter fails just in the point which the first part condemns, namely, assuming traditional views as true. I have no doubt that the latter part is wrong, but it was not worth while either suppressing or changing it. Subsequent and far more elaborate papers have brought the truth as to Matthew 14 and the 1260 days into a sufficiently clear light. It may serve to shew historically the progress made in the apprehension of truth.]

On The 1260 Days

(From the Christian Herald, Feb., 1831, pp. 47, 48.)

We have received a letter from the Rev. S. R. Maitland, animadverting upon the letter and remarks of the Rev. J. N. Darby, which appeared in our No. for December, 1830. Although we do not wish to introduce controversy into our pages, we think it but justice towards Mr. Maitland to publish his letter, of which the following is a copy:

To the Editor of the Christian Herald.

Bishop's Hall, near Taunton,

December 3oth, 1830.

Sir,—In your number of this month, which has only come to my hand to-day, a correspondent, who subscribes himself J. N. Darby, begins his letter with saying, "The following remarks on1 the statements of Mr. Maitland in the Morning Watch, and of R.D. in the Christian Examiner, were written in short intervals of constant occupation."

Without wishing to trespass on your pages, with a defence of statements which I have made, or of the statements of R.D., which I have not seen, will you allow me to say that I never made any statement in the Morning Watch, having never written anything in that work? I should be sorry to suspect your correspondent unjustly, but I cannot help thinking that he knows my statements principally, if not entirely, from the Review in the Morning Watch; and with regard to the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, only from a garbled and falsified

extract contained in that Review. I am driven to this suspicion, not only by his mode of referring to my statement, which I have already noticed, but from his saying— ‘On the other hand, Mr. M. is without ground of inquiry; for if the Hebrew word shibim have no technical or conventional meaning, it would not be sevens according to the Hebrew idiom at all, but seventy; so that we must admit the conventional meaning and inquire what it is.’ If your correspondent had read my first Inquiry, he would have seen that I did admit a conventional meaning, and shewed by several references that the Misnic writers used sheba to signify the space of time between one sabbatical year and another: a fact which the Reviewer in the Morning Watch did not think proper to notice.

I do not wish, however, to intrude on your pages what is already before the public; but I should be glad to prevent or correct a mistake into which I think your readers might naturally fall; and also to beg that my statements may not be judged of either by what has been extracted in the Morning Watch, or brought forward by your correspondent.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,

S. R. Maitland.

On receiving the above letter from Mr. Maitland, we sent a copy of it to Mr. Darby, that his answer might appear together with it. The following is a copy of Mr. Darby’s reply:

The principal occasion of Mr. Maitland’s letter is a mistake occasioned by an unnoticed defect of a stop (I dare say in my manuscript), which should have been supplied thus: “of Mr. Maitland; in the Morning Watch;

and of R.D.", instead of "Mr. Maitland in the Morning Watch, and of R.D.", etc. Indeed, no one, I should have thought, could have made the mistake; for the article in the Morning Watch is written against Mr. M., and treats him with considerable slight. I had read both of Mr. M.'s pamphlets or Inquiries. It is very possible my paper (in the Christian Herald) does not take adequate notice of them; and I have not them with me now to refer to; but the principal argument and the evidence from the passage in Leviticus remain untouched. If you are disposed, I shall be glad to revert to it, as with a mind entirely open on the subject. I feel it one of great interest, and shall be very glad to receive all the light I can from Mr. M., or anyone else, there or elsewhere. R.D. was the immediate object of my paper, which occasioned the less reference to Mr. M., for whom I have really every respect, and from whom I should be very glad to learn. I should, however, confine my inquiry certainly to the scriptural sense of the word as evidence, even though I examined other things brought forward.

I am surprised Mr. M. did not see what the first passage he quotes meant; as the article in the Morning Watch (or rather articles) is not only written against him, but is accompanied by a note accounting for their refusal (as I recollect) to insert Mr. M.'s reply to themselves, so that even if I had not read Mr. M.'s books, or the Morning Watch either, I (or anyone else) must have been of a strange constitution of mind to think that article was Mr. Maitland's.

Believe me, truly and affectionately yours,

John Nelson Darby.

Plymouth, Jan. 13, 1831.

On The Extended Scope Of Prophecy

(From the Christian Witness, Plymouth, Jan., 1834.)

It appears to me that the result of prophecy has been much obscured, and particular passages much more difficult of interpretation, by narrowing their scope and applying them only to the anti-christian character of the last primary evil. Hence, the subject being wrongly assumed, the application has been forced and unknown. The anti-christian form of the Roman empire engrosses the mind, so that even when prophecy is applied to the Jews, nothing further is seen. But this is a confined view; all the nations of the earth are engaged in this scene. Thus Gog the chief prince of Magog, and his army and followers, formed no part of the Roman empire. The Medes and Persians formed no part of that empire; yet all these do form a part of the great prophetic drama of the latter day. I purposely refrain from entering into details here; if I am permitted, I hope to open out my views upon it, at some future time. I merely now make these few remarks, in the hope of enlarging the sphere of observation. The immediate moral position in which we are, may involve us in direct concern with the last exhibition of power of the Roman beast, even Antichrist, destined, I do not doubt, to close the scene and his career in Jerusalem—the mountain of God, where he has, craftily and to his own destruction, set his seat. But this is but one out of many. He thus becomes one, the first (I apprehend) of those powers, who, round the great centre of divine providence, the Jewish land, are brought, as the inhabitants of the earth, under the judicial process of that righteous providence which shall

set the Son of man on the throne of the kingdom of the earth, in the righteousness and peace of God's own government in Him.

As regards the full moral responsibilities of the Christian Church, the apostasy and judgment of the anti-Christian power is clear and decided, as well as solemn and affecting to the believer, but deliverance and joy withal. But when we turn our eyes to the earth, to the dealings of God with its nations, we find, when He divided to the sons of Adam their inheritance, "He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel," Deut. 32:8. In this, of course, the beast will take his part; doubtless, he may lead in the career of evil, but let us enlarge our view a little. Were all the nations of the image in the last beast? Clearly not. The Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and (I suppose) about the Firths of Forth and Clyde, and the Irish Sea, form the geographical bounds of all that could ever be taken within the grasp of the last beast, unless perhaps part of Hungary and Transylvania. I am not saying that all this will be under Antichrist,4 or how far it may be, but merely that the last beast extends no farther than this. But besides this, there is in the image, part of the subject of latter-day judgment—the arms and the breast; the Medo-Persian power not included within these limits. This then, besides the actings of the first power, we must find scope for in the scenes of the latter day, as one of the nations that must act upon the Jews, and in the land. The omission of this may cause great confusion in the application of passages, which, having the Jews and the land in view, must include the account of the vicissitudes arising from this also.

Further, Gog and Magog (who form, I imagine, no part, not only of the beast, but of the image, yet take a conspicuous part in the scenes of the latter day, as the witness of the power of God) must be let into the scheme of prophecy; and till we have developed the sphere in which these take their parts, we cannot appropriate the special prophecies which may have their ultimate fulfilment in these very powers. I do not doubt we shall find much detail of movement within the territorial limits of the beast, which are not the action of its body, as immediately headed by Antichrist,5 as well as the final suppression of smaller nations, within the limits of Israelitish territory, as given of God; but into these details it is not my purpose to enter. That which I would press upon your readers is this— that (while the scene in which we are individually engaged leads us to contemplate directly the growth and operations of Antichrist,6 our most important concern), if we would interpret Scripture fully, we must see that this is but conducive to a system and scene of which the land of Israel is the focus and centre, and in which all the people of the earth are concerned and called in question. The length, the circumstances, the particulars of the great day of tribunal of judgment on the people and nations, beginning at Jerusalem, we may reserve to the Lord's mercy granting us other opportunity. I believe Antichrist to be the first of it, and of a character distinct from the rest—the close to be the clearing of the land and its limits, with the exception, perhaps, of God. But the fact surely seems indisputable and definite, and must widely affect the study and application of scriptural prophecies. To these I would next direct your attention.

4 Antichrist is assumed here to be the head of the beast, as it was by all when this paper was written; not the false Messiah in Palestine.—Ed.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

Scope Of Prophecy

(From the Christian Witness, Plymouth, July, 1835.)

There are two great subjects connected with prophecy—the hope of the Church and the order and accomplishment of that system of earthly government which, with the Jews as its centre, has formed the great subject of ancient prophecy, its proper subject as a literal and distinct testimony of what should happen in the earth. As it is written, “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” “For the Lord’s portion is his people; Israel is the lot of his inheritance.”

There is another point, the connection of the two, the passage from the failing dispensation (failing as in man’s hand) in which we stand, into that which is to come; the portion of the remnant in the Gentile body and of the restored Jewish people, which, it seems to me, from involving both, induces greater difficulty of judgment than either considered apart. The moral state too both of the Christian remnant and of the Jewish remnant is so immediately involved in the question— their responsibilities and the divine judgment concerning them—that responsibility in estimating their place I feel sensibly increased. Nevertheless the faithful word is our sure and only guide, and wherever this directs us, the Spirit shedding light on it to our souls, we shall find the light and power of life in it. Nor will its connection with our responsibilities weaken its importance and value to us. I should value therefore exceedingly any fight upon this subject. But though I have thought in the study of

the word on many things connected with it, I do not feel my mind so distinctly ascertained of that portion of the mind of God as to state myself at present anything concerning it, though quite alive to the inquiry.

I would state very briefly as to the second point what would enlarge the basis on which our inquiries into Scripture may be conducted; and, by extending the limits of that which is certain in things revealed, increase our power of spiritual judgment, both within those limits and also as to those things in which we may be yet untaught. The essential difference of the government of the world during the four beasts is not, I think, sufficiently considered. During this time, there ceased to be, properly speaking, Jews and Gentiles. That which had given importance to the Jews, was that they were God's people. Otherwise "have not I brought (says God) the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" This removed, they were but as one among the nations made of one blood in all the earth, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him.

It is true this distinction, once constituted, was never and never is to be recalled; "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." And hence the Jews, or people of Israel, always constituted a distinct subject of government in the divine mind, never lost sight of and kept continually for the purposes formed therein for His glory, whatever the circumstances were through which they were passed. But they ceased to be the immediate manifested object and centre of the divine government upon earth, the moment "Lo-ammi" was written upon them. They ceased to be the scene in which God displayed His character as a recognised people, and from which, as identified with Himself, He exercised

righteous judgment on surrounding nations, accounted but as strangers meddling with the place of His sanctuary.

Identical with this inscription of “Lo-ammi” (for a little season and still reserved for mercy, and it counted long to Jehovah) was the setting up of the Gentile power, the kingdom of the beasts which should arise out of the earth. This is matter of common knowledge and has been noticed in the Witness; and the whole history of the Jews connected with Nebuchadnezzar makes it too plain to one familiar with Scripture to need the evidence in detail here. But the inscription of “Lo-ammi” being set upon the Jewish people, their present distinction as God’s people from the other nations of the earth ceased (not in purpose nor in providence, but as the subject of manifested government and revelation). And, though for the purpose of the manifestation of Messiah there was a suspension of the final accomplishment of these things, and a partial restoration, or rather setting in such a place as that they might be the subject of Messiah’s restoration, the rod that was upon them of the stranger was never taken off, let it be light or gilded. There was no Jewish history, but of the fact of their rebuilding under the favour of the Persians, and of the rejection of Messiah under the government of the Romans and Herod; and then they are lost to historic scripture after the death of Stephen, forbidding that which was now come to the Gentiles to go to them, and wrath come upon them to the uttermost.

In the setting up of Nebuchadnezzar as the golden head of the image, the man of the earth, “the times of the Gentiles” began, and Israel was lost. It was not Ammi and Goiim,7 but government left in the hands of the

Gentiles, now exercising it in the covetous greediness of self-will, and the apparent government of God, in principle, lost, though never, of course, in providence.

With the four beasts connected with this state of things, every reader of prophecy is familiar. But it is taken notice of here as co-extensive with Israel's (whatever their circumstances) being "Lo-ammi," not God's people, and, consequently, the distinction of Jew and Gentile lost in present manifested exercise, unless in priority of judgment.

I think we shall find a very, distinct division of prophecy connected with this subject, and appropriation of it, much calculated to clear the ground on which we stand.

There are three prophets connected with this state of Jewish rejection—Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Each have their separate portion of testimony, and their several place of giving it. Jeremiah prophesied in the place and habitation of the rebellious people. "The sin of Judah was written with a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond." Ezekiel prophesied by the river of Chebar, among the captives. Daniel in the midst of Babylon, when the golden representative head had been set up.

In Jeremiah we shall see, therefore, the sin of the people proved, and they made Goiim (heathen) of; and then, after vcrious judgments on all the nations, the new covenant with Israel and Judah, their captivity brought again; in a word, "Lo-ammi," and Ammi as to both in restoration; while the history of their present wickedness is given and their necessary captivity, ashamed of Egypt as they were ashamed of Assyria.

In Ezekiel we shall find the sign of the glory departed, the consequent disallowance of the remains of the

people in the land, then the setting aside of every other power previous to Nebuchadnezzar, and the fact of his prevailing as king of Babylon over the last of them; but then a passing by the whole history of, or any allusion to, the beasts: and after setting aside the previous nations by the king of Babylon, the immediate recurrence to the principles of God's dealings with the house of Israel, their restoration and deliverance as one stick in His hand; and, consequently, the heathen knowing that He, Jehovah, did sanctify Israel when His sanctuary was in the midst of them for evermore. And what subsequently happened of Gog, prince of Magog, is a coming up against "my people Israel." Thus way is made in the suppression of previous powers (and of Israel) for the introduction of the beasts, but they are wholly omitted; and the prophet passes over (after the principles of God's dealings are discussed) to the restoration of the people and God's dealings among the heathen, as with them as His people.

Daniel precisely fills up this gap. Nebuchadnezzar is seen as the golden head in the outset, and a king of kings to whom the God of heaven had given a kingdom; and, wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven had He given into his hand, and made him rule over them all. He was the head of gold. Then the character and proceedings of this system and of the four beasts are given, but no mention of anything before or after, nor of the Jews or Israel as God's people at all. It is "the times of the Gentiles," of the four beasts, in which God's people are "Lo-arami"; and when mentioned, it is not "My people," but "thy people," addressing Daniel.

This gives the subjects of these books, I think, great clearness, and shews the character and importance of the time subsequent to the renewal of the distinction between God's people and the heathen. The convulsions and trouble preceding this are of the utmost importance, and have their place; but they are to be viewed as a distinct subject from Israel acknowledged of the Lord. Israel is still lost in the midst of the nations rising one against another. Jerusalem may be taken; but He is not come whose right it is; and, therefore, though it may be the occasion of the Lord's fighting against these nations, still it was not Jehovah-Shammah (Ezek. 48:35) that was taken; nor could that be, as the final post-millennial confederacy and Hezekiah's typical trial prove.

I would advert to a few passages illustrative of what I have stated, and then allude to one or two consequences.

First, as to Jeremiah, up to chapter 24 we have the sin of Israel, and specially Judah, continuously proved. In chapter 25, is the judgment; recapitulating the testimony—shewing immediate judgment also on Babylon, the type of all the nations. The judgment, however, actually runs thus, "Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand and cause all the nations (Goiim) to whom I send thee to drink it. Then took I the cup at the Lord's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the Lord had sent me; Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation"; and then the rest, to "all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth, and the king of Sheshach after them," But this definitely involves Judah and Jerusalem in the indiscriminate and common name of Goiim— "judgment

beginning in the house of God." (See verse 29.) Then, after various details to chapter 30, in that chapter we have the new and sure promises connected with God's purpose concerning the nation to the end of chapter 33. The rest is historically probative or relative to Egypt, till chapter 46, when we have the word against the Gentiles, but restoration to many of them.

In Ezekiel, chapter 24 divides the book. We have the utter rejection of the city. The glory of the Lord is seen at the outset in its full providential governing power; and in chapter 10 its departure from the city and temple: then in chapter 25, getting rid of other nations—these within and surrounding the land. Then two are mentioned who would fain have been beasts in the earth—Assyria and Pharaoh-Necho. The first, however, had fallen. What was the latter better? He should fall; "So was Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord God." Then in chapter 32 we have their common dirge. Here the prophet closes. Instead of pursuing the history of the earth then farther, which must have brought in the beasts, he turns at once to the shepherds of Israel. All but the beasts are disposed of; these Daniel is occupied about in Babylon, not Ezekiel at Chebar. Restoration under the Lord's salvation from evil shepherds is the only remedy. So in chapter 33:4 and in chapter 34:7. The restoration follows; then Gog against Israel as God's people, settled on their own mountains no longer waste, but dwelling in peaee; Israel now no longer "Lo-ammi," as chapters 36, 38. The judgment on Seir (chapter 35) seems special.

Of Daniel I have already said enough, it is manifestly the history of the unnoticed period, the times of the beasts and their doings and character; the account in Babylon

of all that belonged to it, or arose out of it, while Israel was no more a people, and power was recognisedly in the hands of those who knew not how to use it, who had beasts' hearts and left to be so and not man's till the due times had passed over it.

We have then these three agencies to look for, connected with Israel, and at the close of these times, when the great concentrated crisis comes to take effect. First, the heathen as looked at under Jeremiah, nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom, in which Jerusalem and the Jews have a place in the secret enmity perhaps of the wicked one, knowing what is to be and happen there; and surely in the providence of God. Yet still as one of the Goiim, merely mixed up in the troubles with all the rest, only the first to drink the cup. Secondly, the beast (or beasts) then in his power, having his own specific and distinct character as such. That which constitutes the power may be heathen perhaps in race; but it is not merely this but a beast. And lastly, we have the renewed position of Israel as God's people, and the heathen definitely distinguished from them, and opposed to them as such; and God acting on this principle. The other prophets give many details as to them; their proper statements are, of course, of the Jews as Jews, and treating the heathen as such, and therefore not concerning the beasts at all. And I suspect if Antichrist be mentioned in them, he is spoken of in his professed character as "the king"; and the state of the people merely alluded to on the critical time of change, when the summons of the Lord is addressed on the coming of the heathen, when the Lord is just about to go forth, rejected indeed by the nations, but listened to by the remnant.

Thus Joel describes some Got (nation) going up against the land, etc., and summons the inhabitants of the land, and alarms Zion, and sounds for the gathering. When there is this cry, then the Lord is jealous for His land and pities His people; and the answer to them (not before so called), and blessing, and consequent judgment on all the heathen, is described.

So, in Zechariah, we have the city taken by the nations gathered together, and against those nations the Lord will go forth and fight. This is the only place where this taking is mentioned, unless Joel 2 and once perhaps in Isaiah; and not, I conceive, alluding to Antichrist or the wilful king, but omitting or leaving out the whole history of the beast and his doings, which stands on other ground. His place, I conceive, rather holds the place of the covenant with death, made with the scornful men which dwell at Jerusalem, which is disannulled.

But I will not enter farther into details. I have mentioned these passages as immediately affected by the considerations I have offered. If one could see the Jews and Jerusalem (as shewn in the paper, under the title of “Jerusalem,” in a previous number) as the great subject and centre of earthly government and prophecy, we should better understand the force of nations, and then, looking at Israel as lost in them and mixed in their troubles, and the object of their hatred; then the subject of the wilful king’s special though wicked interference; and subsequently, on his destruction, as the scene of the Lord’s deliverance and power, who then holds it in His hand as His weapon against the nations (now again recognised as in opposition to Amrni, “my people,” and He therefore putting them under His feet), we should

see much of the prophecies more distinct and more simple.

Though I acquiesce in and value the general scope of the article I have alluded to, let me just say that it seems to me in some of its details to have overstepped the limits of evidence. I cannot see that Daniel 7, 8 and Revelation 13 are necessarily identical, however analogous the language may be. The connection of Daniel 7 with Revelation I cannot doubt. The proof of the identity of chapters 7 and 8 arises not from direct interpretation, but the necessity, if both be universal, and at the same time, that they should be the same. The argument is good enough (though I distrust and feel difficulty in all illative reasoning about Scripture), but depends, and is justly made to do so, on the universality of both, and also the sameness of time. But I cannot see the universality in chapter 8. Thus "by him the daily sacrifice shall be taken away," should (I apprehend) be from him, though this by-the-bye. I entirely recognise the working of Antichrist as the head of the last beast,8 or the last head of the beast in Jerusalem in his place in his close; but it seems to me there is not enough scope given to the other actors in that scene, who derive their importance, not from present associations, but their then connection with, and opposition to, Jewish interests.9 I have felt that the consideration of the office allotted to these three prophets I have here spoken of, reduced and simplified the ground on which we could judge these things. It is but one narrow point of the subject; still if, by interpretation in which the Lord leads and will justify us, any part of the subject is cleared, so much is positively gained. What may be imperfect or erroneous in it the saints will soon detect, if they wait

for the revelation and instruction of God. I do confess it has cleared a good many details, but its ground is quite independent of them, and I am reluctant to write on them; as undue determination of them seems to me the ground of our difficulties, the ascertainment of them always a step in our knowledge.

7 Ammi, my people; Goiim, Gentiles or heathen.

8 See previous note, and on next page.

9 Note re Antichrist written later. It has been taken for granted among those who expect a personal Antichrist, that he is the civil head of the Roman Empire. This I question. Without doubting in the least, that there will be such a blasphemous Gentile power, it seems to me that the Antichrist is another power, of which the Scriptures are even more full—the vessel of evil religious energy, rather than that of evil public government. At least, two such manifestations of power we find in Revelation 13. See papers on “The Antichrist,” later in this volume.

The Dispensation Of The Kingdom Of Heaven

Matthew 13.

I would say a few words on this chapter, or collection of parables, in the deep feeling of the imperfectness with which any of us understand “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven”; and this, not merely from personal feelings as to individual weakness, but from the scope and extent of the divine wisdom in them—a wisdom knit up with and developing the whole of the divine counsels—a wisdom, therefore, not to be acquired in mere detached passages, but in the comprehension of the mind of God which flows from the abundance of the Spirit exercised in spiritual application to Scripture. Nevertheless, I feel that our portion, as believers, is to be given to know them—our blessed portion; and we may be allowed, in the confidence of His love, to breathe out also what we may have apprehended of the mind of the Spirit, and to present it to the judgment of our brethren.

With this feeling of confidence in the Lord, I shall open out what appears to me to be the order and power of this collection of parables. Their detailed meaning may, perhaps, be the subject of some subsequent observation. I would remark, then, in the first place, that the phrases, “kingdom of heaven,” and also, “kingdom of your or their Father,” are peculiar to Matthew—expressions manifestly not unimportant in force. The only exception at all is the use of the latter expression, by implication, in the instruction to pray, in Luke 11: an exception not without interest, but which I can dwell on here only to

observe, that the kingdom in every instance we are taught to pray for is the Father's kingdom. In these parables we have both: the term "kingdom of heaven" being common to all, save the first; that of "kingdom of your Father" being found in the explanation of the second of the parables. The importance of the former expression is seen not only in its being a positive subject of all the parables, except the first, but from the emphatic declaration of our Lord: "Every scribe, instructed into the kingdom of heaven, will bring forth out of his treasure things new and old."10 The scribe, being well taught in the law of Moses, could therefore bring forth the old things; and being "instructed into the kingdom of heaven," could bring forth out of his treasures, therefore, new things. He was to have, indeed, new things, but he was not to give up the old; what he had learnt as a scribe were treasures in the estimation of Christ, to be brought forth by the scribe "instructed into the kingdom of heaven." I consider these parables, then, as a full prophetic statement of the character and detail of the circumstances in which the kingdom of heaven would be placed. There are seven parables in all—a common circumstance expressive of completeness, or perfectness, in prophetic statements, which the attentive reader of Scripture cannot fail to have observed; of these, six are similitudes of the kingdom of heaven—the first, not: the act described in the first being an act of the Son of man before His ascension; and its results, also, such as might be exhibited in individuals before as well as after it. This parable declares the agency of the kingdom and its particular results; the others, the dispensation of the kingdom. To recur to "things new and old" —the fact of "the kingdom of heaven" might well be called an "old

thing"; one conversant in Daniel, with the hopes of the old law, might well have looked for such a thing. The order of its development and position was a "new thing"; which was to be revealed consequent upon the manifestation, and (we must add, though not here developed)11 the rejection and resurrection of Christ the Son. The fact absolutely revealed in prophetic testimony was the giving of a kingdom to the Son of man. The learning that the heavens do rule was a lesson to be taught in the expected suppression and setting aside of Gentile domination. Yet an earthly dominion in the Jewish people was an expectation which every Jew (taking prophecy literally, as every Jew must), because he was a Jew, must have justly held upon belief in the prophetic declaration. In the midst of these (perhaps confused, yet just, and, in one sense, believing) apprehensions, our Lord came in with a definite declaration, that "the kingdom of heaven was at hand."

That "the kingdom of heaven" was merely the true invisible church of God is an explanation which cannot for a moment be maintained, consistently with a single statement of these parables and of analogous ones. That it was merely the visible church of God is neither consistent with what we find in this chapter, nor any adequate representation of the matter, as is manifest from the parables of the treasure and the pearls. The rule of heaven is the simple force of the expression "the kingdom of heaven." Earthly dominion was exercised by the Gentiles unrighteously; earthly dominion was expected by the Jews, and expected, though true, unrighteously; as was shewn by their rejection of "the Holy One of God," who came from heaven— "the Son of man," "the King of the Jews." Most important, then, and

a point of sustaining faith, to one who might think that it had been “he who should have redeemed Israel,” was it to recognise in this word “the kingdom of heaven,” that a resurrection Lord might hold its power; and anomalous, and apparently failing, as their position might have been, to learn, not only new spiritual things, but that the kingdom of heaven was that which, even in dispensation, was the mind and order of God’s counsels.

Hence we find it so especially referred to in Matthew, the Gospel more particularly of dispensation and prophetic testimony. It would manifestly carry me into too large a subject here to enter farther into this most interesting point of the distinctive character of the gospels, the evidences of which, in three of them, are prominent—in the other, arise from a number of minute particulars. I mention the distinction here, as shewing the ground on which “the kingdom of heaven” and “the kingdom of their Father” appear to be used in Matthew’s gospel alone. It was a gentle unfolding, though full declaration, that the order of things now coming in was, of its own character, maintaining the hope given as coming from God; one which in result, indeed, we know to be founded in the resurrection, but which, in its testimony, then claimed repentance only on the part of the Jew, the connection of which shall never find its manifested accomplishment till the millennial glory in the risen saints and the repentant Jew, gathered together in one in Christ, sustaining in resurrection life and power the blessings of the Jews on earth and its consequences; [He] at the same time being the companion and the servant, too, of the joy of the saints risen into fellowship with Him in His Father’s house as sons. Our Lord, however, in this chapter unfolds its

actual characters, and we must endeavour to bring in "the new things" of "the kingdom," to understand fully the ground on which the kingdom of heaven now stands. We have here two other kingdoms— "the kingdom of their Father," i.e., of the righteous; and "the kingdom of the Son of man." In neither of these, properly speaking, are we now. The Son of man shall do so and so, and "then shall the righteous," etc.12 These kingdoms are the full development of that which now rests in an anomalous and ambiguous state (glorious and blessed, indeed, but still ambiguous13 as regards its manifested results), to wit, "the kingdom of God's dear Son," the kingdom of the Son of God as sitting upon the Father's throne. This is not the kingdom of the Son of man; it is not the kingdom of the Father, but the kingdom of the Son of God sitting on His Father's throne; the Lamb rejected, slain, sitting on the right hand of God, or in the midst of the throne. I believe this to be the great mystery of the present order of the kingdom, the promise to be, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit down with me on my throne, even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne," where no saint ever sat, none but He whose right it is.

This principle, or glorious truth, of the Son sitting on the Father's throne, as the present subject of faith, will be found to run through the whole of our Lord's language in John, and give the character of the whole present state of things. Hence the Spirit is said to be sent down from the Father, because it was to bring us, not only into fellowship with Jesus, but into the understanding of sonship with the Father, in whose house and kingdom the righteous were to dwell and shine forth. Now these parables in Matthew are just the shewing forth of the

planting and results of this kingdom of heaven, in the sitting of Jesus on the throne of God in power unseen, and ministration of the Spirit according to the Father's will, and "a Lamb as it had been slain," yea, and in the midst of the throne, but in which He had not taken the earth as His actual portion.

There is another connection which will illustrate the language of these parables—I mean the development of the hope of Israel in Psalm 78, compared with the application of verse 2 with verse 35 of this chapter. There was no riddle simply in historical facts, but there was a most important lesson and mystery in the total failure of Israel; the Israel of God in the earth totally failing in the midst of all deliverances and blessings, and then set up in stability in David their king. It was the kingdom of David connected with the Jew. But there were other riddles (Psalm 78:1; Matt. 13:35. See original)—the great riddle of the kingdom of heaven in its present dispensation— "things new" (besides David's reign of Christ over the Jews).

Our Lord (as the prophet of Israel, and the kingdom which now reached out to the world) takes two positions in these parables, or rather, string of prophecies, which are the two parts of prophecy filled up in Him in whom every office was fulfilled. The church in order required no prophecy,14 nor Israel either. In disorder, the prophetic testimony had two offices: the testimony of that disorder, and the method of God's purposes as paramount to human disorder—judgment against the one, and the method of God's plan of grace, the purposes of God in their moral character and wisdom of counsel. Both are assumed or recognised by the Spirit, as exhibited by our Lord in this chapter. The first we

have exhibited in the great prophetic mission of Isaiah (chap. 6), where the seeing the full revealed glory of Jehovah necessarily involves those not seeing that glory, now it was revealed, in the consequences of judicial blindness. This was fulfilled in our Lord. There was the full glory of Jehovah and the Spirit of revelation, and the word, therefore, of judicial blindness applied directly; and He speaks this to them in parables. A comparison of the language both of Ezekiel and Zechariah will much confirm this observation: “Then shalt thou know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee,” Zech. 2:11. “In that day shall thy mouth be opened to him that is escaped,” Ezek. 24:27. This prophetic character is attached to the parables in verse 13. The other prophetic character is opening out to the remnant, by these very riddles, the mysteries of the kingdom, understood when the Spirit has revealed Christ, according to the measure of that revelation, “Unto you it is given to know.” This declared in Psalm 78 is adverted to in verse 35. Note here, the Lord acts on the measure of blindness, in judgment, as on the measure of light in giving more—a very awful consideration, yet sure.

Thus we see the character of the whole chapter—to wit, Christ’s prophetic testimony upon the rejection of His word by the Jews: the order of the divine kingdom during the absence of the Son of man consequent upon His rejection, and the assumption of His own throne, the ministration of power in the hands of the Son of man, with the closing scene of that order, the assumption of the righteous into the Father’s kingdom in the brightness “of the sun” (i.e., Christ Himself); the purging of the Son of man’s kingdom, the field in which the tares were; the declaration of the intrinsic

excellence and value with the beauty of the kingdom [the gathering of the good first into vessels], and the judgment of the visible church, the net-full gathered out of the sea.

I would now follow, a little, the order of the parables or prophetic declarations themselves. The first, I have observed, is no similitude of the kingdom at all, but the sowing of the seed, by which its ministration was carried into effect: a general parable, the general instrument, and therefore stated previously to the judicial blindness of the Jews, and not made a similitude of the kingdom of heaven, but the word of the kingdom, the details of the operation or hindrance of which are most blessedly and beautifully marked. The following six parables are similitudes of the kingdom of heaven, but there is a marked distinction in them. The explanation of the first of the six and the last three of these parables are addressed to the disciples alone; the former three being addressed to them and the multitude at large. The first three contain the ostensible position and result of the kingdom in the world, of which men might be more or less cognizant, or which might be addressed to them. The latter three, and their explanation, are either the result in full development, the result in God's hands, or the intrinsic character and value of the kingdom work, as in the mind of the Spirit developing the mind of the Lord. This was addressed to the disciples especially. Farther, I would remark, as the first three are the kingdom as seen in the world, and the last three as known in the mind of God, so is the contrast between them more definite still. The first is the sowing abroad in the world, the last is the separative process of the actual net-full (the quantum gathered out of the sea) now

dragged to shore. The two intermediate ones of the first three are, one, the external organisation by which the kingdom grows up into the world; the other, the diffusion of doctrine through the mass, which the Lord characterises as leaven, the import of which is given elsewhere. The two intermediate ones of the latter three are, the first, the value of the hidden treasure in the field, the real glory of the Church, as known by the mind and discovery of the Lord, though not now brought out, for which He was content to buy the field—to take the world in its present worthless condition. The application of this is most important. The second is the moral beauty of its grace in the eye of God, meeting the mind of the merchantman seeking goodly pearls, the estimate of the grace in the church by Christ, and the spirit of Christ. I believe, also, the first of the former two answers to, or is the contrast of, the first of the latter two, and the latter of the latter. The last parable manifestly discloses the judicial process on the body gathered to shore [by the separation of the good, and subsequent judgment], a question quite distinct from His judgment of the world.

I have now, I believe, distinctly traced the order and structure of the parables. An attempt at their interpretation remains. I shall only remark on those which are the likeness of the kingdom of heaven, and only by way of heads. Of the first, we have our Lord’s own interpretation, in which I have only to direct the attention to the simple force of the terms upon which the Spirit of God must throw His light for our understanding “this word of the kingdom.” We have seen, generally, that the first three are the position or character of the kingdom in the world. So we have here, “the field is the world,” and nothing else; nor does the

judicial process refer to the judgment of even the nominal church, that is subsequently in the last parable. Christ sowed the good seed of the kingdom in the world; and the devil, with craft, sowed tares there amongst it, while men slept, “perverse men” “ordained to this condemnation.” The power of extermination was not given (to wit, out of the world) to the church, the servants of the householder: they must “both grow together until the harvest.” It was no service to Christ, then, to kill a heretic; the rude hand of a servant might destroy a saint, in attempting the purity of the crop, by that which was reserved for other hands. The ripening of both was the present process, ripened together in the world. The church would never become a system to purify or set right the world. The providential power of God in the ministration of the Son by His angels,15 would clear out of His kingdom in bundles, into the field, in the world, the tares to be burned; and thereupon the righteous would shine forth as the sun, not in the kingdom of the Son, not in the kingdom of the Son of man, but in the kingdom of the Father. In a word, we have the clearing of the world, the field, by providential interposition, by a judicial process in the hands of the Son of man, sending His angels. The righteous of the kingdom, i.e., those who had been righteous while the world was evil, shall be as the sun. We know who “the Sun of righteousness” is, and “when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”; but it is in the kingdom of their Father. What followed in the kingdom of the Son of man we know not hence, only that He gathered all that offend out of it, and that the earthly “kingdom of our Lord and his Christ was come”; but this was not the subject of a similitude of the kingdom of heaven. This mixed and ambiguous system was closed,

or rather accomplished, in the separation of the Father's kingdom of glory (the righteous, as the Sun of righteousness, being together in it, to the praise of the glory of His grace by what is past, and of His glory then: compare Eph. 1:6-12) and the kingdom of the Son of man now purged judicially, the earthly kingdom being now brought in, of which we know, from other sources, the Jews to be the imperial power in Christ. The second parable I have already spoken of as the external organization in the world, of the power and influence of the kingdom according to the hierarchical form it took in man's hand. The attentive reader of Scripture must be most familiar with the symbol of a tree as denoting external protective power and eminence, as in Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, and many others, making the analogy most definite. This, then, was the worldly power of the system. Now when the kingdom of the Son of man comes in, there may be something analogous, though not tantamount to this; but such16 a system must be a system of sovereign righteousness, forbidden by the previous parable to the church, or it will be an association or system of evil. The third is the spreading of nominal doctrine to whatever measured extent God had assigned or appointed. So also in another system this might have another character, but it cannot be recognised in grace properly here, for the whole is leavened, a thing again expressly negatived, as a fact in grace, in the first parable. The explanation to the disciples of the first we have spoken of as fully as our limits allow us here. Of the fourth, it is evidently the purchase by Christ of the world, for the sake of the treasure, the church, the treasure of God hidden in it to be brought out in due time. The fifth is the positive discriminated beauty and excellency of the church as

ordained and set by God, and which the Spirit of Christ, the anointed One, recognises and sees in its beauty, so as to “love the church and give himself for it,” as seen in the mind of God’s love. In proportion as we have the mind of Christ, we shall of course enter into the mind of Him who is the head of the kingdom, whose Spirit is thus described, fulfilled in Him perfectly. In the last, we have evidence of the result, that the nominal church shall not gather in the world. There were many fishes in the sea, the mass of the unheeded world pursuing their own ways, not drawn into the net; but the net was filled, and there was gathered of every17 kind out of the sea, and there was also of bad and good. “The fulness of the Gentiles was come in,” and being full it was drawn to shore; and the judgment of the church commenced [by the separation of the good], and the bad are cast away. The details of these parables I do not enter into further here. I state synoptically what has been followed out as the subject arose. The kingdom of heaven we have as a state of things during the period when the Son is sitting on the Father’s throne. During this period the children are in the Son’s, but heirs of the Father’s kingdom—a period during which the world is. not ordered according to the righteous judicial power of the Son of man’s kingdom—the interval between the rejection of the Son of man upon earth and His reigning upon earth, in which the saints are sustained by the Spirit, in the midst of the world, by the Spirit sent of the Son by the Father, the witness of His exaltation there. Of this state of things, this chapter is the full prophetic announcement. The external character which it assumes in the world being depicted in the first three; the real blessing and value and the judgment of its results, its internal character in God’s sight, in the last three of the six parables. It closes

in the setting up of the Son of man's kingdom upon earth, and the assumption of the righteous, during its continuance, to the Father's kingdom in the heavenlies. The first parable is the word of the kingdom. The expositions and internal view of the church or kingdom are given to the disciples; the judicial blindness of the Jews is declared, and the special privilege of the saints; and the parables are spoken distinctively as the "utterance of things hidden from the world," which the Spirit reveals to those "who have ears to hear."

10 I would remark on this expression, that we are taught to hold the continuing value of the Jewish prophetic expectation, of all that a scribe in the law of Moses would have drawn from the Old Testament, and that distinct from the expectation introduced by the gospel.

11 "The kingdom of God" is a distinct expression from "the kingdom of heaven," although in many respects so identified, that the same things could be affirmed about it. Thus it could be said that the kingdom of God was at hand: that was most true; as it could be said also, that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. But at the same time they were of very distinct import; for it was matter of faith to know that the "kingdom of God was come amongst them." (See Gr., Luke n:20; ch. 17:21.) So the Lord makes use of expressions never used of the kingdom of heaven—to know that the kingdom of heaven was not, but was "at hand" (Matt. 4:17, Gr.); whereas the same evangelist, or rather the Spirit of God by him, in speaking of the kingdom of God, immediately changes his phrase to the one noticed in Luke (Gr., Matt. 12:28). The kingdom of God was necessarily there when the Son of God was there—in a word, when God was there. The kingdom of heaven, as the development of God's

purpose, could not be there while He was there; it resulted from the Lord's going away into heaven. The kingdom of God is the exercise or exhibition of the ruling power of God under any circumstances in the wisdom of God. The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom of God in its heavenly character. In dispensation this is set up by the rejection of the King of God's kingdom by the world; and, while it ought to have been known (even while He was upon earth), by faith, is known to faith by Jesus the Head, the Lamb slain, sitting on the throne of the Father. The kingdom of God, therefore, was amongst the Jews when He, the Son of God, Jesus, was there—and they ought to have known it—and the kingdom of heaven was at hand. By the earthliness of men, however, instead of gathering the Gentiles to the Jews, the Messiah being recognised, it was known only (as in God's counsels and wisdom meant to be) by the rejection of Him, and the exaltation (to the place "where he was before") of the Son of man, who was the Lord from heaven, and Son of man in heaven. The kingdom of heaven (His kingdom was not of this world) was set up, continuing, as regards the Church, till the time when the saints, in the Father's kingdom, raised with Jesus at His second coming, shall know the blessedness of the rule of the Son of God and man, in the whole scene which once rejected Him, now brought under His sway and theirs (still, in that sense, the kingdom of heaven to those below), when they witness the blessedness of heavenly rule, while dwelling "kings and priests unto God" in the quiet and secure fulness of the Father's house— sons with Him. This, too, more properly is the kingdom of man (compare Daniel 7); for under the exalted Man and His saints all things are put. Had Jesus not been rejected, it would have been the kingdom of God (still, it

is surely so in character; for He is God, and it is God's kingdom); He would have been righteously subject, "having taken upon him the form of a servant," and as such come, "not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him." And it is thus, I apprehend, the Son shall be subject, when God—not the Father, which would be confounding everything, and not be what the word teaches, but "God —shall be all in all," Father, Son and Holy Ghost; but the rule taken out of man's hands, into which it had been put, through the obedience of Christ. Therefore it is not until after the resurrection that He says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth," etc. All things are delivered unto Him as the Son of God, as heir of all, in whom all centres. This inheritance He has not yet taken. But at present "all power is given unto him" as the appointed Man, according to the glorious mystery in which, as the Son, for whom (and by whom) all things were made. He took it up as the Redeemer in the Person of Jesus; but the power was given to Him as the obedient Man.

12 This gospel is properly the Jewish gospel of Messiah (while consequently shewing the passing away of the present and introduction of a new order of things); saints are therefore called by the term "righteous "or "just." "Saints "more properly speaking, is a Gentile name, or at least either a Christian one, or applicable to the sanctified remnant of the last days, as separated out of the mass, though both terms are true of either class. It is a revelation to the then believing Jew, it being true still, that, in consequence of the rejection of Christ, and the purpose of God contained therein, the believer's portion would not be in the Son's kingdom upon earth, but in the Father's.

13 This I believe to be the real subject of the Revelation, and the first chapters to exhibit this [using language suited]; to clothe within itself, indeed, the glorious result seen through faith, but to be that by which we can understand, as regards the kingdom, the anomaly of present circumstances, intermediate between the rejection of the Son of man, and His manifestation in the irrefutable glory of His own kingdom, when the righteous also shall be in the Father's. Let us understand and be patient till He takes to Him His great power and reigns.

14 By this is not meant prophecy in the sense of edification and comfort, of course.

15 Formally, that is, in the actual assumption of acquired power as man, I believe the angels became the servants of the Son of man when He had overcome Satan—as ministers of the Jewish position of which He had become the redeeming Head—as the agents of God's providential power in the world, which was now shewn to be in His hand, because He had vanquished (in obedience and faithfulness) the prince of it. We read, accordingly, in Matthew, this gospel of dispensation, "Then the devil leaveth him, and behold angels came and ministered unto him." So we find in that marvellous passage in Luke 22, "And there appeared unto him an angel from heaven, strengthening him."

16 The power over evil in the world being forbidden to the church, its having power in the world necessarily involves it in the recognition or allowance of evil.

17 "To take out of them (the Gentiles) a people for his name," Acts 15:14.

The Melchisedec Priesthood Of Christ

The blessing of Abram, by Melchisedec, runs thus—"Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be the Most High God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand."

It is familiar to every reader, that the apostle uses Melchisedec as the type of Christ, according to the word of the oath: "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

We would say a few words on this Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, its extent and blessing. And first, it is not that which Christ the Lord now exercises. Not that He is not a priest after that order—we know fully that He is, by the epistle to the Hebrews, and from Psalm no, and that He is not of any other. But the exercise of His priesthood is according to the typical.character of Aaron's on the day of atonement, as the same epistle shews. The whole of the present order of things answers to the day of atonement—is typified by it. The High Priest is gone within the veil, with the blood of the sacrifice— even of Himself—His own blood. So there, as yet, He is, whom the heavens must receive till the time of the restoration of all things, which God hath promised by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. This, then, is the time during which the Lord, though a priest after the order of Melchisedec, after the power of an endless life, made with an oath for ever (eis to dienekes18), in perpetuity, a continuous, not a successional priesthood; yet exercises it practically for us according to the type, though not according to the

order of Aaron, as within the veil, on the great day of atonement.

Accordingly the apostle, after declaring the order of His priesthood, enters upon and dwells exclusively in detail upon the Aaronic priesthood, as characteristic of that which the Lord Christ now exercises. He shews that He exercises it, anti-typically, within the veil, the priesthood being, in its exercise, now one entirely of a heavenly character. He is gone within, not the typical veil, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. The blood is not of bulls and goats, with which the patterns of things in the heavens were purified, but His own blood—those better sacrifices by which the heavenly things themselves could be purified. The very glory with which Jesus is said to be crowned is spoken of in the words in which the consecration garments of Aaron, and his sons after him, are described in Exodus. (Compare Heb. 2:7 and Exod. 28:2, in LXX, where the words are literally “for honour and glory.”) The whole of chapters 8 and 9 shew the present exercise of the Lord Christ’s priesthood to be after the Aaronical pattern, though He be in no sort after the Aaronical order. It is the very reasoning and subject of the epistle; and in chapter 9 the analogy is entered into in detail, so as to enable us to apply the details of the priestly services of the Levitical order to our present condition; as, however imperfectly, is commonly known in the Christian church.

It is manifest, then, that the type of Melchisedec here presented to us, as indicative of the priesthood of Christ, in its exercise leads us to further results and wider exhibition than that in which He now so graciously, and blessedly for us, secures the life, and blessing, and salvation of His people in heavenly places; Himself far

above all heavens, at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having by Himself purged our sins. The priesthood of Christ is clearly after the order of Melchisedec, and solely so; its exercise now is as clearly after the type of the order of Aaron solely; and that as exhibited on the great day of atonement within the veil. Not but that there is a great deal revealed now as to Aaronic types, which could not be seen in the type itself, which was a shadow, not the very image, the veil is now rent behind Him, and we are enabled to follow Him within, and see where He is set down, to our comfort and everlasting joy. But there is a glory besides, not yet fulfilled; a glory of its own character, a glory properly Christ's, and taught us in this type of Melchisedec, the exercise of which we find yet to come; and all that develops Christ's glory is precious to the saints. It is the Lord's glory, the glory of the Son of the Father, His own glory, too, as well as the Lord's glory. On this I would speak a little.

The priesthood of Melchisedec is, then, that royal dominion of priesthood in which, as representing the Most High God, and speaking also for man to Him in returns of praise, Christ blesses from Him (as now in His possession) heaven and the uttermost parts of the earth, through and in the seed of God. We find even in the case of Nebuchadnezzar (the first great type of earthly and Gentile dominion but opening out its corruption), his greatness reached unto heaven, and his dominion to the end of the earth; and this is put in such a strong light, that, as far as earth goes, the Adamic dominion is (Dan. 2:38) in a remarkable manner attributed to him. He may have been guilty, and the first exhibition of Gentile apostate dominion; Still this characteristic of universal dominion is attached to him. He was the man (in

whatever pride of character he filled it) set in power. The mystery of his non-acknowledgment of God in it was to be brought out in him; and the seven times of a beast's heart in this selfish and proud dominion. It was the man of the earth, not the Lord from heaven acting as man in the power of righteousness; the king of Babylon, not the Son of David, not the Lord from heaven ruling in Jerusalem as witnessing the true God. But it was a dominion given, and typically exhibiting this dominion over the earth, though to illustrate its abuse in man's hand (hence the seed of God, even brought into captivity, not blessed as in power or deliverers); a dominion given in connection with that age (aion), in which administrative power was put into the hand of man, in the commission to kill whoever killed, which was given to Noah. The other characteristic of the evil and apostasy of it was the setting up a false god—an image. But the result was that God was owned by the king "the Most High God": God is acknowledged in this character. The seven times' punishment comes, till he knows that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. Thus much for all short of dominion in heaven (though his greatness reaches to that), all earthly dominion. But there is another portion of the divine inheritance corrupted and debased, the scene of power, however, and blessing. His greatness reached to the heavens; but what do the revelations of God shew us to be in the heavenlies? "The saints of the Most High (that is, of the heavenlies—Heb. elionin)19 shall take the kingdom." But we find that we are wrestling with principalities and powers, with spiritual wickedness in the heavenlies (Eph. 6:12); that is, power apostate from God, holding the earth; exceeding great power, and spiritual wickedness, principalities and

powers, holding the heavenlies: the earth, and the heavenlies alike, possessed by evil in present power. We find the saints of the heavenlies (Daniel 7:18) taking the kingdom, and the people of the saints of the high places or heavenlies given the kingdom, and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven (v. 27). In this it is that God has His title, as may be seen in Daniel, of Most High (the second word Most High in verse 25 being different in the original from the first given above), that Most High whom Nebuchadnezzar was obliged and made willing to acknowledge. Thus the earthlies and heavenlies will, as regards government in association with God, be set in blessing under the name of the Most High.

But we have more definite statements on the subject. In the day of the full glory of the Lamb, there shall be one Lord, and His name One; the God of the whole earth shall He be called. In that day shall Jerusalem be called the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered to it. And the Son of man appearing in His glory, King of the Jews, even Jesus of Nazareth, shall be on the throne, and not on the cross; and not in Hebrew, nor in Greek and Latin only; but in every language of power which despised Him, shall men join in owning the inscription of the Lord of glory, even Jesus of Nazareth, “This is the King of the Jews,” when the earthly kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is come. This is not, indeed, the limit of His glory, though it be much to have destroyed them that destroyed the earth, and fill it with blessing, the mountain of the Lord’s house being established in the top of the mountains, with especial blessing to the seed of God, under His righteous reign. All power is given to Him in heaven; and thus we find

the blessing identified with the Person and heavenly presence of Jesus. Accordingly we find in the promise, the purpose of His will in the Ephesians, that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, “He should gather together in one all things in Christ; both which are in heaven and which are upon the earth.” Now the mystery which belongs to us is not merely that we should have the sure mercies of David by virtue of His resurrection. This will be made sure to the Jews (Acts 13:32-34), in the day when He shall see them, even the believing remnant, and He shall sit upon the throne of David His father, and reign over the house of Jacob for ever, all nations serving Him, and the nation and kingdom which will not serve Jerusalem shall perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. But Jerusalem shall be called the city of the Lord; the Zion of the Holy One of Israel shall be an eternal excellency; its sun no more go down, but the Gentiles come to the brightness of its rising. This will be the portion of the despised ones, in all whose affliction He has been afflicted, over whose apostasy and rejection of Himself He could but weep. Those tears are not shed in vain, but mark a reaping in joy, when the joy shall be as the joy in harvest and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

But we have a yet better portion, not blessings, great as they are, secured in His resurrection, but to be raised together with Him, and to sit with Him in heavenly places. “He hath blessed us in heavenly places “; and the very purpose of that epistle to the Ephesians is to shew that, made sons with Him, we are to be with Him in heavenly places, the body of Him, the Head to the Church over all things. We have not merely the fruits, but the working towards ourselves of that exceeding

great power, which was wrought in Him, when “God raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” (See Eph. 1:19; ch. 2:7.) But we look at this only in government now in connection with the throne of Melchisedec.

Thus when He gathers together in one all things in Christ, we find, under the blessing of His throne, the Jews in the earthlies the centre of blessing, and all nations blessed in them through Him (see Acts 3:25), and the saints in the heavenlies, sitting there as raised with Christ, and having overcome through grace, sitting down in His throne, as He overcame and sat down in His Father’s throne; and thus witnesses together of the universal dominion of Him, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, at once Son of God and Son of man; Lord over all, as well as God over all, blessed for evermore. But there is another character (for what of blessing does He not fill?) which we find the Lord here shewing forth. He is a Priest upon His throne (Zech. 6); and here we have the real full exercise of the Melchisedec priesthood. And now see how all the things referred to are brought together in it. We speak of Christ as Priest after the order of Melchisedec, in the day of His power on His throne. He had sat on His Father’s till His foes were made His footstool, but now—gathering all things in heaven and on earth into one—He sits on His own throne.

That dreadful evil had come in, that Satan, sitting in heavenly places, had made the poor inhabitants of earth worship demons, gods many and lords many. And earthly power was associated with false worship and apostasy, as we see typified in the great image set up by Nebuchadnezzar, in the plain of Dura, in the province of

Babylon. Hence misery, also persecution and degradation of the children of God. The corrupter and murderer being in heavenly places, corruption was the portion of his subjects, death of those who were not so exempt. Now that which was specifically opposed to this was this title of the Most High God; so Nebuchadnezzar is bound down to confess the Most High God. And this name we find in the passage we are considering: "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God." Now this remarkably concurs with what we find connected with the call of Abram: "Your fathers," says Joshua (chap. 24), "served other gods beyond the flood." The call of Abraham, therefore, was not the judgment upon unrighteousness against God alone known and owned, but the call and witness of the Most High God. When the perverseness of man made gods many, and lords many, He was then the Most High God. We have seen, further, the heavenlies and the earthlies are united in one, in Christ; whose is all power in heaven and earth; and here, accordingly, Abraham is blessed of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth; and as the title of the Most High God is given here, and witnessed in the priesthood of Melchisedec, who was priest of the Most High God, so also shall the blessing run in this full and unhindered channel, Possessor of heaven and earth. O what blessing in that day when there shall not be principalities and powers in heavenly places to taint the very source of blessing in powers above: no scene of deceived corruption below to make evil what God had made good; nor spirit of rebellion to bring the curse of opposition to God, the God of blessing, upon the wearied corrupters of their own mercy; but one whose it is, Possessor of heaven and earth, when the Lord shall hear the heavens, and the heavens shall hear the earth

standing in the priesthood, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and the corn and the oil shall hear Jezreel. O what blessing when the Most High takes (ever His in title) possession of heaven and earth, and our High Priest is His High Priest.

Thus we have total exclusion of all other gods but one, the only One; the world or heaven above knowing none but One; no creature above or on the earth taken to be a god but the Most High God, known as the Possessor of heaven and earth. What rest in that! what rest and security! while Satan has the power, while those hold the possession subject to his power, sorrow, discord, and death are the sad and unwelcome companions of man's voyage; he is seduced to every folly, he is but as the convict in the ship—its guidance and its power are in other hands. Now the Most High is Possessor, and where shall be the tempter then? Not in heaven: the Most High possesses that; not on earth: the Most High reaches in His possession to that; and the very ends of the earth shall feel the blessing of His pervading comprehensive blessedness. But this Melchisedec, though priest of the Most High God, had other characters. He was King of righteousness (comp. Isaiah 32); for where righteousness is, there is blessing. He was king of Salem, which is king of Peace; for the fruit of righteousness is peace; the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. The Melchisedec priesthood is the security of the blessings of these from the Most High God; the union of heaven and earth under Him, and the mutual blessing of both known in Him, and the common recognition of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth.

But we have also to look at the object of this blessing—Abram. Now, naturally, Abram is the father of the natural seed— “I know that ye are Abraham’s seed,” saith the Lord to the Jews. Here then he stood the father of Israel (and in them of the blessing of many nations), blessed from the fulness of the Most High God, by the King of Peace and of righteousness; the representative of the natural seed of Israel, blessed from on high, in the earthlies, with all the fulness of blessings from God Most High, possessor, etc. But Abraham stood, however, as we know, also as representative of the seed which inherit the heavenlies—Christ and ourselves. “If ye are Christ’s, ye are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”; “and they that are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” And thus (though by subsequent development, for it was hidden as yet) he stood as the representative of the heavenly seed also, and the blessing of the Most High found its actual scope, as He was possessor of the heavens, those who were in Jesus, having their place there, as well as of the earth, all being gathered together in one in Him. Thus, in the tide of God—in the priest himself—in the object of the blessing, we find the great character of universality according to the mystery of His will (His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself), “that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He should gather together in one, all things in Christ”: the Jews, being the objects and channels of earthly blessing; and we, sitting in heavenly blessings, priests with Him, ministers of all blessings, and kings withal.

In the character of the priesthood, as exercised in the passage before us, we see the plain distinction from the Aaronical priesthood. That priesthood was a priesthood

of intercession— “He ever liveth to make intercession for us,” the saints of God, in our weakness: here is the constant object of His sure and never-failing care and intercession. He has appeared in the presence of God for us; and, I will add, the people of God (I mean the Jews), though under the cloud of His rejection, still waiting till the great High Priest shall come forth, the witness of the acceptance of the blood of the atonement, carried within the veil; and remaining a people blinded indeed, but sustained outwardly as the people of God, by virtue of that service of intercession, till He shall come forth and bless them in the name of the Lord. We know that He has sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; we can see through the rent veil into the holiest of all, and see our Jesus there; and still, though longing and waiting for the time of His appearing, are content, because we know that Jesus is glorified, and His glory sure, waiting only till His enemies be made His footstool, and that the long-suffering of God is salvation, that He delays because He is yet waiting to be gracious and calling sinners, and that He will surely come—He will not tarry.

But the priestly act of Melchisedec was blessing, not intercession; blessing from the Most High God. Here, then, is the exercise of the priesthood in its Melchisedec character— the King of righteousness and peace blessing the seed of God’s acceptance, a blessed refreshing thought; evil removed, and blessing flowing out through the great High Priest, the Priest of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, unhindered. How do our hearts long for that day, the coming forth of Him our souls long for yet know, the universal blessing from the Most High God of heaven and earth. What a

word shall be pronounced in that day! how shall heaven and earth ring with the welcome witness of the blessing of the heavenly; the earthly seed be unfettered in its praise; the bondage of corruption gone from the creature, whose rejoicing, though God was ever good and shewed His goodness in it, was restrained till the heirs of the inheritance of God, joint-heirs with Jesus, were manifested to be sons of God. For, lest a cloud should rest on the brow of the heirs of God's inheritance —the church of the firstborn, the creation in bondage through them must wait for their manifestation for its happiness—must be dependent on their deliverance for its joy, as suffering through their fault. For neither is the blessing of Abraham thus widely spread, the only thing; but honour redounds and praise on high: "Blessed be the Most High God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand." This blessing is after the full destruction of the enemies of the people of God, after the victory over the gathered kings and great ones of the earth, "the hosts of the high ones also [that are] on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth"; for there is one Most High, who is possessor of both, and one King Melchisedec, King of Salem, where praise waits for the God of all the earth. Thus is the echo above and below in that centre of both—one in Him; one with the Father, the Most High God; and who Himself took on Him Abraham's seed, now come forth in His kingly glory to bless us from God Most High, and God from us—the Man of blessing, the Blessing Man, the Lord Most High. But we remark in interpretation most definitely, in connection with all we have said, that it is blessing and refreshment after, and consequent upon, the destruction of all the enemies of those who are represented by Abraham, bringing down and destroying those who

destroy the earth by the Lord's power, Himself the servant to refresh. All victory is but in some sort weariness, for victory, if a time of joy, is a time of weariness: if we had none to meet after it, it would be the sorrowful consciousness of destruction, needed, perhaps, for deliverance, but destruction still, God's strange work. But it is not so with the delivered there, nor with us, but in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps, joy of deliverance. And who shall be there to refresh? Even that One who cometh forth to bless. He brings forth bread and wine, the bread of Salem where the King dwelt, but now the servant of the victors, to give the joy of deliverance, and the refreshing of love; the wine of the kingdom drunk new, great deliverance to their parched lips, that they may open in refreshment, and praise, and speak, and think of Him, how great soever, who brought it forth, their Melchisedec making them to sit down to meat, and as he that taketh the yoke from off the neck; the servant of that blessing always, though beyond controversy the less is blessed of the greater.

Thus then we have in this little sentence the accomplished character of the Most High God, over, and as to, all things in heaven and earth, the one true God, known in blessing, universal blessing, and the unity of all things in Christ; the centre of all this blessing, the benediction priesthood of Melchisedec, the blessing by Him of the redeemed of God. This consequent upon the victory of these, over all their confederate enemies, and the deliverance of every captive; and they all made partakers of the food and wine of the kingdom, brought forth for their joy, and His own rest and delight, by the

King of Salem, of righteousness and peace, ministering blessing from the Most High to them, offering it up for them to the Most High. The victory over, the refreshment, as the joy of it from the blessed source, the blessing from His own mouth, the blessing from the Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, proved so in His redeemed, to whom He gives the joy and inheritance, the habitation of both.

May the blessing of Melchisedec, of Christ, the Lord, the King, dwell on our spirits; may we see it in spirit, and may it, in type, be our joyful portion now that He is the servant of intercession for us. He is Head, the witness, and the leader of all our praise, in the ages of the fulness of blessing (even when God shall be all in all), as now in the poor congregation of His saints. How imperfectly all the joy of this could be declared, our own enjoyment of it must most surely tell. May the Spirit of our God teach a more skilful tune to those who may take, the lesson into their hands, because the chord struck unskilfully has awakened the thoughts of praise in their hearts; and after all, our dying notes here are but poor witnesses to that new song which we shall sing in abiding notes of praise. And may the sweetness of the instrument itself strike some heart as yet untuned. To hear or know how sweet is the melody of heaven, of Jesus' praise, they and we have yet to learn, in the hope and glory of the blessing which rests not only on His head, but is in His heart toward the redeemed of God in full creation, for we are called to inherit a blessing. We have a better portion than reigning—our calling to be with Him: still His reign will be the source of sweet and rich blessings to a delivered earth; Rev. 11:15.

18 See note to Hebrews 5:6 in New Translation of New Testament.

19 The Chaldee plural of Elion.

A Letter Addressed To——, Parsonstown,

In Reply To A Tract Entitled, “Three Considerations; Proving Unscriptural The Supposition Of The Personal Reign Of Christ On Earth During The Millennium.”20 Dear Brother in the Lord,—I have received the little tract you sent me; many occupations have delayed me, but I reply to it at length.

To one well acquainted with the gathering together in one all things “both which are in heaven, and which are on earth,” in Christ, this short paper will not present any difficulty. Indeed, it proves little more than most tracts or books written by others with the same view; and that is, the unacquaintedness of the writer with the subject; but as many scriptures are referred to, it may be well, as regards those who are not so acquainted, to refer to them. As to the zeal for the offices of Christ, I have only to say, that acknowledging and blessing Him for all His offices, we simply seek to see what Scripture teaches us of the exercise of them, and we think from Scripture that our brethren have made mistakes concerning them.

The first two propositions—though the first might mislead— I should have no difficulty in admitting: so little is the writer aware of the point between us. The third is direct misstatement of the fact as to Scripture, which we shall see at once when we examine the texts.

Christ, we own, is King. We own Him as our Priest; but the place of the exercise of His priesthood is in the presence of God in heaven; so that, while the Jewish system was permitted to continue, He could not be a

priest there. “If he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law.” Did Paul deny the priesthood of Christ in saying this? He was proving it, and shewing the place and manner of its exercise. Again, Christ, the anointed Man, is King; but the world and the Jews are the kingdom given to Him. But while we admit His title from the beginning, He was born King of the Jews, and to Him were the Gentiles to come. We read, at a given time, “the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ.” Mr. Stronach surely will not say that this time is come yet. If any enquirer will turn to Daniel 7, he will see “one like the Son of man” brought before the “Ancient of days,” and a kingdom “given to him”: the Ancient of days having judged and consumed the beast. We believe, when the Son of man takes the kingdom, He will suffer no evil at all; that until He does so, He works by His Spirit in the hearts of His people, teaching and strengthening them to shew the life and patience of Christ in the midst of the evil, and forming them for a better and a happier world: as to this world, they are in the kingdom and patience, not the kingdom and power, of Jesus Christ. A time is coming when they will have to say, “We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come,” Rev. 11:17. Does any one suppose that God then first had great power? The mention of it shews the folly of such a thought; but He took it, and reigned, and wrath came. He had, for a long time, held His peace; now He arose. Christ is Lord, Head, Bridegroom of the church; but the scripture speaks of Him as King of the world (as before, and also in futurity, of the Jewish nation). As God, every real

Christian owns Him, as Jehovah, King of eternity. But the writer must know that this is not the question, but of office, of a kingdom taken as Son of man—a given kingdom, a kingdom to be delivered up.

And now as to the texts, Psalm 2:1-7, it is said, has received its accomplishment. Acts 4:25-28; ch. 13:32, 33. As to the former passage, the Psalm is quoted for nothing but the raging of the kings and rulers against Christ; as to the latter, simply that the promise made to the fathers was fulfilled in raising up Jesus,21 to which he applies the passage in the Psalm, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” The setting Him King in Zion is, in neither case, at all referred to. Does Mr. S. mean to say that the quotation of one part of a passage proves the accomplishment of the whole? If so, he must say, that the “uttermost parts of the earth “are now the possession of Christ, that He has broken them “with a rod of iron, and dashed them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” He knows that this is not the case. If he says, He has it in title and He will yet accomplish it, I answer, precisely so; and when He is King in Zion, He will then by His power take possession of all the earth, and break down, even as with a rod of iron, all the power and wickedness that is opposed to Him. This reference, therefore, proves nothing to the purpose.

The next is Acts 2:30-36. In this, again, there is not one word about Christ’s being made King; so that the writer is obliged to add to, or rather change, the passage to make it answer. The point proved is first the resurrection;22 secondly, the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God, and the house of Israel were to know that He was made Lord and Christ. The question of the kingdom, though this proved His title, was left in total

abeyance. As to Israel's being typical of the Israel of God (though I think it no type, and a very imperfect analogy, and do not believe the Israel of God to mean the church, but the believing portion among Israel in the days of the Apostle), it is sufficient to say, that there is not a word in one of the passages about the kingship of Christ over the church at all.

Matthew 28:18. The only answer is, nobody (i.e. no believer) can question it. The only question is, is He exercising it in every way? Clearly not: for example, judgment. This, we know, is reserved to an appointed day, yet it is the very witness of Christ's power; so, that though He has confessedly "all power," the manifestation of it is not yet made in every way. "The apostle Paul," we are told, "declares, that Jesus is crowned king"; where? Hebrews 2:9—not a word about it. It so happens that the words here, "glory" and "honour," are the words used in the Septuagint about the garments of priesthood; at any rate, there is nothing about being king. In Ephesians 1:20-23, nothing still about king; and further, it shews the mistake of the writer as to the position in which Christ is here shewn to stand. He is Head, the church is His body—Head thus to the church, not over it, but over all things. It describes here, not His lordship over, but His union with, the church, and over all things with it, as His body. That Christ died, and rose, and revived, that He might be the Lord of the dead and living, is quite true; but what about His being King, or how King of the dead? He will shew Himself their Lord in calling them before Him, raising them; but while the resurrection shewed Him Lord of the dead and living, it has surely nothing to do with the present character of the exercise of the power to which

He is entitled. As we have said, this will be shewn as to the dead in resurrection; but this is not shewn yet, though we know He has it, nor in the same manner His just royal power; 1 Corinthians 15:25. That Christ, as sitting upon the Father's throne, exercises all power, no one denies; but the exercise of His dominion as Son of man in given title over the world, is the very thing here proved—this must be subjected also. These are all the passages quoted.

The conclusion is in no way the scriptural mind of God. Who told the writer that there would be succeeding ages of this world's history? We have not so learned to say, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly!" "Our Lord shall exercise undisputedly." This is exactly what He does not do now in the church; for we wrestle with principalities and powers, "against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," Eph. 6:12. If the exercise be far more extensive than at present, it is clear, in some sort, there is a power which He has not taken. This is the thing we assert from Scripture: the question is, what is the manner of it? The writer, if he says anything, must say, Christ can exercise His power in no other way than He does now. We think He can, and we think the Scriptures say He will; for example, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," Psalm 2:9. We do not think that this is the gentle influence of His Spirit in the hearts of His people, by which, according to the notion of the writer, He is King in Zion. These nations are not Zion at all, and the exercise of the power is quite a different thing yet to come. When Mr. S. says, "Christ will still continue seated where He now is"—if he mean that the Man, Christ Jesus, shall never

leave His place in heaven, it is clean contrary to Scripture, and a denial of the faith; for we read, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven,” Acts 1:11. And again, “Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus… whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began,” Acts 3:19-21. When the times of refreshing come, then Jesus is sent, the heavens receiving Him till then. Not so those who deny His return, and look for the times of refreshing to come, without Jesus being sent at all. This, though the universal testimony of Scripture by all the holy prophets, the unbelieving church now rejects and denies. We believe that the heavens will receive Him till a time, which time is a time of refreshing—not the final judgment of the dead and sending them to the lake of eternal fire.

With the second head, I have only to say, I entirely agree. On the proofs of it, I remark the times of refreshing which were to come (Acts 3:21) on the repentance of the Jews, clearly are not the judgment of the dead, which yet, Mr. S. acknowledges, comes on the entire close of the dispensation, “when we all … are come.” And, further, the mediatorship of blessing does not cease when the mediatorship of intercession does. Aaron, in the holy place, is the type of one—Melchisedec, coming forth to bless Abraham, of the other.

Now, as to the quotations under the third head, that the resurrection of all the dead is invariably represented in Scripture as taking place at the same time, I have only

to say, it is an entire mis-statement; John 5:28, 29. Here I see, on the contrary, there is a resurrection to life spoken of, and a resurrection to judgment, shewing they are distinct things; if the word “hour” be spoken of, reference to verse 25 will shew that the same word can be applied to the time of Christ’s work in the flesh, and also, the time of His work when exalted, which last part has already lasted eighteen hundred years. This text proves, not that there is one resurrection, but two— a resurrection to life and a resurrection to judgment.

In Daniel 12:2, it is written, “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake.” This is a strange text to prove that all rise at once. But I do not believe that it applies to the literal resurrection of the dead at all, but to the gathering of the scattered Jews from their hiding places, some of whom will, after all, be unbelieving: at any rate, there is no word of all being raised.

Acts 24:15. That there will be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust, all admit; the question is, will they take place together? Of this the passage says nothing. John 6 and 1 Corinthians 15 speak solely of the resurrection of the righteous, and prove, of course, nothing of the simultaneous resurrection spoken of the wicked: they rather shew, that the resurrection of the godly, believers, is a distinctive privilege. If the verses (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54) be referred to, it will be plainly seen to be the believer’s privilege: how so, if it be a common resurrection of all? It is clear, however, that none but believers are spoken of, and that it is their privilege as such. If the verses of 1 Corinthians 15:51-54 be read, or indeed the whole passage, it will be plain that none but blessed saints are spoken of at all, as is distinctly expressed in verse 23, “Christ the first fruits;

afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming; then cometh the end." Surely this does not represent all rising at the same time. As to Rev. 20:11 to end, I do not see how those of whom we have previously read— "they lived and reigned" —could be called the dead, specially when it is said, "The rest of the dead lived not again until die thousand years were finished."

The passage in 1 Corinthians 15:23, 24, is very plain. There are three steps: first, Christ; then (with a lapse of, we know, at least eighteen hundred years) "they that are Christ's at his coming"; then (with—how long interval is not said more than before, from other places we read of —one thousand years and a little space more) cometh the end. So that there is Christ; and then Christ appearing, and they that are Christ's raised; then the end, and the kingdom delivered up. This is very simple and clear.

Matthew 25:31 to the end. How is this shewn to apply to resurrection at all? I do not see that it does. Where is anything spoken of resurrection in it? The chapters seem to run in this order: chapter 24 commences with the judgment on Jerusalem and the Jewish people; then at the end, the disciples or church looked at immediately, their actual calling in particular responsibility to meet the Bridegroom, and the actual gifts—a solemn truth, for which they were responsible in the use, 'occupying till he come'; then the Gentiles (all the nations) called before Him for the manner in which they had received the messengers of His mercy. This, so far from being a general judgment of the dead, takes in no Jews at all, but is contrasted with them— does not include the previous judgment of the church—does not include any dying before Christ came (for the terms of

the judgment preclude this), nor any to whom the message of truth did not come—in a word, very, very far the greatest portion of the subjects of a general judgment. It is, in a word, the judgment of all the Gentiles in that day, as He had before judged Jerusalem and the Jews. It may involve many principles, as the whole passage does, but this is its simple statement; nor is there a word about resurrection in the whole passage, but of judgment on all the Gentiles, when the Son of man sits upon the throne of His glory.

Philippians 3:20, 21. It is hard to see how a sensible person could quote this and similar passages to prove such a proposition. Are the wicked "looking for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto his glorious body"? Or, is their "conversion in heaven"? It is the contrast of this hope, as belonging only to the heavenly-minded. The whole chapter treats of a resurrection, or emphatically, "The Resurrection," as the special and blessed hope of those who, by the power of Christ, are conformed to His death. How could the wicked be said to "attain to the resurrection"? This point is distinctly proved from Luke 20:35: "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Thus there is, declaredly, a resurrection, which the children of God, as such, are alone accounted worthy to obtain, and on the obtaining of which they are equal to the angels.

Colossians 3:4. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." What this has to do with the wicked being raised, too, with the saints, is beyond me.

1 John 3:2. “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” What has this to do with any but saints like Him at His appearing? What is there of the wicked being in the resurrection with the saints? They seem to treat continually of a blessing confined to the righteous, to those who suffer with Christ. These are the only passages quoted directly.

Ezekiel 37:1-14 (which is mixed up with Rom. 11:15; Eph. 2:5, 6; and Rev. 20—all passages treating of widely different subjects), I agree, is a figurative description, fully explained in the chapter itself to mean the restoration of the two houses of Israel, long buried among the heathen, made one again under David their King—a truth, generally, as much denied by those who reject the first resurrection of the saints, as the latter revelation itself. As to Romans 11:15, I do not think it necessary to make any comment. And Ephesians 2:5,6, is the statement of the association of the church with the power of that which was wrought in Christ, and though spiritual, is not figurative. It is a sad thing to call such a testimony figurative; it is the blessed identity of the church with the power of what was wrought in Christ really.

Lastly, Revelation 20 (to disprove the application of which the other passages have been quoted). The statement is simple, and the language plain. We read of God and Christ, of the devil and Satan, the first resurrection and the second death. This is not symbolical, but plain; and (what is very important to remark) it is not a state of things described, but a reward of persons. “If we suffer, we shall also reign with

him," said the apostle; and so, in another place, "If so be we suffer with him that we may be glorified together." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." We do not (though figures may be used to express them) believe that the things here spoken of are figures; we do not believe, that, when the Lord said that people who suffered with Him should also reign with Him, He meant that the principles which they suffered for should prevail in persons who were reigned over, however happy they might therefore be. His suffering church is one with Himself, His body; and when He appears, we shall appear with Him. When He reigns, He will make us reign with Him. The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom. He must do it in the necessity of His own love; His word has declared it for the comfort of His people. We cannot let go His grace out of our hands; we shall be priests of God and of Christ, reigning a thousand years with Him, a Priest upon His throne, reigning upon, or rather over, the earth.

Isaiah 65 and Ezekiel 37, compared with Luke 20 and Revelation 20, will shew the difference of the earth blessed under the saints' reign with Christ, and their reigning with Him—the instruments of the blessing. In a word, He is to gather together in one, both things in heaven and things on earth. Luke and Revelation shew the former, being written to the church; Isaiah and Ezekiel, being written to the Jews, the heirs of the latter, shew the earthly glory and blessing which shall result from Satan being cast down (see Eph. 6:12, margin, and Rev. 12); and the Lord and His saints taking the place they held, and all blessing coming in consequence, as

described in Hosea 2:21, 22. We admit, from Isaiah, that there may be death among those on earth during the millennium (not, of course, among the risen saints); but it is only spoken of as being judicial. It does not appear, that I see, that the godly will die even on earth during the millennium: “as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” It would in fact be only a little prolongation in blessing, of that which was shewn to be originally more natural to man in sorrow even on the departure of creation from God—blessing now restored, as when his days were not as the evening shadow, till well nigh the verge of as long a day as that which yet shall be but short from its blessedness in favour under the securing reign of the Lord from heaven, the second Adam.

As to the concluding paragraph generally, I never saw more terrible confusion and error resulting from confounding the kingdom taken as Son of man, and the divine majesty, which can never pass away. The kingdom spoken of in 1 Corinthians 15 is a kingdom “given up,” a kingdom exercised during, as well as till, the last day, but at the end given up. Therefore, says the writer, we conclude, “that the King, the Lord of Hosts, shall fill His throne in the highest heavens till the last day.” He will, surely, for ever and ever. “Till the solemn hour.” Does the writer believe that the King, the Lord of Hosts, will ever give up His kingdom? This is a strange way of securing the Saviour’s Person, and offices. It just shews the awful error persons are brought into, when they resist the plain testimony of Scripture—an error which, in his thoughts concerning our blessed Master, I gladly own, I believe, the writer to be quite free from, but which his denial of the given, and afterwards

surrendered kingdom, taken by the Son, and confounding it with the divine and unchangeable royalty of His Person (a conclusion also made by C.G.T., in referring to 1 Timothy 6:13), completely involves them both in; for this connection of 1 Corinthians 15:25, etc., with His glory as the King, the Lord of Hosts, is a direct statement that He gives the latter up, holds it only till a given time; which I believe and am sure both the writers would hold to be a blasphemy against the divine glory of the Lord Jesus, Jehovah, "God over all, blessed for evermore." If the kingly power of the Lord Jesus is simply as the King, the Lord of Hosts, and, using 1 Corinthians 15 for this, "we conclude" that He "so" fills His throne till the last day; then is it most certain that this He gives up to God, even the Father; and I trust that such a statement will awaken the writer's eyes to the truth, that there is a time when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His glory, when He distinctly, and before the world, shall be upon His throne, as now the church knows Him to be set down on His Father's, in the rightful and glorious title of Son of God, a place where He, one with the Father, alone of all that ever were in the form of man, can, or has title to, sit in the glory which He had with Him before the world was. But there is a throne, His throne, on which, in the blessed love of His grace, they that overcome shall sit with Him according to the truth of His word. If he examine the passage in 1 Corinthians 15 a little closer, he will see that it refers to the subjecting of all things to man in resurrection (not the King, the Lord of Hosts, in title unvarying, in glory never changing—the same, yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, who was and is to come, the Almighty, Jesus, our Lord).

There is only one other passage I need refer to—John 18:36, “My kingdom is not of this world.” Does C.G.T. mean to say, that this world will not be made the kingdom of Christ? He knows this would be entirely contrary to Christian hope and faith. Then the question is its character, the source of its power. “It is not from hence “: that I indeed believe. Would that other Christians would own the truth! As to how it is to be brought under His power, we must refer to other scriptures where this power, and in what way used, is sufficiently spoken of. I use, as an example, C.G.T.’s reference, Psalm 2:6-12.

There is one subject more remains to be noticed—the rejection of Christian ministry—to which the short reply is, that we reject nothing but un-Christian ministry. I do not believe that persons appointed by the king or chosen by the people, are therefore ministers. This is the point in question. I disclaim the title of either to choose or appoint them, or of any but God. But I believe Christian ministry to be as essential to this dispensation, as the fact of Christ’s coming. So far am I from setting it aside, I believe it to be essentially from God, and object to the perversion of it, or the mere will of king or people—though both are to be respected in their place—interfering with so holy a thing. I read that when Christ ascended up on high, “He gave some apostles, and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” This is the only source of ministry, not the appointment of a king, nor the choice of a people. I see it, on the one side asserted, that authorities have a right to appoint, and, on the other, that the people have a right to choose: I do not believe either. Christ gives when and how He pleases—woe be to them who do not

own it! In a little tract called “The Protestant Dissenter’s Manual,” it is stated, that a man has as much right to choose his own minister as his own lawyer, or physician. This seems to shut out God altogether, just as much as what is objected to. If Christ has given a gift, the saint is bound to own its use, and Christ’s word by it. Where is the proof of an evangelist’s gift? In the converted souls which bless God through his means. The church may own and recognise them in it, but they must do so if they are spiritual, if the gift and therefore appointment, of God be there: they sin against Christ who has sent him, if they do not. The consequence of these human appointments, or choosings, has been the fixing a person who pleased the people, fit, or unfit, as the one only person in whom every gift must be concentrated, or the Church lose part of its inheritance and portion: and the whole service has been turned habitually into a preacher.

We do not object to ministry, but to the assumption of the whole of it by one individual, who may or may not be sent, and, if sent, may have one qualification, and not all. A man may be eminently qualified for an evangelist, and he is made a pastor, for which he is in no way fitted; he is qualified to teach, perhaps, but not to rule, and he is put to guide the flock. It is the substitution of a minister, good or bad, for the whole work of the ministry, of which we complain, and the dislocation of the frame of Christ’s body, which is the consequence. What is the Home Mission, and the Presbyterian mission, and the like, but the effort to correct this plainly seen nuisance in the frame-work of these bodies which call themselves churches? The reason I say that ministry is essential to this dispensation, is the declaration in 2 Corinthians 5.

“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation”; more correctly, “and committing unto us.” That is, God in Christ was doing these three things: reconciling the world, not imputing trespasses, and committing ministry. This was essentially part of the work of God manifest in the flesh, the manner in which He was revealed. Amongst the Jews it was not so. They were a people formed by birth, and a certain code of laws was prescribed to them as such. But when God was in Christ, being a reconciling God, a ministry was necessarily the way of fulfilling this very purpose; it was the distinctive character of the dispensation, essentially characteristic of it. The grace of this may be amazingly concentrated, as it was in the apostle: it is habitually distributed in various competencies of service. These are for use, and the church is bound to own them, or it denies Christ’s title in committing them, which is as real and essential to Him as the power in which He was reconciling,23 and could forgive, and not impute trespasses: any one who is reconciled is competent to state, and bound, as far as able, to state Christ’s glory as the Reconciler to them who are ignorant. There are those who may have the special gift of evangelising; the church, of course, is not the place for this, ordinarily speaking, for they are the church, because they have received it; no one has the smallest right to speak in the church to whom God has not given a competency to edify it; nature has no right there; we, as to it, are dead in Christ—out of Him, dead in trespasses and sins—our right in flesh is only everlasting destruction. I know no right that a rebellious sinner has but to go there; a saint has none—he is bought with a price—Christ has all, and power too;

neither has grace any right to speak, unless for the edification of the brethren. If they are edified they will soon find it out; if not, it proves the incompetency of the speaker, let him be as wise as the Prince of Tyre: for the Spirit always speaks to profit to them to whom He speaks.

It is true there may be so evil a state, as that men will not endure sound doctrine; but for this there is no remedy but the direct intervention of prerogative mercy, in sending some one able to bring them back. The church, then, has a right to the profit of all the ministry, with which God has endowed any of the brethren, for its edification; those who cannot do so, must, of course, be silent, for it is God who alone can provide, and He will shew His prerogative by giving it by whom He pleases. If any one be exceedingly gifted of the Lord in knowledge and wisdom—in that affectionate and watchful discernment of the state of souls, and ability to minister the right remedy in Christ—to control the unruly in the manifested power and energy of the Spirit of God—to detect the devices of Satan—his value in feeding the flock of God will soon be felt; the godly part of the church would soon be apt to cling too much, rather than too little, to such an one for guidance, comfort, and support; and he is bound to exercise his ministry according to the measure given to him, whether locally or more extendedly. If any one be able, with much gift from God, rightly to divide the word of truth, though he may not have such qualifications as previously spoken of, he may teach with as much, or more even, of profit than the other, yet not hold the same place of service among the brethren; he may have a word of wisdom, though not of knowledge, or the converse; the church is

entitled to all. Whatever He gave, He gave to the church to profit withal; how shall we get it, if it be not exercised? That Christ will demand the account of the talent is certain; but there is much more gained than merely the exercise of whatever gifts God may give: for, the Spirit of God being owned, the power of communion is there, and, the Spirit of God being honoured, blessing accompanies all in the power of grace and communion otherwise unknown. We quite acknowledge, then, Christian ministry, but not to be altogether in the hands of those who would thus confine it to a single individual, whatever his extent of qualification. There may be persons who have a constant gift of a given character, and it is their duty to exercise it; a word of profit might be given to any at any time. If there are those who are experienced, through divine grace, in the guidance and governance of the church, the saints will, guided of God's Spirit, be in subjection for their own profit; yea, all will be subject one to another. Where the Spirit of grace and love is, all will be well; where not, it will be surely ill, unless the Lord in mercy interfere, by sending someone able to control the unruly, and convince the gainsayers. The Lord will surely afford for His church all that is needful for its good, though He may, for our profit, keep us waiting very closely upon Him for them, and thus teach us dependence upon Him. If He were more looked to, we should have fewer difficulties, for He would act more— perhaps I should say, more manifestly to us. Further, I add, that while every office or gift is a blessing to the church, and to be fully recognised, it is the clear privilege of any two or three Christians, where not done in the spirit of schism, to meet and break bread together, should they not have any ministry at all, nor any office whatever. It is their privilege as Christians—

the rest is their profit, of course, as saints, and to be gladly welcomed and ministering to the other, but, indeed, no way to be compared with their actual abiding privilege of communion together, their privilege and duty and substantially the everlasting part of the whole matter. The necessity of a priest for this, for such it in fact comes to, is a mere remnant of the principle of apostasy in the church, though where there are many, whoever may preside, one who is an elder would be the natural person to fulfil such an office, as someone manifestly must;24 public sanction before, and by the world, is not at all necessary for any office. This is what is called being a clergyman, and is one of the seals and marks of apostasy; the union of the world and the church, whether in the Establishment or Dissent. If this is what is meant by being a minister, I would utterly disdain and abhor it in such a sense: nature, I am sure, likes it: the authority to minister comes from the competency given of Christ; its recognition by the church is therefore a responsibility which solemnly rests on them; if the Spirit of the Lord be amongst them, He has ever, and will ever, order all things needful for this and for the expulsion of error. When I speak of authority to minister, it is, indeed, a deep responsibility, to be exercised according to the word, of which Christ will take sure account, and judge our neglect. Any recognition by the church may be all well for itself as to order; it is not what confers competency to minister—woe be to the church, if it owns not what Christ has given—separation to any special service the Lord may make, if He pleases; if He does, He will provide the way for Himself, in His wisdom, and it will be proved and made good, and, I will add, justified of wisdom’s children. It is not necessary for the church’s continuous

blessing, as is manifest from the history of the church of Antioch; God works, I trust, though we are feeble and foolish—is working much more deeply and powerfully than the devised order of human arrangements may be able, perhaps, to see. May He give us to wait on His time and way for every gift and guidance of His Holy Spirit; His Spirit is sovereign, and will prove Himself so, however men may carve channels to carry its waters safe. Perhaps when it may seem to overflow and break their banks, it is rich nourishment and unction that it may leave behind and deposit—while the channel they are so curious about may be found to have but sand and stones at bottom, making its course troubled—its profit and value only when it breaks through the dikes human wisdom has raised. The Lord, I am persuaded, will order much more blessing than we have yet seen, if we are patient and devoted. With the fullest liberty, then, to those whom the Lord has enabled to profit the church, exercised, as in Spirit it alone can be, subject to the authority of God in the church, “decently and in order”—we do recognise, in the fullest sense, a ministry in the use of, and waiting upon, every gift in the service of God, which He has given for the profit arid edification of His church. When God calls any individual, and appropriates any gift to him, as such, of course, he will be a minister, and is bound to wait upon it. We do not count ourselves perfect in wisdom, but these things we see in Scripture, and believe God is honoured most in His own way.

Another book has been put into my hands, containing remarks on a letter by Mr. Newton, by a clergyman. I have read it through, but I cannot think that in point of argument, scholarship, or good manners, whatever its

pretensions, it claims any answer. If those amongst whom it is circulated feel any difficulties from its contents, there will not be much difficulty in replying to it separately.

20 Dublin, 1835.

21 Raising up, however, does not apply to the resurrection, but to raising Him up as a deliverer. What follows in the passage goes on to speak of the resurrection.

22 See preceding note.

23 The difference of Christ as on earth, and a ministry founded on His death and resurrection, is not entered on here, but it does not affect the argument, so I leave it as it is. 2 Corinthians 5 does enter on it.

24 That is, in the act of giving thanks and breaking bread.

Evidence From Scripture Of The Passing Away Of The Present Dispensation

The testimony of Scripture is the only secure resting-place for man amid the darkness of this world. This, through the teaching of the Spirit, is the believer's light and security; from this his judgment flows; and, consequently, from this the rule and foundation of his conduct springs. Wrong thoughts as to God's dealings, and our own place before Him, must lead to wrong judgment as to the conduct claimed from us; and thus all our service will be folly, and, perhaps, our hopes presumption; our light will be darkness, and then what will become of those "who are led"?

Immediately connected with this inquiry (and thus involving the most practical results) is the question as to the dispensation in which we stand, and what are to be our hopes in it? Many most interesting inquiries are connected with this subject, as to the development of the purposes of God; but it is not my present purpose to enter into them. I intend to confine myself to the scriptural evidence on the two following most important questions, which, in the highest degree, affect the present interests and operations of the church of Christ.

1. Is this dispensation the last, or not?

2. What are the circumstances by which any other is to be introduced?

The answer to these questions appears to me to involve the whole ground of the judgment of a believer's mind,

as to his present position in the world; and, consequently, as to his duty and his hopes. Without examining the detail of circumstances, I shall endeavour to seize on some of the broad facts and principles.

1. Is this dispensation the last, or is it not?

First—Let us consider the evidence of Scripture as to the Christian body.

The 9th verse of the 1st of Ephesians affords a leading declaration of Scripture on this subject: “Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might 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” (v. 10). Now this is in no way applicable to the present dispensation. He is to gather together in one all things which are in heaven, and which are on earth. This the present dispensation does not assume to do: it is a dispensation in which Satan is the prince and god of this world—in which he sows tares among the wheat, and is in high places. In this, God visits the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. This is indeed a dispensation of another gathering (as we shall see presently), in which angels minister and devils oppose—anything but a gathering into one things in heaven and things on earth; for we must be absent from the body to be present with the Lord, and absent from the Lord to be at home in the body; and we “groan” waiting. Indeed, there is ample demonstration in the above passage, that the present dispensation does not and was not meant to do this. The passage declares that God has made known

this to us, as that which should happen in the fulness of times, of which we have the earnest under the present dispensation until the redemption. This is not merely “going to heaven,” because, as we see in the passage itself, God is to gather together in one all things in heaven and on earth in Christ. That which we have under the present dispensation is an earnest merely of that which we are to have; which is not a going to heaven, but a dispensation in which all things are gathered together in heaven and on earth. In a word, the passage declares a gathering, which cannot mean the church in the present dispensation, or in any dispensation; for the church, as applied to believers, in no dispensation comprehends all things in heaven and on earth; and that which comprehends and gathers all into one (all things in heaven and on earth) is manifestly not the church; for the church, even here, is gathered out of the earth, and does not gather all things on the earth into itself, and as a dispensation of the assembled saints in heaven, it has none of the things of the earth in it at all. Indeed, except from the force of habitual prejudice, it is just as fairly inferred from this passage that all the things in heaven will be gathered in the earth, as that all on the earth will be gathered in heaven. If we do not acknowledge a common gathering of all things both in heaven and on earth under the authority of Christ (as is also written elsewhere), it is manifest we must force this passage into some previously assumed sense, and then it may mean anything we like. Chapter 3 of John’s gospel might throw light on this, if the reader is disposed to enquire. But as it is manifest that the church is no such gathering actually, so it is equally manifest that to say that the assembly of the saints in heaven is a gathering of all

things in heaven and on earth into one, is a plain perversion to suit previous ideas; for the saints are not all things, if the position taken were otherwise tenable: and it is thinking that they are so (in self-complacency) which is one grand source of error, for thus His glory is marred and shortened, by whom and for whom all things are created. I affirm (though it be the manifestation of God's wisdom) that the church of God's saints is only a part—a small part—of the glory and purposes of God, as fulfilled: a part worthy, indeed, of all admiration, as it is; but one which, if we take the comeliness that God has put upon us, and make our boast as if it were all God's glory, He will shew us it is as nothing in His sight—calling the things that are not as though they were.

Again (1 Peter 1:9-13), "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

Here we have three things: the prophets prophesying of a grace to be brought to us, the Holy Ghost reporting these same things, and, therefore, the Christian church

waiting to the end for the things which are to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That is to say, that which the prophets prophesied should be brought to us, the Holy Ghost, in the present dispensation, reports in the word, and believers, therefore, wait for as about to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ. But it was not heaven the prophets prophesied of, but the dealings and dispensations of God; therefore there is yet a dispensation to come, in which the things prophesied of by the prophets will come, and for which those who have received the truth wait; and this dispensation is not it.

Further, there is another important fact we would advert to:

There is no promise of universality annexed to the present dispensation, but the contrary. “Go ye,” is its leading instruction, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.” But there is a dispensation, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. This is therefore not the last, for the effects stated of that are not contemplated in the instructions of this. This is a dispensation of testimony and of instruction; that, of universal knowledge, and therefore essentially different, for men shall no more say, “Know the Lord.”

Again, as to the Jews, there shall be a state of things in which all Israel shall be saved, i.e. as a body. But now, “Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah”: and again, “Even so,

then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace." The dispensations, therefore, are essentially different in their character; the one the rescuing of the remnant, the other, the saving of the body. So, of the Gentiles, "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." It has not, therefore, the intention of universality manifested in it.

So John 11:52: "And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." Here we have a gathering which characterises this dispensation, but essentially distinct from that noticed by Paul in the Ephesians.

Again, in connection with this, the character and position annexed to His people equally contravene the idea of the universality of the dispensation. "Who gave himself for us," we read, "that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works": all this is essentially distinctive, therefore not universal.

So Peter: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

So Philippians 2:15: "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world."

So John, in the conclusion of his first epistle, and many like passages, and others withal, which prove suffering to be their portion.

And connected with this, is the direct warning of the excision of the church25 on its failure of maintaining effectually this position. See the whole of Romans 11. The conclusion is summed up in verse 22: “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” But is not the confidence of the necessary continuance of the present dispensation very like that high-minded conceit which ruined the Jews, though they had perhaps better ground for it; and against which, expressly, the apostles warned these Gentiles? Is it not what the apostle warned of as the very way of being cut off? The ruin of the Jews was, boasting of the comeliness which God had put upon them. But to proceed (nevertheless, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear), the position in which they are thus put, with such purpose and responsibility, under pain of excision, is thus expressed (Matt. 5:13): “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is henceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”

The consequences are fully stated by the Lord: “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” “Whoso taketh not up his cross, and followeth not after me, cannot be my disciple.” “He that saveth his life shall lose it… he that serveth me, let him follow me”: and many other like passages, familiar to the Christian. They were to be called Beelzebub, and he that killed them would think that he did God service—they were to be hated of all men, etc.—nor, may we add, was the church at any other time pure.

So the apostles, or rather the Spirit in them: “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.” “Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”: and yet more, for “yourselves know that also we are appointed thereunto.”

Again, the results of the testimony of Christ by the Spirit, and the ultimate results of His incarnation, are contrasted: “Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth,” is the title of the latter; “Suppose ye that I am come to send peace on the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division,” is the result of the former.

Again, the full continuance of evil, until some change by power be wrought, is fully declared: “As it was in the days of Noe,” and “as it was in the days of Lot,” we are told, “shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed.”

Further, this could not be a day of universal blessing simply, or it w.ould be idle to talk of it as coming “unawares,” “as a thief in the night”; and that there would be some whom it did not take unawares. Judgment may overtake those unsuited for it; but spiritual light and blessing are blessings because they do so. Yet Peter declares this is the day of grace to the church, which was prophesied by the prophets of old, even the glory of Christ that was to follow; 1 Peter 1:10-12.

But more, evil shall get worse:

“Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse,” says Paul to Timothy, “deceiving and being deceived.” This does not look like the knowledge of the glory of the Lord covering the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

In the next place, we are assured that the man of sin, the apostasy of professing Christianity, will be destroyed by the brightness (lit. appearing) of Christ's coming; 2 Thess. 2:8. What that is I think may be fairly learned from Titus 2:13; but I do not here press it thus far. I merely use it as evidence that this is not the last dispensation. It is, however, not different in degree, but contrasted in character from "the grace… which hath appeared"26 in verse 11, just before; the one leads to wait for the other. But the passage in Thessalonians proves this: that the apostasy continues up to a time when a wholly different power has intervened, and a new state of things ensued; for, not to hang it on the thread of sense which connects 2 Thessalonians (which some would cut boldly through), its association with chapter 1 of this epistle is evident. In chapter 1 the instrument which cuts off the apostasy is represented as giving rest from the existing dispensation, and introducing another, when the wicked should cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest. That is, chapter 1 declares (in the terms used by the Lord in Luke, and the apostle Peter in his epistle) His revelation; that He will then and so clear His kingdom from them that trouble the church. Thus it is an entirely new dispensation which we are to look for—the wicked continuing and growing worse to the end of this.

This may suffice for direct testimony; more will appear when we consider the manner of the introduction of the next dispensation, every evidence of which is evidence also, of course, of its existence. I shall only mention one thing more here, before I turn to evidence of another character. The parable of the tares of the field is a testimony from the Lord, stating directly that the

church27 would become corrupt: i.e., that the field (the world in which the Son of man had sown good seed) would be overrun with tares, and that it would be rectified by a dispensation of judgment—a harvest, not a re-sowing of the field. It is not said that the tares would be turned into wheat, but be gathered in bundles to be burned, and the wheat itself made to shine in some other system. What that is, is another question. But the place where the change was to occur, where the exercise of the judgment was to be, the kingdom spoken of as the Son's, was the place where the seed was sown, the field of the world, out of which all things that offended were to be gathered.

Let us now pursue, as other evidence, the uniform method of God's dealings. It has been surely this: some strong manifestation of divine glory, followed by a declension from the practical faith of that glory, and then judgments, preceded, however, by testimony, that they which have ears to hear may escape the judgment.

Thus, in the patriarchal dispensation, the original association of paradise, the judgment and the promise (not without intervening testimony), formed the basis of patriarchal faith: from this, even as Adam from his innocency, men declined, losing the power of testimony in lust. The very sons of God became defiled, till the earth was corrupt before God, and filled with violence; and He said, I will destroy man whom I have made, from off the face of the earth. Then came the testimony —the deluge coming, and the ark of escape, and then the judgment testified of. Again, upon the introduction of idolatry, Abraham was called out to be, in his seed after the flesh, the source of another dispensation, as he was the father of the faithful, circumcised as well as not. And

in due time the Jews were drawn out into fresh national relationship with God, with signs and wonders, and an outstretched arm—mercies and securities of peace—and their God nigh to them in glory and power as none other nation had; but they were stiff-necked and rebellious. The Lord, indeed, sent deliverances while it was sin, and not infidelity; and then prophets, rising up early and sending them, till there was no remedy; when after their restoration from Babylon, a yet last hope was afforded by Him who had yet one Son, and spent Him, as it were, upon them. Upon their filling up the measure of their fathers, the abundant testimony of the apostolic spirit went forth, before a destruction not leaving one stone upon another which was not thrown down, came upon a disobedient and gainsaying people, despising thus their own mercy. The remnant of believers in this very testimony alone escaped the judgments. And (if God spared not the natural branches, the people, in all whose affliction He was afflicted, the angel of His presence succouring them) shall the Gentile church, fallen into yet greater evil, after yet greater blessings, go unpunished? It shall not go unpunished: “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

Is popery, infidelity, worldliness, the minding earthly things, which they who do are enemies of the cross of Christ, the continuing in God’s goodness? If not, is there not ample evidence, that if there be not some new dispensation, God’s glory is defeated and destroyed in the world, and that instead of the Lord destroying the works of the devil, the devil, as far as this world goes,

the only place he could, has destroyed the work of the Lord? But it will be said, the Lord is showing His arm, and the gospel is preached, in a way it never was before. Doubtless it is, and here is one of the strongest evidences—not that there will be no change of dispensation, but that the change is near. In the first place, there is no instance of the renewal of a dispensation which had declined away and departed from its God, but a full and extraordinary testimony before the judgment came, in order to the gathering out the remnant before the judgments. Such there is now we admit, and rejoice in the mercy of it: this also we do say, that every one that listeneth to the testimony will escape. Would that all had ears to hear! for if they would turn and repent, God would surely turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him; yet we know that if they will not, they shall receive the reward of their unbelief; they that do, shall receive yet greater blessings and glory in the Lord's righteousness.

Having thus seen that the uniform analogy of God's dealings (by all parts of it, save judgment itself), and also the direct warnings of Scripture, lead us thus to judge of the nature and object of the testimony referred to, let us now turn to the light afforded by the passage usually quoted in connection herewith: that it is thus justly quoted I am willing to admit,28 because I believe it does point out what is going on now in the testimony which some think will convert the world. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people"; but what is the message?— "Saying, with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of

his judgment is come." We have, then, the uniform analogy of God's moral dealings (herein His ways are evidenced to be equal)—the solemn warning—and the actual testimony (on which those who think otherwise rely), all tending to this point, that this dispensation inherits judgment, not the world; is itself to be cut off, not to be the system of the world's blessing. I expressly avoid argument upon the subject here, because it supposes either space for very great length, or the reception of first principles, and, though profitable, is less direct than testimony; to which, therefore, I confine myself. But this I say, that either the church must shew that it has continued in God's goodness, or else it must admit the conclusion, it shall be cut off, save repentance avert it. Testimony, however, in self-satisfaction, is not repentance: "I shall see no sorrow," is the language of Babylon as fit for cutting off. There is, indeed, a most important principle and truth at the bottom of, and revealed in, all this; namely, the constant failure (under the power of Satan) of the creature, as the first—and then, indeed, every dispensation externally—has failed and will fail, unsustained by the direct power of God: and where evil is, the creature must fail, though God may uphold him, as He has and ever will His own people through all the dispensations, till they be brought where there is no evil. And here we may learn the special character of the millennium (purposely confining myself to the point in hand, I mention this only as a fact throwing light upon the failure of this dispensation), kept by power till Satan be let loose again, though finally, in its external form, the elect be gathered as out of all other dispensations: for, as we know that Satan's prevailing in one dispensation has, in its destruction, only given occasion to a better, so will it be then—even

to the final destruction of his power—when all the elect of God shall be perfected in everlasting habitations, all evil removed, and God be all in all.

(2) Let us now consider what are the circumstances by which that dispensation is to be introduced.

First, then, judgment is the portion of this, and the introduction of that, and nothing else, whatever may accompany it for other, in themselves perhaps more important, objects.

And, secondly, it is connected with the dealings of God with the Jews as a people, setting up a dispensation among them. It will be impossible to state all the evidence of these separately, because the accomplishment of both being in one act, of course they are testified of together. There is, however, distinctness, as in New Testament statements, where often, as relating only to the church, the Gentile judgment solely is alluded to. Nevertheless, having stated them as objects of reference, it will be easy, under God's grace, to see them each to be definitely revealed by the Spirit, even when both are found together. I shall therefore (and the rather that they may prove themselves, and not be made to speak by any forced juxtaposition of mine) quote them with scarcely any order but that in which they present themselves; and, if the word is to be trusted (for that is the question), the truth I here, I sorrow to say, have to prove, rests on the fullest testimony of the word, as demonstrated to the mind of the believer. But let me here remark an enormous fallacy in the minds of those who reason on these subjects, and do not take the testimony.

It is admitted upon all hands that there is a time, or dispensation, in which the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. This is a great object held out in prophecy. The question between us is, How is this to be brought about? They say, By our preaching, or the preaching of the gospel. (I take the best ground for them.) How do they know that? How do they conclude that? Did the gospel ever do it before? Was it ever promised that it should do it? That man is responsible for its not doing so, I freely admit, but that is not the question. And that he is guilty, too, I admit. I conceive, indeed, that therefore the Gentile church will be cut off, because it has not done so; and therefore, we may say, as a church it is damnably guilty, because it has not done so. But as to actual result, those I speak of pass by the present sin of the church, and then prophesy (i.e., assert as to the future), that of which they can have no experience as to the past, that their exertions will do it. They charge us with looking into prophecy: undoubtedly we do, and use it as God intended it, as a charge and warning against our present sin and state; while they prophesy for themselves that which is credit for themselves—though never has the professing church at large been so far from godliness as now; if not, why all this labour, effort, formation of societies for home or continental purposes? This is the simple difference: we acknowledge it as a result of God's power; they say, without God's word (and we must add, against it), 'It will be done by our instrumentality.' Believers say, with God's word, It will not be done thus. We quarrel not with their efforts, but join in them according to our ability of God, as far as our poor hearts permit us; but we do quarrel with their assumption as to the coming result of their own labours,

as if they were prophets, of that of which God has prophesied otherwise. They prophesy; we consult the word, and apply it to judge ourselves, and find the church guilty. Our assertion, accordingly, is this:

Firstly, that there is no prophecy in Scripture, or promise (which as to means, observe, of future accomplishment, is prophecy) that the gradual diffusion of the gospel shall convert the world. If there be, let them produce it: if not, I affirm that they are assuming something future, without any warrant for it but their own thoughts.

Secondly, that the prophecies always connect the filling of the world with the knowledge of the glory—with judgments.

Thirdly, we add, to those who are labouring without reference to this glory, yet are looking to the gathering of God's elect— faithfully perhaps—that there is a vast purpose of God, and one which is the result of all God's purposes, not embraced in their views, and that, as teachers of God's mind and will, their system must be wholly and utterly defective; for the earth is to be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. They recognise, and justly, that that cannot be, as it has never been, and, as we have seen, that it was not intended to be, by the gospel. There must, therefore, if they admit the truth of God's word, be some great plan and act of God's power, on which His mind is especially set (for His glory on the earth, as in heaven, must be His end as well as our desire, because we are His saints, and have the mind of Christ), of which they embrace nothing, teach nothing.

As to our assertion just made, of these three points, the second point, viz., 'that the prophecies always connect the filling of the world with the knowledge of the glory—with judgments,' is that which we would now prove. The first, 'That there is no prophecy in scripture that the gradual diffusion of the gospel shall convert the world,' would be proved by the second, were it complete; but, as a negative assertion, it rests only on reference to Scripture—and must be disproved by them—a single text is sufficient for the purpose, and to disprove the whole view, so that their task is a very easy one, if I am wrong. The third, as argumentative, is not a subject for proof here.

Let us now turn to the second: and may God in mercy and grace guide us herein to the right and full use of His word, receiving it with simplicity of faith and obedience in our consciences!

Let us turn to Zephaniah 3:8, 9: "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." The explicitness of this needs no comment; it is an express and unequivocal assertion, that it is upon all the earth's being devoured with the fire of God's jealousy, after assembling the kingdoms to this end, that the Lord will turn to the people a pure language, to serve Him with one consent. I will only observe that people, in the original, is plural, Ammim not Goyim, Gentiles, and is the word, I think, in the original, for all

nations not contemplated as excluded from the covenant (see page 106).

Let us turn to Isaiah 65:13 to the end: “Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit. And ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen: for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name: that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth: because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes. 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 labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, 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 the Lord."

Here we have both points, namely, the introduction of the blessing by judgment, and its connection with the Jewish people. If any one will say this means the gospel, let him tell me what is the meaning, after saying the unbelieving Jews shall be left for a curse to His chosen, of the former troubles being forgotten, and how the rest of the passage applies to the church; for the former troubles of the Jews were only then beginning, or, at the least, accomplishing; so much so, that wrath was "come upon them to the uttermost." To the Gentiles it could have no application; for there was nothing of "former" to them; indeed, the whole passage has so plainly another and a fuller aim, that more argument seems needless.

Zechariah 12:9, 10: "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."

Here we have the destruction (God's seeking to destroy all nations that come against Jerusalem) given as the occasion of the conversion of the Jews to the recognition of Him whom they had pierced: in a word, the cutting off

of the nations (the general results of which we saw in Zephaniah) stated in the special circumstances resulting to the Jews. If Jerusalem be the church, still destruction is poured, not conversion, upon the nations; and if Jerusalem, as it must be in that case, be the true church, what is all this mourning as a new fruit of the destruction of their enemies? or how comes this to be the spirit now first called forth, and what is its suitableness?

Let us now turn to Zechariah 14:1-9: “Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living

waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one."

Our notice of this need be but short, because the first three verses can hardly be gainsaid in their force. The gospel cannot be made out of them, for Jerusalem is to be taken; but the Lord, as we have seen in other cases, is to go forth and fight against those nations, and then the Lord is to be King over all the earth; and in that day there shall be one Lord and His name one—that is, the blessing of the universal acknowledgment of the Lord covering the earth, is, by some extraordinary dispensations, in which the nations are gathered against Jerusalem, and the Lord seeks, as we have seen above, to destroy them there; and then His name is known in all the earth.

Let us compare Isaiah 66:6, 13-16, 18, 19, indeed to the end of the chapter, noticing verses 22 and 23: "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompense to his enemies… 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 the Lord shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies. For, behold, the Lord 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 the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many… For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that

I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."

We have here the simplest demonstration that judgment is the portion of the Gentile world, and that by it the glory of the Lord is known. Now the Lord never pleaded by fire and sword with all flesh at a time when His gospel, or glory by it, was made known to them; still less did He then bless and restore the Jews; but more of this hereafter.

To the same purpose we may quote Ezekiel, without quoting the whole passage, which may be easily referred to by those interested in it. It may be sufficient to refer

to two verses, viz., the 6th and 7th of chapter 39: “And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel.” We have here the same fact, so distinctly stated as to need no observation: if any doubt its application, they may easily satisfy themselves that it is not the gospel, by reading the verses following: if so, then it is by judgment that the heathen are to know that Jehovah is the Lord, and that in Israel.

And this is the day of which the Lord hath spoken, as Gog and Magog were the party of whom the Lord hath spoken. Here, too, I may quote the solemn announcement of Joel 3:9-18: “Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near: let them come up: beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the vats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter His voice from

Jerusalem, and the heavens, and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim" —describing thus, as we have seen in too many places not to determine its character, some solemn and determinate, act, closing up the intentions of God: an act of judgment at once upon the heathen, and by which, yet, the heathen, with Israel, are to know that God is the Lord in Israel, and when God shall thereupon turn to the people a pure language.

But from Deuteronomy 32:34, 35, we shall see that this was the original intention and plan of God.

After describing the sale of the children of Israel into the hands of their enemies, He says, "Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures? To me belongeth vengeance and recompence; their foot shall slide in due time." Who have been the instruments of judgment and oppression upon the Jews? whose feet, therefore, shall slide in due time? Then the order of this is seen (v. 36, 40-43): "For the Lord shall judge his people and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left… For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. I will make

my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives from the beginning of the revenges upon the enemy. Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people; for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people."

Let us now trace some of the passages of Isaiah where this subject is developed in one of its branches at length. Thus (Isaiah 63:1-7), "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? that this is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come. And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me. And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth. I will mention the lovingkindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses." We may make the same remark here as in Zephaniah, as to the term

people; it is ‘ammitn.’ But generally it is the exercise of the judgment of the Lord, treading down the people in His fury, breaking out into the testimony of the lovingkindness of the Lord towards Israel (see page 101).

Again, in Isaiah 61:2, to the end of the chapter, “To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. And they shall build up the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations. And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord: men shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves. For your shame ye shall have double, and for confusion they shall rejoice in their portion: therefore in their land they shall possess the double; everlasting joy shall be unto them. For I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offering: and I will direct their work in truth, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people; all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed. I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with

the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, so the Lord will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." With the testimony of the full blessing then to flow from what is described, we have this remarkable circumstance, that that portion of the prophecy, as the Lord's people have often observed, which applied to the manifestation of Christ in grace, was quoted by the Lord, but the latter part not; so that we have here demonstrative evidence of the application of the latter part to some ulterior visitation. I would remark that this is always the case in prophecies embracing the first and second advents of our Lord, and their circumstances: they are quoted so far even when most apparently mixed, as they are applicable to the existing circumstances, and there they stop. The application of the latter part to Zion is 'too manifest to need proof; indeed, all that is personal to our Lord in the flesh belongs exclusively to their dispensation, but this, of course, we cannot pursue here. But, on the whole, the day of vengeance is the day of Zion's joy, relief, blessing, and inheriting the Gentiles, and rebuilding the former desolations.

Again, in Isaiah 52:7-10, the same truths are brought before us, with (we must add) the same distinction by Paul as before by the Lord, namely, stopping at the part which was applicable to the former coming of the Lord, even in humiliation: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that puolisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God

reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice: with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." The forty-ninth chapter is a full expose of the order of these things, but as not bearing on the point of judgment I pass it by, with this notice only to direct the attention of Christian brethren to it.

But I must, though without comment, direct attention to chapter 32 of the same prophet; which I do the rather, because it was in this the Lord was pleased, without man's teaching, first to open my eyes on this subject, that I might learn His will concerning it throughout—not by the first blessed truths stated in it, but the latter part, when there shall be a complete change in the dispensation, the wilderness becoming the fruitful field of God's fruit and glory, and that which had been so, being counted a forest, at a time when-the Lord's judgments should come down, even great hail, upon this forest; and the city, even of pride, be utterly abased. That the Spirit's pouring out upon the Jews, and their substitution for the Gentile church, become a forest, is here adverted to, is evident from the connection of the previous verses. I shall quote only the latter verses (from verse 14), begging, however, reference to the former part: "Because the palaces shall be forsaken: the multitude of the city shall be left: the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the Spirit be poured upon us from on

high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting-places; when it shall hail, coming down on the forest: and the city shall be low in a low place. Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass." I can only refer to the chapters 34 and 35— the whole chapters should be read; they are too plain to need any comment, if the point stated has been so stated as to be understood.

Again, chapter 30:25, to the end: "And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound. Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: and his breath as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err. Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty One of Israel. And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and

shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded [i.e. decreed or determined] staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking [or, an outstretched hand] will he fight with it. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."

Again, chapter 29:17 to the end, with the reason and occasion, verse 20: "Is it not yet a very little while, and Lebanon shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest? And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off: that make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought. Therefore, thus saith the Lord, who redeemed Abraham, concerning the house of Jacob, Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale. But when he seeth his children, the work of mine hands, in the midst of him, they shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel. They also that erred in spirit shall come to

understanding, and they that murmured shall learn doctrine."

Again, chapter 26:19, to the end: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."

Isaiah 25:3-7, and 12: "Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall. Thou shalt bring down the noise of strangers as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud; the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low. And in this mountain shall the Lord 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… And the fortress of the high fort of thy walls shall he bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust."

The whole of the chapter 24 may be read, particularly the latter part; and lest any should conclude that it

applied only to the land of Israel, we would refer them to verses 4 and 21. This is not the place to enter into the special application of the word earth, or rather the word from which it is translated, Greek or Hebrew; but it is full of interest, and I believe the Spirit always to use it in the same and a consistent sense.

I would just advert only to chapter 17:12-14. I only advert to this as applying to the same truth, because I admit that within itself (and I am not here expounding all prophecy), it does not contain on the face of it the evidence that it cannot apply to Sennacherib; and, therefore, though I give it as the same truth, I do not use it as an argument: “Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountain before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. And behold at evening tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.”

Let us turn to chapter 11:1-12: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: 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 fading 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 the Lord, 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 the Lord 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."

Here we have one of the passages where the knowledge of the Lord covering the earth is spoken of; and how? The destruction of the Assyrian, when Lebanon should fall by a mighty one, or mightily—this is stated as the occasion when One should arise who should reprove with equity for the meek of the earth, who should smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He should slay the wicked. I know they say the breath of His mouth is the gospel; but this is merely to hold a system together: for slaying the wicked is not

converting them, nor is the breath of the Lord the gospel. In chapter 30:33, it is compared to a stream of brimstone kindling the fire for the king; and so it is said, in the epistle to the Thessalonians, of the wicked one whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth. We surely need not argue that this is the destruction, not the conversion, of the wicked one. Let us refer to Psalm 18, where this expression (I might say subject, but from this I must refrain) is brought before us: “Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved, and were shaken, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.” So verses 13-15 of the same Psalm. At that time peace shall be indeed on earth, without hurt or destruction; a day when the Lord shall set Himself again to recover the remnant, even the dispersed of Judah from the four quarters of the earth—when they should prevail against their enemies, and Assyria be smitten, and this known in all the earth, for the Lord shall be great in Zion. Here, then, again we have the circumstances in which the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea—judgment, excision of enemies, the blessing of Israel, His gathering from the four quarters of the earth, and the Lord’s being great in Zion.

So the Jews are taught by the results of His first coming to look for, and wait on, Him who hideth His face from the house of Jacob; Isaiah 8:14-17. “And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be

snared, and be taken. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him."

Compare also chapter 4:2 to the end, which proves, as other passages, the involving of the Jews in that day, in days of purging trial. So Ezekiel. I can only refer generally to Isaiah 1 from verse 24 to the end of chapter 2, where the great moral bearing of these truths is fully and solemnly brought forward.

Let us turn now to Jeremiah. In chapter 3:17, 18 we find Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, when all nations are gathered together in the name of the Lord, when also the children of Israel and Judah come out of captivity into their own land: "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, 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."

So also see Jeremiah 31:10-12, for the Jewish part of the enquiry: "Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for

the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all."

So Jeremiah 30:7-11, where the language is sufficiently plain without comment, as denoting the circumstances which attend the time of blessing: "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. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear them not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel; for, lo, I will save them from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished."

Again, more distinctly, Jeremiah 33:7-9. The language here is of the utmost strength: "And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and

tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it."

The testimony of Micah is very definite also, to the same purpose—as Micah 4:1-5, and 11 to the end: "But in the last days it shall come to pass that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nations shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk, every one, in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever… Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be denied, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people; and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth." In this, the gathering of the nations, not understanding the thoughts of the Lord, as in so many passages we

have seen, is distinctly revealed, as well as the special blessing of Jerusalem as the centre of worship. Micah 5 may be referred to for the same purpose; both points are there distinctly stated: the blessing of Israel in Christ, as in verses 9 and 15; the lifting up His hand on all His adversaries, and vengeance on the heathen, such as they have not heard: “Thine hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off… And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.”

Habakkuk 2 need only be referred to and read, simply to see that the knowledge of the Lord filling the earth, as the waters cover the sea, is the result of the destruction of the oppressing proud man, who was the scourge of guilty Israel, who had gathered all nations; when, of the Lord of hosts, the people should labour in the very fire, and weary themselves for very vanity, or under affliction. This surely is not the preaching of the gospel, or anything like it. Yet this is what makes the prophet say, “For the earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” We have, I may remark, these same “Ammim” here again, as before (see page 101).

Let me here remark, before turning to the collateral statements of Scripture, that in many of these passages it is not merely the statement of the fact which we affirm, which is material, but its statement coincidently with facts which leave it impossible to spiritualise it away to other meanings. For example, it might be said that gathering all nations to Jerusalem, or coming up to Jerusalem, meant the assembly of the Gentiles into the church; but I find it associated with the re-gathering and exaltation of the Jewish nation, and at the same time desolating destructions and judgments on these same

Gentile nations. Then I see that the one cannot mean former restorations, because then there was no gathering of Gentiles into the church; nor the gathering by the gospel, when it went forth from Zion before; because there was no gathering of the Jewish nation, but their dispersion, nor any judgment on the Gentile nations which came up against Jerusalem, but on the Jews themselves. Yet I find these things introduced as coincident occurrences, leading me to sure conclusions as to the unfulfilled character of the transaction, and how to receive their force.

One passage demands our attention, before we turn to the New Testament: I mean Daniel's image. There we have a stone cut out without hands, unseen till the image was formed, even to the ten toes. This stone did not progressively diffuse its influence over the image. Indeed the image was not the earth, nor people, but empires, or kingdoms of well-known characters; nor was the stone the gospel, but something that destroyed the image. This stone, then, was cut out without hands, as its first act here stated, struck the image on its feet (i.e., the Roman empire in its divided state), and thereby put empire out of the earth; and the stone which smote the image became a mountain, and filled the whole earth: it was that which destroyed the empire of the whole earth. Here, then, we have a power, differing in its nature, but analogous in its character, not formed by the ordinary instrumentality of man, acting in destruction of that which assumed authority on the earth in its last form; and then, after having destroyed it, filling the earth, the place of them being no more found. Is not the character of this work as simple and determinate as possible, and the manner by which the hoped-for filling the earth with

the glory of the Lord is to be accomplished evidently declared?—a work in which man has no part, and which is not the gospel but Christ's power.

Can we find nothing analogous to this in the short book of Christian prophecy? We have already adverted to the parable of the tares, sufficiently to shew the judicial process by which Christ's field, this world, is set right. Let us shortly turn to Matthew 25—the parable of the sheep and the goats. The former chapter had, as to judgment, developed the dealings of the Lord with the Jews, with the associated introduction of the gospel, and its nature; of which more hereafter. This declares that the Lord would gather all the Gentiles before Him, and try them according to the manner in which this testimony of the gospel had been received. That is, He will fulfil that which is testified of by Joel: "Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about." The gospel might be despised meanwhile, in the world, but this His followers might be assured of, that it was precisely according to the way in which they were treated that all the Gentiles would be judged; for they, as well as the Jews, were subjects of His Son's power.29 Such is manifestly the force of this passage, if taken in its order as a revelation.

Coincidently with this, and as indicative of our whole subject, compare Matthew 24:14: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." True, the nations ought to be converted; but that which is declared as preceding the end (i.e., of the dispensation of the separation of the Jewish people from their head),

is a testimony, a witness to all nations; then comes the end. This is all, therefore, we are entitled to look for.

But have the vials no associations with these judgments on the nations? Is there no wrath in them? That they are poured out before the millennium is evident, because there is a gathering to Armageddon in them, and after that (i.e., in the seventh) great Babylon comes in remembrance. And are the vials conversion by preaching, or are they poured out on the heathen, or on the professing church? “All the kings of the earth and of the whole world,” sounds much like the judgments we have been hearing of. They were to be gathered, as we saw before: are there to be two such gatherings, or what is it? At any rate, there is wrath on the earth and air, and a gathering of all the earth by Satan against the Lamb, before and as an introduction to the millennium. Again, do the harvest of the earth and the vine of the earth, trodden in the winepress of God’s wrath, bear no analogy to that which we have seen in the Prophets? What is the vine of the earth? when is this? and, perhaps we might ask, where? Note, also, in the Jewish order, the feast of tabernacles came after the vintage. Leviticus 23 is the history of the world in its septarian30 form. We have seen, historically, the antitypes, in the history of the church, of two of the feasts, though in their effects not fully accomplished: of the great eight-day feast we have yet to see the blessing and accomplishment; and it was after the vintage, the end of God’s prophetic year, I mean of the revolution of history, in Christ manifested in the flesh.

Revelation 14 affords another eventful septary,31 beginning with the general blessing. The millennium comes after this; this ends with the vintage. Will the

church shut its ears to the testimony of the warning which God has given it? Let us conclude our references, at least, by turning to Luke 21. We have here the Lord's answer to His disciples' enquiries on these subjects. This is important and interesting. Let us consider it.

What is the character, then, given of the dispensation? Any sign? any promise of universal blessing or peace by the gospel? I find it not. I find persecution, betrayal, hating of all men for His name's sake; and then, when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, during which the scene of God's visible power on earth is removed, how are we taught to look for redemption? (I mean not as regards our present condition, extensive blessing, or the pervading of the word, but redemption.) There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and on the earth, distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring, and men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth. And are they looking in vain? In truth, they are not; for as His fear is, so is His wrath; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, Jerusalem shall be trodden down till— but that "till" comes in desolation and destruction on the apostate Gentiles: for when they say. Peace and safety, behold sudden destruction shall come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape; and the professing church is the special object of this, as it is specially responsible.

And now, what do we complain of? Is it not prying into futurity? Far otherwise. It is not taking the testimony of God and applying it to present judgment, and thus consequently offering the sacrifice of folly. I do say it is the privilege of the saints to know what is revealed. It is mere infidelity and unbelief—simple infidelity and

unbelief, and rejection of the promise, “He shall shew you things to come”; and, again, “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit!” that is, the things which He hath prepared for them that love Him. Men may say, It is presumption! But it is no more presumption in me to believe what God has said, and has declared that He has revealed to us for our blessing as to this, than it is to believe what He has stated concerning the accomplished work of Christ; and I suspect the notion of presumption runs pretty much together as to both. But this is not my present subject, but this: that the church is hiding the present judgment of itself from its eyes, that God’s judgments, are upon the church in warning, and they will not hear; and therefore they will be cut off if they repent not. “And the vision of all is become unto you 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. Wherefore the Lord saith, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men: therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid,” Isa. 29:11-14.

If it be so, that these things are hid, then I say it is a solemn judgment from God, His greatest judgment on the church, thus to hide them—a sign of judgment that they may be judged. Yet men seem to rejoice and pride themselves on their wisdom in knowing nothing about

them—rejoice in the last heaviest sign, the deep hope-obscuring cloud, before the judgments of God break down upon them who have wilfully stayed abroad in the field because they believed not, or received not the word and warnings and threatenings of God the Lord. For there is one that seeth and judgeth. Poor man! If the Lord hath indeed poured out upon you a deep sleep and hath closed your eyes, the prophets, and rulers, and seers hath He covered; then woe for you; and what shall the sheep do? All your services are but folly; for when God, perhaps, is calling for repentance, behold, you are in joy; when judgment is ready to strike, you are rejoicing; when God calls to fasting, and weeping, and mourning, behold you are killing sheep and slaying oxen. If the testimony of God be not received as applicable in our present state, then all our worship and service must be guided by man's judgment and our fear by the precept of men, and be foolishness and rebellion in His sight. But ye say, We will not consider… I say not to you, look at the hopes and the future glory; but I say, God has warned of judgment now. I speak of something which applies to you now: yea, why even of yourselves judge ye not that which is right? Does not the church, do not we, deserve judgment? The Lord hearken to the supplication of His servants, that our eyes may be opened! Infidel liberty is not Christian liberty. God may use it for His own purposes in punishing the wicked, as He saith, "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation." But if the people rejoice in Rezin and Pekah, trust in this Tiglath-Pileser does but show their infidelity, and will be their distress, and not their strength; for yet it is but a little while (as indeed it is the rod of God against the corruption of the church) His anger will cease, and His indignation, in

their destruction. The prophet may be grieved at the evil of the church, but the spirit of infidelity is the spirit of pride—a proud man which enlargeth his desire as hell, neither stayeth at home. It will have its day, perhaps, against a corrupt and guilty church; it may seek to sit upon the mount of God; but as soon as the Lord has accomplished His whole work upon Mount Zion and Jerusalem, He will punish the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks; and the spirit of the prophet will be of grief, intercession, and pity, that the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he. The Lord will hearken, hear, and deliver; for, though he be proud, his heart that is lifted up is not righteous in him; and the just shall live by his faith. Of this infidelity may be sure, that it will rack its heart in bitterness or the madness with which it is now proud; for God's eye is upon it, and the proof of it is, that it sees Him not; it is rushing in blindness into the bitterness of God's wrath. There will they be in great fear, for God is in the generation of the righteous.

It may be right to mention, in conclusion, that the abundant testimony of the Psalms on this subject has not been referred to, as it would have introduced too great an extent of testimony here; but reference, with this subject in our mind, will at once satisfy the believing enquirer how direct and full the development of God's Spirit in the word is there—as in Psalms 2, 9, 10, 18, 67, 68, 75, 76, 83, 92, and many others which I omit, as supposing more detailed enquiry into the subject, though not of obscurer evidence when understood through the light of other scriptures.

25 Note to translation. 'Church' refers here merely to professing Christendom.

26 The words used in the original here and in verse 13 stress the idea of appearing.

27 That is, as an outward system in the world.

28 The literal accomplishment of this passage is, I doubt not, yet wholly future. It will be the testimony, or gospel, of the kingdom when the church is gone. But there is that within Christendom and in the world which is analogous at the present time.

29 Nay, more, for they that should fall upon this stone should be broken; but upon whomsoever it should fall, it would grind them to powder. Compare the image in Daniel.

30 i.e., arranged in sevens.

31 Ibid.

Divine Mercy In The Church And Towards Israel The Church

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth j even in him.”—Eph. 1:9, 10.

All the fulness of God is well pleased to dwell and manifest itself in Christ the Son. Such was the counsel, the blessed counsel of the Holy One. The manner in which this is manifested to us, and in which we are associated with it, is to us infinitely interesting. After all, but a small, and, as it were, external part is treated of in the following pages; still a part deeply interesting. The manner of its accomplishment is, on God’s part, designedly external, and so by truths; but by these truths the child of God enters into communion with Him who is the power of them; and, moreover, is guarded by them (poor feeble creatures that we are!) from substituting his own imaginations in place of the holy manifestation of God.

The subject spoken of here is that contained in the prayer of the apostle at the close of Ephesians 1. There is a deeper matter whence it flows, at the close of Ephesians 3, to which I have alluded above; nor can the subject of Ephesians 1 be really enjoyed without, in some measure, the power of Ephesians 3; but I respond feebly to the desire of some in communicating this, trusting that God will supply the rest.

There are two great subjects which occupy the sphere of millennial prophecy and testimony: the church and its glory in Christ; and the Jews and their glory as a redeemed nation in Christ: the heavenly people and the earthly people; the habitation and scene of the glory of the one being the heavens; of the other, the earth. Christ shall display His glory in the one according to that which is celestial; in the other, according to that which is terrestrial—Himself the Son, the image and glory of God, the centre and sun of them both. And though the scene and habitation of the glory shall be the heavens, wherein He hath set a tabernacle for the sun, the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it. It shall be manifested suitably on earth, and earth shall enjoy its blessing. When all this is accomplished, God shall be all in all; and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, not descending, so to speak, but descended out of heaven. The principles and the manner of the accomplishment of this are fully detailed in the Scriptures. Though the church and Israel be, in connection with Christ, the centres respectively of the heavenly and the earthly glory, mutually enhancing the blessing and joy of each other, yet each has its respective sphere, all things in the heavens being subordinate and the scene of the glory—angels, principalities, and powers in the one; the nations of the earth in the other.

But to confine myself now to the history and condition of the church on the one hand, and to that of Israel on the other. “In the beginning,” I read in the Old Testament, “God created”; “In the beginning,” I read in the New, “the Word was” —the latter the foundation of a higher and an abiding glory, on which the former, ruined in

man’s weakness and man’s sin, should rest and be restored. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” All were made and fashioned very good: sin entered, and they were defiled. (Compare Col. 1:20; Eph. 1:10.) God, for a moment, as it were, rested in them; and His rest passed away. Of the defilement of the heavens little is said; we know only that the angels fell. But on earth, and by man, the great scene of divine working and redemption was to be manifested; and of this a full account is given. The sabbath of God in creation was short. The sabbath of man with God was not so to pass. That which passed away in the first Adam in weakness, was to be restored in infinitely fuller blessing in the last Adam (sustained and displayed in His strength), God gathering together in one (as we have seen in Ephesians 1) all things in heaven and in earth, in Him. On this re-heading of all things, as the scripture expresses it, in Christ, hangs the constitution and substance of the church’s hope, until “God be all in all.” “Christ manifested” is spoken of in this respect as the Heir of all this, the church as co-heirs with Him. It is, so to speak, the formal character which He receives as to all things, that we may understand our place with Him.

Thus, in Hebrews 1:2,” Whom he hath appointed heir of all things”; Ephesians 1:11, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance”; and Romans 8:17, “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” The source of this great title is yet in greater glory. “He is the first-born of every creature; for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth”; “all things were created for him and by him.” Then we have seen the church, the children, are co-heirs with Him. The manner of this we have to develop. Christ takes this title as Man.

He takes it as the risen Man; being previously the fellow-sufferer in respect of the evil; afterwards the Head and chief, and source of the blessing.

First, we have in the “image of him that is to come,” the type and picture of this; and it is used as such in Ephesians 5. That is Adam, Adam hidden in sleep, as it were; and Eve, the church, taken out of his side, and presented to him by God as the help-meet for him, as the co-partner with him in the dominion over and inheritance of all things which God had given him in paradise. So the church, taken as it were out of Christ, He (being God as well as man) presents to Himself, awoke up in His glory, partner with Him in the glory and dominion which was already His in title, and in the gift of God. “The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them.” And Adam and Eve together are called Adam, as one, though Eve was in a sense inferior to Adam, and subsequent; and so with the church and Christ—one mystic Person. This type, familiar to the readers of Scripture, presents very simply all the force of the truth, save that the last Adam, being Lord from heaven, is Head and Lord of the heavenly things also.

The texts which speak very particularly of this dominion of man, the union of the church with Christ in it, and its not being yet accomplished, follow. They have their rise, as the apostle uses them, in Psalm 8, “Thou hast crowned him (man, the Son of man) with glory and honour; thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.” This we learn in Hebrews 2, is not yet to be seen; but Jesus is crowned with glory and honour, the designation to the church of Him under whose feet, as Man, all things are to be put. Meanwhile, till His enemies (who unrighteously hold the power till God’s

purposes be accomplished) be made His footstool, that He may hold all things in power of blessing, He sits (that is the present economy) on the right hand of the majesty on high, set down, as having overcome, on the Father's throne, as He will give them who overcome to sit down on His throne when He takes it—takes His power and reigns. In Ephesians 1, at the close, we have the union of the church in all this, according to the exercise of the power in which Christ was raised from the dead. Read from the prayer of the apostle in chapter 1 to the end of verge 6 in chapter 2. The glorious cause, or reason, is in verse 7. In chapter 1:22, we have Psalm 8 again quoted, "And hath-put all things under his feet, and hath given him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Here the church is the body of Christ, the Head over all things which are put under His feet. He is Head over all things to the church as His body. This is as risen and ascended, as is there fully stated. This point is taken up specially in 1 Corinthians 15, where the same passage is referred to: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end when he shall have delivered up the kingdom [the kingdom held thus as the risen Man, which is the subject of this chapter] to God, even the Father, when he shall have put down all rule and all authority. For he must reign until he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. And when all things shall

be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject (i.e., as the risen Man, the last Adam, in which character He is ever spoken of here) unto him that put all things under him, that God [not Christ in His mediatorial kingdom] may be all in all." Here then we have this reign of Christ as Man in resurrection, in a kingdom which He delivers up, that "God may be all in all"—all administration and human dominion being given up, that the divine glory simply may be universal.

As to the manner in which this is accomplished, other passages instruct us. Christ, we have seen, was the heir in title, as Creator: "All things were created by him and for him," the Son; and also by the counsels of God, in appointment; and so (God acting by way of promise) all promises centre in Him. To Abraham and to his seed were the promises made; not to seeds as of many, but as of one; "and to thy seed "—which is Christ. And 2 Corinthians 1, "All the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, to the glory of God by us." Thus Christ was the heir, the Seed to whom the promise was made. As regards the earth, Israel, the seed after the flesh, were the best situated of all men to receive the Lord in a world that knew Him not; Israel, His own, whose were the law and the promises, and the covenants, and the oracles of God; and amongst whom, according to the flesh, He was to come; and who, amidst a ruined world, had, through their relationship with God the sabbath, the sign given to them of the hope of God's rest. But though coming according to all which their own prophets had said, they received Him not. They said, and justly, "This is the heir"; but they hated Him, saying, "Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours." Here the last hope of the rest of God on the earth

was gone. After all that had passed, He had yet one Son. It was tried; but man was found in his best estate altogether vanity, wholly wanting when all was done. But it only made way for the revelation of a far deeper and more glorious economy. The earth and Israel were set aside for a time, though the gifts and calling of God were without repentance. The counsel, hidden from ages and generations, was now to be revealed, the counsel stated in Ephesians 1, the embodying in one the remnant of Jew and Gentile in Christ; to set them in heavenly places, the companion and spouse of Him who was rejected and risen, gathered while He sat at the right hand of God, and to appear with Him in the same glory when He shall appear. (Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2.) Christ, as the seed of Abraham was the heir of the promises. Had He taken them alive here, He had taken them alone. Thus, after His vindication of His glory as Son of God, in the resurrection of Lazarus, and as King of the Jews, in His entry into Jerusalem, when the Greeks also came to seek Him, it was evident that the hour was come—though the Jews might have rejected the promised seed. The hour was come that the Son of man should be glorified; but, adds the Lord immediately, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." Christ was to take the inheritance in resurrection with the church, born upon this plant from the tomb of death. The church is therefore perfectly justified; that is, Christ takes the promises, not as on earth, incarnate, but as risen. That is, after He has done all needful to redeem the church, and in the power of that life in which He associates them (quickened them into fellowship and association) by the Holy Ghost with Himself, when born of the Holy Ghost they are viewed as raised together

with Him. In a word, He is heir as the risen Man, the ascended Head of the church. The confirmation of the promise to Christ, referred to by the Spirit in the Galatians, accords exactly with this. It is in Genesis 22, where we find the promise of blessing to the nations, made to Abraham in chapter 12, confirmed to the Seed consequent on his reception from the dead in a figure, as the apostle speaks in Hebrews 11:" Because thou hast done these things," etc.; and, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Thus we have seen under various lights this blessed truth, how the church was redeemed into union with Jesus, that in taking the inheritance He might have a help meet for Him, entirely associated and made like to Himself glorified. For this it was necessary, not only that the church should be redeemed, but that He should go and prepare a place for it.

The resurrection was both the accomplishment of the redemption of the church, and also set Jesus in the place in which He could establish the sure mercies of David (Acts 13:34); that is, establish in His Person all the promises to Israel; but He had yet to take the heavenlies, that the kingdom of heaven might be established, that He might fill all things, and associate the church in that new yet everlasting glory, prepared before the worlds yet hidden from preceding ages, for which the rejection of Messiah by His people, by the Jews, in the wisdom of God made the way. There were two things in this—the preparation of a place, a heavenly place of abode; and the gathering, out of all nations, those who were to be the joint heirs—to call the bride who was to inherit it.

Thus, in John 14, the Lord says, “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; that where I am, there ye may be also.” See John 17. “Father, I will 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 foundation of the world”; and “Whom he foreknew, he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren”; and Colossians 1, “The head of the body the church, the firstborn from the dead.” But how is this? Not as “bearing the image of the earthy,” but, as we have borne that, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” This is in 1 Corinthians 15, where the subject is entirely the resurrection; and in Romans 8 it is pursued, not to sanctification here below, but to glory. “Whom he justified, them he also glorified”; “Who shall change (as we read in Phil. 3) our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.” The time of this is clearly taught in Scripture. Christ now is hid in God; Col. 3:3. Our life is hid with Him there. It is a time of gathering, by the Holy Ghost, the members of His body, the co-heirs, while He sits on Jehovah’s right hand, till His foes be made His footstool. “Having,” says the apostle (Hebrews 10), “by one offering perfected for ever them which are sanctified,” He sat down, “from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.” He has finished all He had to do in redemption for us His friends; and while we are actually gathering by the power of the Holy Ghost sent down by Him, and revealing Him and the Father by Him, He sits there

expecting, not taking the earth till this, the gathering of His bride, His co-heirs, be accomplished. Seated on the Father's throne, there the church knows Him now. But while He waits, we, yea, the whole creation, wait for the manifestation of the sons of God; as to when and how the Scriptures are plain. If we are to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus, it is plain it must be by resurrection and glory, because He is risen and glorified. Accordingly it is said in Romans 8, "The whole creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God: and not only so, but we ourselves also, who have received the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." In Colossians 3, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory"; and in 1 John 3, "We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is"; as we have seen before the Lord saying, "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." And the circumstances of this, the resurrection or change ("for we shall not all die, but we shall all be changed," which is the church's entrance into glory), are particularly told us (1 Thess. 4): "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."

The description of this, of the "marriage of the Lamb," and of the consequent judgment of the earth, or at least of the leaders of antichristian wickedness, may be found in Revelation 19. The judgment is described in yet wider

terms in Jude, where “the Lord cometh with myriads of his saints to execute judgment”; or, as in Zechariah, “The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee”; when He shall have presented His spouse to Himself, a glorious church, “without spot or wrinkle or any such thing,” in her own beauty and glory that is proper to herself, seeing in her Lord the beauty and glory of the Father, and with Him in His own glory, and in the power of that love in which He has loved her, and given Himself for her, that she might be perfectly purified and glorious with Him where He is; and then brought forth in glory with honours such as His, the participator in all His glory, the glory given Him of the Father (that the world may know that we have been loved as He was loved), to judge angels and the world; companions in all His glory, and the ministers and instruments of the light and blessing of His reign over a refreshed and solaced earth, renewed out of its miseries, where Satan is not. “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.” “They that are counted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, die no more”; “on such the second death hath no power, but they… shall reign with him [Christ] a thousand years.” Blessed are they! Risen already as regards their souls, they now, when Christ appears, are raised as regards their bodies, on account of His Spirit dwelling in them, to a resurrection, not of judgment, but of life (John 5:29); a resurrection which belongs to the church by virtue of its union with Christ, through the Holy Ghost dwelling in them, and with which, therefore, the wicked can have nothing to do, though raised by the word of Christ in their own time for judgment,” but they that are Christ’s at his coming”; the rest, when (the kingdom being given up) as

Son of God, He, on the great white throne, shall judge the dead, heaven and earth being fled from before His throne. So the word of God instructs us. The taking of this kingdom by Christ is described in Daniel; but as this would lead us into the second part, or the earthly glory, I do not yet enter on it, having only here sought to shew the place which the church holds in this scene, and the scriptural connection of it with all the most sweet and fundamental truths, which, in their true light, rejoice and fill the heart of the true believer.

There is one point of this scarcely touched on here (but I should be too long, and depart too far from the subject, so as to distract the minds of others); that is, the place of the Father's love in it. But this is very blessed also. It is the Father's kingdom we pray for. In the Father's kingdom we are to shine as the sun, that is, as Christ the Sun of righteousness; Matt. 13:43.

In the Father's glory Christ is to appear. And this is a sweet part of it; for it passes into deeper and yet calmer waters, where eternity unruffled is found—that wide and soundless ocean of infinite joy, the length, and depth, and height, and breadth, of which are, we know, unknown: I say, "passes into," for it is learned there: we learn glory there; grace, perhaps, more deeply here. We witness it there. But the passages referred to may suffice to lead those who search much into this blessed and simple truth. They will soon learn that they have everything to find there—the fulness of Him, who, without beginning, began, and without end shall endlessly fulfil, all the joy which itself enables us increasingly to apprehend. There are great lessons to learn in glory with Him, the Lamb, in whom we have all the Father revealed. The life we have received makes it

ours now. But this is individual. Here I have simply traced the place of the church, when Christ takes the glory and the power, and it is manifested as His consort and companion in the same glory and love, all things blessed through it as the medium and sphere of the display of His glory and blessing.

Israel

We have seen, in the first part of this tract, the infinite grace of God manifested in the exaltation of the church into heavenly places. In this second part, we pass on to the interest of the earthly people, “a people wonderful from the beginning hitherto.” As in the church we have seen the full manifestation of grace, so here we shall behold, supremely displayed, all the providence, all the counsel, all the patience, all the long suffering mercy of God, manifested in sovereignty, shewn already, or before the end of the history of this earth, the wonderful theatre of all His dispensations: here is the importance of the thing. It was necessary that God should choose some nation: in this He was both sovereign and wise. He chose the Jews: He formed them for Himself, that they should be His witnesses, and that they should shew forth His praise; Isaiah 43:10, 21. Let us follow the history of this people of God, towards whom “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance,” Rom. 11:29.

The two passages we have just quoted are sufficiently remarkable in themselves to attract all our attention to Israel. God has formed this people for Himself; and it is with respect to them that it is said, “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” It follows as a direct consequence, that the faithfulness of God on one hand,

and His character on the other, should be found specially manifested in this nation.

In fact, it was in contemplating the dispensations of God toward this people that the great apostle of the Gentiles exclaimed, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” Rom. 11:33.

But it is on earth that they are the witnesses. As to the heavens, there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all; Col. 3:11. Consequently, this witness acts on the nations of the earth. God Himself, in the midst of this people, and by their instrumentality, acts on these nations, and shews Himself amongst them by His justice and power towards Israel, and by the connections which Israel had with the nations, or the nations with them, and according to their conduct towards this people.

Here, then, all His providence finds its centre, as it is written: “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel,” Deut. 32:8. Thus, then, the faithfulness, the character, and the providential government of God are found displayed on earth. I shall endeavour to follow, according to the Scriptures, some of the facts, the principles, and the testimonies, which refer to this people, and instruct us in the judgments and ways of God.

There is a very clear distinction between the ways of God before and after the deluge. Since the fall, there has always been a people of God, and the world of the ungodly. God has never left Himself without a witness.

The prophecies of Enoch were the instruction of the people of God in those days, and the hope of the faithful in our days. Nevertheless, in those times, there was no manifested judgment, no nation, no external call, which formed believers or an elect people into a body acknowledged before God; and there was consequently no development of the principles of the character of God. It was a fallen race; and the fallen nature of man shewed itself, and followed its course in spite of the witness of God; and God did nothing until (the evil being intolerable) He swept them from before His face, by a judgment which none could escape, save the little band in the ark; and the world, swallowed up in the waters, perished. God “repented that he had made man,” for “the earth was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence,” and God destroyed it.

The world which exists now is a new world, reserved for fire in the day of judgment. In this world there are two great principles: rule in the hands of men—and separation from the world by the call of God.

The first is easily corrupted; and men may shew themselves in this, and in everything else, unfaithful in maintaining the glory of God; but where there is the possibility of evil, where there are principles, which, left to themselves, might produce evil and misery, there the ordering of everything on divine principles, according to the will of God, is the first principle of happiness, which, in its character, embraces all the extent of the earth. This was the principle which, in its root, was established for the first time with Noah, for the guidance of that new world, which rose out of the ruins caused by lust and violence: “He who sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” It was the authority of God over life,

put into the hands of man, and for which he was to be responsible. The exercise of this power was the manifestation of the judgment of God, and recalled the holiness, the authority, and the constant watchfulness of the Most High. This at least was its true character. But in order that the value of this principle of rule should be recognised in its details, either by the governor, or the governed, it was necessary that the source whence it emanated should be acknowledged. The value of this principle was its recalling, to the heart and the eye, the authority of that God who had established it—an authority which, thus recognised, would restrain the lusts of the flesh, ere they broke out in those acts to which the power of the sword itself was to be applied, and would even prevent the effects of those desires which were not sufficiently serious to come under the immediate application of the law. But not only do we see the head of this new world failing (in the very beginning) in self-government, and consequently losing the respect of him who ought to be the first to obey, even his own son; but we also perceive an evil and malicious spirit, who knew how to destroy the efficacy of this power in its very source, by appropriating it to himself—presenting himself as the source both of the evils and blessings which resulted from man's conduct, or were the effect of the power and rule of God. And in the fallen and sinful state of man, he was able in some degree to verify his pretensions, or at least to cause them to be respected.

Hereupon, then, came in the second principle; viz., the call of God: a principle which (by separating one person, one people, one family, one assembly, which acknowledged the true God) was capable of rendering them witnesses of His character, and the theatre where

He could display His power in accordance with that character. “And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan,” etc. (Josh. 24:1-3). We see, in the history given in this passage, the occasion and the necessity of this call, which was a thing unheard of in all the provocations before the deluge. “Your fathers served other gods!”—a fresh crime, a fresh snare of Satan, which called for new measures on the part of a God who is all goodness.

Strife and violence displayed themselves in the time of Nimrod; and perhaps pride and ambition, rising against God, were seen in those who wished to make themselves a name, lest they should be dispersed. There Satan caused the principle of rule to flow from the will and the violence of man, and the concentration of power from the name he was making for himself. But the judgment of God, confounding their projects and dispersing them, sufficed to shew the supremacy of His power to humble their pride, and by the confusion of tongues to originate at the same time the national separation and ties of country, which were to furnish opportunity for the organizations of His providence.

But, whilst the pride of man was abased by the judgments of God, and served only to display His watchful power and to accomplish His providential

designs, the substitution of the power of Satan in man's heart, under the form of false gods, as the originators of rule and the authors of judgment, gave occasion to Almighty God, who is ever able to extract good from evil, to display the other principle before mentioned, even the calling of God; and thus He glorified Himself, even by the perversities of His foolish creatures.

God called Abraham, who was a type (both according to the flesh and the spirit) of the family of God, and the depositary of all His promises. These are the terms of this call: "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great: and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Here, in principle, was separation from the world, by breaking all its strongest ties and nearest relationships, in order that he might give himself to God alone, in heart, faith, and confidence.

The principle of national government and family authority remained in all its power, but Satan had seized upon it; and our gracious God, by drawing one family and nation nearer to Himself, introduced a new and powerful principle to make good His name, His character, and His grace, in the midst of that world, which had withdrawn from His providential judgments, by throwing itself into the hands of the great adversary of its happiness, as well as of the glory of God. The want of fidelity and power in man, under responsibility, was thus again shewn, in a manner fatal to the whole world; because his weakness had placed it in the hands and

under the authority of Satan, not only in consequence of the sin of the whole human race, but as respected the principle of government introduced for its regulation. But the principle of the call of God maintained His supremacy in a manner which put it beyond the effects of man's responsibility; and therefore God could add to it unconditional promises. This is what took place as respected Abram; and, in what follows, we shall see its importance in the history of the people thus chosen. This is the difference between the external call in itself, and the principle of government (two things, nevertheless, which have clear and positive rights on the hearts of men) on one side, and the certainty of the promises and the calling of God according to grace on the other, whether for the Jews or for the church. God's right is recognised by the believer in the first case, but also the perfect failure of man in every sense, as respected them. The efficacious power of God is felt, and produces its effects, in the second.

The existence of this principle of the call of God has been developed, since the time of Abraham, under various forms; but God has constantly maintained the principle. In the history of the government of the world from that time there have been many changes of the greatest importance, in which the government of God has been displayed; and the truth of it will yet be honoured by the results which shall spring from them in the latter day. These are the subjects of the Old Testament prophecies; as the precious subjects of the New are the faithfulness of God to His call, as respects His ancient people, and the manifestation of this call in a new form, which leads the church into the knowledge

and enjoyment of heavenly things—things plainly revealed by the Holy Spirit which has been given to it.

Before the deluge, then, we see the perfect opposition between fallen man and the character of God; and that, after a simple yet powerful and patient testimony, God swept this mass of iniquity from before His face, and washed the polluted world in the waters of the deluge. We have seen the principle of judgment and daily retribution introduced under Noah, as a constituent of the new world. This is the principle of government. We have also seen the principle of the calling of God marked out in the history of Abraham. This is the principle of grace, holiness, and the supremacy of God. But the union of these two principles is also presented to our view in the Scriptures; a union very remarkable for a time, as a new trial of the faithfulness of man under responsibility, and in circumstances altogether singular, and accompanied by a still more astonishing display of patience on the part of God, which will furnish the subject of that solemn praise in the latter times: “His mercy endureth for ever.” As to the future, the union of these two principles is the source of a state of things which will be the manifestation of the incomparable wisdom and power of God, when He takes the government into His own hands.

The history of the union of these two principles, whether under the responsibility of man or in the efficacy of the supremacy of God, is the history of the Jewish people. The law is the directing principle of it, as being the expression of the actual terms of God’s government. It is consequently in the history of this people that we must look for the centre of the administration of the government of the world; containing (as it does) in its

past history, on the one hand, the witness given by a people called to the knowledge of the only true God against the false gods of the Gentiles (“Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord!”), and, on the other hand, the witness afforded to the principles of the government of the true God by His conduct towards His chosen people, blessing or punishing them openly according to their proceedings: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities,” Amos 3:2. In their history for the future (of which prophecy is the account), the sovereignty and efficacy of the calling of God will be clearly and openly manifested, and the government of all the earth be put into the hands of the king whom God has established, and conducted according to the principles of a law which God shall, in the meantime, have written on the hearts of His people; a covenant teeming with rich and sovereign blessings, and proving at once the riches of His goodness and the faithfulness of His promises, and of which the obedient Gentiles shall partake, according to their measure, in a world filled with the knowledge of the glory of God, as the waters cover the sea.

But if the responsibility of man gave mediately an opportunity for the display of the whole character of God on the one hand, the weakness of man on the other made it necessary for God to establish the hope of all His promises on some other basis than this responsibility. And, in fact, we see, in the history we are examining, that Israel receives the promises in Abraham, according to the calling of God absolutely and unconditionally. Under the law, Israel takes these promises on the responsibility of their own obedience.

We will examine their circumstances in these two respects rather more in detail.

The promises of blessing were given to Abraham unconditionally. We read in Genesis 17, that “when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and. thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be called Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.” Then he received the seal of circumcision, which, if neglected, occasioned, not the loss of the promise nationally, but the cutting off of him who omitted it. We also see the unconditional promise in chapter 15, “He that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir”; and, again, “so shall thy seed be”; and in verse 18, “In the same day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt, unto the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenites,” etc. This promise to Abraham is confirmed

to Isaac in chapter 22, and to Jacob in the vision at Bethel, equally unconditionally.

Let us compare the covenant made with the people at mount Sinai. God had brought them out of Egypt with a strong hand, and had led them with grace and blessing to the mount, providing for all their wants, and never reproaching them for their murmurings; and Israel encamped over against the mountain. This was God's message to them by Moses, "Ye have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord," Exod. 19:4-8.

Then the law was given; and thus was the covenant concluded, on the express condition of obedience on the part of the people, as a preliminary to their enjoyment of the promises it contained. What was the consequence of it? Just what must be expected from man—from our wretched hearts. Before Moses could bring down the details of the covenant from the presence of God, and the commandments written by His hand, the people had turned completely from Him, and had made to themselves a god of gold.

The covenant was, on their part, broken in its fundamental principle almost before they had received it. “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up; make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him,” Exod. 32:1. What forgetfulness of the hand of God! But the Lord takes them at their word, and does not acknowledge them as His people under the covenant that had been made with them. He said to Moses (v. 7), “Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.”

Let us pause for a moment at this important juncture, and consider the unfolding of the relationship of God with the world, and with men, in this people: after that we will return to their history. From this time we see the three great instruments of these relations, holding their place in the midst of them: Moses was the representative of royalty among the people of God. “Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together.” Aaron held the place of the great high priest; and Miriam as the prophetess: “For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam,” Micah 6:4. See also Exod. 15; Num. 13.

Thus we see in the wilderness the model of the three mediatorial instruments of the power of God—one, the communication of His will; the second, the means of our

approach to Him; and the third, the instrument of His government, the recipient of His power.

Moses at different periods filled all these three functions. Thus also in the plagues inflicted on the proud Egyptians, Aaron acted as prophet, Moses as God to Pharaoh, but that changes nothing in the main. During the union of the two principles of government and calling, these things were fully developed. But under responsibility in these things, the Jewish people corrupted themselves in each one of them.

Under the priesthood (when God was their King, and there were only judges raised up from time to time to preserve them in their inheritance from the occasions of misery produced by their unbelief), they were connected with God through the medium of the priest. Shiloh was the place where God had put His name; but what was the end of it? A witness of judgment to all generations. "Go ye now [saith the Lord] to my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel… I will do unto this house… as I have done to Shiloh," Jer. 7:12. Under the priesthood there was complete corruption, even in the priests; as we see in 1 Samuel 2, and in the touching scene described in chapter 3, which marked Ichabod on the people of God. I say not that the priesthood was abolished; far from it: it was, on the contrary, to be an example of the patience of God, until He came who could efficiently fill all its functions.

Samuel was the representative of the prophetic line, a judge also, governing the people by the witness of God—a witness given, as we have seen, against the actual state of the priesthood. It is for this reason Peter says, in

Acts 3, “All the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after.” This then was God’s government by prophets; yet the people were not yet satisfied with it, but desired a king: and God gave them “a king in his anger, and took him away in his wrath,” Hos. 13:11. A king chosen according to the flesh, when God was their King, served only to shew the weakness of all that man did, the folly of all he desired. Nevertheless, the kingship of Christ over His people was ever in God’s designs. And He gave them a king after His own heart, and David and Solomon furnished the type of the kingship of Christ: one, in suffering and overcoming all his enemies, after complete obedience; the other, as reigning in peace and glory over a happy, obedient, and prosperous people. There the picture ended! Man may furnish types, but can never fill the functions of that which is true, and which shall be fulfilled in Christ. The repose and glory which Solomon enjoyed were the cause of his fall. He kept not his uprightness in the midst of the gifts of God, but, drawn aside by his wives, he followed other gods. Kingship, the last resource of God for maintaining His relationship with His people, was corrupted, just in that particular in which Israel should have been His witness. The kingdom failed, and was divided: nevertheless, the house of David had one tribe, in the wisdom of God, for the love of David His servant, and of Jerusalem, the city which He had chosen among all the tribes of Israel; for the calling of David was a calling according to grace, and the choice of Jerusalem was the choice of God. See 1 Chron. 21:22; ch. 22:7-14; 1 Kings 11:13. After that, the longsuffering of God waited, teaching, reproving, and forewarning by His prophets. For “the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending;

because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees," 2 Chron. 36:15. The rest of their sorrowful history is short: the kingdom was made over to the Gentiles. God, to fulfil His designs, preserved and restored a remnant, in order that His Christ should be set forth in the midst of the people, "a minister of the circumcision, to confirm the promises made to the fathers." The prophet was manifested, the king was born but rejected. The history of this all-important event is given us, though shortly, in the controversy which Jesus had with all classes of the Jews, at the close of His ministry; Matt. 21:23, etc. At length He sent unto them, saying, "They will reverence my Son. But when the husbandmen saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him." And their judgment was given, and their desolation declared in these tender words: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Having accomplished His ministry to the people as a prophet, and maintained their cause (notwithstanding their being under a righteous judgment until that day) like Aaron, not yet come from within the veil (they therefore consequently

ignorant of their fate), He will return as a King, and fill the throne of David His father. He shall be a Priest upon His throne, according to the promise: “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days,” Hos. 3:4, 5. In those days, the government and the principle of calling shall be united under the reign of Christ; and “the Lord shall be King over the whole earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one.” Nevertheless, Jerusalem shall be built and safely inhabited; and God shall say, “It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God,” Zech. 13, 14.

Having thus briefly followed the history of this people, until grace shall restore happiness to their nation (which shall bear fruit, and be the people whom the Lord has blessed, Matthew 21:32)—a history which shews us how they have been the scene of the manifestation of the principles of God’s government—I will now resume the consideration of their relationships with God, under more general, yet deeper and more detailed, circumstances.

We have seen the promises made to Abraham unconditionally; the exodus from Egypt through grace and the strong arm of God. We have seen the people, led by grace to mount Sinai, enter into a covenant based on their obedience, and break every tie with God by making to themselves a god of gold. But this circumstance gave opportunity for the revelation of another principle of the greatest importance—mediation; which served at once

to maintain the consistency of the character of God with the choice which He had made of a wicked people, and to give occasion for the development of that character, in patience, justice, and faithful chastisements and pity. Mediation always recalled to God His grace; never the covenant of obedience: for then there was no need of it, inflicting, perhaps, at the same time, severe chastenings, the duration and severity of which were proportioned to the fervour of the mediatorial supplications—a mediation on which, consequently, all the relations of God with His people were based; in order that He might display all the riches of His grace and of His nature, manifested towards the people of His choice, beloved by Him (the just God), but constantly failing, in fact, in the obedience which was His due, and which would have been the source of direct blessing.

Mediation sustained the relations of God with His people in the midst of their transgressions, whilst all His wonders were made known, and until His judgment had severed the wicked from among them, and completed the blessing and glory of His people under the sustaining hand of him who had been the mediator during the time of all their trials. “And the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word: but as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land,

and his seed shall possess it," Num. 14:20-24; read all the chapter.

But we must observe the historical evidences of this introduction of mediation as a support to the old covenant, or the foundation of a new one. "And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiffnecked people: now therefore let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them,… and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou32hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land which I have spoken of will I give unto thy seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the Lord repented of the evil that he thought to do unto his people," Ex. 32:9-14. Here was the principle.

The consequences of this mediation—the conduct of Moses towards the people—his return to God with fresh supplications (placing himself as the one hoping to atone for their sins), together with the detail of God's answers, are found in what follows in Exodus 33. At length Moses intreats to see the glory of God: this was impossible; but He promises to make all His goodness to pass before him. "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord.

And the Lord passed by before him and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children unto the third and to the fourth generation," Ex. 34:5-7. Then, on the renewed intercession of Moses, the Lord announces to him some modifications of His dispensations; and in the end it is said (v. 27), "Write thou these words, for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel."

Here we see a covenant founded on the calling to remembrance the covenant made with Abraham, etc. (the intercession of Moses staying the uplifted hand of God), and the revelation of a special character of relationship with the people; a character on which is based the new covenant with Moses the mediator, and the people. When Moses interceded in the desert on the return of the spies, his intercession was founded on the character given by God as the terms of the relationship existing between Him and the people; and both the answer and the judgments of God are in accordance with this character, save only one special mark of mercy which arose from circumstances. Ezekiel 18 (often quoted with really unbelieving views) announced that God acted towards the people for their own iniquity, and according to the covenant of which we are speaking, and in truth put an end to an important application of an important principle it contains. The same thing is found in Jeremiah, who concluded the period of their history in their country, as Ezekiel concluded it out of it,

accompanied in the former by a promise of a covenant and a new order of things, which should in the latter days be made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah; Jer. 31:27-37. It will be found also that Daniel, who prophesies of the four empires, confesses both their past and actual transgressions.

Having traced the allusions to this covenant, there is one remark which it is very important to make; and the intercession of Moses, at the time of their sin in making the golden calf, gives rise to it. It is this: the Spirit of God, in all references to the true hopes of Israel, refers to the unconditional covenant made with Abraham. Thus we have seen Moses saying, “Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, saying,” etc. In the same manner the God of mercy, having pronounced blessing on their obedience, and followed their rebellions with threats, until their actual dispersion, adds in Leviticus 26, “If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers… and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land.” See also Micah 7:20. Such was the hope of Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:72, 73); such also the prophetic song in Psalm 105:6-9, 42. According to the solemn declaration of God, when Moses asked, “If they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I am that I am,” He said also, “Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The Lord God of your fathers, the

God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." Therefore, the apostle in discussing this subject says (Rom. n:28), "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes."

We see, in the book of Deuteronomy, the people, when nearly entering Canaan, put under the principle of obedience, and their enjoyment of the promises dependent on that obedience. Moses recalls to the people all that God had done for them, adding, "The Lord hath not given you a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear… Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do… that thou shouldest enter into a covenant with the Lord thy God… that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." As it is said, Moses "set before" them "life and death, blessing and cursing." It was a covenant which, in remembrance of the oath made with the fathers, is a covenant of blessing, if they obeyed, and of threatenings, if they disobeyed. God did not promise that they should possess the land, but that they should be blessed in it; otherwise, that they should be driven out of it; but that God would shew mercy unto them in a far country, if their hearts turned to the Lord. For this reason the apostle quotes a passage here as a pledge of the righteousness of God according to faith, because the observance of the law was impossible in any land except that of Israel. Nevertheless, if they were obedient in

heart, and turned to the Lord, they should be heard and delivered. The return under Nehemiah was a partial accomplishment of this promise, and this covenant. But in that return, there was no question of the promises made to Abraham. It was an event that shewed the mercy and faithfulness of God, but which was not the fulfilment of His promises and original covenant, although it involved important consequences. The original promises, given unconditionally, and guaranteed by the oath of God, must find a complete fulfilment in all their extent.33 This is what still remains for the people of God. Joshua gives the history of their then present and earthly fulfilment; and the book of Judges, that of the fall of Israel in the midst of human enjoyment.

In order, then, to accomplish the full manifestation of the thought and will of God, there was needed, not only the promise made to Abraham, and the mediation (which testified to the complete violation of it), to sustain the weight and truth of God's promises, in conformity with His justice, until the fulfilment of the promises should take place (a mediation which was the type of Christ's); but there was also needed the representation of the type of Him who was to be the instrument of their accomplishment, and the centre of the blessings they comprised. This must be by grace in the midst of a fallen and rebellious people, who were consequently thrown upon the mercy of God. This representation took place in David among a people, who, transgressing under the immediate government of God, desired in their wretchedness another king than Him, that they might be like unto the nations. After this filling up of their iniquity, God, in His grace, gave them a king, who was a remarkable type of Christ—named as king, rejected,

driven out, hunted as a partridge on the mountains, but just, patient, and obedient under his sufferings; the hope of Israel, when Israel would not hope in him, rilled himself, in the midst of his trials, with all those glorious hopes with which the Spirit of God inspired him; afterwards vanquishing all his enemies, and reigning in glory in Solomon. These are the things which God gave us, to serve as a type of Christ rejected—Christ the hope of Israel. And in fact the Psalms are the prophecies of the experience or the expression of the sympathy of Christ with all the sufferings of His people. We see the soul of Christ revealed, either in the circumstances which were to befall Him, in the midst of His people (and in that case taking the form of direct prophecy); or in the events which were to happen to His people (and in these He is found by His complete sympathy, as His Spirit expresses itself, “In all their afflictions he was afflicted,” or, as He said, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?”). In every case they are songs which give, not an historical narration, but the soul, the feelings, the thoughts, the dependence of the spirit of Christ under the circumstances detailed: an admirable thing to give us the most perfect acquaintance with Christ, and throw a light and a personal interest over all the circumstances described in the gospel histories, and in those prophecies whose accomplishment is yet future.

We find the mind and the thoughts of Christ, on all that was passing around Him, in the gospels. We find it also in the whole prophetic history of future events. These strains introduce us to His heart, whether it be to the reality of His sufferings, or to the perfection of His sympathy with His people. The sufferings and the kingdom of Christ are the completion of all the promises

which have been typically presented to us in David and Solomon: and the Spirit of Christ, as in the midst of His people, presents to us in the Psalms all that He was in them.

But there were also declarative prophecies; and we would speak a little of their character. These begin with the anticipated fall of the kingly power—the last means of maintaining the union (in the responsibility of man) of the government and the character of God in His called ones according to the flesh. In order to enter into their full character, we will take the prophet Isaiah, where the commencement of this species of prophecy is given us. This prophet begins by stating the complete fall of the nation—their future glory—the coming of the Gentiles to that revealed glory; and he takes Israel themselves for a witness that God had done all that was possible for them, and that they had only brought forth wild grapes. He declares, nevertheless, that after judgments grace should triumph in blessings to this rebellious and backsliding people. After this, he is regularly appointed to his mission, and goes to meet Ahaz.

It is to these latter circumstances that I wish to draw the attention of those who have accompanied me in my researches. The first thing to be observed is this: that the promise, and the prophecy as a witness of the promise, are always applicable to a state of failure. Adam, in a state of innocence, had no need of the promise. Israel, walking in all uprightness under the law, and rejoicing in all the blessings which flowed from it, was not the subject of the reprimands of God, or of promises tending to encourage the faithful, when depressed by the prosperity of the wicked or the misery of the chosen nation. Consequently, the promise and the

prophecy belong alike to grace. They are addressed to sinners, and are the intervention of God, to give an object to faith, or to sustain it where already existing. This is their character, as we find it in Isaiah 6— the manifestation of the glory of Christ, as the Lord God of Israel, convincing the nation and even the prophet of sin, but strengthening his mouth by purifying it to bear witness, in the midst of them, to the judgment of God, and also to His faithfulness in preserving for future blessing the seed which was to be the strength of the tree stripped of all its glory. I say, the glory of Christ, because it is thus stated in John 12. Judgment had been hanging over the heads of this people for centuries; but at length finds its accomplishment on their rejection of Christ, the true David. See John 12:40; Acts 28:26, 27. The other part of the spirit of prophecy is intercession, the spirit of faith, which acknowledges the people and the fidelity of God; the answer of the duration of the judgment of God, as not being for ever—an answer which is the support of the faithful remnant, in the midst of a wicked people. The glory of Christ, and His rejection (sufferings), are the two subjects of prophecy—a rejection which shews the fulness of that wickedness which the glory condemns, and becomes the foundation of the hope which finds its blessing and its end in that glory. Reproof always takes place according to actual circumstances; and the violation of that law which was the rule of the government of God, together with the idolatry which destroyed their witness as a chosen people to the one true God, furnished the occasion for those wonderful expositions of grace, of which the prophecies are full, and also for the detail of those circumstances, by which God vindicated His rights in

the midst of an ungrateful people by righteous judgments, and by means of a new covenant.

This is the reason that the prophets (I speak not now of Daniel and the Apocalypse), omitting the present dispensation, pass from the circumstances which gave rise to the prophecy to the circumstances in and by which the judgments of God on infidelity (which is the subject of the prophecy) shall be fully displayed. They pass to the events of the latter days, when God shall arise in judgment upon all nations—upon Israel, according to their behaviour as a people, and the Gentiles, according to their conduct towards that people; and when the glory of Christ, which has been the hope of the faithful in all ages, shall be manifested for their joy and complete happiness. It is impossible to understand the prophecies without looking to the circumstances of the latter days. Certainly there have been remarkable judgments on the Jews, and on the Gentiles who were in connection with them; but nothing which fulfils the prophecies, because nothing which fulfils the end of God. This, to my mind, is the meaning of the Holy Spirit, when Peter says, “No prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation”; it must form a link in the counsels of God, which only finds its completion in the solemn and magnificent scenes of the latter days. All the nations which persecuted Israel, and insulted God by their idols and their pride, shall take part in them. Christ must reign over all the nations. The mountain of the Lord’s house is to be set up above all mountains, and the Gentiles shall flow to it. He must reign in peace; but first the judgments of God must be manifested: “When thy judgments are in the earth, then shall the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.” The consequences of

these judgments on Israel, and even on the nations, may be seen in Isaiah, from chapter 13 to chapter 33, in which is contained also the glory of Israel, which shall be accomplished. The same may also be briefly seen in Jeremiah 25.

There are three classes of prophecy in the Old Testament, after the establishment of the kingdom—those which preceded the captivity, those during it, and those which followed the re-establishment of Jerusalem. But there is one event of the utmost importance, which gave rise to the division, viz., God's ceasing to reign in the midst of His people, and the giving authority and dominion over the whole earth into the hands of the Gentiles. Jerusalem ceased to be "the throne of the Lord," where His rule was directly displayed, where the ark of the covenant was found, and where God was seated between the cherubim. Consequently, there were prophets who bore witness to the circumstances of the Jews, and the other nations, whilst the throne of God was in the midst of Jerusalem, or who spoke of the judgments of God on His people and on their enemies. There were others who spoke of the state of the Gentiles, during the time that the authority of God in judgment was committed to their hands. The prophets after the captivity embraced both, and had a special character on account of the partial re-establishment of the Jews, whilst the Gentile empire still existed. The event of which we speak changed the whole state of the earth, by separating the government from the calling of God—two things which had long been united in the Jewish people under responsibility: a union which (having failed through the unfaithfulness of man, when God Himself ruled over them) had been propped up, and

established afresh, under the reign of a man who was a chosen type of Christ. From the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the throne of David, the government of the world was in the hands of the Gentiles; and the times of the Gentiles commenced (see Dan. 2:37, 38) under a responsibility, the effects of which are described in the book of Daniel, the Apocalypse, and Zechariah, and which are characterised in Daniel 4. The four great empires which, by their pride and in God's providence, successively seized on the supreme power, and consequently brought themselves under this responsibility and failed, are well known. All the time of their dominion, Israel has been Lo-ammi, "not my people." This is all that we need say of them at this present time.

Before this event, prophecy was the voice of God, judging the nations as from His throne in the promised land. The world is viewed in its pride, rising against God and His people, and Babylon presenting itself only as taking the place where Israel had reigned. Its destruction is consequently foretold; but its history, and that of the nations which succeeded it, are not given. The question is always between the God of Israel, Israel, and the world. There is no mention of Babylon in the first prophecies of Isaiah, which end at chapter 12. In chapter 13 we have the destruction of Babylon, which represents the habitable world. In chapter 14 it is said, "For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land; and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for

servants and handmaids; and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors." Here is Babylon set aside, and replaced by the restoration of Israel to dominion in the land of the Lord. "For the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion, from henceforth even for ever. And then, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion: the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem." This is the accomplishment of the prophecy in Micah 4, "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks." I have quoted all this as necessary to complete the scene. The details belong to the times of the Gentiles, which is the reason I refer to what belongs to those times.

But there were many prophecies which belong to Israel, recognised in a measure, though unfaithful. The great question was between Israel and the world, before and after the existence of the beasts: not as under their power, for the beasts come into existence only by Israel's ceasing to exist as a people. Egypt, which was at first the world, was already passed away in that respect —God having called His son out of Egypt. Assyria was its

representative: that is the reason we see so many vital questions, between Israel and Assyria, as the last thing in the history of the present age.

Babylon represented the world in the time of the empire of the Gentiles, when God had given the empire to the Gentiles, and she was responsible in herself for the exercise of His power. Daniel, as we have said, has given us the results, but the call of God (a principle of all importance) was separated from government. We see the character of the union of religion and government under the beasts, in Daniel 3. Faithfulness was displayed in keeping out of such a union, while acknowledging the authority of the government; but for religion it appeals to God alone. But while Israel was the called nation, Babylon was not in question.

But the question between the authority of God's government in Israel and the world ever existed. Nineveh and Assyria were the occasion of it. This was how God acted. He permits the world, as executor of His judgments, to lay waste His people for their good. Judgment begins at the house of God; but if the worldliness and the sin of His people have been corrected by the stronger worldliness and sin of the world, what will the end of that world itself be? We have, consequently, two prophets, whose witness concerns Nineveh only: one of these, the last witness given to the world in the mercy of God, that is to say, Jonah, a witness that there was the greatest and most speedy mercy for the world itself before God; the other, Nahum, a witness of the final judgment. "The Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown." "The Lord hath turned away the pride of Jacob, as the pride of Israel"; but there was, through

grace, a faithful remnant, though a small one. Here there was nothing but pride against the Lord: and who shall abide the day of His wrath? In the prophecies which bring into contact the state of Israel and the world, we find the activity of the Assyrian, as the last instrument of the wrath of God, and the judgment of Israel by its means; but at length their destruction by God Himself.

Israel is found a prisoner in Babylon, or, what is still worse, united in desire and principle with the king of the apostate system, having “made a covenant with death,” and being “at agreement with hell,” saying, “When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves”: wretched refuge against the justice and the wrath of the Lord! The return from Babylon, when Cyrus was king, changed nothing in fact: “Behold we are servants this day,” said Nehemiah (who felt the truth of the thing), “and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers, to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins; also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress,” Nehemiah 9:36, 37. And the Lord Himself, the legitimate King of the Jews, united Himself, in His infinite wisdom, to this confession of the state of His beloved Israel, in repelling their unholy temptations: “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” The wretched Jews received a repulse, which left the weight of their wicknedness on their own heads. Their malice and wretchedness reached their height

when they said, “We have no other king but Caesar.” Although their state varied according to the character, the strength, or weakness of their rulers, yet were they always under the dominion of the Gentiles.

But it was quite otherwise as to the Assyrian, the rod of the Lord: he humbles them. But the Lord, choosing Jerusalem, puts her by His power beyond all the efforts of the pride of the world. Thus, until the end of Isaiah 13 where the history of the world begins, the prophet pursues the history of Israel in relation with the king of Assyria. The other events are only passing troubles; and both in chapter 7 and chapter 8 the king of Assyria is the subject of the prophetic threatenings; and from chapters 9 and 10, from the actual circumstances of the moment, he shews the outstretched arm of the Lord, until He takes the Assyrian by His strong hand to be the staff of His indignation, which is completed, and ceases, in chapter 10:25, with the destruction of the proud king.

In chapters 10 and n we see the glory, the joy, and the peace of Israel, and of the world in their deliverance, a deliverance which, as the apostle says, shall be life from the dead. Chapter 10 marks, in a very striking manner, all the principles and effects of the judgments of God, which only leave a faithful remnant of His people, who destroy their enemies completely. It is God judging the earth, whether His people or the world. For this reason, after the destruction of Babylon and its king (who had been substituted in the place of God’s union with Israel), we find in Isaiah 14:24, 25 the destruction of the Assyrians upon the mountains, and the land purified from all those enemies, when the answer to the messengers of the nation shall be, that the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it

(v. 32). In the remainder of the chapters which are applicable to this subject, we see the judgments of God on all the nations who have interfered with the affairs of Israel, whether near or afar off beyond the rivers of Cush. We see the subject also treated of in reference to the latter days (the occasions of the prophecies being sometimes the Assyrians, sometimes Nebuchadnezzar), and a complete mixture of dates and circumstances, if we refer them to past time—exact, however, even in detail as to the latter days, a detail which is verified and arranged by a comparison with other prophecies.

To enter into the details would be to explain almost all the prophecies. The slightest attention will shew us the application of these things to the latter days (for example, chapter 18 and the end of chapter 19). But we have said enough to shew the separation of rule and the calling of God, in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the giving of government or power into the hands of the Gentiles. With them it still exists, and shall exist, until the destruction of the last of the four empires: with this destruction the times of the Gentiles end. During those times the calling of God remained with some of the Jews. After the fall of their nation, after all hope was lost for the Jews in their actual state by their rejection of Messiah, this calling took place in the church, not for earthly, but for heavenly places; and God, in His providence, surfers the last empire to exist until it rises against Him and His church. See Rev. 16:14; ch. 17:12, 14; ch. 19:19, 20. But this belongs to the history of the Gentiles, or to the hope and character of the church, of which we have before spoken.

We must observe here, that at the time of the invasion of the Assyrian (a type of what shall take place in the latter

days), they acted upon Israel and Judah, seizing Israel and falling before Jerusalem. The king of Babylon (representative of the empires) takes Jerusalem; consequently, when he is destroyed, Christ will retake Jerusalem; and the contest between Him, as King there, and the Assyrian will begin; and the restoration of Israel shall have its full accomplishment.

Thus, among the prophets of the captivity, we have in Jeremiah (who prophesied in the land) the total rejection of Judah, as Lo-ammi, not a people; and a new covenant made with the two divisions of the people, Judah and Israel; and under this covenant complete blessing is brought in both to that nation and to the earth. We see in Daniel the history of the four empires, and the circumstances of the call of God, until their end. In Ezekiel, we find an entire omission of the four empires. The prophet, having given an account of the destruction of Pharaoh by the king of Babylon (whose attempts were a last effort to obtain the empire before Babylon), passes at once to events which characterise the return of Israel and their re-establishment in their own land, and to the attacks which their last enemies will make upon them; attacks which only serve for the complete manifestation to the Gentiles of the glory of God in the midst of Israel. These last events bring us to the consideration of the reunion, once more, of rule and the call of God in the Jewish nation, but under His dominion, who, in the display of His glory, shall make all the earth happy; in the reign of Him who shall be a Priest upon His throne, and who will maintain the fulness of blessing by His presence in His reign, and by the complete union, established and settled in Him, between the heavens and the earth.

We will quote some passages as proof of the accomplishment of these things: first, of the government of Christ in Israel, as powerful to subdue and drive out the enemies of His ancient people; and then of His being the peaceful Benefactor of them, and through them of the whole earth: in both cases joining together power and justice, which had long been separated. The cross of Christ was the complete overthrow of justice on earth. For the only just One was persecuted by the people whom He loved—of whom He was the benefactor and the glory; condemned by him who represented the government of the world, and who, nevertheless, declared His innocence; and at length apparently, and in one sense really, forsaken of God and given up to the justice of Him He had appealed to. This is what the cross was to the world. The church, which views these things in their heavenly light, sees in them, not the judgment of the patient Jesus, but of that world which rejected Him. It sees heavenly justice in the abandonment on the cross (divine love having provided a lamb for a sacrifice)—a justice which made good the rights of that victim, not by helping Him in this sinful and wretched world, where He finished the work of salvation, but by receiving Him to that place which was the only real witness of His righteousness and the glory of His Person; namely, to the right hand of the Majesty on high. The church, consequently, partaking of the righteousness and glory of Christ, should seek rather the fellowship of the sufferings of her Head, than the participation of that false glory which drove Him from the earth (see Phil. 3); expecting that which He expects—that His enemies be made His footstool.

In those days His cause and His right shall be maintained even upon earth, and His right hand shall find out all His enemies. The Jews suffer the earthly consequences until this moment. The kingdom which has rejected Him in His humiliation, rising out of the abyss, will oppose Him when coming forth out of His place in His glory, and shall find its end. Then Christ, uniting Himself to His earthly people, or at least to the faithful remnant, will subdue the whole world unto Himself by His power. The little stone which broke the image shall become a great mountain, which shall fill all the earth.

This is the witness of a post-captivity prophet, given in the passage where he speaks of Christ manifesting Himself in humiliation: “When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. The Lord of Hosts shall defend them.” See Zech. 9 and 10. “I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I am the Lord their God and will hear them,” Zech. 10:6. And in chapter 12, “In that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it,” Zech. 12:3. The details of these things will be found in this chapter and the following ones. Jerusalem will have been taken before, as was foretold by Ezekiel, “I

will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him," Ezek. 21:27; see also Zech. 14. We see the same truth in Jeremiah 51:19, "The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the Lord of Hosts is his name. Thou art my battle-axe, and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms," etc.

Let us come to more general descriptions of the reunion of Christ with this people, at the time of their restoration. "The children of Israel," saith the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of Hosea, "shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." Read from chapter 2:15 to the end of chapter 3.

This is the promise in Jeremiah 32:37, "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in my anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart

and with my whole soul," etc. And in chapter 33:14," Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our righteousness. For thus saith the Lord, David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel.… Thus saith the Lord, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant," etc. Also verses 7, 8 and 9 of the same chapter, "And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and all the prosperity that I procure unto it." Also in Isaiah 59, having described the state of sin and ruin in which Israel was found, their transgressions being multiplied before the Lord and truth lost, the prophet announces the intervention of the Lord in these words: "And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breast-

plate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloke. According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adversaries, recompense to his enemies; to the islands he will repay recompense. So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun. When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. And the Redeemer shall come from Zion; and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob [or, shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob], saith the Lord." I take here the reading of the apostle (Rom. n:26), supported by many ancient versions, which alters nothing as to the present question; but the application of the passage by the apostle is of immense importance, for he says that it applies to the restoration of Israel, after the fulness of the Gentiles is come in; that is to say, to the glory of the nation after the end of the economy of the church.

There is yet another long passage which must be quoted. After the resurrection of the dry bones, the Holy Spirit by the mouth of Ezekiel says, "Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, 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. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have

spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord. The word of the Lord came again unto me, saying, Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: and join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them; so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them: and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have

dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children, for ever; and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."

We may also read in detail Isaiah 65 and 66, the elect remnant of Judah, and the judgments on the wicked nation, the blessing of the earthly Jerusalem after a marked distinction between the faithful and unfaithful Jews (chapter 65:13, 14; then chapter 66:15), the remnant addressed in terms of the greatest tenderness and consolation, and at last judgment on their enemies. "For, behold, the Lord 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 the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many… For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon

mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord… For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain," Isaiah 66.

The same thing may be seen in Joel 3 and the manner in which it shall be done in Isaiah 63 compared with Revelation 19. The promise is found in the second Psalm. I have already quoted the latter chapters of Zechariah, and will only select three passages, amongst numbers that present themselves: the first, respecting the re-establishment of the Jews; the second, respecting the judgment on the nations; and the third, concerning the presence of Christ as the strength of the restored nation against the Assyrian. "Behold," saith the Holy Spirit, by the prophet Amos, "the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God," Amos 9:13-15. "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the

Lord, to serve him with one consent," Zeph. 3:8, 9. What follows is the joy of Israel, saying, in verse 17, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty." "Thou shalt not see evil any more," v. 15. This is the quotation from the prophet Micah: "Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces," Micah 5:1-5.

That which follows is the description of what Jacob shall be in the midst of the nations, and of what God will be in the midst of Jacob and the nations: for, as we read in Zechariah 14:9, the Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one. We see the kingdom given to Christ after the destruction of the fourth beast; Dan. 7:13,14. In Psalms 75, 76, 82, we have God arising to judge the earth, because all have failed in obedience, walking in darkness, Christ celebrating the government of God as put into His hands, in Psalm 75, His re-establishment in Judah, in Psalm 76.

There is one consequence to be observed, which several of the quotations have in fact already marked; namely, the actual blessedness of the earth under the government of the Lord. The call to universal joy is found in Psalm 95; then in Psalm 96, the earth is called to sing the new song: being instructed, she sings the song in Psalm 97. Psalm 98 is the calling of Israel to sing. Their song is found in Psalm 99. Psalms 96 and 98 finish with one common chorus. The same state of things is described in Psalm 72, but directly as Christ reigning as Solomon. We have seen, in the passages quoted, the judgment of God on His unfaithful people, and the calling of God separated from His government, and the government made over to the Gentiles, furnishing afterwards the opportunity (through the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews) for the manifestation of the heavenly calling of God to the church.

We have seen the promise of the restoration of Israel, but under very adverse circumstances, even their chiefs at Jerusalem making a covenant with hell and the grave to escape the scourge of God; all the nations led by their pride and their passions against Jerusalem; the righteous judgment of God on His people: a time thus described by Jeremiah with the promises already quoted, Jeremiah 30:7: “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. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him. But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.” We have, in fact, seen all the nations of the earth assembled against her,

saying in their pride, Where is thy God? But at this word, this unknown God shall shew Himself to their confusion, and shall gather them as sheaves into the floor; Micah 4:12. Jerusalem becomes a burdensome stone to all nations. Her faithful remannt escape from the judgments. See Isaiah 65:19. To the faithful remnant the Saviour manifests Himself. They weep justly, but they will have David their king—His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives. Then the calling and the government of God shall be united once more, "This man shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into the land." The wrath against Israel shall then have ceased; their land shall be delivered from their oppressors, who had long filled it: and the dispersed among the nations shall return. "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people … and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord 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," Isa. 11:10-14.

All the promises to Israel shall be fulfilled to the letter: for when has God failed in His promises? But the earth also shall rejoice before the Lord, Himself coming to judge it. And we have seen in Daniel 7 dominion over all nations put into the hands of the Son of man; and His kingdom, which broke the image, becomes a mountain which fills all the earth. We have seen also, in speaking of the church, that Satan shall be bound at this time, and there will be a world blessed under the dominion of Christ, from which outward temptation and the tempter shall be alike banished. The Lord shall hear the heavens, and the heavens shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they shall hear Jezreel (that is, the seed of God); Hos. 2:21. There shall be a chain of blessing without interruption or hindrance from the throne of the Lord to His people blessed on the earth; and the Gentiles shall rejoice with them.

We have seen this state described in Psalms 96, 99, 72; Isaiah 24-28; and even the following chapters describe the same things. For it is in those days that the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Here is the truth of the promises. They shall bless themselves in the earth, in the God of truth. Here is the long expected accomplishment of the prophecies. Here the proof that the calling of God is without repentance, even on earth; and that His mercy endureth for ever. Here is the oath to David, to which the faithful God has not been wanting. Here is the government of God established, not on the instability of man under responsibility, but on the efficacy of the power of Christ, the Son of God, Son of man, Son of David, Heir of all things. Here, even on earth, is the

grace of God triumphing in the splendour of His justice: “Mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” “Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness look down from heaven; yea, the Lord shall give that which is good, and the land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him, and shall set us in the way of His steps.” We may read from Psalm 73 to the end of Psalm 77, which are all the description of what will take place in Emmanuel’s land in the latter days. The blessings of Noah, the promises made to Abraham, the hopes of David, shall be accomplished together; and men shall rejoice in the beneficence of the Lord, not in the miseries of their own weakness and the temptations of the enemy, but in the strength of a present God, and of Christ, the rightful Heir, the support, the Mediator, of all the blessings.

I have but one word to say, one character of Christ to add. It is in those days that He shall be manifested as the real Melchisedec, King of Righteousness, King of Peace; the Priest of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth; the High Priest, not of intercession within the veil, hidden in God, but come forth to bless, with the riches and abundance of His house, the people of God, already conquerors over all their enemies, and to pronounce on them the blessing of the Most High God, possessor then in blessing of the heavens and the earth, and to bring up praises worthy of Him in the mouth of the High Priest. Happy reciprocation of blessings! for if the blessings of God are the happiness of His people, the happiness of His people in Christ is the joy of God. It was meet to make merry and be glad for those which were dead, and are alive again, which were lost and are found. The happiness and blessing of

this earth are the joy of our gracious God; and the last Adam will not fail of this part of His inheritance. Happy those who are co-heirs with Him, and who, partakers of the divine nature, may rejoice with God in the blessings with which He clothes others, with hearts filled with His love. Blessed is the church of the Lord.

32 God had before said to Moses, “thy people, which thou.”

33 What is said in Deuteronomy 32 goes farther and deeper: God speaks not according to the covenant, but according to His sovereignty, and His thoughts. Consequently, the joy of the Gentiles with His people is there introduced.

Notes On The Revelation

Editor's Note34

The following pages pretend to be nothing more whatsoever than what is presented in the title. There is no attempt at a general exposition of this most instructive and important book: and those who seek for an exciting application to surrounding and past events will not find it here. The writer had noted down, in reading, what struck him in the text (often, he believes, overlooked in the framing of some general theory), and he has published what has struck his own mind for the purpose of drawing attention to the book itself. He has added some notes containing more the expression of the light thus elicited from the text; and in these and in the commencement, as he was writing really for the use of Christian brethren, he has not been afraid to communicate freely what thus struck him, desiring it to be as freely weighed, by this and other scriptures, before the Lord. In teaching, he would feel it wrong to teach anything which (however still fallible) he could not affirm was the Lord’s mind, without doubt in his own. Here, he has not exactly restricted himself to this, because he does not present himself as a teacher, but merely as seeking to help on others, who are enquiring with him. At the same time he has stated nothing he believes unweighed; nor, when a difficulty presented itself connected with any statement, has he allowed the statement to stand without the difficulty being solved. Many very simple statements have, in this way, been connected with much enquiry throughout Scripture; though neither the difficulty nor the solution appear,

perhaps, in what follows. But he has found abundant instruction and enlargement of judgment in Scripture in the research occasioned by it. He believes that the book, in the body of it, views the church as either mystically, according to Ephesians 2, or really, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:17, in heavenly places; and that the want of observing this has much obscured the study of it. He conceives that the scriptural estimate of Ephesians 2 has justified an application of it to past events (though on ground of which those who so applied the prophecy were, in the wisdom of God, scarcely conscious), and application which had its force in a period now nearly, though not quite, passed away; while the application of it, consequent on 1 Thessalonians 4:17, clearly has, as to the substance of it, to begin. I say, the substance of it, because, in tracing the evils to their sources, and developing the various subjects, there are many connecting links, with antecedent facts and events; and this not only in the more hidden sources, but, while the dispensation of judgment is quite distinct from the dispensation of patience, the tares which are judged in the one are often to be spiritually discerned in the other. And hence it is that the book is given to the church. The judgment of God in power supplies force to the conduct and judgment of the church in patience. It seems to me, then, that they are both alike practically wrong who have slightingly rejected the one or the other, and thus respectively deprived the church of each.

A difficulty may perhaps present itself to some. It will be found that many points familiar to modern students of the prophetic words are taken for granted; as, for example, the idea of a personal Antichrist is assumed to be just.35 The answer to such an objection, if these

papers should be subjected to such, is, that they are not written to demonstrate truths already elementary to those to whom they could be interesting. The writer is presenting what has occupied his own mind to those who, with him, stand on such points as admitted, and seek to make progress. It is possible some inconsistencies may be found. The writer has found his own mind grow clearer, and make progress in the research occasioned by the study of the book; and it is possible that some immature idea, assumed unconsciously, but not stated in the word, may be found. He is not aware, however, of any. He has found disencumbering himself of his own or others' assumptions a main point of progress. Finally, he would say, that there are certain great outlines and truths of a definite character in the word of prophecy—safeguards in every research. If in any details he has erred against these, he trusts any such idea may be at once rejected. He commends what he has written to the blessing of God, whose the church is, and who loves it; and to the thoughts and enquiries of those brethren who are led by the Spirit of God, to search into and be instructed in these things.

We cannot, I think, interpret the divine word in the book of the Revelation with the same confined sense that the ancient prophecies carry; because the church has the mind of Christ, and is supposed not merely to have particular facts communicated to it, but to understand the thoughts of God about, or as manifested in, those facts.

To take an example: I read in Isaiah, "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor brought to mind. But rejoice ye for

ever in that which I create; for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." Now here, I find this vast and blessed expectation of the new heavens and the new earth brought down to a definite joy connected with earthly associations, and resulting from known though new enjoyments and blessings; coming indeed fresh from the hand of God, and, therefore, real and divine blessings, but restricted to a given and earthly sphere, and to definite facts.

Could the church confine itself to this sphere? or are such its apprehensions created by the testimony of a new heavens and a new earth? Clearly not. The mind of God—the glory of Christ—the deliverance of the whole groaning creation of which (in the marvellous love of God, and the power of that worthiness which makes it due to Christ, according to the counsel of grace and glory which unites them to Him) the church is a fellow-heir with Christ—the being like Him, and seeing Him as He is, displayed in the same love of the Father in which He is, that the world may know it—the savour of that love which can delight not only in its own blessing, but by its divine nature, in the blessing of others—and the filling of all things with the divine glory, first mediatorially, and then directly—these are the thoughts (with the blessing of banished sin, perfected holiness, and the restoration of all things) which would occupy the mind of the church as having the Spirit.

Whoever, then, would set about to present the contents of the Revelation with the same confinedness of interpretation as Old Testament prophecy at once puts the church out of her place as the full confidante of God and the wonderful counsellor, as having the mind of Christ, and narrows the glory and the counsel to the

feebleness of that state with which the church's position is expressly contrasted (1 Cor. 2:9, 10; see that whole passage). We may indeed know in part and prophesy in part, and so learn from time to time; but, in another sense, we have an unction from the Holy One, and we know all things, because we have the Spirit of God who formed, ordered, and reveals them. We are of one counsel with Him, have the mind of Christ, and are not merely the objects of that counsel, as they of old. Being children, the family interests are ours as well as His, though we may be but feeble in the detailed apprehension of them. Now the Revelation has particularly this character, because it was left for the church (not a communication between living apostles and living men, but left for the church), as having the Spirit and dependent on the Spirit, and so, as having that Spirit, to use it in time to come; and so only.

Consistently herewith, the address is not an address of personal relationship, but the presenting of that which is the subject of knowledge. The most blessed truths of redemption may shine forth throughout it, yet it is not the address simply of the Father, by the Spirit, to the family, as to the things which concern them within the family. The Father36 is not spoken of in it, save in one place, as the Lamb's Father or we, save as kings and priests to His Father); never as in intercourse with the children as His children. This difference, and the corresponding characters of the operation of the Spirit, I find constantly maintained in the Scriptures.

Accordingly we find (with much additional light, indeed, for the sphere is much wider, and the foundation of divine conduct on a much fuller and more widely extended base) that the position and imagery of the

Revelation are all Jewish in character, though not Jewish in place. Neglect of this last point has misled many whose views have been contracted, and who have not in this, I believe, been led by the Spirit of God.

It is not the Father we have here (at least not in that character), but the temple and temple circumstances—He that was, and that is, and that comes. It is a throne and not a family: but it is not, on the other hand, the temple on earth at all, but the mind of God acting there on the throne, but in the perfection of that provident wisdom, in which the seven spirits are before the throne. He that sat on the throne37is the character and leading title of the Almighty in the Revelation; but that throne is not at Jerusalem, and has nothing to do with it immediately as the place of its establishment.

It is, in this sense, the book of the throne when the King had been rejected upon earth.

We have, in conformity to this idea, not the Son in the bosom of the Father, but a revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him; and He sent and signified it by an angel to His servant John. All this is Jewish in its character. It is not the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost testifying, but God, Jesus Christ, and the ministration of angels to a servant: none of the other things, of course, ceased to be true; but it was not the character here developed. It is therefore the word of God, the testimony of Jesus Christ, and visions; and there is blessing on the reader. It is addressed to the church in its full privilege; but the subject presented is governance, and order and control, not sonship with the Father. God would instruct His servants.

The blessings to the churches are conformable to this: from One who bears the character of Ancient of Days, who shall come—who was, and is, and is to come; and we see the Spirit, not as on earth, the Comforter (come down here, and in the sons, looking up there), but in His various and manifold sufficiency and perfection, in the presence of the throne, and as afterwards sent in power into the earth (providential protection and power) and from the Lord, not as the Son, one with His Father (see John 14:20), so that we are with Him there through the union of the Spirit, but seen as in human character, as a faithful Witness the First-begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth—glorious in all this, but human.

Still the church is put in full confidence here, for the praise to this blessed One is praise in which this word of the Spirit “us” is ever found; and, seeing Him in the glory, she breaks out, by the Spirit in the apostle, into thanksgiving, for His praise cannot be passed by; for she is loved, washed, and will reign in nearness to God and His Father.38 To the world and to the Jews, His coming will be sorrow. Here, then, we find the place of all these parties at the outset. This is its form, then, “He that is, and was, and is to come”39— the perfection or fulness of the Spirit before the throne: Jesus known as faithful, risen, to reign—all on earth.40 The church, meanwhile, knowing its own position in this, therefore says, not Our Father, but His—His God and Father: for so it is. The announcement of what the purport of Jesus’ coming is to the world follows thereon, completing what He is and was on earth, the churches portion thereby, and the world’s at His coming. In verse 8 we have the announcement of His titles and character here, by “the

Lord." Upon His name, thus developed, all the stability of purpose and government hung; and the church had need to know this in all the circumstances which followed. Her place follows—as to the present, in the place of the instrument of this word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ (the word is God's, the testimony Jesus's—in hearing Him we "set to our seal that God is true"); "your brother and fellow-partaker in the tribulation, and kingdom and patience in Jesus." This is the church's place through the recognition of sonship, while the throne is above. But it is not in union and headship, but kingdom and patience. Still, in whatever form, the word she ministers is the word of God or the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Lordship in itself is not the highest title of Christ: "God hath made him both Lord and Christ." To us there is but one God, the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ. But in this word the herald of God announces all the style of His ancient and future glory; for Lord here, doubtless, answers to Jehovah. Further, this book does not present to us the Holy Ghost received of the Father, sent down to produce a public testimony to the world. Nor is it a gift received as needful for the maintenance of the church, and communicated "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come," etc. But it is a revelation given to Christ, and communicated when the church had begun to decay (instead of growing), and had need, in its severed compartments, at very best to be reproved or encouraged, as so looked at apart—as these several candlesticks —the Son of man interfering as the High Priest, but judicially: a revelation given (not the Spirit communicated) when all this darkness and (in principle)

apostasy had come in. Each one of these seems another thing, and less immediate than the promise in John already referred to (John 14:20), “In that lay ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”

There is the sonship of Christ with the Father, in respect of which the Holy Ghost dwells in us (the Spirit of adoption and union, the Comforter) and looks up and places us before the Father even as He the Son is.

There is Christ, the Head of the body, the exalted Man (the first-born among many brethren), in which character He receives the promise of the Father, and imparts it, as power for testimony. And there is the Lordship of Christ over the world, which is communicated subordinately to the church, who reign with Him, are kings and priests to His God and Father, by virtue of the previous parts of blessing. This last, after the judgment of the churches in their present state, is the subject of the book of Revelation. This state of the churches becomes thus very important and appropriately introductory.

After the heading, and four subsequent verses of introduction, including His work, our position (i.e. as kings and priests), and His coming again, we find the announcement, that, come what would, the Lord was the beginning and ending, the Almighty.

Then we have the revelation to one cast out into the wilderness, the depository of the sorrows of the church, and so of the providence of God, but in the Spirit, on the day typical of the rest of glory which remains. He sees Christ in the midst of the seven candlesticks (not as a servant with His loins girt, but) in holy execution of judgment as priest, the symbols of the Ancient of Days

being withal upon Him. It is not Christ on high. It is not Christ the Head of one body.41 It is not Christ in heaven. But he turns and sees Him governing, judging, and holding in His hand the destinies of the several churches; but while, with the symbols of the Ancient of Days upon Him, yet revealing Himself for the church to the faithful disciple, as One that lived, was dead, and is alive for evermore,42 having power over the gates of His enemies, the keys of hell and of death. This the apostle saw: such was the place Christ took now—a different place from being the communicating Head of the body, however, that might also be. The seer was to write these things, and the things which are, and what should be after these things. In a word, we have the Almighty continuance, which comprehends all things, of the Lord, and the present position of the Son of man in the churches, yet He that lived, was dead, and was alive, and had power over the power of death. The churches are the things that are. There is a close connection between the things that are and those that were seen; for, turning to see the voice that spake with him, he sees the golden candlesticks. So, often, as in the judgment of "the woman," the chief part of the description is of "the beast," chap. 17.

The addresses to the churches are not part of the things that are, properly; they come in by the by, and designedly so: "Unto the angel, etc., write," and "he that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." Yet the existence of the churches themselves and the stars constitute the things that are, and are of all importance, as shewing the transition from the state in which Christ, according to Ephesians 4 was the Head of the one body, making it grow by that which every joint

supplied (in which its original state was connected with, and presented in, its abstract and mystic perfectness—the results of which shall be manifested in that day when it shall be manifested as one with Him), to the state of ruin and apostasy into which it actually fell, so as to be cut off and spued out of His mouth: as a dispensation—a state of transition—in which He was not filling the one body with gifts, but judging details in the several corporate bodies, in different places, and judging the evil inconsistent with the moral design of the church, maintaining a character absolutely necessary to their recognition as His—as churches at all. Hence, they are moral addresses of the Spirit with promises and threatenings. From this last recognised state, this place of transition, in which Christ can deal upon earth (but in a spiritual sense) judicially, we are necessarily caught up to the throne, on which all hangs subsisting always, but now the only resource; because the manifestation of acceptable grace, with which the Lord can manifestatively dwell in spiritual presence upon earth, had ceased. Hence this part is not properly prophetic, but connected with things that are; and the prophetic character that it has is entirely by the moral designation of the testimony of the Spirit; and we come back to the throne, after these things.43 If John was to describe the government of the world on the throne, the church being lost, he must first trace the church as subjected to this moral judgment. The picture of the word would not be complete, had we not, after the epistles which regulated the church, as subsisting among the Gentiles, not only the practical account of the apostasy, as in Jude, 2 Peter, 2 Timothy, 2 Thessalonians, etc., but the moral judgment of the church, as passing from the state noticed in the epistles—evidences that

Christ never lost sight of it, and that when it ceased to be a manifestative place of His presence —His epistle— He takes His place and title in the throne whence all things are governed— “the same yesterday, to-day and for ever”; “Him who was, and is, and is to come”; “the First and the Last,” comprehending and ruling all things. The things that are, then, are the seven candlesticks and the seven stars—mystic perfection and actual imperfection; the church never losing its mystic perfection in the mind of God, but when it has to be addressed on earth—to be addressed as figured in so many separate bodies then actually existing, and often with reproofs and threatenings.

The things that are, then, involve both these points.

The things that shall be hereafter, or after these things, begin when He that sits on the throne begins to act in providence, not when Jesus is in recognised church relationship, or even in judicial testimony to the church when the world (creation) is brought into view. It does not follow from this, that there may be no saints, or that they may not be faithful and give a testimony, but that the Lord does not stand towards them in this particular character of relationship.

The things which are, and the addresses to the seven churches, have (connected with this, to my mind) a double character; i.e., accordingly as we look at actually existing facts, or facts dispensationally existing: an observation which has strictly the same application to the expression of the Lord to the Jewish economy: “This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled” —the connection of which, indeed, with this subject is more strong than is at first sight apparent (for

the fortunes44 of the church and the Jews are more coincident than we suppose as to dispensation, though for the same reason opposite in principle. The root bears us, though the branches may be broken off that we may be grafted in), and has its light increased by, while it casts light on, the passage at the end of John's gospel, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" This was taken as if he in person would not die. But, says the inspired writer, that was not said by the Lord, but "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" The Lord, then, in that expression, left something for the church's wisdom and spirituality to discover. He did not say he should not die, but "If I will," etc.

Now it appears to me that we have very distinctly, in Peter, Paul, and John, the three representatives of, first, the Jewish church, as planted, its tabernacle shortly to be put off; then, the Gentile church in its energy, as planted, and ministerially sustained of the apostle (i.e., Paul), but, after his decease, the flock unspared, and perverse men arising, and so that departing too—Ichabod on that; lastly, John on the contrary is placed in contrast with the cutting off of the Jewish body likened in the person of Peter to the Lord, and made to represent the extended protracted existence of the church as one hanging on the will of the Lord, having lost and forfeited its real character, to which faithfulness attached blessing and sustaining power, as due to the character of God, and just hanging now on His secret counsel. And accordingly we have John here, who was in the bosom of Jesus and received the communication of His mind and secret knowledge, hanging over the fallen and falling fortunes of the church—already fallen, if we compare them with their estate as planted, not now

sustained by Paul's apostolic care and energy, but beset by wolves and perverse men, and falling, yet sustained by this word, "If I will that he tarry till I come." Now I take it that this suspended place had its form actually and externally at the destruction of Jerusalem. Then also "this generation" took its place externally: the earthly local centralisation of the church was externally set aside (it was really from the time of Stephen's death, when the first martyr left the world to go, as to his spirit, on high), and, the Lord's hand having set aside the earth as His place, all was in abeyance till He personally took up the matter again—coming again in connection with a similar overturning: the fitting of which two events together is what constitutes the force of Matthew 24:1-43. In the meanwhile the throne was really set up in heaven, giving the evidence that everything had failed on earth, but that nothing could fail in the purpose and throne of God. With this the book commences; and the protracted condition of the churches is brought in after the throne is set up, as incidental before the unfolding of the actings, in the world, of the throne so set up in faithfulness.

I hold therefore that the things that are, and this address to the churches, give this double character, as to period, to the Revelation. If we take the things that are, as that which actually existed in the time of John, then it closes with the actual existence and state of those churches, as addressed by John, or rather with the life of John himself, who addresses them under the warning of removal for their failure. The throne at Jerusalem being gone, there was still, by him who had been there with the Lord, a recognition of the churches as something upon earth. There was nothing sealed in

this. But if we take the apostle as the mystic representative of the dispensation in its condition after the departure of Peter and Paul,45 then it is the protraction of that state of things, till the church, as a dispensation, is spued out of Christ's mouth; and the things that shall be hereafter are the actual intervention of the throne of God afresh in the government of the world.

I believe the Holy Ghost has ordered it so as to leave ground for both these applications; as the church knows the throne mystically now in the exaltation of her Head, and actually in its future judicial and open intervention in the affairs of the world.

Accordingly, chapters 2 and 3 are addresses to the churches, but, on moral principles, extended to every one that had ears to hear; connecting the actually existing bodies with the condition in which the church might find itself in after ages. "The things that are "are, more properly, what then was; the addresses to the churches, the exhibition of the protracted prolongation of the dispensation of the church, mystically perfect, yet ruined (the throne being set up already, but its full manifestation, as for the world, not yet brought out). Within this scene, the yet remaining attention of Christ to the churches, as to the formal manifestation in the body on earth, was in warning and judgment, not headship. This being their state on earth, in heaven they were only expecting with Him a glory which could not fail.

It is not my object here to enter into the detail of instruction given to the churches, though it be most personally precious; turning attention here rather to the

structure and prophetic character of the Apocalypse. And, as briefly as I may, I add, therefore, here merely the order of the statements made to these churches, and their condition, that they may stand together before the mind of the reader of the Apocalypse.

Firstly, declension from first love, and the Lord taking the place of examination and judgment.

Secondly, persecution: Christ the overcomer of death, a giver of the crown of life.

Thirdly, dwelling in the world, to wit, where Satan's throne is (the prince of this world), yet Christ's witness amongst them where Satan dwelleth, suffering faithfully: with this, the beginning of teaching error for reward, and allowance of evil and low practice. Christ would fight against them (to wit, as an adversary) if they did not repent.

Fourthly, a state of increased devotedness in patience, charity, and works; but Jezebel, teaching communion with an evil and idolatrous world; and suffered. Space had been given for her repentance, but she did not (note here, it is a woman, not some of them). Judgment would fall on her followers, but discriminating—to every one according to his works, and no further burden laid on the faithful.

Here begins another distinction, that, whereas the reward promised was, previously, after the warning to hear, from this point it comes regularly before. On this fearful judgments, and the Lord's coming first introduced and the morning star, and the kingdom on the earth substituted for the professing church.

Fifthly, a name to live, but no reality; profession of being alive as something distinctive: but there were, however, things remaining and a few names. The Lord, if they did not repent, would come on them like a thief: here the church, in this state, judged like the world.

Sixthly, weakness, but an open door, marked, not by detailed works, but keeping the word of Christ, of His patience, and not denying His name. They would be kept from an hour of temptation, which was coming on all the world to try the dwellers upon earth. Compare Isaiah 24.

Seventhly, the church to be spued out of His mouth without proposal of repentance, because of what they had become, yet counsel given; and if any one who has remained within and heard when Christ knocked still at the door, that one would be with Him.

Such is the course presented by these churches in their moral character and condition.

These addresses, however, as we have remarked, come in incidentally. John was to write the things he saw. But this was not properly his vision, but came in afterwards, generally under the things that are, and that only as a consequence.

In the fourth chapter we come to the next branch of the subject—the things after these, or (as it is here translated) which must be hereafter, taking up chapter i: 19.

If we take the former part as the protracted condition of the church dispensation, then this will be the power of the throne of Him who was, and is, and is to come,46 (the Lamb being still, however, there), exercised over the world, after the close of this dispensation, yet

properly before the beginning of the next. If we take the former part as the things which actually then were (and, doubtless, such actually existed), then it is the governance of the world, when the church had no formal recognised existence on earth which could be called the habitation of God in any full sense, though just as dear to Him individually as regards salvation. I believe both these thoughts are intended for the church. In the former case we have literal fulfilment of the prophecy which follows; in the latter, analogies in a protracted period.

The apostle now is translated (in spirit) into heaven. Before, he had seen Christ, on turning round: a newly revealed state of things, but on earth, and he there still. But the churches now were no longer so recognised; and the voice, which he had heard at the first behind him on earth, now calls him up to heaven.

Here, accordingly, for the first time, he saw the throne, for it is set in heaven (the earth, as addressing the church, he had left), and there was One sitting on it.

Heretofore, it has been the Son of man judging upon earth: according to His various glory, in address; but in vision, the Son of man. We have not the Son of man again, till the judgment in chapter 14:14. The Lamb only is concerned in the seals. The angelic power is connected with the trumpets. We shall see this more particularly; but I remark only, the Lamb is always in a higher or lower place (this latter, by grace), not exercising intermediate providences; in the throne, suffering, or judging.

It was in heaven the apostle must learn the things which were to be hereafter. There only they can be learned;47

and, by the habituation of the mind there, seen, as they are important to God, to Christ, and, therefore, to the church, and to the Spirit for the church. No one having the Spirit, so as to be interested in God's mind about the church loved of Christ, could be indifferent to them.

But to follow closely the chapters. Chapter 4 sets up the throne in heaven, and One is sitting on it. The sign of the covenant with creation was around the throne. There is no statement of a veil, intercession, incense, or priesthood. It is government—elders on thrones. There were the seven spirits, the Holy Ghost in His energy and perfectness, the fixed moral purity which belonged to the place, the approach to the throne, and, lastly (that of which most was said), four beasts,48 which were the heads of the genera of creation, and filled with the intelligence and activity of providence, celebrating Jehovah Elohim Shaddai, the covenant and dispensational names of God, not the relationship name of the church, thus representing the throne of providence and creation, controlling all the springs of the state of things in nature; of which throne these living attributes of God formed the pillars and support; they were around the throne. It was the temple; but the temple was the accompaniment of the throne, without veil or priest. The twenty-four elders may be taken as the representatives of the redeemed of the two dispensations; but it was not the essential character. They were on thrones. But I doubt they went beyond creature instrumentality, however sustained by divine power. The beasts or living creatures are more particularly noticed as connected with the living creatures of Ezekiel— the living supports of the throne of God, leaving (judging rather) Jerusalem, now found as

parts of the circle of the throne in heaven.49 We may remark, that all dispensation, and that which is the source of it, is noticed (save the church properly, i.e., sons with the Father)—God, Shaddai (i.e., God as with Abraham, the Almighty), and Jehovah, the Governor, who is, and was, and is to come. A part of these living creatures, the eyes, are found elsewhere: first, in 2 Chronicles 16:9—there service generally; in Ezekiel their connection is with the place of the throne which had been in Jerusalem, but a throne of God over all, the Spirit leading; graven on the stone laid, in Zechariah 3:9, and again, in Zechariah 4:10, resuming their course through the earth, and, as we shall soon see, as the eyes of the Lamb (as possessing all power in heaven and earth), the seven Spirits so sent forth.

This, then, established the throne, the church not being (properly speaking as such) in the scene at all, save representatively in the enthroned elders. It was another subject. The throne of Him that liveth for ever and ever was the subject here. In chapter 5 the book is introduced to us. The throne first established, whatever happened now was what hung on the throne. In the right hand of His power who sat on the throne was a book.

There may be some allusion in this, and the little open book, to Jeremiah 32; but it is (to say the least) very faint. A title to open a book is a distinct thing from a book containing a title, the evidences of a title. Besides, it was a book to be read, to be opened and read, as containing communications of the mind of God. But the death of Christ doubtless gave Him the title to the inheritance morally, and to open the book, and purchased and redeemed the joint-heirs.

It is not, moreover, here the kingdom merely of the Son of man, as given to Him, nor the title of the Offspring of David {that is not brought in until the end), but the Root of David, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, David's Lord, not his son—He hath prevailed. The redemption, or purchase, here, is of the church50—a new song, not a Jewish one. It was a book in the hand of God, of Him that sat on the throne, not antecedently revealed, nor the subject of ordered prophecy before, and founded, not on promise which man could have had on uprightness, as the Jewish promises, but solely on the exaltation of the Lamb that was slain; and His being on the throne who was rejected on earth, and specially in the character of the head of these promises to the Jews; and none, therefore, but He, could open it or look on it. The title, too, is one higher than the official or given inheritance of the Son of man, deeper in its ground, and much more exalted. It is a place and a title, held in the throne—the Lamb slain there. This was not a title properly given to a mediatorial person in peace; but a title, due, perhaps, as to person, but acquired by excellency, and humiliation, and perfectness. In this place, the communication is with the elder, as representing, I apprehend, the church cognisant ("for you hath he reconciled") of the tide and glory of the Lamb.

We are then shewn the Lamb slain—He who did not resist evil, but gave Himself even unto death, and was led to the slaughter, "as he had been slain"; the full power actually, the seven horns, and full knowledge, seven eyes, being in Him, and thus universal permeation of knowledge. His eyes were the seven spirits sent forth into all the earth. Those spirits, the light and power of

the holiness of God before the throne, thus characterising His presence, were now the agents of the active discernment and power of Him who was justly exalted. It was not then the Son of man, in His titles of inheritance, but the Lamb who opened the book. To Him and to the church, in measure, as one with Him, as suffering, rejected, and exalted in her Head, the opening of the book appertains. We have the mind of Christ—to us by the word.

He came and took the book. The moment He had done this, the beasts and elders (i.e., in principle and title, creation, providence, and redemption) all own His headship, the headship of this humbled but exalted One; for, though the Lion of the tribe of Judah had undertaken it, yet the church knew His titles as Root of David, and yet the Lamb slain but now exalted to the throne as such. The book unfolded what under His hand concerned them; all of it was the counsel of God to bring all out into the place they had in His mind and purpose. Verse 9 should be, “they sing” not “they sung.” This is what they do in heaven, as under the Lamb. This being so, “us” would be no difficulty. Perhaps we are bound to take the correction of Griesbach, which would remove even its appearance to the eye, the sense remaining the same. It is remarkable, that while the same confidence and title is expressed by John writing to the saints on earth in the first chapter, and here by those around the Lamb on the throne, they add here, to shew their state of expectancy,51 “We shall reign.” That was needless to say, though true, to the saints on earth: it was pretty plain to sufferers that they were not reigning. We might have thought that these were. They are therefore shewn to us in this state of expectancy.52 The four beasts are

ever mentioned first, as connected with divine power, and entirely distinct from the angels.53 I see not exactly, how one searching Ezekiel, and their places here, can doubt their general force. They are more intimately conneaed with redemption, because all that displays creation and providence being connected with, and come under, the power of evil subjectively, they are especially interested in it. The angels merely celebrate the Person of Him that was slain, and His excellent dignity. And, after them, all the actual creation (of which as creatures they are head, they having owned the Lamb as worthy) celebrate Him that sirteth on the throne, and the Lamb together. And the four beasts, who sum up all its moral import, say, Amen. And the elders, the intelligent redeemed, fall down and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever. This is His highest and essential character; and in this they close the doxology. First, redemption; then, the angels own the Lamb; then, every creature Him that sits upon the throne and the Lamb; the living beasts saying, Amen: and then the elders Him that liveth for ever and ever, filled with all the fulness of God. This is particularly the portion of the elders, though it is the same blessed One that is honoured by the beasts; but their word is continuance, rather Jehovah-continuance—was, and is, and is to come—relative continuance, not intrinsic life; for, though the throne is the the great head and source of all, yet redemption leads us more deeply into the knowledge of Him that sits upon it, and puts all things in their place. 54 This, then, is a position which bears upon the whole to the end, though much intermediate important matter may come in under different heads; but the position of this bears upon all the intrinsic exaltation of the Lamb to the throne. Many dispensatory arrangements and

providences may come in subordinately, but this is the key to the result. Further, this is connected with the immediate relationship of the church with Christ. The church knows Him as the Lamb, and should be the follower of Him, and representative of Him as such here. The Lord may act on the dispensation by many external circumstances and orderings; He does not act in it but in this character. As such, He is primarily glorified; as such, the world is against Him, and Satan's rage in its deepest and intrinsic character. The church is seen in its dispensed perfectness as kings and priests (seven is the number for its abstract mystic perfection); because, though all through this period, viewed in its protracted character of years for days, it was yet imperfect, yet here the government of the world is viewed,55 not the dealing with the church; and therefore, in placing the parties (if I may so speak, the dramatis personae), the church is viewed as a complete distinct whole. Although it is the supreme throne which is above all, and the source of all (it is He that sits on the throne that makes all things new, and is here the object of supreme worship), yet, relatively it is not the throne of God at Jerusalem. It is not the filial relation of the church, nor the ordered throne of the Son of man, but the throne in heaven;56 and there the Lamb in the throne, with the power, knowledge, and holiness belonging to it in exercise, and that over the earth.

There is a very distinct break, in the course of the book, at the close of the eleventh chapter, which, in the sum of its contents, closes the whole book. The time was come that those that destroyed or corrupted the earth should be destroyed. But in chapter 12 it resumes from the origin, to bring in the radical character and development

of the last form of evil; and, as this will be manifested in fact at the end, as to the facts, it may be taken as a continuance of the previous visions. But there is another important division within the first eleven chapters. At the beginning of the eighth chapter, the last seal is opened by the Lamb. Now of course this closes the book; and though that which follows may come under it, yet is it a distinct course and character of events. The Lamb is not spoken of during the course of the trumpets; all is angelic. After chapter 12 we have the Lamb again: of that we can speak there. The Lamb is in opposition to man and the world; that is, they have rejected Hint. And the suffering church, at least, is rejected by the world; and what concerns it is what answers to Christ in that character. This, then, is what we have under the seals. In a certain sense, this is always true: for “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall surfer persecution”; but it is not dispensatorily true (i.e., as to the condition of the church). We have then, looking at it as progressive history, three great divisions: the church under the Lamb; the church under the ministration of angelic providences; and the church under and during the last great apostasy, traced from Satan’s power at the outset. The world meanwhile, not the church, is the subject of the statements contained in these portions.57 Upon this earthquake great terror manifests itself; but it is not the expression of God’s revealed judgment, but of their terror. I do not say this may not have an application afterwards, and that the kings of the earth may have terror then; but this is not the kings joined to the beast, making war with the Lamb, and slain with the sword of Him that sat on the horse. It is terror on an earthquake, which they ascribe to the wrath of the Lamb, as if His day were come. It is after this all the trumpets sound.

On the ground on which I am at present interpreting (that is, that of the protracted period), it would be the upsetting of that heathen empire, with its rulers, which had hitherto been in existence, with the consequent terror and dismay of the Lamb's enemies. The idea of an application to such a period is often unjustly combated, and the name of Constantine introduced to shew that what he did in the church was of no consequence, or evil instead of good. But this anxiety proceeds on a false supposition that this is the history of the church; whereas it is the history of the Lamb's government of the world in providence. And in this respect we should remember there never was such an event since Babel, and its consummation in the image at Babylon, as the setting aside the direct worship of Satan in the imperial nation. And this is what took place then.

The recognition of the church, in spite of all, then, comes in by and by: first, the full complement of the elect Jews; and, then, the multitude of the Gentiles with their portion. Nothing was allowed to be done till these were reckoned up or owned in their place.

The first tumult and storm of nations was arrested till this was distinctly done. Such had been the power of God in the Spirit during this period, in spite of all the persecutions and oppositions of ungodly men. The fifth and sixth seals shew the different result of the actually persecuted or rather killed, and the powers that had persecuted them;58 the seventh, the great result, in spite of the persecution—the word of God had not been bound.

The four winds, blowing on the earth and sea, shew the disorder and tumult of the spirit of nations. Here, not

merely on the sea, wherefrom, consequent on it, Daniel saw the four great beasts or kingdoms emerge; but on the earth, here, because there was already a settled and ordered system which was effected by them as well as the mass of unformed nations— the sea. This was arrested till it was shewn how effectual the word of God had been in spite of opposition.

The seals, as well as the trumpets, and perhaps, I might add, the vials, are divided into four and three. The four beasts call to see the consequences of opening the first four seals. The last three have their own special character. The division of the trumpets is well known; the last three being woe-trumpets. The seven churches are divided into four and three, by the different position of the promise and warning to all that have ears to hear. I think, it will be found that no repentance is proposed to the church after the first three.59 Looked at in the light of the sustaining power and attributes of providential rule, the call of the four living creatures is very intelligible.

Taking the interpretation now according to the protracted course of divine government, the first four seals would be the history of the empire. I hold a horse to be the symbol of imperial or royal power in exercise. And such would be God’s account of the course of the empire then existing. If it be asked, What avails this to the saint? I answer, Everything:— to know that all passes under the eye and knowledge of God. This lion, in whose mouth they were, had his days and ways all numbered and ordered of the Lord; and they were, indeed, in union with Him who governed, though they might suffer with Him. The understanding of this place

of patience was, and to us is, of the very last importance.

In the fifth seal we have the estimate of those who had suffered during this period graciously taken notice of, although it had been enough to have shewn all was ordered. But it comes out here that many had been killed. Their place is ordered. This was not the last persecution.

The sixth seal has occasioned great difficulty. I admit the application of all this to an ulterior period, if “the things that are” be taken as the whole dispensation, which I recognise. There was a great earthquake,60 and the ruling powers shaken, convulsions of the prophetic earth, and dislocations of its governing powers;61 and, to strengthen the saints, the consequence is shewn.

The seventh seal gave occasion to the definite results of the state of things introduced by the fifth. There were those who had come out of great tribulation, and were fully owned—their robes were “white in the blood of the Lamb.” The seventh seal once opened, we hear no more of the Lamb. The church, as a dispensation, had ceased to be in a suffering state.62 Of the seventh seal nothing could be directly said: heaven could say nothing, man perhaps much; but his thoughts are not as God’s thoughts. The owning63 of Christianity could not be condemned; the putting the church into the world, its real effect, could not be celebrated. There was silence in heaven. But on this state of things, which heaven could not own at all, secret providence soon began to act. The angels began sounding. It was an action, then, from without in the providential state of things by angelic ministrations of providence, not in the known

relationship of a suffering church, and the world opposed, as it had crucified the Head. The growth of apostasy is traced, not in this second part, but in the third, as having its own importance.

But there was a feature in this not yet noticed. Mixed, as they might be (in a certain sense in spite of themselves) with the world, the prayers of the saints had not ceased, and much incense was given to the angel of the altar to add to them, or give them savour and efficacy with God. 64 The High Priest Himself wears the angelic character here: the nearness of relationship, and completeness of all in heaven as governing on known principles (known by man in the church as his own to go upon), were gone.

This is the first mention we have of the altar of incense. The souls were under the altar of burnt-offering as whole burnt-offerings. Now, it was the whole resource of the saints to cry to God. The answer was judgments from the holiness of God against evil; and the definite course of disasters prepared to pursue its progress. We have, thus, at the close or at the beginning of the periods, an account of the state of the saints during the period (i.e. as to the principle of the dispensation in the period). The trumpets, then, would be the judgments of God upon the mingled state of things, in which the saints had ceased to suffer65 and be identified with the character of the Lamb, in answer to the secret prayers of the remnant offered up as a sweet savour by the secret action of the angel of the covenant; but the known dealings, externally, upon principles which the church could explain on the character of its existence.

There was alarm, the powerful acting of God in men's spirits in terror, and a convulsion in the condition of the earth; then the progressive course of judgments:—

On the grandees, and universal prosperity and glory of man, by heaven-sent judgments;

Then, destruction by judgment, through power, on the mass of external nations;

Then, some apostate power polluting and embittering the very sources of the moral popular condition;66 Then, the supreme authority smitten, but this in a confined sphere, with all dependent or subordinate light or authority.

There is then a term introduced, not previously used, save in the address to the church of Philadelphia, "Woe to the inhabiters of earth!" an expression, I apprehend, taken from Isaiah 24, and used in the Apocalypse in contrast with dwellers in heaven (i.e., persons within the range of the prophetic earth, or scene of God's immediate moral dealings, but not a stranger or sojourner there, that is, a spiritual, heavenly-minded man, but dwelling there). In chapter 12, it is contrasted with "Rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea"; (compare Ephesians 1 at the close, and chap. 2). Here, accordingly, we have the last three trumpets announced as woes to these inhabiters of the earth. The rest might be providential judgments on the condition of things. These last took up these earthly-minded people fixed upon earth. Note, when the saints, though in supplication, live, as to their actual condition, not in suffering, but mixed up with the world, they67 partake externally, and therefore in spirit sensibly, of the trouble

and sorrow of the judgments that come; and come, it may be, just as wholesome chastenings, or at least warnings, in answer68 to their prayers; and this in principle may, I believe, quite go on now. But there are judgments afterwards specially on these earthly-minded ones (the form in which they become now characterised, when, after the patient and separating chastenings of God, they are fixed in this character). Then come positive judgments on them specifically.

The first comes by apostasy letting loose the influences of what is beneath—what is of the abyss. The effect is to put out or darken the supreme authority and the healthful influences which acted on men's minds.69 From this, a swarm of marauders spread themselves upon the earth—the prophetic earth, having a king, the angel of the bottomless pit: for though, having the active energy of imperial power, and towards others in face they were men, yet they had "power on their heads." "When seen behind, they were not in the open dignity of man, as governing in civil power by the image of God; they were subject to something, though they might press forward in prevailing conquest on others; and their sting their tail. It was not their energy that was their poisonous power of mischief, but what they brought in as a consequence. "The prophet and teacher of lies, he is the tail."

The next woe was a more open incursion of external enemies, as such—this army of prevailing, imperial, congregated power; and from the mouths of them (they carried it before them) what was judgment came forth: only it was by evil, and what was of the enemy positively. 70 They had power in their mouths, but in their tails too; for in that, also, was their planned mischief more settled

than before, though not the introduction of it; “and with them they hurt.” It was like Satan in form. This was more open and warlike in character; but not the original evil.

But those, the rest of men, that were not killed by them, did not repent of their idolatries and evil conduct; many would be entirely destroyed from their profession, and their place set aside and filled up by others; but even so the rest repented not. The extent of the power of these was limited; The general objects of all the woes were earthly-minded people in the region of God’s dealings. When the originating, darkening, and tormenting evil came in, those only were excepted who were manifestly owned of God as His—manifested to be of Him.

The trumpet angel—this announcement of the full time of God’s purpose—looses these subordinate instruments of His providence to have power of destruction for the prescribed time.

All these, however, were dealings in which, though a remnant prayed, the church had no natural place.71 For the growth of the apostasy is not the subject here. It is all mere angelic providential dealing. It is not the Son of man in judgment. It is not the Lamb in glory on the throne, but in sympathy withal with a suffering people, whom the world is against, and whom He ostensibly recognised. This was quite lost when the world recognised the church: the church wholly lost its place. It had gradually practically approached the world—it was now ostensibly sunk in it; such was its downward course, having lost the spiritual discernment, it was not capable of seeing its position in the outward blessing. So Abraham, when his wife was taken into Pharaoh’s court.

He had gone down into Egypt first. Then the Lord acts by angelic ministrations on the profession, first in external chastenings, then in direct judgment and woes. Present facts, as we proceed, will lead us to the extent (i.e., geographical extent) of these two woes. I reserve the course of these passages more particularly, according to the protracted sense of “the things that are,” as applied to the whole dispensation, for what presents itself farther on.

But before the third woe, or seventh trumpet, there is a large parenthetic revelation comes in; but it is still further angelic or providential72 ministration. Nor is it, though it goes through manifestly the same scene, the account of the apostasy which we have afterwards, but the same scene historically, as coming under the course of events as prophetically declared by God. There was much that announced God’s judgment against the state of things here entered into, that was not revealed. But though this was not a sealed book which the Lamb could alone open, but the progress of the course of historic events in Providence, yet was it specially in the hand of that mighty angel, and the dignity of His Person was sustained.

The manifestations of the judgment of God connected with the utterance of His voice, and what followed on it, were not yet revealed. A voice from heaven sealed them up: for though the course of events went on, and was described, yet were there really principles in this of such a character and weight in the eyes of Him who could bring in the name of Him that liveth for ever and ever, that it proved that delay should be no longer. And these things were to precede the accomplishing of the mystery

of God, which should be when the seventh angel was about to sound.

In this way the little open book is very simple. It is not the mystery of iniquity, brought all out in its character, but it is the historic course of events—a picture of that scene, by itself, in which the mystery of iniquity, and all its important principles, and God's acting on them, are developed, in order to the filling up of that which is finished at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. It is thus a step lower in its nature than the great sealed book. That was held by Him that sat on the throne; and it was given to the Lamb, who alone could open it. It belonged to Him by a title none else at all had: but this is in the hand of the angel, and it is given to the prophet. It was part of the course of progressive historic events. Its allusions, however, identify it with what comes after, as the beast out of the bottomless pit, etc.

There was a further point. The prophet could look at external events, and describe them; but here, though the taste of the knowledge of this was sweet, yet, when he saw what it really conveyed, when he digested it, when the sympathies of his own soul were concerned in it, painful and trying things concerning the position and ruin-state of the church73 were involved in it—disorder and evil, and departure from God, and trial connected with this in the saints. Ah! it was bitter in his belly. This term is ever used for the affections and inward thoughts of the man. Therefore, in the church, the Holy Ghost is said to flow from the belly of the believer, because it is not merely a communication of known events, but the Spirit, as an earnest of what belongs to ourselves, and therefore filling the soul; and, from our own association with the things, the joy and testimony flow forth. There

was to be the wide-spread field of this testimony again resumed. This part of the testimony took the subject up afresh, and, though connected in fact, a full subject and scene of itself.

Thus, this little open book gave the historical account (when it assumed its place in external history) of the state of things under the great apostasy, in order to closing the whole scene as a history in the seventh trumpet; while the detail of the apostasy, its origin and source (before it was matter of the church's progressive history at all), the power and intent of Satan as manifested in it, were reserved for a distinct account (that is, all its moral workings and developments).

It is to be remarked, in addition, that the third woe is not given here at all. When the seventh trumpet sounds, there are voices in heaven celebrating the coming of the worldly kingdom of Christ; and the scene is described in very general terms, as embracing its introduction and results; but the woe is not described. In truth, all the detail of circumstances is reserved for the accounts which would follow: but "delay no longer" is the thing here evidenced. I have only to add, that if "the things that are" be taken for the whole dispensation, then the twelfth chapter may be taken continuously74 for the acting of the agents there described in their conduct in the crisis; only, that it traces them downwards from the state of things in the heavens—that is, as objects of the judgment referred to in the seventh trumpet. In this case, the first act would be the taking of the saints out of the way; then the casting down of Satan; then, after persecution of the Jews, the last struggle, including the judgment of the beast and the like. Otherwise the twelfth chapter is a tracing of the details of the source,

principles, and actings of them, as in God’s mind, and that from their nature, object, and outset.

I apprehend some of them, at any rate, as the two witnesses, partook of the heavenly calling according to Daniel 7, without being the church testimony represented in the holy city. See the analogy of the pentecostal church at first (though that was in fact the church), but its testimony is remarkable as to this.

But to return to the details of the eleventh chapter, what we find is this: all who had the priestly character and what concerned them, preserved—even their worship and the altar (that is, the holy place and the place of the priest’s approach). But the outward profession—the holy city—is all given up to be entirely desecrated for the prophetic period of forty-two months. But it is not only the priestly associations which are preserved here, but the witnessing or prophetic character. That is, efficacy was given to their testimony, “given to the prayers of the saints,” or given to “my two witnesses,” which signifies efficacy to the subject of the gift.75 This witness was guarded, not by external worldly preservatives, far from it; during this period “woe “was on what might have been so. What was external was the subject of merely secret angelic interference of God; but judgment corresponded to their testimony. If any would hurt them, out of their mouth went fire. It was not the coming down of judgment by external manifest authority; the pretence, at least, of that was on the side of the false prophet. But they were answered in judgment, to preserve them according to the testimony of their mouth against those that would destroy them. This secret hand of God, according to the word of the faithful witness, when all was gone wrong and desecrated, has, I doubt

not, been always in such cases afforded. It was not the time for open appearance in judgment, but always to interfere in watchful vindication of their testimony when needed. If they took the sword in such cases, it was an effort to alter the perfect order76 of God's providence which always preserves His principles—they would perish by the sword.

What follows seems analogous to the circumstances of Moses and Elias, and the energy of their ministry, not a question of their persons. Moses ministered when the people were under oppression, when the world prevailed; and he had power to plague the earth, to which Pharaoh belonged, and of which he was prince, and which he sought. Elias shut up heaven on the apostate people, who ought to have been in connection and association with it; and the blessing was withheld from a land watered with the rain of heaven. Thus, it was power of calling in judgment suited to the respective position of the two: one, acting on the world out of which God's people were called; the other, judging the people which had become the world, by arresting their enjoyment of blessings from heaven. Both have their application to the state of things alluded to in this short but comprehensive prophecy.

At the close of the three years and a half, their sack-cloth testimony ceased by their death through the hands of the beast of the bottomless pit, when they shall have fulfilled their testimony. The eighth verse seems to me designed to afford the general and specific applications, both of which I have stated my belief to be, in the mind of the Spirit of God; first, the great city of the world, which was where Christ was crucified; and specifically

Jerusalem, where religious apostasy, always the leader of the world's evil, locally committed the act.

As regards the interpretation, which would give one thousand two hundred and sixty years to this prophecy, enough has been said by others: a testimony, raised during the protracted moral apostasy, to which I believe the Holy Spirit attaches more importance than many are inclined to do; for God loves His saints. I believe it was of the last possible importance, but not of closing importance—not the great closing scene. I hold that it held, to the manifestation of the personal Antichrist, the same relation as the church, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, does to the personal coming of Christ, the Lord; and that is not unimportant or immaterial, very far otherwise, or a light object of God's guardian and all-thoughtful eye. Slaughtered saints, and worshipped demons, suppression, or at least degradation, of God's ordinance actually in civil authority— these were not light things in God's estimate, though His patience might bear with them in that long-suffering which was salvation. But the subversion of the true glory of the church, in the recognition of the Holy Ghost, was not unimportant, as proving the degeneracy of man, who apostatises in all circumstances, though it were not the open war against the Son.

Further, I add, that the apostasy, and the revelation-of the man of sin, are two distinct things. The apostasy is the introduction of the man of sin. Now the apostasy may not be the wicked (lit. lawless) one; but surely it is of some importance. I find much want of attention to the accuracy of Scripture in those who seem most accurate themselves. The mystery of iniquity working, the apostasy, and the wicked one, may all be looked at as

distinct things, though intimately connected; nor is the lawless identical with Antichrist, though it may be very likely77 they may be the same person.

With regard to the denial of symbols, and the assertion that it is so literal a book, it seems to me untenable. Thus, when the third part of the sun was smitten, the day shone not for a third part of it; but this was not what would have followed in any literal sense. And a little investigation into detail will shew that much of what has been recently said on the subject will not bear examination.

There is another point which the advocates of literalism78 and crisis often insist on, which deserves notice (though I am unwilling to detain myself for questions)—days being put for years. This is denied, notwithstanding the plain suggestion of such an idea both in the passage in Numbers 14:34, and in that in Ezekiel 4:6.

The seventy weeks, however, stand strongly in the way; and the ingenuity of criticism has been called into service to say that it is simply seventy sevens, not seventy weeks, and may thus literally be years. Now, if the conventional reading79 be taken, it is simply weeks; if not, it cannot mean sevens at all, but seventy seventies. I think this criticism, therefore, cannot be maintained. It is either seventy weeks or seventy times seventy, not seventy sevens.

But, as regards the numbers here, there is another important question: it is alleged that, looked at as in crisis and literally, this is not the last half week at all.80 In the last half week at Jerusalem, it is said they are not times of testimony, but of vengeance—not of testimony

of any one, Christian or Jew. The disciples, who had been giving testimony, and called to possess their souls in patience, are then directed to flee; for these were the days of vengeance. This was at the setting up of the abomination of desolation, the commencement of the last twelve hundred and sixty days, or three years and a half. So in the twelfth chapter, after the casting down of Satan, his great wrath begins upon the earth; then heaven and its inhabiters are free; and the woman, accordingly, flees into the wilderness for the twelve hundred and sixty days, to be nourished from the face of the serpent. Antichrist does not assume his proper distinctive character in Jerusalem till then. He may, as the oppressive apostate head of the Gentiles, at the instigation of Jews, persecute the saints who have the testimony of Jesus—possibly tyrannically oppress even the Jews, as the holy nation, by times; but, strictly, their "covenant is with death, and with hell are they at agreement" (i.e., as to the rulers who represent the nation). This last is true as regards the last half week; its character is a covenant of the beast with the Jews. But the Lord in Matthew 24 distinguishes the general testimony of the kingdom sent out into all the world, and which began. immediately after His death, from the last half week only. What He speaks of is not a special testimony in Jerusalem, and we must not confound the peculiar testimony of the two witnesses with the first fourteen verses of Matthew 24. That chapter knows no first half week. There is a general testimony and one half week, beginning with the setting up of the abomination of desolation, and ending with the Lord's corning. Daniel 9 does contemplate a first half week, in which the prince that shall come makes a covenant with the mass of the Jews, which he will break in the middle

of the week. But Revelation 11 contemplates, I believe, only the last half week, that of Matthew 24.

We have another distinction here, which also runs through what follows, not duly noticed—people, tongues, nations, languages, and they that dwell upon the earth. I say not duly noticed, as the universality of Antichrist's dominion has been argued from the expression, "All that dwell upon the earth shall worship him." But there, as elsewhere, they are in contrast with nations, kindreds, tongues, people. The case of the dwellers upon earth is always, I think, more aggravated.

Thus it is not merely evil conduct towards the witnesses here, but great interested joy at their destruction. There are three parties engaged in the evil: the beast, who kills the witnesses; those of the nations and kindreds, who do not suffer them to be buried, exhibiting the natural hostility of the human heart; and the people dwelling upon earth, whom the testimony of the witnesses had specially tormented. For the testimony of holy consistency and prophetic nearness to God is continual torment to them to whom the testimony comes for their apostasy. The prophet, in this character, is always a witness that, with all their pride and self-satisfaction, they are apostate; and this is torment, for they have really no peace with God, whatever their pretension. The return to life of the witnesses was a public thing, in which the judgment and vindication of God was plain to their enemies. They heard the voice from heaven, saying to them, Come up hither. They were first brought to life, and then called up to heaven openly.

These witnesses had stood before the God of the earth, the witnesses of God's title here. The affright which the

public manifestation of God in their favour produced did not give efficacy to their testimony; but the affrighted ones glorified the God of heaven. There was the general effect of unrepentant religion—the testimony not received; for that would have broken their will. But their fear acted on externally was to honour God formally, but only as One in heaven. It was that which acted on themselves that did this—the earthquake and slaying of men, names of men, their pride and title put down.81 All this took place before the sounding of the last trumpet; but when it closed, the second woe was passed.

Although there may be an accomplishment of this more literally in crisis, there is nothing in the revival of the witnesses, which renders it strictly literal; on the contrary, the terms are, for the most part, symbolical. A spirit of life from God, though it may be applied, is not so strictly characteristic of mere quickening.82 It was distinct, however, from a mere renewal of prophecy in sackcloth. The testimony now was by their exaltation publicly, not by their faithfulness in trial.

I would remark on verse 8, that it is properly not the street of the great city; but rather the highway or great street of the city, but the antecedent to which seems the whole idea. All this time the last great woe was on the eve of being manifested.

The witnesses then were a testimony—given previous to the last dire expression of the power of evil being let loose—an adequate testimony; and that of God’s claim upon the earth, during the time that these dwellers upon earth claimed it as theirs, and therefore were tormented by the testimony. It was not necessarily during the prevalence of the beast out of the bottomless pit; for till

the war (v. 7) his existence is not in question. When he makes war on them, he overcomes and kills them; but they have power in testimony till then—till their testimony is fulfilled. Their testimony,83 then, was not properly under the oppression of his power; at least that is not the way God distinguishes it. It is carried on in sorrow while the external sacred things are defiled, but the priestly remnant, and what pertained to them, preserved; and this for the forty-two months. And in these circumstances they fulfil their testimony: then the beast out of the bottomless pit makes war upon them and kills them.84 When the question as to power comes on, and Antichrist rises up in his full form against the Lamb, he is finally cast down, and put, with the false prophet, in the lake of fire, and his followers killed. It is dealing with the witnesses in its principle, an antecedent act; the Lamb has not yet come upon the scene. For He comes personally victorious: but here, while the beast comes against the witnesses who stand before the God of the earth, they are overcome, because the Lamb has not yet come forth in power, nor the earthly kingdom come. Lucifer shall rise up against the Lord from heaven, and be cast down. When his representative rises against the witnesses and representatives of the Lord—these two anointed ones, they are cast down and killed, and taken to heaven where the glory and the Lamb yet were. It was the last external public act of testimony—whether for the dispensation or the crisis—and therefore had definitely the character attached to it when prophetic witness had place in it—the prevalence of evil externally, and suffering of the witnesses—their rest and refuge being above.

Thus, the beast out of the bottomless pit does not appear here as the direct agent against the witnesses, till the three years and a half of their testimony are finished, though, as to their condition, they were in sackcloth. When the announcement of the last woe comes, heaven estimates it as the signal for the earthly kingdom coming; and the church, anticipative, as having the mind of Christ, gives thanks to the Lord God Almighty, who, in the continuity of His being and counsel, was now taking His power; and therefore she anticipates all the results. The elders only speak here; for the things were not in the vision in their completeness or principles: but it was the actual anticipation of the facts as now coming in, as having the mind of Christ.

It would seem that the last woe had a wider aspect85 than the others—much, though containing the scene and object of them. In verse 12 of the succeeding chapter, after Satan is cast down, woe indeed is pronounced on the inhabiters of the earth, who were the former objects of the woes; and also, then, on those of the sea. Now it is true this does not come in, in proper historical continuity, from chapter 12; nor is it the final woe of chapter 11; but it introduces the larger scene which is the subject of the judgment executed in that woe. But the expression of the woe there had been reserved; here, all are concerned in it under heaven.

The nineteenth verse of chapter 11 should, I think though a connecting one, more properly begin the twelfth chapter. Looking at the chapters as continuous, it is the direct manifest agency of heaven upon earth, the connection of the two. It is not now a seal opened by

one who alone could do it, but the temple opened; “and there was seen,” etc.

The first thing seen was the secure and unchanging witness of God’s covenant mercy, on which all his thoughts and purposes were bent. After the sounding of the seventh trumpet, all the relationships of things, and their real principles and sources, came out. If we look at the eighteenth verse of chapter 11 as closing generally the whole history as it does, then the twelfth takes back the church to see, abstractedly, the principles and sources of all the events, which, in fact, will be brought out in the last three years and a half manifestly.

These two points of view are in no way inconsistent; for the last crisis is a bringing to a head and manifestation these very sources of action in manifested agents and direct collision of action. On the contrary, none can understand the crisis that takes place, unless they enter into the sources, principles, and moving of (in some sense, we may say, interested) agents, which are here unveiled from the beginning; and, on the other hand, the workings of these agents and principles, and their results, are never clearly seen until brought thus out at the end in their very results, though faith may discern their principles long before. Thus the Lord says in the first displays of His power,” I beheld Satan, like lightning, fall from heaven”; and His great apostle reveals to us, that the mystery of iniquity did already work: only there is He who restrains, till He should be taken out of the way (2 Thess. 2:7); and then the wicked should be revealed, whom the Lord would destroy. The unveiling, then, of these hidden, but real agents, was just the unfolding of what would be brought into crisis: and the crisis is the actual manifestation of these agents

in their true character, no longer under the cover of mysteries. Hence the church, as admitted into heaven, knows them, and explains their manifestations when they shew themselves on earth.

This forms no part, properly, of the seals, then; but comes in, under the church's proper knowledge, by the Holy Ghost, and His revelations of what passes in heaven; not in mere communion, as taking of the things of Christ, but in revelation, as shewing what is connected with the manifestation of His glory. It is all based (come what will) on the immutability of the ark of the covenant. It was the ark of the covenant of God and the temple of God. The church rests on this sure faithfulness, but its direct application is to Israel, though in peculiarly symbolical images.

This being fixed, the ways and purposes of Providence were then discovered. There appeared a great86 sign in heaven. As the woman was for the man, so was the man by the woman; and here things were revealed, not in ultimate results (that is the knowledge of the church always, in communion, whether as to Christ's glory as man or God all in all), but as administered by the way, and, therefore, the man is by the woman here. So in other types of scripture. Hence, though we see her in the glory of God's mind at first, we soon see her in various circumstances and exigencies, to which she was, in His wisdom and righteousness, subjected, even to fleeing away upon earth. Here, however, she is seen in her title of glory in heaven. The purpose of God is in the church; but Christ is its great subject; and, in fact, she may be subject to ten thousand vicissitudes here below, for the world is not regulated otherwise than secretly. God may glorify her, but the woman's place is to be

subject; she does not carry on the war, and cannot in this character. I have already mentioned, elsewhere,87 that the activity of faith, or its failure, is, in typical scripture, spoken of as the man—the condition of the church or people of God (for in this sense the church is the name for a condition of the people of God, this last being used in a general sense) is represented by the woman.88 We have to look here, at the people of God, as in His own mind or purpose, and therefore glorified in that; yet, as we have said, entering into the detail of consequences, it is in the ministration of it, for it is the man by the woman, not the woman for the man. Both have their importance and their place. Hence the woman is seen clothed with supreme authority—the splendour of supreme authority, and all derivative light under her feet;89 and derivative rule, all lesser authority, her crown, and that in perfectness. Thus it is viewed abstractedly, but in purpose with all God attaches to it, and about which all God's mediate purposes or plans roll—His own glory and Jesus ever the end. And thus shall it close, for it is true that, 'What begins with sight, ends in action.'

For we are not speaking here of God's returning into His own infinitude, which can hardly be called purpose:90—Christ, then, the glory of the Son, was the purpose; but here, it being the ministration of it, the woman is presented and the man hidden.

If we descend to detail, we shall find the most marked contrast: the lowest state of the lowest condition of God's people—that under the law broken, and they ruled over by the last form of Gentile evil, as to its personality—that in which Christ was born; and so rightly. For by sin the glory was all reversed; all was reversed: the

throne, which ought to be the instrument of God's justice, was the instrument of slaying His Son, at the instance and instigation (intercession, if you please' of His priests, the leaders of His own people! What a picture of things! If we go to the time when the Jews will actually say, "To us a child is born," we shall see it is after the very last and manifested form of the last evil—the evil of the last days. The church knows it now, for it has the mind of Chris:; and we are renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created us.

That which we find here, then, is the purpose of God concerning the condition of His people producing One who was to rule all nations; and, instead of His doing so, He is caught up to God and His throne; and the condition of His people is left exposed to trial, misery, and pursuit of the great enemy, who had been waiting and seeking to devour the man-child when born. It, however, entirely escapes from him. Such is the general picture, which throws much light on the whole of the detail. If we apply it to Christ in Person, then its accomplishment as to heavenly purpose, whatever He might suffer here, is sufficiently manifest (the condition of God's people being suffering and trial thereon). If we apply it to the saints, who overcome here (as we read) as He did, and to whom it is given to rule as He has received of His Father, then we find that, though the object of the enemy was to devour them too, they are caught up out of his way to Him who was above his power; and the trial and persecution fall on those who are left here—upon the woman. The details of this are entered into in what follows in the chapter. After the child is caught up, the woman flees. In this there are no details. It is a description of the position of the parties,

and that with all possible clearness, as with divine power and precision. There is one of these of which, as yet, I have said but little—this other wonder (who was opposed to the woman, this purpose of God in His people), the great red dragon. His object was to destroy the man-child to be brought forth by the woman whose pains of labour he perceived, and hating all that belonged to it; for the purpose of God and its fruits were his destruction. He failed in this, and turned his anger against that which, in a certain sense, was left in his power.

That the dragon is the hostile power of the adversary there is no question. We have the authority of this book (chap. 20), I suppose no one will deny, for saying that.

If we look to the source of power, it is there; only without the description which gives it its formal character. It was here seen in heaven (i.e., not in its providential forms and consequences by the will of man, but as the Lord viewed it in its will or power of evil), as a whole, identified in form with the beast (to which it gave its power, it is true), yet not the beast, and not identified with it in the specialities of its latter-day character; but the whole generic form of Satan's power, in that which took, at a given period, that character. It had the seven heads and ten horns, but the heads were crowned, not the horns. It was Satan, acting in the form of power, in which he countervailed—not simply the earthly purpose91 amongst the Jews, or in which he attacks Jerusalem by an earthly instrument, but—the whole heavenly92 purposes and the glory of God by Christ in His people. Hence, too, the death of Christ, which closed His Jewish and earthly career, is not noticed here; because the Jewish associations of Christ are not the

question when things are seen in the heavens. The child was caught up to God and His throne. The tail of the serpent, his moral influence—evil moral influence—characterised by the form of the Roman empire, the effects of his power, and the dominant religion of the state, put down a third of the rulers of God, and made them subordinate. The effect on the woman was her retreat into solitude and sorrow, for so she is seen in actual effect.

Here are the parties: the seventh verse begins a new topic. There was war in heaven. This was not the war of the church, but of divine power; not yet, however, in the manifested energy of the Son of man, the mighty man, the man-child; but in the more secret agencies of His will, angelic ministrations. The church's war, carried on in the flesh, is carried on in suffering, and waged against the accuser by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; he being always there, and yet they above him, as an overcome enemy in Christ, in their flesh wretched, and as to that in its will, when it worked, under his power. But here it was power to expel in service to God—the question settled whether the dragon and his angels should continue there: "And the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their 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."93 Then came the celebration; and in the thirteenth verse, what followed on the earth: and the change in all this is very important. The church's estimate of it in heaven, too, is— "the accuser of our brethren";94 the consequence of whose accusations and

power was trial95 and persecution upon earth. They loved not their lives unto death, overcoming him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony—a time then of saints' suffering, and Satan having his place in heaven, in authority and power, and deceiving the whole world. From this the victory of Michael and his angels cast him down.

I apply here the same principle of providential working and manifestation in crisis as throughout; and I mention it here only particularly, and its application to the fall of idolatry, because by modern interpreters, entirely rejected. It is not his influence in the church that is here in question,96 but his power in the rule of the world, however that might act on the church. The argument, then, that mischief might accrue to the church by the ceasing of Satan's open power in the world, because the church thereby sunk in the world, is nothing to the purpose: for my own part, I admit it in the fullest manner possible, though I am sure all was wisely ordered. But as the setting up the supreme power in Nebuchadnezzar, and his speedy connection of it with enforced idolatry, was very important in the divine government in the world, that power coming from God (though Israel was, or might not be, in question in this last act), so the entire relinquishment of idolatry by the governing power (for whatever man does, God looks to the conduct of the governing power) was a fact of great importance in the history of God's government of the world. It was a setting aside Satan's direct throne in the world; for the existence of power in the Gentiles is not Satan's direct throne (it was transferred to them by God); it is its use and character in sinful man that makes it Satan's. This may be merely by passions, or it may be

by the direct worship of Satan and his angels, or by open blasphemy against God. The second of these is the open heavenly rule of Satan, looked at in providence: and this went on in Gentile idolatry. He may recover it secretly by what is called the church:97 but the thing itself was never restored. This appears to me a very plain and important distinction in the exercise of Satan's power, which we cannot pass by without leaving a blank in our knowledge of God's mind, and consequently its train lost and the church misled. Taking this event in this point of view, it would connect itself with the providential course of things which the church understands in heaven, though not yet outwardly manifested; and the consequent period would be a period of years, the period being the period of her nourishing there, not the date of her flight for this providential purpose. These things are given generally in their characters, not dates, because it was a course of progressively developed principles, although sometimes facts may have given particular dates. As regards that which takes place actually in the crisis, the facts are simple and plain.98 There was war in heaven. Michael, the archangel, and his angels fought, and the dragon; and the dragon was cast out of heaven, entirely and finally out of that place of authority and power which he had held, as ruling the world: "the rulers of the darkness of this world." As to who Michael is, we have mention of this exalted name in Jude, as contending with the devil; and in Daniel, as that great prince who stands up as the ruler of providential power, in favour of the Jewish people, who are the central object of providence in the arrangement of nations. I do not see that it is revealed that it is Christ99 under a mystical name, but it is certainly the direct superior agent of God's providential purposes, and thus

the immediate instrument of favour to His people in that character. The notion of archangels is not sustained in Scripture.100 There are seven angels, who stand in the presence of God, spoken of. But Satan was cast out, finally out of heaven; and the announcement given, that salvation, strength, and the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ was come; and the reason—that the accuser of the brethren was cast down. Satan, in his character of anti-priest, had been unceasing in his accusations against the brethren; though, in the course of God's dealings with the saints, during this time of trial, He had suffered their being even put to death here below; yet they had overcome their enemy there really as to all the questions which Satan could raise before God. The accusations were of no avail, through the blood of the Lamb. Satan could not overthrow their conscience; and by the word of their testimony they maintained the truth and righteousness against him as the father of lies. So that while the great High Priest secured their cause above, Satan as a liar and accuser, seeking to deceive, was baffled and overcome; as a murderer, was submitted to, till Christ took the power, and he was turned out. The manner in which accusations and persecutions are connected, in principle, may be seen in the history of the book of Job. Thereon the dwellers in heaven—for this was the ground and place of the enmity and conflict (see Ephesians, chaps, 1, 2 and 6)—are called on to rejoice, for this conflict is ended. Christ, as the great High Priest, might have sustained them in the conflict with the accuser: but now the conflict101 was ended. This is clearly what concerned the church, in this matter, as identified with Christ in His priestly exaltation. Woe then comes upon the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea; for the devil,

not yet shut up, but cast from heaven, is come down in great wrath, knowing he has but a short time. Here the second paragraph of this chapter ends: the first at verse 8, where the parties are stated, as we have seen, in the original idea and purpose; here the actings of heaven's deliverance from his power and the consequence of this to the church, which properly sits in heavenly places (and indeed all heavenly saints); then, verse 13, what the devil did when cast down to earth, after he was cast out of heaven.

The dragon has now lost his place in heaven. He cannot rule the world, as thence, as the prince and god of it: but he comes as a woe and judgment from God upon those who dwelt on earth, had not followed the heavenly calling, where it was then; and he is in great wrath, because he has now but a short time. His enmity against Him102 who has thus sentenced him, is exercised against that which has any connection with Him in the new sphere of his malice. He can no longer accuse the brethren; he persecutes the woman. And at this period, upon earth, the woman is the Jewish people owned of God, the woman that brought forth the man (for that was true of the Jewish economy as to Christ, looked at in His title of power upon earth: "To us a son is born"). But here, to the woman is given force and speed from God; but only to flee into the wilderness, where she is nourished for the allotted period, which, speaking as to the closing crisis, is three years and a half; for during this period the opportunity of her return was not afforded by the cessation of the dragon's power.

The dragon here takes the name of serpent, as having the form of subtlety, deceit, and malice, "that old serpent which is the devil and Satan." It is the enmity,

we are to remark, of the dragon and serpent, not the woe on the earth which is described: that is reserved for more detailed account in what follows, at least as to the part material for the church's instruction in its passage towards it. And here I must remark the extreme importance to us of connecting the events and agents in the crisis, in principle, character, and progress with what is passing and the agents we see around us, or it loses its main moral effect and its whole use for the church. The church is not under this woe, I believe, at all, in the final crisis. It is on earth, to the Jewish people, this Son is born: we belong to the heavens, whence Satan is cast out. But, by the ripened fruit in that day, as more fully displayed in subsequent chapters, we learn the present nature and character of the tree that bears it, as God describes man by his fruits in Romans 3, though all men have not borne such. And thus I can judge my own heart, and know what man is. And if the last apostate be not yet revealed, he is but the head of a system of which God's revelation of him, as the full fruity makes me know the sap and character. Though the serpent could not overcome the woman in war (for God preserved her, not by the mighty man, but by flight; and there his direct power was stopped; for heavenly power was in aid for her), yet the resources he had he uses, and pours forth these waters, animated by his energy, as a flood. I should suppose, from the explanation given in this book of waters looked at as on earth, these were armies of people directly under Satan's moral influence, flowing from his mouth, the expression of his mind and will.

But the earth—the scene of God's providential and prophetic agency—helped the woman by whatever

providence (for God teaches here the facts of Satan's agency, not the historical providences) and swallowed up and brought to nought this agency of Satan: it was frustrated. And he went to make war with the remnant of her seed, the godly Jews who might remain within his reach, who obeyed God's commandments and had received the testimony of Jesus Christ—for so (for I am now speaking of the final crisis) I believe the Jews, i.e., the remnant, will. But I do not say further than a prophetic testimony; "for the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." The dragon (for he is not now spoken of in his subtle actings, but identified again in his character and acting in the sphere and character of power) was wroth with the woman whom he could not touch, and went to make war with, to use violence towards, the remnant of the seed.

Chapter 12

In this chapter, then, we have a very clear account, not of the details of providential historical acting, but of Satan's mind, and ways, and purposes concerning the purpose of God in its inceptive character; for, as accomplished, it is clear he cannot touch it. Although I have little doubt in my mind in what events these plans of Satan will specially shew themselves, I have entered into them here very little, because God is here instructing the church what the plans are, rather than how they are accomplished, save as presenting severally the agents: and if we are not content to be instructed as God instructs us, we had better not learn at all. I desire in Scripture not to explain but to receive, and, in communicating, to say what is there, not add thoughts. This may seem a slight distinction; but the effect of the

difference will soon be seen in the formation of systems, instead of actual profiting by divine instruction.

There are three distinct parts in the chapter. First, the agents; the woman in God's purpose to be delivered of a man-child (the depository of earthly power to rule the nations); the dragon ready to devour Him, whose birth and character he partially knew (for Scripture told it), and whose speedy bringing forth was now apparent. The result is, that the man-child, instead of acting in power at once, is hid, but in the place of Godhead and power, and the woman flees. Thus the direct agents are disposed of. We have, then, the second portion; in which the question is between his (the dragon's) place there, and the angelic ministrations of God's power ("His angels which excel in strength"); and the dragon loses his place in heaven (he who had deceived the whole world), and he is cast out into the earth, not properly the world. This is all the direct statement made in this portion: for the question was, ruling the nations. But then secretly this made a most important change in another thing not so open in the world, the church, dwellers in heaven, the brethren. This was the way heaven was specially affected by this event. Salvation and strength and the kingdom of our God and the power of His Christ were now come,103 not till then in power. There was that which was hidden to the world and not understood, no more than Christ was, the heavenly-minded church which understands God's leading and most important meaning in these things (what was next Himself, if I may so speak). There was a witness to all Christ's glory on the terms and grounds of God's holiness in heaven, as walking in the light as He is in the light, having fellowship one with another, the blood of

Jesus cleansing them from all sin, all the time that Satan was in the heavens drawing the third part of the stars—the ruler of the darkness of this world—a people who walked indeed on earth, but in spirit and title and nature, as given, dwelt in heaven; their Head being exalted above Satan, even before God, and who had suffered and shed His blood for them, though now, as yet, He had not taken His power ("all things were not yet put under him"); wherefore Satan could torment. This people Satan had been constantly accusing before God, for their inconsistencies, or falsely, in order to distract, trouble, and hinder their assurance with God, or their testimony for God. By the turning of Satan out of the heavenly places of power this conflict and accusation ceased; the heavens were cleared, that these might now declare His righteousness.

The actual catching up of the saints is not here mentioned, because the church should always expect it; 104 and because the agents and their public acts being here in question, the church (one with Christ before the Father, the mystery hidden from ages and known only by the Spirit) is not, as we have seen all through, the subject;105 but the acts, as they affect the brethren, looked at in their condition here below, are noticed, because they are to reign with Christ, whose power was now come.

The church united to Christ and interested in Him as her Advocate and Priest, and all those associated with the heavens, were now free. The question then was between the dragon's wrath against those who were the special scene of Christ's royalty, and the power of that Christ which was now come: the trial of the church had ceased. The subject being the rule of the nations by the man-

child, all the history of what passed in the church as to this is unnoticed; only the dragon remains in heaven; the royalty not assumed: when it is, the change is noticed. Then, the power though come is not, however, immediately exercised (that is, on earth, for the heavens were already clear). The question then arises for the woman upon earth—a question of royalty and power. The sphere of this royalty and power in Christ being necessarily hated but rescued,106 and Satan's hatred and animosity then directed against the remnant who were faithful to the light they had, keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus, having the light there was—the spirit of prophecy. 107 The providential actual agencies follow; wherein these things are accomplished. As to the position and condition of the inhabiters of earth (of whom we have only heard as yet), for this period, thrice repeated woe (in the second, the wide unformed mass of people too included, the inhabiters of the sea).

We have further to remark, that (the moment the saints are introduced in their own position and character, suffering while Satan is in the heavens) the Lamb, its salvation, its strength, its joy, is at once introduced, and their victory celebrated on high. It is the natural association of the saints, as such— fellowship with the crucified One: and therefore if only one or two saints be in their place, their associations are with the Lamb.108 It will be remembered that the Lamb has not been mentioned all through the historical part: that was providence; and the church was, as it were, hidden. This, in the course of external history, is its real relationship—as Peter describes it, doing well, suffering for it, and taking it patiently. The Lamb led the way in

this their joy; while, as to accusation, His blood gives them access to the throne where He is.

This account in chapter 12 of the dragon's doings, taking up the mind of God in the threne as to it, the conflict by which he is cast out of the heavens of rule, and his conduct upon earth when cast down there, was quite the suitable introduction to the history of the manner and development of it in human instrumentality; that the church might know, not merely its history, outside in the earth, but the meaning and truth of it in its elementary and radical causes and facts in Satan's position, power, and actings, relative to God's purposes. It relates to the question of ruling the nations (i.e., to Christ, as ruling, as He will, with the saints, the nations); and shews the relative position of the parties (while the man-child is caught up to God and His throne, or not actually in the scene), first in heaven, and therefore (the evil ceasing, when cast out, to affect the saints of the heavenlies) brought in thus,109 by the by, when their position has changed; and then on earth as affecting the Jews, during the period in which God's purpose, and therefore those interested in it, as a body, flee, in consequence of the dragon's actings, into the wilderness, where they are nourished of God (i.e., not in the order of God's regulated covenant blessing, apparent in manifested relationship, but of God supremely as such). All this time, therefore of the dragon's prevalence in heaven first, or on earth, is the time of the hiding and apparent disregard of God's relationship with His people. Yet the object of these relationships becomes visible when the earth comes in question, and the woman, though persecuted or fleeing, is seen on earth (i.e., the Jewish body as such in

connection with their place and promises, though unfulfilled). To this many of the Psalms refer—those in which God and not Lord is used as the term of relationship with the Most High.

The saints may be united to the position of the man-child when removed hence and taken to Christ; but the great signal manifestation of the first statement of the chapter was, when Christ Himself was taken out of the way. All, except that fact which characterises all, is the statement of the principles and relative position of the parties. There may be, therefore, any lapse of time between the catching up of the man-child and the subsequent actings of the Lord; for there is no note of time connected with it: the facts are resumed, or, as to results, commenced by the war in heaven. This is most signally fulfilled in its actual final accomplishment when Satan is cast out (the commencement, in their source,110 of the very last events, that change the position of the saints of the heavenlies; and when also the last events on earth relative to the Jews begin to have their course). The providential agents, as far as the moral prophetic earth is concerned, and the beasts, therefore, at this point, as we have said, are thereupon taken up.

Chapter 13

The apostle now traces equally from its origin, the earthly circumstances of the power through which Satan operates;111 and, as in the previous chapter, he first gives us characteristically the subject of the prophecy. It is not here of purpose necessarily, but of fact. Out of the floating mass of population, he sees a beast rise up. It was not now a vision in heaven, where the secret designs were carried on, but on earth, where the

instruments of these designs are produced and act; here, not purpose, but fact.

The whole character of the beast, from beginning to end, is seen, but pursued to, and therefore having its agency in, its last form. This enables us to identify the beast all through, and brings him under the character of guilt which has attached to him from the beginning, or marked the course of his protracted progress, whatever unrestrained iniquity this may shew itself in at the close. He is therefore seen rising out of the sea having all his heads and horns: on his heads names of blasphemy—he bore them high on his front; and the crowns were on his horns, which was the latter form (i.e., the imperial power divided). I do not carry this farther than being definitely characteristic; for if it were carried into detail, as at the close, we should have, assuming the identity according to the ordinary interpretation of the beasts, 112 three of the horns fallen. Further, this beast had incorporated the character of Daniel's three other beasts, but most of the Grecian leopard, though in ravening power and terror like the first. To this beast the dragon (he had not formed it, that is taken as the existing fact) gives his power, his seat, and great authority. Now, I doubt not, this has its full scope of positive action and manifestation from the close of the former chapter; when, in its last form, it will do Satan's work in the place of his power. But as we have the elements of things in these chapters, we have seen the beast traced from his very rise out of the sea; and whatever he so characteristically does,113 when formed, comes under the designation of holding the throne and power of Satan. It will be exercised according to the character of the place where Satan is,

heaven or earth, each the scene of the conflict whether Christ and His joint-heirs are to have His creation, or Satan hold it by right of the first Adam's fall and sin, the great question agitated, along with the special redemption of the church. Doubtless, when on earth it will be more definite and formal, not necessarily more important. Nor can I see why the conflict for the delivery of the earthly people and the inheritance is of more or exclusive importance, rather than what is of heaven, in which the victory and fate of the heirs is decided; though this be more secret, and known only to the church. Yet it must be remembered that that by which Satan troubles the church, while here, is that by which he holds the world. It is, then, the great characteristic fact we have here as to the beast so formed: he holds the dragon's place. I may add, I hold the beast to be simply and plainly the Roman empire. The next characteristic of the beast was the destruction and healing of one114 of the heads or forms of government. This, observe, was subsequent to,115 and not preceding, the dragon's giving him his power. And there was admiration in all the earth at the beast. The Roman empire and its corporate power became in the earth the object of their admiration, and laid hold on their minds. And they worshipped116 that infidel power and hostility to God, which had given power to the beast. The form in which this shewed itself in man was the pursuit of his own will, simply casting off the thought and principle of obedience. The shape which it assumed, or had in this history, was the dominant power of the Roman empire, not in its apostasy, but in its self-will117 and self-aggrandisement —Satan's power without reference to God—as the apostle expresses it, "the course of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that

now worketh in the children of disobedience." Whether this arrives to any formal open act at the close is comparatively immaterial, save as an open act bringing down open judgment. They worshipped also the beast—honoured it as the place, and holder, and depositary of power (God being thus really put out of sight). Pride here was the characteristic—personal pride and power: "Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?"

There seems to me to be an analogy here, or contrast, in falsehood, with the gift, by the Father, of power and glory, to the Son. On the dazzling influence of this false glory and power the world hangs, and takes it as that which holds the only place of power in it, shutting practically, as we have said, God out of it: "the inheritance ours." And they hang on this evil power, to hold and keep it in human will—openly man, secretly Satan; as openly it shall be (or manifestly) Christ, and hiddenly (i.e., not in personal manifestation, save by the Son) the Father. And the world honoured the hidden and open power, as we should honour the Father and the Son, save that in us it is in the knowledge of their Persons. It was a false anticipation in deceit and power by man's will, of what we own in principle now, and shall be declared in millennial power and manifestation. Thus far we have had the fact, and Satan's doings in it.

We have, then, the power of mischief as it is conferred upon the beast, he being thus constituted and set up in power by Satan, and receiving Satan's place at his hand. He is then given power to shew all his will and thoughts, and to act for so long; for all these things are controlled: this with its consequences from verses 5 to 8. Consequently, we have here what was done by the beast,

as before what was done to the beast, and about the beast, whether by Satan or in the earth. First was given to the beast extraordinary prevailing assumption to himself, “he spoke great things”; it is not here doing but speaking in pride; it is his character, not his acts: next, injurious words against others flowing from this pride—blasphemies; and he was to continue the characteristic period of forty-two months, or to practise, to act, for that period.118 When we come to the literal use of it, then it is earthly and literal. So, on the other hand, they that dwell in heaven dwell literally in heaven. It is not merely their mystic character; otherwise it is obvious it would be the 1,260 years; and they that dwell in heaven are the heavenly-minded remnant. We have then the application of this character of the beast to its objects; “he blasphemed God.” It was not here mere apostasy: that might be its actual course on earth, just denying the Father and the Son; but here it is his formal character under Satan’s power. He blasphemed the “name” of God, instead of in the place of power owning its source—“and his tabernacle,” i.e., the presence of God among the saints, as of the wilderness, their heavenly place, for so it was (the tabernacle was not the wilderness nor was it the temple, as in chapter 21:22: the Jewish body was driven into the wilderness: in manifested and lasting glory, the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple). But it was the tabernacle or tent of God: this included the most holy and holy place. This heavenly dwelling-place of God with the saints he blasphemed;119 he would have the earth, the inheritance, in his own way: this was an evidence there was a power beyond all this. He blasphemed also those who were characterised by this dwelling-place—dwellers in heaven, the saints of heavenly places. This, as regards heavenly things, was

what characterised the church, which sits in heavenly places. Further, it was given him to make war with the saints and overcome them here on earth. Satan they overcame, see chapter 12:11;120 but in present physical persecution the beast overcame, and prevailed against the saints. It is not, however, here a question of individual death, but of prevalence, as in chapter 12:11. But he had the day on earth, for this was not redeemed nor vindicated to Christ yet. This is true also as regards (within the range of the beast) the long protracted period of years, and on earth121 in the crisis among the Jewish people.122 The next characteristic was, “power was given him over all kindreds, tongues, and nations”: this still was characteristic. It was to be the dominant power on the earth, assuming and giving authority over the various subject nations. There was another point connected with this manifestation, not exactly characteristic, as given to him, but a consequence, a resulting fact. All the dwellers upon earth should worship him. Their character we have already noticed—those who, living within the sphere of the application of the world and its light, the formed scene of God’s revealed moral providence, have not their citizenship in the heavens (Phil. 3:20), are not dwellers in heaven, and as strangers and pilgrims seek a country, but “dwell upon the earth.” These were not written (for such was the security of the others) from the foundation of the world, in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain—characterised, not only by the Book of life, but by the sufferings123 of the Holy One, with whom they were associated as strangers and pilgrims: “He that hath ears to hear let him hear.”

There is a great principle connected with all this working and character of the beast upon earth, “he that leadeth into captivity shall go there”; so it will be with him: but God will not depart from His principles. He that uses the oppressing power shall be oppressed: the Lord will judge it, be it where it may; “he that killeth with the sword shall be killed with the sword.” The saints’ part is to suffer, to endure the continuance of evil, while God permits it and power is given to it. If the saints meddle with its principles and avenge themselves here, they must suffer its consequences here: “they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.” Patient suffering is the saints’ place, as Christ’s.124 They are not to take the beast’s character, because they suffer under it: it is warring with God’s providential government, which leaves him thus to practise. The Book of life is the book of the life of the Lamb slain.

Such was the grand secular power recognised in connection with the purpose and plans of God during this time—to which Satan’s throne and power was given. This is no description of a personal Antichrist at all, but the characteristic description of the corporate power of the beast. Antichrist’s deadly wound, for example, was never healed. The haste which applies passages to an object (because there may be other passages which prove an important link of the subject of the former with that object), often deprives us of a vast deal of the instruction of the word of God, and deters those from pursuing that link, who have seized the neglected parts which are now, by a particular absorbing interest, all set aside. The terror of the day of Antichrist is not characteristic of the saint: he has, it seems to me, a consciousness of his union with the Lord and gathering

to Him, which sets him above the terror of Antichrist's power, or of the day of the Lord upon him. We have had the sign of Satan as the dragon in heaven, a secret for the church, for those who saw things there.

We have had the beast arise out of the sea (the tumultuous movings of the nations, the mass of peoples), and, so formed, Satan give him his power, and throne, and great authority. Now, out of the formed arrangement of the scene of God's moral providence, the subject-place of light and darkness, the earth, we have another beast come up. In form of power he was like the Lamb, not in real meekness and suffering; but he took the similitude of His power; yet his utterance, his voice, his expression of himself, having this form of power, was like the dragon, the great hostile power of Satan himself, prevailing over the stars of heaven, and persecuting on earth: a very strange and singular combination—the similitude of the power of Christ, in form—of Christ in His kingly power as Messiah, yet who had been the rejected Lamb (it was not of the Son of man openly); but the expression of the character of Satan when he spake. We have still, as a beast, a corporate oppressing power, as such, though, in some sense, an individual may actually wield its power;125 but it is not the force of the symbol "beast." Power so concentrated is rather a horn, though there may be close connection between them. This did not set aside the existence of the first beast, but was of another character; yet "he exercises all the power of the first beast," before the first beast, in his presence—still a very singular position. His power, however, is not, as such, over kindreds and tongues and nations, but localised, and acting on men's minds in influence when

subject—not subjecting secularly nations. He causes the earth, and them that dwell therein, to worship the first beast; but to worship him as bearing this character, “whose deadly wound was healed.”126 It is in this restored state or headship-form of government of the beast that he does this. It is not the horns he makes them worship, but the beast, whose deadly wound (of one of his heads) was healed. Such is his character. Lamb-like as he may be in the form of his own power, he wields the power of the first beast before him; that is one point: another, he makes the earth and dwellers on it—carnal-minded men—worship the first, whose wound was healed: these were distinct points; for the whole character is here given. As to his own doing, there is the open exhibition of judicial power as of God: it was not (like the witnesses) “fire out of their mouth,” a testimony made good in judgment, but “fire down from heaven” in the sight of men—the apparent exercise of God’s judgments (as Elijah127 did) outwardly. All this, remark, is an ecclesiastical or spiritual power—a power ostensibly connected with divine things falsely, for it is evil—but ostensibly, and verified to the eyes of men by the exhibitions of power.

Moreover, he does miracles on the earth, by which he deceives those that dwell on it, whose character we have so often seen, and leads them to set up a resemblance of the beast whose deadly wound was healed—this great corporate system, with a formal headship—and to give breath to and thus apparently vivify this image to exercise controlling authority—not to kill, but to cause to be killed, those who did not worship this image. This was the doing of this second beast, the spiritual being; they had power to do this. It is not said, he had them all

killed, but he had power to cause all this.128 But he did oppress in earthly things; he caused all to receive “the mark of the beast” (in profession or service, as slaves), and would allow no man to buy or sell, “save he that had the mark”; or if he had “his name” it would do, though perhaps not thus actually a slave—or “the number of his name.” A person might be a ruler or leader in this system, and then, though not actually a slave, he would have the character of it yet more indelibly and intelligently stamped upon him. The name and the number of the name would be there. I do not pretend to wisdom—indeed, far from it; but I find, if the Lord means such a sense, tradition as well as apostasy gives the number of his name. As I have said in the note, these seem to me not the last actions in crisis, but the character of the preparatory agents: we shall see the results afterwards.129 That which is formal, and not subservient in their character, may continue and hold its place during the crisis—for example the blasphemy; for this was on his heads, it was characteristically part of himself, not particular subservient conduct. Both these parties are found at the judgment which closes the last three years and a half; but the last is found, not exactly in the same form, but, if I may so speak, in an exceedingly narrowed character; for the moral operations previous to the last critical period are very different from the conduct and its consequences which fill up that period, though the parties may be the same, and have just the same spirit really. The characters here are of much wider extent, having their description comprehensively given here, as Satan’s designs previously.

Chapter 14

The historical process of the Lord's dealings follows. Special details of the objects and character of His judgments succeed. In chapter 15, as I have said, there is a new great sign seen in heaven. The description of the secret agency and the providential instruments on earth has finished. The gracious effects of divine grace and spiritual power, with open testimony and judgment, follow here. Mount Zion is a modification of what was before seen. It is not yet the Lord returned in judgment —then He is the Son of man. And here we have, subsequent to this, the patience of the saints under the prevailing power of the beast and his image, and afterwards "blessed are the dead," and the Son of man reaping the harvest of the earth. Moreover, we have a new song130 sung before the throne, and before the elders, which song none but the "hundred and forty and four thousand" could learn; so that we are not dissociated from heavenly places, for this throne was set in heaven. Yet Zion was not the place of the temple, but the place of royalty: but, first, of grace—the place of God's connection, in grace, with the earth before the temple was built, where David had prepared a place for the ark—contrasted with Sinai, the place of law to the earth—whence, too, the law was to go forth in grace from the city of the great King, that "Zion that bringeth glad tidings." See Isaiah 3:2, and 40:9.

Here, then, anticipatively of the time when the Lord God and the Lamb should be the temple of the heavenly Jerusalem, when withal on earth Solomon's glory should be all displayed, stood a Lamb, maintaining still this character, not yet appearing in that of Son of man, but now drawing towards His royalty, towards the earth, yet

associated with His suffering people still, and with the perfect number of the remnant, having His Father's name on their forehead, the manifestation of the character plain upon them in grace connected with Him.131 Their great characteristic was, having kept themselves pure. The dwellers upon earth, we read afterwards, had been made drunk with the poison of Babylon's fornication, but these had kept themselves pure though Babylon was not yet fallen. They were redeemed from among men, from the earth—a peculiar people in the power of their lives, in the midst of those professors, while Babylon stood—not the reign of Christ in blessing, not the widespread promulgation of the gospel, but purity, as an undefiled few, following the Lamb, the holy Sufferer.

Though the world might have slighted them, as an unknown people, yet the full perfect remnant of them was here found assembled. And as Zion, as we have said, was the place where the ark was before the temple was built (and the temple was the type of the established glory), so here we find them assembled on Mount Zion; yet we are still in close connection with the heavenly places; for the new song is sung before the throne and before the elders. The harvest and dealings of the Son of man are subsequent to this and the fall of Babylon. These are redeemed from the earth (while the earth132 went on, i.e., the earth as described in the two preceding chapters) to be firstfruits to God and the Lamb.133 We meet with this connection for the first time formally expressed. It seems to me connected with fidelity during corruption, during which the mediatorial work of Christ was confounded, corrupted, or denied, as the mediatorial glory is described by the terms "Throne

of God and the Lamb,”134 “The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it,” etc. So, in the true bride, contrasted with the great whore that did corrupt the earth with her fornication, we have the elect or heavenly church (which is spoken of, therefore, as coming down from heaven) contrasted with that earthly system which connects itself with the kings of the earth. It is the Lord God that judges her. The kings of the earth have their war with the Lamb. “Firstfruits to God and the Lamb” seem to imply separation from the evil of the one, and suffering in faithfulness to the Lamb, from the unbelief of the other. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes, and are without fault before the throne of God. It is not properly the Father’s135 house they are received into, as identified with Himself—as hidden in heavenly places. It was deliverance from this corruption as regards worship, that formed a prominent part of the next of the seven messages of this chapter—a public general announcement for all to hear, of the everlasting136 gospel, declaring judgment on subsisting things, and calling for true worship to recognise God in the supremacy of His ministrations as the source of all things. The connection of the hour of His judgment being come and the call for true worship, supposes a gospel preached in the midst of apostasy and corruption before the judgment. I believe the principle137of this began at the Reformation (though it was by no means the accomplishment of it), and that it will not be fulfilled till the testimony to all—even the heathen nations—for a witness, be fulfilled. The striking feature is the announcement of the hour of God’s judgment138 being come. The next messenger announces the fall of Babylon. The particulars of this are more fully given us farther on; but getting its place in the course of events is

of great moment, which is given us here. The beast and his image still continue, but things are now closing in; for the warning is next given, If any man worship him, he shall be made to drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation. This, therefore, is the point of patience and faith now for the saints, keeping entirely aloof from all connection with the beast; for as yet it was a prevailing though judged power.

But now the patience of the saints (who suffered even to death, at least) closed. They were the happy ones; they rested from their labours, and their works followed them.

On the announcement of judgment on those that worshipped the beast or his image, or received his mark, and of the trial being the point of the saints' patience, a voice was heard from heaven; not the next progressive providential announcement (for it was no part of providence or dealings below), but the heavenly declaration of the decreed state of the saints, to whom this place was now publicly assigned in the economy of God. Death of the saints was now quite done with; and the blessedness of those of whom this was the portion was brought to light (not yet by their public manifestation on earth, but by the announcement from heaven to the ear of faith, that the time was come): a blessedness to which the Spirit, who had been their secret strength in labour, and even to death, now, with the same understanding and sympathy in joy, adds its "Yea." This introduction of the Spirit is very beautiful in this connection. When the earth was coming into blessing, they could not be left out in the testimony of Him who had suffered with them. It will be seen that, on

the introduction of grace to the earth (“the Lamb on Mount Zion”), all that follows in this chapter relates to the earth; but then, by the voice from heaven, the portion of the saints is thereon given. Their portion is given, too, as in the reward of glory, at least in announcement: “Their works do follow them.” This refers to manifestation in glory. (Compare 2 Thessalonians 1.)139 Anything the beast does after this is not mentioned here. It is the account of God’s dealings as towards the earth (the condition of the saints having been stated in passing). The next step therefore is the “harvest of the earth”—the execution of separating judgment in it; which was the actual accomplishment of the announcement of the previous verse—at least as regards its consequences in earth.

Then comes the vintage, which is pure wrath, not discriminating judgment. All the grapes of that which had the form of His people upon earth are trampled in the wine-press of God’s wrath. This was done “without the city,” not yet mentioned since chapter 11. And there, notice, it was “men” were slain; here, it is “blood came out”: the destruction is dreadful.140 This passes then from redemption out of the really apostate earth, seen in the one hundred and forty-four thousand, when redemption from amid profession was necessary, to the dealing of God, first in testimony, and then in judgment, with evil in all its forms as to men, the beast being reserved in judgment for a fuller description. This was rather the judgment of men and their corruption under those circumstances, the Lamb’s open war and victory being another thing. This is God’s judgment of the state of things, not the Lamb’s war with hostile power.

We have here, then, a general prospective view of God's dealings with the subject—apostasy (for subject it is to Him) first, saving His saints out of it, preserving them pure; then testimony; then judgment.

Chapters 15 and 16

Chapter 15 begins a new sign and a distinct subject. No longer various parties in heaven with consequent effects —the child caught away, and the patience and faith of the saints— but the plain statement of the wrath of God being completed or fulfilled: not here, observe, the judgment and victory of the Lamb over the beast; that is all special and administrative, connected with the exhibition of the power and effect in their followers.

Here was "another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels" (this was providential government, not the Lamb or Son of man) "having the seven last plagues." The sea was seen before the throne. Here it was seen, not only in its fixed purity, but this connected with trial—judicial trial. But on it, having now gotten the victory, stood those who had overcome the beast, and his image, and his mark, and the number of his name. Neither secular persecution nor deceitful power had prevailed over those faithful kept ones. They had the "harps of God" —divine and well-tuned joy. The song they sung was of a double character—the victory of God's power, the song of Moses—Jehovah Elohim Shaddai's works were "great and marvelous"; and the truth and justice of the ways of the King of nations141—the song142 of the Lamb. It was not only for power exhibited; but, as the saints, they understood, in the Spirit of the Lamb, the justice and truth of His ways: so they celebrate the coming recognition of the Lord. Now His judgments

were made manifest, who should not fear Him? For He only was holy: all else had failed. The Lord alone was to be exalted.

These had gotten the victory over everything of the beast. They were conspicuous in joy, consequent on this, before the throne of God, the elect remnant, faithful under the beast's power.143 There was a complete and final separation. They are not here seen as come forth to judgment with the Lamb, or on their thrones, for He is not yet so manifested, but singing His song. (Compare Psalm 92.) The judgments were on those who had the mark of the beast, not yet on the beast; that was by the Lamb coming with the saints. From these they were entirely exempt—seen in heaven. Faith may anticipate it; but the full actual accomplishment of this would be on the rapture of the victors, taking of the victors, to their scene of glory. They were not under the altar, nor necessarily killed; but they had the victory, refusing the mark of the beast.

The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony was now seen opened. In chapter 11 it was the ark of the covenant that was seen securing all for His people, while the power of evil remained unpunished; here, the tabernacle of His testimony. For judgment was to go forth according to His word. His judgments were made manifest, but for the deliverance of His earthly people according to that word. The deliverance of the saints is judgment, the judgment of the wicked. This was according to His governing power over creation in providence. One of the four beasts gave the angels the vials—vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. The return is to past dispensation and circumstance in this wrath, to Him whom we saw sitting

on the throne before they were opened, according to that character in which He judges by and from Himself. The glory of God now displayed itself (i.e., not in bright blessing), but in the power and influence of His judgment, as Sinai smoked, and "there went up a smoke out of his nostrils." "The tabernacle of the testimony was opened," but not the callings of grace or warnings, but for the execution and manifestation of judgments. It was not a time of testimony, in this sense, but of judgment, and no one could come into the temple: and, as the Lord speaks of the land, telling them their testimony would close ("These be the days of vengeance, Flee!"), so here (the saints first removed), it is no longer a time of reception but of judgment. Separation having been made (i.e., within the range of the beast's influence), no one could now enter into the heavenlies: and the earthly people who had taken and received the mark of the beast were judged.

The judgment as yet, however, was not one of destruction. The heavenlies144 and the earth were now separated; and instead of entering into the former, judgment was flowing from them on the latter. But it was not the actual judgment of the quick by the Son of man, but providential dealings of the wrath of God as such, and the wrath filled up in them.

I do not say that this is the last woe. But we have here that which was connected with it, "Thy wrath is come"; and I am disposed to think all that follows in that verse, though other things are mentioned also here. But as the woe in chapter 12, pronounced on the descent of Satan, was on the earth and on the sea, when he was cast out of heaven, so here, on the distinction between heaven and earth and closing of the heavenlies (the saints being

on the sea of glass), the judgment sent on the earth falls on the earth and sea too.

First, it was “poured” in the stricter sense “on the earth … a grievous sore.” A manifested plague from God fell on the men who had received the mark of the beast, and who worshipped his image. Next, all form of life was turned into death in the mass of the population, “and every living soul “(they are not spoken of as written in the book of life; but those who externally had life) “died.” The profession of being alive to God was blotted out of the mass of unformed nations.

The sources of the state of the population became also the form and power of death—the just judgment of those who had put the saints to death. These were general judgments on the mass and on their condition. Griesbach reads, “I heard the altar saying.” “Another out of the altar” would apparently mean another angel, which would be unsuited to all the force of these images. The force of “the altar” generally is clear; because the slain saints are looked at as offered, as burnt offerings to God. Compare chapter 6:9, 10. And the altar may be here heard to cry, as the witness of all this slaughter of the saints of God. I hardly think one saint would give this testimony from under or out of the altar. If the ordinary reading be correct, then an angel announces it out of the altar, recalling the mind to their having been in their death as burnt sacrifices to God.

The fourth angel deals with the supreme power over the earth. But its effect was only to make it hotter. Men suffered from intolerable tyranny now; they would not be subject to God—now they only blasphemed Him.

The fifth poured out his vial on the throne of the beast, which was really Satan's throne, the seat of his dominion and power. The effect was darkness and confusion; and they, the people of his dominion, "gnawed their tongues for pain." The beast and his armies, his active evil and mischief, are not in question now; the vial was poured upon his throne. There God's judgment reached him, in the other the Lamb's. The pains and sores here connected seem to identify this class with the first. God had still, to them, only the character of the God of heaven.

Under the sixth, that which flowed through, and gave its strength, character, and prosperity to Babylon was dried up; that "the way of the kings from the sun-rising might be prepared." The final destruction of Babylon and the final combats still remained.

There is reference here plainly to the position of the Euphrates. It is not, I conceive, the kings "of the east," but the kings who came from the east, from the sun-rising; chap. 16:12. This drying up of the great river Euphrates prepared their way. I suppose, from other passages, the Euphrates will, at any rate temporarily, be dried up for Israel to pass over; but I do not see that this passage applies to it in the midst of a symbolical prophecy, the vial being said to be poured out on it. It is commonly, from a previous passage, considered that it is the drying up of the Turkish power: it may be so, or at least there may be something analogous, taking the whole chapter in a subordinate and preparatory sense, which I believe it has had and is having in our own days (as I have expressed of other chapters, only over a longer period). Such application I believe this chapter has had; and this falls in consistently with the whole

plan of the protracted scheme of prophecy, because the second beast loses its character as a beast and becomes a false prophet before the final close.

The saints in chapter 15 had their victory over the effort to make them worship the image of the beast; but it was the second beast, not the false prophet, who sought to make them worship the image of the first. But here he has the character of the false prophet, so that thus far (i.e., in principle) the victory had been obtained and could be celebrated, by the Spirit, for the church. But when we come to a more positive fulfilment of judgment, and the actual bringing it into effect, on the separation of the saints out of the scene, and the closing the testimony of grace which gathered into the heavenlies, then there must be something more distinct, something which makes way for the eastern kings to take their part in the great catastrophe. The barrier and resources of the western Roman empire were dried up, so that the way for this coming in of the kings from the east was prepared. Thereon it is, that the unclean spirits go out to gather the kings of the whole world to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

Chapter 14 had given, so to speak, the ecclesiastical dealings of the Lord; and testimony in grace was there. In chapter 15 we have the separation of the saints appropriated to the heavenlies; and then, in chapter 16, the judgment on the earth, reaching primarily those who had received the mark: all this in relation to God—subjection and fidelity to Him—not the Lamb nor the Son of man wielding His power as King of kings and Lord of lords.

But upon this judgment145 (the drying up of the Euphrates the last struggle must commence; and Satan uses all his energies to prepare his forces: but it is only for the battle of the great day of God Almighty. This is done (being a vision in the midst of the course of the judgment) by the influence and principles of the positive exercise of infidel self-will and enmity to Christ's power, the concentrating spirit of empire in the beast (the Roman power), and the spirit of Antichrist here (having changed its secular power as a beast for its false influence on minds as a prophet). We see the son of place this holds in Judah in Jeremiah's time, and with Ahab, etc.: the manner of it may be different, but it exercises this guiding character in apostasy (the power to be wielded being held by another).

These three gather the kings of the whole organised habitable earth to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. But now Christ was nigh at hand. All this went on with multiplied human plans perhaps, but to the saints it was the sign that Christ was at hand. "And he gathered them together." Who is He? This was the power and providence of God by Christ, I apprehend: whatever the satanic influence or instrumentality, it was done, if through that, by Him. The spirits were to go forth to gather; and they gathered: but it was really the Lord's doing in judgment. Compare Micah 4:11-13.

This battle, the scene of the Lamb's judgments, against whom the hatred and opposition was, is reserved for His coming forth, and the display of His power. We have an intimation of its connection with Hebrew localities: the place has a Hebrew name, Armageddon. But this comes in here by the bye; for it is the account of God's wrath, and the gathering is all that has this character

providentially. If there be allusion to the place and term Megiddo, I should suppose it was, of the two, rather Judges 5 than the case of Josiah.

The seventh vial was poured into the air, that which affected the whole scene below, the place of universal government and influence. The wrath was still in the earth: so in fact, in all. And now a voice from the throne in the temple announced that all was finished, and the power of God displayed itself in judgments and thunderings of His power; for “the voice of the Lord is powerful.” And never was so great an earthquake—so great a disruption of all the elements of organised social existence. “The great city (that frame-work and centre of this organisation) “was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell”—all the centres of organisation of the nations external to the great city. And great Babylon is here presented, not merely in its civil sociality, but its full character before God— “great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.” The particulars of her judgment also are reserved for a fuller and exacter display, together with her character, as was that of the beast. The precursory judgments have been stated here, and the order of these final ones placed. The fall of Babylon is connected with chapter 14, where testimony is going on, as we have seen.

Direct destructive judgment, in the way of plague, not proper judgment before the throne, came down on men, along with this bringing the corporate system of Babylon into remembrance. It was neither repentance, nor, as I have said, anything of the final judgment of the throne—an earthly thing; for men blasphemed God because of it, for it was very great. Such is the effect of God’s

judgments when the wilful rebellious heart is unchanged; such have all of us, unless in new life by grace.

Chapter 17

The apostle is now called away to a fuller description of the woman and the beast, not called up to heaven at all now, for her place and her judgment are on earth. He is called by one of the angels, or messengers of judgment, that had the seven vials of wrath of God. These angels had the character of perfect righteousness both divine and human: the golden girdle in which the certain energy and pure power of divine righteousness is maintained and vindicated; and white robes, in which the spotlessness of human sanctity and faultlessness, as of God, is expressed. One of these now comes to shew the prophet the judgment of the great whore that is seated, in her malignant influence, on the masses of peoples. That is, the revelation is made according to the character and estimate of this judgment.

The interpretation of this chapter is clearly of the greatest possible importance, as to the form of the corporate power of man, as apart from God, and setting up for independence of Him in the latter days. However, the judgment (though much information be given of her, and of the beast that is found to carry her) is definitely of her in one character—the great whore. She is judged as such, though much thereon depends; and this I certainly conclude to be mainly her ecclesiastical character, just as the bride, the Lamb's wife, with whom she is in eminent contrast, is the church; though heavenly glory be her portion, as false earthly glory is the great whore's. But the union with the Lamb is the

real distinction of the one; her meretricious conduct (ecclesiastical corruption) is of the other: doubtless the glory of the world is eminently and intimately associated with this. Had she not this in play, much of her grandeur and influence would be lost, and she would cease to have this character. Her union with the world was her whoredom. Babylon may have a king over it—so it is spoken of in the Old Testament; but this is not its character here—she rides the beast. In the Old Testament, she is never, accordingly, spoken of as committing fornication; for in a certain sense (though, perhaps, through him, an evil one), she belonged to the king of the earth: he had made her and builded her for his majesty and his glory. Here, she rides on the beast, using him, though afterwards hated and impoverished, etc., by the ten kings. Babylon of old, had deceived the nations by the multitude of her sorceries and her enchantments; but that is another thing: evil or good, she belonged to the king of Babylon; she rose by him, and fell with him. Here she has no king, but lives in evil, her own mistress, with the kings of the earth. Israel was an adulteress,146 not Babylon, then.

Far this she is judged, though other things and all worldly splendour might surround her, and give her influence over the minds of others. In the Old Testament, fornication is attached, not to Babylon, but to Tyre, with reference to her merchandise.

The material feature here is, that Babylon is not the seat of earthly power, ruled over and headed at any time by him who exercises apostate royalty upon the earth, but an independent woman. So was Tyre in the world, as thus spoken of: and, where the prince of Tyre147 is spoken of, it is not in human earthly language, but the

highest character of apostasy, such as can be reached in its full character only by the great enemy, and, it would seem to me, connected with a church or religious standing—a character and apostasy far more terrible than the apostasy of the world, headed by its king, in its full form builded by him. Worldly association, then, this has, and wide extent of merchandising and wealth—a great system of worldly prosperity; but its character for judgment is her fornication, not her purple, her scarlet, and the like, though all these were connected with it, and designated her. Judgment ruined her as to these; but they were not the cause of judgment. And this is always the case: the becoming worldly, and by this spirit, and to gain this wealth, pandering to the passions of the kings of the earth, is just the very cause of this. But, as in old time, the blood of all righteous men was found in God's house, then apostate—not in the world's or the wicked one's outwardly—judged in Jerusalem, not in heathen Rome, so, ever: the ecclesiastical form of wickedness takes the lead, not the worldly. The gainsaying is recorded as the gainsaying of Korah, not of Dathan and Abiram, though the earth might swallow them up too; and the beast may be judged as well as Babylon, but not presented in the same sad terms in God's moral judgment, in the sight of men. Moral corruption is ever worse than evil power.

Babylon was also the mother of harlots, and of the abominations or idolatries of the earth. The invocation of a demon, under the name of Paul, was worse than under the name of Hercules or Theseus; and the uprooting of the mediation of Christ more fatal and destructive (as of the remedy itself), than that of the unity of the one true Jehovah. She was here a mystery. The apostasy of

worldly power and grandeur was no mystery to the escaped remnant of Babylon, and the Patmos prisoner of Domitian. That the church, which the apostle watched over, should assume this form, was a mystery indeed—ruling that which he was suffering under as a poor despised follower of the crucified Jesus, and corrupting a world of which the church properly was the only true light. She was the mother of the abominations of the earth; but her sway was over the many waters, peoples, and tongues, and nations, and languages. Rome, I cannot help believing, was the centre of this system. The golden cup was in the whore's hand, not she a golden cup in the Lord's—she governed and rode the ten-horned beast, that was her long general character, but not her final one: she became the prey and spoil of the kings which had their power with the beast. They gave their power, not to her any longer, but to him. She, not the beast, was drunk with the blood of the saints, and that, as seen sitting in her full ease and comfort there. And this was matter of deep astonishment to the apostle, that she who connected herself in his mind with such a character and pretension should be such.

Thus far the vision: but the interpretation follows, and (as has been elsewhere remarked of Daniel and the parables) the interpretation carries the facts of the prophecy into a further scene, altogether consequent upon that in the prophecy. "The beast which thou sawest." The interpretation takes up the time of the passage into this further scene, which did not exist in the actual vision of the apostle; which saw (in order to give her her full character) the woman in all her splendour. "The beast which thou sawest, was" (to wit, the fourth great empire), "and is not" (i.e., had not, at

the noticed period, its united formal character), “and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit”—shall resume this formal character, under the direct influence of Satan, and then be destroyed. And all within the prophetic range of his power (the earth—the woman’s influence extended farther, “she sat on the waters”) should be amazed when they thus saw it. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman, not the whore, sitteth, “but that great city which reigneth.” This cannot mean merely Babylon; for that was the whore’s name already on her forehead, and therefore not an explanation to be given. That was her symbolic character: this her local explanation. There are also seven kings; these are not the horns, they were not moreover contemporaneous. “Five are fallen, one is” (I take this, from verse 9, to be a direct present explication to the apostle), “the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.” This made the seven. One brief-lived head of the beast was to arise before the last, after the apostle’s days. The Spirit of God has not thought it material to give a special designation of this or the previous heads, as not in the present scene affecting the church or purposes of God, but merely identifying the beast, and not suffering the church to be led astray.

But there is that which is more distinctly noted, after all this is completed, and all that properly formed the beast is full—an eighth head148 (which is the beast itself, as arising directly from Satan’s power and influence) arises, which is yet of the seven, which is connected with and takes its place among the other heads and forms of the Roman empire, but is also a distinct,

definite power, the resurrection-beast of Satan's power; and in this form it is that it goes into perdition.

We have now the woman, the beast, and its heads, described.

We have then the conduct of the ten horns, the ten kings. These properly belong to the beast; they had received no kingdom at the time of the vision, formed no part of the then system, but would receive power contemporaneously with the beast. I do not see that this states that they would exist all the time along with the beast,149 but that they would not be a power supplanting or without connection with the beast, but that they would exist themselves, contemporaneously, and while the beast existed. They would give their power to the beast. I have no doubt that mainly the beast in its last form is here spoken of, but it is their character generally. They give their kingdom and power to the beast; they have one mind as to this. But though they did this corporately, they had a mind of their own, or at least practically in action. These shall make war with the Lamb: this shall be their conduct and end. The Lamb shall overcome them, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and then we have His companions the church and armies of heaven anticipatively brought forward. He is not alone: they that are with Him are "called, and chosen, and faithful." This was the history and the end of the ten kings, but still characteristically; for, if we consult Daniel, three of them fall. Their Victor is then declared and His companions. As the confederacy of the kings gave (for it was man's will) their power to the beast, the Lamb's companions were, on the contrary, called, and chosen, and faithful. The "waters" are then explained so as to need little

comment, save as reminding us of the extent of general moral influence beyond the prophetic earth: she had her seat there, though she sat on the beast too. Another characteristic was, that she had this influence and place on the peoples and multitudes and nations; all this was an independent influence proper to the woman, and this in her evil character as the whore.

Another incident of much importance in the history is then brought forward. These ten kings are to give their power to the beast. So “God hath put into their hearts to fulfil his will,” and “these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate, and eat her flesh” (devour her wealth and fatness), “and burn her with fire.” It was not specifically with these kings she had committed fornication; that had been her general character with the kings of the earth. These ten kings, however, desolate her: the will at this time acts in them, not in the beast.150 They are the prominent and existing actors, that they may give their power to the beast, whose final character and end we have already seen. This goes on “until the words of God shall be fulfilled.” The woman, not the whore, is then designated as that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth (the predominant associated power of the earth):151 but if acting by corrupt religion, not doing so here as a false prophet, but as a city—a system in her secular, carnal, and worldly, and wealthy character; yet that secularity and wealth, the meretricious secularity152 and wealth of an active, corrupting will— “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.”

Chapter 18

Having thus seen Babylon in her active will, in her connection with the will of others, and her end in wealth and fatness, the announcement of her fall as a corporate system is declared.

And here I find much more of the purely worldly part of the system; and this is its character, though the other be not denied. And here she is seen as fallen—Babylon the great, not spoken of here as the mother of harlots, the whore, or the woman, but simply as Babylon the great, as a city or dwelling-place. She had not ceased to exist, however, at all; but she was fallen, and become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every unclean spirit, and the hold of every unclean and hateful bird. This was her present condition and judgment— her condition morally—and as discerned by the church, who, through the Spirit, knew all things on the testimony of God. The fall of Babylon seems to be her losing the place of active, governing or leading power, ruling as such the beast and many waters, involving her moral degradation, not destruction.

God now calls His people out of her. I do not say that this call had not application whenever the truth of the third verse was perceived: but it was now definite and positive, for the truth was declared judicially. Woe to them who remained! Her sins had reached to heaven, and they would receive of her plagues if they stayed. It was a warning on account of consequences now. The separation must be made, for God had begun to judge her. She had already fallen from power, the seductive power of wealth and corruption. She still, it seems, said in her heart, she should be a queen,and see no sorrow—

still maintained her pride, though she was fallen; and the church knew God was now judging her.153 The desolation of all the temporal prosperity of the great city is sorrow and trouble to the kings of the earth. This is a distinct thing from the ten horns hating her and burning her with fire. The kings of the earth are the royal rulers, not these specific ten horns, which give their power to the beast as kingdoms; the horns were the power of the kingdoms, exercised by the ruling power for the time, perhaps. But all those who had been dwelling in the security of the settled and ordered earthly system—the kings of the earth, as the inhabitants of the earth—those who had been committing fornication with the great whore—these bewailed her burning.154 The ten were a definite class, brought forward with the beast in his last actings against the Lamb, for the accomplishment of which God puts it into their heart to get rid of the great whore. The ten kings are never, as such, spoken of as committing fornication with the harlot. The kings of the earth and inhabitants of the earth are mentioned as having so conducted themselves. The rising of the ten kings into active power is a distinctly noticed and subsequent event. Their specific description as active is from chapter 17:12-17. The destruction and judgment of the great city involved the ruin of all mere secular interests—wealth—all that was Tyrian in its character, though souls of men had been added to that renowned city's traffic; for the great city traded in them also. Anything to enrich characterised the conduct of the city, taught by direct and accomplished apostasy. The city was, in a certain sense, distinct from the merchants. She was the whole system; they stood aloof, from the fear of her torment when God was judging her; and the ship-masters withal. But heaven and the holy apostles and

prophets were called to rejoice over her. She had been the enemy of heaven, as the whole lust of the earth, to shut out God; and withal the persecutor and enemy of the revelation and testimony of the heavenly glory, the judgment of the world, and the coming of the Son of man—in a word, of the great power of testimony by which the church was constituted in the world. Then came the statement of the sudden and total manner of her final destruction.155 Her worldly wealth, the power of riches, is marked as her great final character as thus judged and destroyed. And here she was like Babylon of old; and in her was found all the blood slain upon the earth—as in Jerusalem all that was shed, up to her destruction—as being the chief and perfected form of apostasy from God.

In this description of Babylon we have the whole spirit and character of the world except power, royal power; for that is of God, however used, and that (in the hands of the kings of the earth) was corrupted by her; and then these ten horns or kings hated her and destroyed all its fulness and power. These were not Babylon; but they gave their power to the beast; so that power also which did come from God, might be found in open rebellion against Him to whose hand all power was entrusted and given—the Lamb; and thus the last and final form of evil be produced, involving (for it was then the question whose power was to stand) the destruction and setting aside of the form and subsistence of apostasy.

Thus, in Babylon we have wealth, corruption, sorceries, arts, luxuries, bodies and souls of men sold, fornication committed with the kings and dwellers upon earth, and they made drunk with it:156 the principle of confederate will, but the corruption (not the exercise) of royal

secular power as of God, though it might, by seduction, rule and govern this power, and thus separate it from its divine source, and actually set aside and hinder the unqualified assertion of its supremacy, as of God over all. This, as we have seen, is distinct from the direct apostasy of power, which is founded on the hatred and consumption of the whore, and has its place in the beast. Power was given to Nebuchadnezzar, and he built Babylon. But here we have the woman in the exercise of her own will corrupting and ruling, uniting the characters of Israel towards God (save that she was a harlot, not an adulteress, for she had been but espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ), and Tyre towards the world. When in exercise, we have always the ecclesiastical taking the lead in evil, as in Kore and the chief priests: so here this mysterious woman sits on the beast and many waters. When the kings begin to act, and are going to give their power by their will, they begin by her destruction, or consumption at any rate. And note, the act of Christ's power is on the feet and toes themselves. God judges Babylon as a great moral system denying His supremacy, not in open hostility to Christ's power.

We have the fall157of Babylon distinguished, I think, from the destruction of Babylon. Her fall includes moral degradation, and being the dwelling-place of unclean spirits. This is judgment on her; and she falls because of her making the nations drink of the wine of the poison of her fornication; chap. 14:8. This we find in the ecclesiastical course, so to speak, of closing facts. Her final judgment we find in the close of the filling up of the wrath of God; chap. 16:19. The connection of the former

seems to be with chapter 18:2; of the latter, with chapter 18:21.

Chapter 19

Thus Babylon was judged—removed out of the way with her corruptions, which corrupted the earth; and the blood of the servants of the Lord God was avenged. This is celebrated as the work of the Lord God by a multitude in heaven, and the mystic representations of the redeemed; but the worship was of God as sitting on the throne, whose power and judgment had been thus exercised. The way was now made free; and a voice comes forth out of the throne for the voice of praise from all God's servants. His sons could always praise Him in spirit; but here (the prevalence of evil being removed and "delay no longer ") they, in their character of servants, and all that feared God, can praise Him; for He now reigned as the Lord God Omnipotent—that character or those characters in which He dealt with the earth whether as God, Creator, Promiser, and Shield of His people while strangers, or the everlasting Accomplisher of all He had promised, Jehovah Elohim Shaddai. All these He took now in power and reigned. This time takes us back to chapter 11:17:158 we have had, in the interval, the source, character, and form of evil, and judgment of all but the beast, and open power against the Lamb, which is earthly. All secret or mere corrupt evil, all evil that had its place in heaven, being removed, it was a question of open power—Satan's last and hopeless resource on earth. The praise, accordingly, is returned to God in this character of Lord God Almighty who reigneth; and gladness and joy immediately came forth.

Then His first and immediate purpose manifests itself, before even the Lamb's judgment of His earthly enemies; "the marriage of the Lamb is come." This is a matter of ordinance and dispensation. We are now His children; but the marriage of the Lamb is not yet come, nor is His wife made ready. It is not here, then, children with the Father. But the time for the Lord's manifest glory being come, the Lord God takes His power, judges and removes the evil worldly counterpart, and (the Lamb's wife made ready) the time for it is come: these, however, were heavenly things,159 and they are passed by. The time, and readiness and nature of her robes only, are passingly mentioned as an important circumstantial characterising the progress of events: and it closes with pronouncing blessing on those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb; and the prophet returns to the course on the earth again, where the white-robed ones are found the companions of His glory in judgment.

This closed the scene of what was properly heavenly, i.e., the time during which the Lamb (and His followers) were not manifested upon earth. It closes with "these are the true sayings of God." The angel was his fellow servant160 and the fellow servant of his brethren that had the testimony of Jesus; for the spirit of prophecy still testified of Jesus. God was to be worshipped: this was the great end of the book—to keep the church in the holy simplicity of true worship in the midst of ruin and apostasy.

Now the heaven is opened. It is not John caught up there. It is not a sign there. It is not the temple opened to him there; but heaven is opened and One comes forth. 161 Heaven opened for the Holy Ghost to descend on Jesus here. It opened for the angels of God to ascend

and descend on the Son of man. It opened for the church (to wit, in Stephen closing that period and scene) to see into heaven and be received there. It now was opened, that the King of kings and Lord of lords Himself should come forth thence to act on the earth—to judge and make war in righteousness. It was now the time that power was to be applied to righteousness162 in the earth. He came in the manifestation of faithfulness and truth; He came with scrutinising and purging judgment; He came in the assemblage of many royalties; and in the secret of His own power, which none knew but Himself. His armies were in fine linen clean and white—heavenly righteousness and purity—the priests of God. He came with divine vengeance (His garment was dipped in blood), and in that title of the manifestation of the power of God which was from creation downward, "the word of God." Thus He had created, thus revealed, thus judges. The armies in heaven followed. None were in this conflict with Him on the earth—His own arm brought salvation: He smites, rules, and treads the wine-press of God's wrath. The power and title, in which He is now publicly manifested, is "King of kings, and Lord of lords": this recalls to chapter 17:14. The birds of the air are summoned to the great supper of destruction. The ten kings were specially marked in their war against the Lamb; and they did take a lead in it; but the expression here is more general. The beast is found here, and the kings of the earth. Those who ruled the earth were generally found refusing to submit to this royal conqueror—to the Lord. The beast is first and prominent; then the kings of the earth withal and their armies. It was the general character of the state of the earth then. The beast and the false prophet are taken and put in the lake of fire. The prophet, by his

characteristics, is identified with the second two-horned beast which arose out of the earth, which has lost its secular power, but not its character as counsellor of mischief in the latter day. The remnant was slain with the sword of him that sat on the horse—it "proceeded out of his mouth." For, though it was the actual execution of judgment, and no longer merely the sword of the Spirit, but of the Lord, in active imperial judgment of the quick, it was according to the word. It was the judgment of the word which proceeded out of His mouth: they died by that. The proper application of this is to those who were against Him, as coming from heaven to judge those who were directly under the influence and power of apostasy. Still, the kings of the earth is wider than the ten kings,163 and left general. I doubt, however, whether it includes Gog, whose aim is against the land rather than the Lamb, or even the Prince of princes. With Gog, it is the gratification of covetousness, the lust of possessing. He goes against the land of unwalled villages, and perishes in the mountains of Israel, after Israel is brought back and dwelling in peace.

The beast and the false prophet, these delegates of Satan, the active enemies of the Lamb, were finally judged: but it does not appear that the deceiving of the nations by Satan thereupon ceases, because he is not yet bound. Still, he cannot now reproduce anything that had before flowed from his place in heaven. On his casting down, his place became, as we have seen, that of open opposition to the Lamb. This is the character of the action of the nations ever afterwards under his influence: nothing like the great previous system. So, even after the thousand years, all is on earth and of this

character. He never regained heaven again at all. The beast and the false prophet, the resulting form of the apostasy while Satan was god of this world, never re-appeared either. He established himself evidentially prince of this world by what led to the cross, that being the climax of it. When that was departed from, the church only became the instrument of his power; sin and the world resuming their dominion under her name. This was maintained in active apostasy by the use of a corrupt church, still on the earth as to means; and, when he was cast down from heaven, it could then only be by open war, as we have seen, against Him who came in His royalty to claim His inheritance. I believe it will be found that the early commerce and colonisation of the earth were most intimately connected with idolatry—the children of apostate though once rescued Ham. His first act was casting off or degrading authority as of God; and ere long we find, at the river of Cush,164 idolatry in practice, and extending even to the Shemitic race, whence Abraham was then called out.

The former state (i.e., confederacy, trading, false religion) is spoken of as a woman:165 this may, as to part of the ideas, be subjected to Christ. Nebuchadnezzar may rule Babylon (the city of confusion); so the Lord Christ “the city of the great King,” where God is well known; and Jerusalem may be the queen in gold of Ophir. The latter state of earthly opposition is, either the beast, once subject to the former, and it is by the will of the kings, or in the hands of the wilful king, the fallen and hostile carnal man rising up against the Lord. The former point much explains to me the prince of Tyre in the prophet Ezekiel.

Chapter 20

We have, accordingly, to remark that Satan is not bound by him that sat on the horse; but an angel comes down from heaven. It is not the immediate judgment here on Satan by Christ, but the divine power, and providence, and intervention of God, which sets Satan aside and incapacitates him from any further deceiving of the Gentiles till he be let loose.

In verse 4 we begin a new scene—the thrones. It is not judging and making war here, but sitting in royal judgment on thrones. This passage, it seems to me, alludes to the thrones being set (so admitted to mean, I believe, as in Septuagint) in Daniel 7:9; in the interpretation of which, in verse 22, we read, "judgment was given to the saints of the most high," or of the heavenly places. Here, not only are the thrones set, but he sees people sitting on them: the thrones were filled. This Daniel did not see—it was a period with him: with us it is our glory with Christ. These thrones were set before even the King and His armies came forth; but they formed no part of the actual visible earthly scene (nothing yet of the connection of heaven with the earth); and therefore they are not mentioned. The thrones were set before the judgment of the beast in Daniel; and those who come forth with the Lamb are sitters on the thrones. But, I repeat, though filled, they are not brought into the scene till they form properly part of it. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory … then shall he sit on the throne of his glory." They do not take this place properly till He takes it openly (the power being given to Him as Son of man, which is connected with earth): and so these thrones, though seated in heaven. As, in Daniel, "the Ancient of days came, and

judgment was given to the saints of the most high," so this is consequent upon His taking His power and reigning. They reign with Him the thousand years. What follows in the verse is an additional intimation that the others had lost nothing by the enmity of the world,166 and of Satan even to death, or by their refusal to worship the beast. Their souls were seen. There might have been power to kill the body, but they had never died to God, and now they enjoyed the fruit of it— "they reign in life by one."

The reigning on the thrones actually is consequent upon the removal of the deceiving power of Satan: and so with Christ. He comes first, and then actually takes the throne of the world: His companions have been hidden with Him meanwhile; and though glorified (so I speak of them now), the thrones were not seen till the war ended. The title was full, they were gone to Him. But they did not, before that, actually possess the kingdom; nor did He Himself. The horse and the throne are distinct things —imperial, active, subduing power; and full, peaceable, judicial power as king. For Christ's act so coming is not a mere passing act. The throne of His glory continues till, as mediatorial king, He gives it up. On this throne of the Son of man the saints will sit, occupying thrones with Him and judging the world; and this is a reign of peace, but of righteousness withal (this latter Jewish properly): for heaven and earth meet in peace now— peace on earth; because the face of heaven, in its own character through Christ the Mediator, and the saints with Him, shines on it now.

In this part there is little mention of the nations, though it be left general; because Christ deals with the nations as identified with earthly Jerusalem: whereas here He is

looked upon as coming from heaven to act upon the main scene and agent of Satan's hostile power—the beast and his followers. The nations at this time are more the subjects of Old Testament prophecy; which, while it recognises the fact of the Lord's coming from heaven with all His saints, occupies itself with the earthly Jerusalem and what passes there. Here we have the display of the first resurrection—the main subject. Blessed and holy are they! they shall be priests of God and of Christ: there is their highest place, as seen in this book; and they shall reign with Him a thousand years, for He is a priest on His throne. It would be hard to make priests of principles, though, by a figure, we might say principles reign.

After this, when the nations form the body of hostile agents, we have Satan's actings in them; but it is no revival of the beast, nor anything in that character. Blessed be God, there was a final ending of that dark and subtle apostasy which resulted from Satan's being in heaven; but this is a mere exhibition of open, hostile enmity in those whom he has been able to deceive here. We must on no account, therefore, lose sight of this character of present evil and rebellion and apostasy, that it flows from Satan's being in heavenly places (though the church, in the knowledge of Christ's exaltation, may know His and its entire victory over him). The wrestling, however, is not now with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. In chapter 12 Satan is cast down from heaven; but here, what he raises on earth against the Lamb is cast into the lake of fire and Satan himself is bound in the bottomless pit, the history of the earth not being yet finished. The coming of Jesus, whose judgment

acts on the beast and false prophet, is not the same as the angel of God's providence and power casting Satan into the pit.

The glory and reigning of the Son of man seems to vindicate God as regards the failure of the Noah world. The blessing of the Second Adam, as the Head of a redeemed race, takes the place of antediluvian evil and wretchedness, in which the children of fallen Adam displayed their character: this closed by the judgment of water, that commenced by that of fire. In the reign of the Son of man with His saints, "a King shall reign in righteousness." In the blessedness of the Second Adam, as Head of the new race when God's tabernacle is with men, therein "dwelleth righteousness," its peaceful and constant habitation without force maintaining it. Partially the principles of these two states mingle, by virtue of the power and influence of the heavenly Jerusalem and its great Bridegroom (and so we have Psalm 85 accomplished): still are they different.

Upon the close of the thousand years, Satan is let loose — deceives the nations—a separation takes place; and he brings up the deceived against the camp of the saints and the beloved city, to wit, the earthly Jerusalem. Then the devil is cast into the lake of fire, where the beast and the false prophet are already, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The judgment of the beast and his armies, it appears to me, is not the judgment of Matthew 25, nor is Matthew 25 the judgment of the great white throne. That judgment in Matthew appears to me to be the judgment of the nations at large, when Christ is not making war, either as coming from heaven, or as going forth in

connection with Jerusalem; but when He is sitting on His throne, having come, and judging the nations for the manner in which they have treated the preachers of the gospel of the kingdom in that going forth which shall specially take place at the close. It is not, “He shall send forth his armies,” but the calm and solemn session of the throne on those who have despised Him in His messengers.

Although the fact of the resurrection of the just is mentioned here to separate them out of the judgment, the millennial state itself is little dwelt upon, the chapter being properly the account of the session of judgment. From this we see the partakers of the first resurrection entirely exempt. Then Satan’s actings, as introducing the millennial judgment167 are mentioned, and that judgment itself. On the great white throne (for there were no thrones now) sat One from whose face heaven and earth fled away. This, therefore, was no coming at all—no judgment of the habitable world as a scene, nor a judgment of the quick. The dead, small and great, stand before God; and they are judged out of the books, according to their works. We have therewith a general statement of the portion of those not written in the book of life. Whatever differences there may have been in measure, they were all cast into the lake of fire. This was not now a place merely prepared for the devil and his angels. The devil was there. The false prophet and the beast had been there long before: now, all those who were not written in the book of life.

Chapter 21

There was now not merely an economic change. The great white throne had no reference to any dispensation,

but to the dead. There was now an actual physical change—a new heaven and a new earth, and no more sea. And here John sees a new object, new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven. This general fact, I conceive, is presented here to give the object. Its bearings are taken up apart: and first the historical progress or result is stated; and we find the tabernacle of God, not the throne or heavenly dwelling of God and the Lamb, but God all in all—the tabernacle of God with men. The race, man, now are blessed with God's presence; and grace had provided a way in the which (with no desolating enquiry of "Where art thou?") God could visit, yea, have His tabernacle among men, now headed up in the blessed last Adam—the risen and glorified Man, not in the first fallen one. The millennium, as we have said, is the contrast to Noachic failure, when Satan is cast out of the heavens, and government comes in, righteous and effectual for blessing and peace. To man's fall, the ruin of the first Adam, is here contrasted the perfect, unfailing, and new and durable blessing of the second —all things made new—no more death—all evil put in the lake of fire. Chapter 19:9 is the special recorded blessing of the former state, the marriage of the Lamb: chapter 21:5, the blessing of this.

The condition of the earth during the millenium is more properly the subject of the Old Testament prophets—the restitution of all things spoken of by them. The connection of the heavenly blessings with it, during the millennium, is, however, taken up in what follows, to complete the picture, and give the saints the joy of their own portion in it, which, in its own proper and intrinsic character, moreover is eternal. This account is from chapter 21:9 to 22:5, 6.168 On this I have but few

remarks to make, having so far prolonged this. It is not here the children in the Father's house; it is not dwelling in God as love (and thus, through Jesus, in whom all fulness dwells, filled with His fulness, we in Him, and He in the Father), but the glory of God, the order of all dispensation. Glory is taken up in it (i.e., that which constitutes the glory of each), as displaying the character, foundation, and ways of God, the excellency of mediation, and the basis of righteousness and true holiness, firmly established as the very streets of the city. These constituted the characteristics of the city.

But there is another very interesting point in this character of the heavenly Jerusalem, the Lamb's bride, the perfection and blessedness of mediatorial glory. First, God and the Lamb are the light of it: they enjoy the light of glory; the nations of the spared ones walk in the light of it (i.e., of the heavenly Jerusalem, the Lamb's wife, the glorified saints). It is not merely "nations shall come to the brightness of its rising" — the acknowledgment of a new and dominant power owned of God and glorified in the earth; it is proper blessing, "they walk in the light of it." And yet more distinctly does it preserve its character of grace, and the immense privilege of grace; and what it possesses in common, it has on incomparably higher ground than even Paradise of old. The Tree of Life has healing in it now. Not merely can the innocent eat and live, but there is remedial blessing in it for those on earth. They worse perhaps in some sort than Adam, but far more glory, and blessing displayed even in glory. The Lamb's bride, answering as a help-meet to the Lamb's heart of love, is minister of blessing to them that need. It is now full of blessing, and we ministers of it, "for his servants shall serve Him …

His name shall be on their foreheads." Far other is the minister of strict earthly righteousness, the earthly Jerusalem— "the people and nations that will not serve thee shall utterly perish." Now this heavenly rule, withal, is recognised as the source of power. The kings of the earth bring their glory to it (not to corrupt Babylon, to their disgrace and ruin). None enter this that defile, but those written in the Lamb's book of life. It is not now merely "the Lord shall reign for ever and ever," but "they shall reign for ever and ever."

From the time of the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God, and the association of the church with Him, Christ has been ready to judge. There were many Antichrists, whereby it was known that it was the last time, as this same apostle teaches us. And now, in the manifested failure of the church on earth unfolded in the first chapters, though the Bridegroom might tarry, the church, knowing His mind, had but one cry, "Come!" In this position, therefore, the church is practically set.

From the time the prophecy took its course, all was remediless. When it took absolutely and definitely in the crisis, it became absolutely and definitely so as to individuals, as regarded the dispensation of judgment— "the door was shut." The Lord declares He has sent His angel to testify these things in the churches. Here we are brought back to what went before the prophetic sayings (the churches being thus made cognisant of the prophetic sayings). The Lord presents Himself to them, as the root indeed, but as the offspring of David, ready to inherit his throne; and the bright and blessed witness of millennial day, and, in one sense, eternal day to the church. This was the next thought to the church on this failure. Accordingly, knowing it, the church is only lifted

up into better hopes, and the Spirit,169 which, as Comforter, abides for ever, takes the lead; and, in its character of bride, abstracting itself from circumstances and earthly progress and associations, the church joins its guiding Spirit and says, Come—calls on all who hear, whose ear is open to divine truth, to join in this as its cry, its first utterance, now born into a world of sorrow even for the church, which sees its desolation (still, however, maintaining its character of grace, ministerial grace, to the world): “And let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” While the Holy Ghost remains filling the church, no change of circumstances can prevent it or us from being the ministers of this calling-grace in the midst of a ruined world.

Strictly speaking, then, verse 17 returns to the things that are; verses 10, 11 to the prophetic period, which has closed the hope and testimony of grace, and assumed the testimony of judgment, either preparatory or final. Verse 20 gives the individual seal, as it were, of the apostle’s faith to the personal application of the book by the Lord.

As the church instantly broke forth in answer on the church revelation of Jesus, in exactly corresponding praises to His then revealed character, so now, on the revelation of His millennial and glorified character, it breaks forth by the Spirit, which never leaves it let it be ever so desolate, but rather inspires it with hope in the answering and suitable cry of “Come! “and then looks round, in the sense of this, to renew its service of grace to the world.

In chapter 21:6, we have Jehovah sitting on the throne, declaring Himself as Alpha and Omega; here, in chapter 22:12,13, we have Jesus doing so (there closing the millennium —here introducing the millennial times).

The following four pages set out in tabulated form:—

The New Testament.—Viewing the Revelation on the protracted or historic scale.

Synopsis of the Revelation.—The prophetic part viewed as the Lord's assumption of the inheritance, consequent on the church being in heaven.

* The Chart here has been omitted because it was too small to read…

34 "Notes on the Book of Revelation; to assist Inquirers in searching into that Book." London, 1839.

35 See Note page 52.

36 This is true also of the Hebrews, where sacrifice and priesthood are spoken of, which constitute relationship with God. Here it is supremacy (whatever be the circumstances), which is His character, not with the children, but over all things, over all creation, and ever the throne of Him that was and is and is to come.

37 See also (that is, as soon as we come to the prophecy) ch. 4:2, 10; ch. 5:1, 7, 13; ch. 6:16. Note also ch. 7:10 (observe there is no allusion to this from ch. 8 until ch. 19:4) and ch. 21:5. Chapter 20:11 comes in specially intermediately. As to the city, see ch. 22:1.

38 The instant answer of the church on the announcement of Christ in His titles as to His Person, is exceedingly beautiful here. And, on the announcement of His coming glory (ch. 22:16), the instant response of

the church, led by the Spirit, is equally lovely: “The Spirit and the bride say, Come”; and the church then takes its full place, while waiting.

Christ’s relative character is fully shewn and responded to—a faithful witness for God to man, the perfect representative and Head of the church, as the perfect new risen Man before God, and the head of power to the world; and the church sees Him, and then says what He is to herself.

39 Note here, not was and is, but is and was, the One who is, and thus, in relation to time, was and is coming.

40 i.e. The witness of God, as He was the conqueror of death, and the governor of the world in power.

41 It has therefore passed beyond the condition of the apostolic epistles, but not entered on the relation in which Christ stands to the world in government and lordship.

42 The first and the last. Christ as continuous, as Jehovah in power and nature, yet One that had passed through the vicissitudes of the church’s necessity, so that in all circumstantial changes it might know what and where its security was: so that it was security, not terror, to the individual. So, come what would, the church would not be prevailed over by her enemies.

43 [Note the wisdom of this. No delay was thus revealed; before the Lord came, the things were; but that was given which, as I doubt not, gives a full consecutive history of the church till He comes.]

44 That is, the church dispensation on earth, taking, as to time, the place of the broken-off Jewish branches, and therefore, in many respects, connected in dates, though

the church itself be just opposite in principle; for it is another and a heavenly thing instead of a failed earthly thing.

45 If we trace the actual order of church history in the Acts, we shall find the breaking up and scattering of the central and only church of Jerusalem by the death of Stephen, gone to Jesus— and then the church on earth scattered; thereon Saul called for, an entirely new instrument to Gentiles, rulers, and the people of Israel; and thereon the union of the church with Jesus in heaven for the first time mentioned, “Why persecutest thou me? “but after this (though the principle of Paul’s mission and the union of the church with Jesus was established), the patience of God continuing to work by the ministration of Peter, Æneas and Tabitha are the witnesses of his power; and the calling of the Gentiles is by his mouth, that the witness of the Jewish stock might still be preserved in grace, whatever the righteous justice of the dispensation might do in judgment (and so in dispensation the faithful partake of the ruin of the unfaithful, as Caleb and Joshua must wander in the wilderness), and thereon extraordinary intervention might effect besides in one born out of due time, the witness of prerogative grace in the disorder of the dispensation as to man. We find the lingering traces of habitual evil in the saints, for they objected to Peter his having gone to the Gentiles; yet this was the final sin of the Jews. Such was the patience of God, that they were not, historically, then shut up, till Paul’s intercourse with them at Rome (Acts 28); and even so, it was blindness in part, not stumbling to fall, and there was a remnant according to the election of grace.

46 In the next, He is Son of man and Son of David seated on His throne.

47 History was not written in heaven. I believe that the attempt to interpret prophecy by history has been most injurious to the ascertaining of its real meaning. When we have ascertained, by the aid of the Spirit of Christ, the mind of God, we have, as far as it be history, God's estimate of events, and their explanation. But history is man's estimate of events, and he has no right to assume that these are in prophecy at all; and it is clear that he must understand prophecy before he can apply it to any: when he understands it, he has what God meant to give him, without going farther. I do not admit history to be, in any sense, necessary to the understanding of prophecy. I get present facts, and God's moral account of what led to them, and thereby His moral estimate of them: I do not want history to tell me Nineveh or Babylon is ruined, or Jerusalem in the hands of the Gentiles. Of course, where any prophecy does apply to facts, it is a true history of those facts; but it is much more. It is the connection of those facts with the purposes of God in Christ, and whenever any isolated fact, however important in the eyes of man, is taken as the fulfilment of a prophecy, that prophecy is made of private interpretation; and this I believe to be the meaning of that passage. Of course, when any prophecy is fulfilled, the fulfilment is evidence of its truth, but the Christian does not need this; and evidence of truth and interpretation are two very different things.

48 Lit. 'living creatures.' It will be found that they are intelligent worshippers—give a reason for their source; the angels never do.

49 The four characters of beasts are the heads of the four genera stated in Genesis. Birds of the air, cattle, beasts of the field, and man; doubtless, they had specific characters as to attribute too. [The beasts will be found to unite seraphic qualities with the cherubic. Cherubic is earthly government. The seraph introduces the proper holiness of God and so brings in a principle of final judgment. In adding this note, I will add another recent impression, that up to the next chapter (where the Lamb first appears) angels had been the instrument; with the Lamb men take this place, though the result be not brought out.]

50 The difference of reading throws doubt on this: at any rate, it was a new song in heaven, not a Jewish one.

51 Many MSS read ‘they shall reign’; but then I doubt as to ‘redeemed [us].’

52 This sets the saints in heaven but awaiting their inheritance—of the earth—the place, in principle, of Christ now.

53 In the fourth chapter we have, no angels, and the beasts are apart from the elders; here the beasts and the elders are associated, and we have angels.

54 This is true even if these honours of the beasts be transferred to the elders, as we know those of the angels certainly will to men in the world to come. For the elders always represent the place of intelligent faith.

55 Viewed, that is, in its protracted character on earth.

56 This can clearly apply but to two periods properly: the protracted period subsequent to owning the churches upon earth; and the preparatory scene of judicial and providential governance, subsequent to the

taking up of the church, and previous to the reign of the Son of man.

57 As regards the crisis at the close, this would develop itself in, first, the period of trials and persecution of the saints (compare Matt. 24;; secondly, the preparatory or providential judgments on the despisers of the Lord (the wrath being simply announced, and not described, in the seventh trumpet); and lastly, a full account of the character, doings, and rise of the beast, with the final judgment of all that belongs to him.

58 It would seem, from the fifth seal, just when the heavens are going to be changed, that, after the church who have suffered are publicly owned and put in white robes, they are to rest a little season, because there are brethren and fellow-servants to be killed yet. Though thus owned, therefore, vengeance could not be taken for this little space, till this was done. But then the heavens were changed to prepare for this vengeance. In the trumpets, note that there is no evil on the saints, or any saints, but judgment on the earth or its inhabiters. The last suffering (i.e., as to death) of these “brethren” seems a transition point, the act of the beast in its last state, as coming out of the bottomless pit, getting rid of them in that power, to the comfort of the inhabiters of the earth whom they tormented. They stood before the God of the earth.

Some would account this the time of the catching up of the church; but this appears to me a mistake. It is the time, rather, of their public owning before the throne, consequent upon the change in the heavens previously spoken of, and previous to the commencement of the judgments. The hundred and forty-four thousand are, in

that case, the Jewish remnant, then owned upon earth. Looked at as the church, in its own portion, it is looked at, I apprehend, as in the heavens from the end of chapter 3. It is quite done with on earth there.

59 This is true in the main of the ecclesiastical body. It is said to Thyatira, “I gave her space to repent and she repented not,” and the coming of Christ is then announced. But the call is renewed to Sardis (as I believe, Protestantism) in its turn, but, unless for individuals, in vain. It ends in Laodicea.

60 In the crisis, I do not believe it to be the judgment of Antichrist at all, but that subversion of Satan’s power in the heavens, and consequent complete subversion and revolution of all the foundation and elements of all political arrangement and power, which are spoken of as preceding the day of the Lord. For the sources of power in the heavens must be changed before the day of the Lord come, though Satan may be raging upon earth; against whose earthly doings, and upon them, the day may come. See Joel 2; Mark 13:24, 25. The extent and importance of this revolution in the heavens I believe not to be sufficiently attended to ordinarily. The earth may have been often shaken, and have reverted to its course, because the heavens are not. But when the heavens are, the sources of power are changed, and the enemy cast out; and he never regains that place, though, when loose, he may still act in opposition—fruitless opposition—on earth; for then the judgment is come, the heavens being so established and ruling.

61 The application of symbols literally seems to me to be very false in principle and a very unsuitable mode of interpretation. It is the denial that they are symbols. I

believe the language of symbols as definite as any other, and always used in the same sense, as much as language is.

62 Or an expectant state as to themselves. Looking at the close, they had no longer to say “How long?” though the judgment might not yet be actually come.

63 So as regards the crisis, the heavens, as now filled by the saints, had no part in the Son of man’s judgment. Their armies which are in heaven will follow Him; but these were the preparatory judgments of God’s supreme providential power, in which the saints have no part at all. They could not open the bottomless pit to let the locusts out and Apollyon loose. They have the mind of Christ, and thus the character and ways of God in the Son of man, not His supreme government, though that ministers to them. It is entirely beyond them; and of that the trumpets are a part—the announcement of God’s sovereign dealings and government, not His ways and purposes with them.

64 Hence I apprehend in the crisis this would be the intercession of the High Priest for those left on the earth —saints after (as we have been before led to see) the rapture of the church—saints then connected with the condition of the earth.

65 Their corporate suffering was not characteristic of the contents of the trumpets, which dealt in judgments on those not saints; and there was no recognition of their present union and identification with the Lamb, though individually they might be so.

66 There is no symbol more difficult than the various uses of water. Living water is the Spirit; but, as this acts by the word, water (not exactly living water) is doctrine,

and in a good sense the word. But waters are peoples, tongues, nations, and languages, and the sea the unformed mass of them. Hence rivers seem the different compartments of them, as “whose land the rivers have spoiled.” But I take it, water is always viewed as under active moral influences of some sort, when living, in power; when the sea, it may be acted on merely; when fountains, it may be the spring of their influences, as the rivers would be their source; and therefore, according to the form of its use, it would be the source, or effects, of these moral influences on the mass of the population (what we call “the people”), and hence, the moral popular condition as a whole, the respective form of water indicating its particular character. The springs of waters, the sources of this influenced condition: “From the fountain of Israel,” looked at Israel as the source of the whole nation. Thus he stamped their relative character on all that flowed from him: and hence, it might be applied perhaps directly to a teacher, or rather existing set of teachers—fountains of waters: for where they are, they characterise the people; as men say, “Like people, like priest.”

67 This will have its truth in the land withal in the latter day.

68 Compare the spiritual process of the prophet Habakkuk, which just illustrates this.

69 In the protracted view I see no reason to deviate from the ordinary interpretation of this (that is, the Saracens): in the crisis, it will have its accomplishment in the great last enemy, or Antichrist.

70 As in the first woe in the long period, I take this as usually, as the Turks. In the crisis, it will be the inroads

of the northern and eastern armies, headed up after into the Assyrian, and Gog, the prince of Magog.

71 As regards the crisis, it is viewed as actually in heaven (i.e., lost sight of on earth entirely, as it was actually, when it lost its place of testimony here below, as a city set on a hill). For all through, as to time, whatever the particular condition of the saints, from the moment the church ceased to be owned by the Son of man in judgment here, as in the seven churches, it was viewed either mystically (which gives the protracted period), or actually in heaven, when the latter-day trials and judgments, the crisis, as it has been called, takes place. In both cases it is lost sight of on earth.

72 The rainbow round the head shewed its connection with the restoration of creation—the covenant with creation at the time government was instituted.

73 In the crisis, rather the apostate results of what was nominally the church. In the seals the Lamb is concerned, and the saints are still liable to persecution. The trumpets are providential judgments on the evil, in which the saints are not found (often by wicked men on one another, as in Jewish history). Then comes the display of the open enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ and their judgment, and in their full character, by the Son of man Himself.

74 But the historical continuance is then not immediate; but from the state of things consequent on the position of the parties, more particularly from the flight of the woman into the wilderness, the previous verses being merely to shew what had brought the parties into this condition, that the strength of the man-child was not at first put forth, but taken out of the way—then there was

a process by which the heavens were first cleared; and then that by which, after its full heading up against Christ, apostate power was put down. The thing to be noted here, as to order, is, that the war seems to be before the powers of heaven were changed, with which the fifth, sixth, and seventh seals must be compared. I do not see that the owning of the saints, in the fifth, involves the changing of the heavens. The sixth seems, however, to do so.

The order which these passages would involve, as to the final crisis, would be this: The three seals after the first are the beginning of sorrows; during this period the faithful witnesses on earth were liable to be killed, and the gospel of the kingdom was preached among the Gentiles. At the fifth seal the heavens are changed. The abomination of desolation is set up in the midst of the last week. A time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, the dragon persecuting the woman. The woman flees. Those in Judea flee to the mountains.

The sixth seal is opened: and, before the winds blow, the remnant are sealed, and the palm-bearing multitude seen clothed in white. The cry of the remnant on earth brings judgment down there; as the cry from under the altar in the fifth seal had brought on the sixth. Then come the trumpet-judgments in succession, the last involving the final judgment.

The only point that remains is, when is Satan cast down? The twelfth chapter takes in the whole course of the book, in its sources within, to introduce the last agents as objects of judgment announced in heaven on the seventh trumpet sounding. That chapter shews, as noticed, the first act to be catching clean out of the way

Him who is to rule the nations; and the whole question all goes on after that. The next step is, not changing the heavens, but war there; and then the adversary and accuser is cast down. This is clearly before the last three and a half years when there is tribulation, and before the tribulation and fleeing takes place; at least it seems to me so. The changing of the heavens is after that, or rather thereupon. I only state, then, as to this, that upon these passages, the casting down of the dragon, as to the crisis, seems to be some time previous to the setting up of the abomination, after the catching up of the saints, i.e., before or in the period of the first four or five seals. The sixth would be the effect of it.

It is clear that the appearing of the Son of man is subsequent to these changes in the heavens, from Matthew, Mark, Joel; and indeed the whole course and order of these mighty dealings of God's judgment. The appearing of His coming destroys the man of sin. Isaiah 24 may be referred to here.

75 Power was given them that they should prophesy in sackcloth for the period of the treading down of the outside holy place while the inner was preserved. It is given in days here, I apprehend, to shew the continuity and constancy of their testimony, not merely the term. The next point in the testimony was this, that it was without the attainment of order in the ministration of Christ's great offices on earth when He shall come; but it was a witness to them. If we compare Zechariah 4 we shall find, in the restoration of the Jewish economy on earth, the strictest order in all the parts; and in the arrangements of the one candlestick, and its two olive trees and pipes. But here there are two olive trees and two candlesticks. There they stood before the Lord of

the whole earth, even as these here, a witness to the truth, but not the accomplishment of it: not its order, beauty, and regularity, but a testimony to God's title to have it so. Such were these witnesses.

76 It would be, in fact too, acting on the principles God was judging.

77 As I suppose they are (see Note re Antichrist, page 52).

78 The application of Old Testament allusions or prophecies in the sense in which they are used there, seems to me to be equally untenable; they are borrowed thence to be applied to heavenly subjects, just as in the case of Jerusalem; so the analogy holds throughout: the bringing down the Revelation to the same sense seems to me simply depriving us of them, and merely to amount to this, that when the apostle uses prophetic language to carry it up into further scenes, we are arrested where the former prophecy left us: simply, I conceive, darkening, instead of enlightening.

79 i.e., by Hebrew vowel points.

80 I have changed this paragraph, as I, at the time of writing these notes, followed the usual division in chapter n into two half weeks, applying it as an answer to the writers just alluded to. As I do not now accept this division, I have of course changed the paragraph into short observations on the question; but I have given what is alleged for it.

81 Babel's word was, "Let us make ourselves a name." God only is entitled to a name, or to give it. Adam had title as regards the beasts, as set over them by God; "and he brought them unto Adam." The enemy may give

a name, in derision, to saints, over-ruled of God; but they are gathered only to the name of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and should bear His name, and, in Him, the Father's only.

82 Observe, it is neither resurrection nor changing them who are alive, but a special act. Man had killed them; but God quickened and called them up.

83 I say their testimony, because as to his general character the beast will persecute the saints.

84 To the joy of the dwellers upon earth; and thus, doubtless, he is their great friend (see Note re Antichrist, page 52).

85 At least is connected with a wider scope of results.

86 Another sign begins chapter 15.

87 Collected Writings, volume 19, page (194) 129.

88 But as to direct historic application the woman here is the Jewish people (or Jerusalem) seen in heaven and glory first, then cast out and persecuted by the dragon; that is, in God's mind, and then the object of Satan's enmity.

89 Thus all the previous state of heart in which reflected light was shadowed out for the people is put under their feet.

90 Purpose has rather the force of the thing purposed here, than intention. If I am understood, I have no anxiety as to metaphysical precision. The word 'purpose' evidently includes both, but may apply specially to either (i.e., the intention and the thing intended).

91 The Son born was caught up, but was to rule all nations: the heavenly condition is here the answer and

remedy for an effort directed against one who was to rule over the earthly. His rule and power is the matter in question.

92 This is true, even in Antichrist; for that is association with the Jews and possession of Jerusalem, to hold it as the centre of earthly power against the Lord, as coming from heaven. The “scornful men” that dwell at Jerusalem “have made a covenant with death and are at agreement with hell.” [I have not altered the abstract applications: it would be changing the book (and they afford a kind of dictionary to the symbols), but I add here and there the particular prophetic events in which they are fulfilled—as I believe, that to which they apply.]

93 But they are not as yet replaced by the saints there.

94 Note here, the victory is celebrated; they overcame, they are not therefore in this conflict any more.

95 I suspect it will be found that, while the suffering may be most blessed and glorious for righteousness’, or Christ’s sake, it is, nevertheless, always used by the Lord for the correction of some secret or manifest evil in the individual or in the church.

96 i.e., even referring the passage to the protracted period.

97 In saint-worship, which is really demon-worship.

98 Satan is cast down from heaven to earth, where he yet is in great wrath for Daniel’s last half week, and persecutes the Jews owned of God, saved providentially as a body, whereon the enemy seizes all he can. The woman is, as I have said, the Jews owned of God, or Jerusalem.

99 I see a great deal to lead to the conviction that it is Christ as the head of angelic power, but not certainly, and therefore say no more than I do here. Fuller enquiry would lead me to a different conclusion.

100 i.e., in the plural number. Superiorities (as principalities, powers, thrones, dominions) are spoken of, but not directly archangels.

101 Conflict with Satan, and trial, though used, perhaps for chastening judgment, are very different from judgment in war, where Satan has power according to the fall of the first Adam, and a will to walk with him.

102 It is the angelic head of the Jewish people who was the power that overcame him above.

103 Should not this be, “Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ”?

104 I have no doubt it is contained in the catching up of the man-child, as well as Christ Himself.

105 It is looked at corporately only as in heaven (as we have often seen) from the end of chapter 3. The accuser of our brethren, therefore, is spoken of; for the voice from heaven could not speak of suffering or accusation of saints there, but of those who had been liable to it on earth. On the supposition noticed above, these would be the class of sufferers still to be gathered as slain in the last testimony, or who would not worship the beast.

106 The time of Jacob’s trouble; but he is delivered out of it.

107 We have here the important fact, that, after the celebration of the coming of salvation, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ, and the casting

Satan down out of the heavenly places, three years and a half elapse before his trial and persecution of the Jewish people closes; and they are the object of his hatred; and Christ does not appear in their behalf.

108 The Lamb is always the suffering rejected One, who is after all the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the centre of glory. In the historical fact this takes place on the casting down of Satan, in which the kingdom and power are first displayed.

109 This passage is a remarkable one as regards the crisis; for the joy is properly in heaven. The church, properly speaking, is not in question. A voice accordingly is heard in heaven; but it clearly expresses the mind of God in the church above; for it says “the accuser of our brethren,” and has the prospect of the kingdom as now come. It is as a gleaming out of the church’s joy in heaven, before the saints are manifested with Christ, on the cessation of the sufferings of those left on earth, and the clearing of the heavenlies. The voice of heaven, the church, is here rather identified with the priesthood and expectation of Christ, but that in a triumphant character, because accomplished by the casting down of Satan, and the kingdom now come, though not yet established for three years and a half upon earth.

I apprehend the proper application of the catching up of the man-child, besides Christ, to be to the Church of the first-born—His body, and to be undated, save by its precedence of all ulterior events, i.e., of all events below, and even of the war in heaven; for Christ and His body cannot take their new relative place on earth, till Satan and his angels are cast down.

110 Although I say their source, which is true as to the administration of events and the moral state of things, yet there is passed by here (as not the. subject of the chapter, and what can be hardly called an event, as changing the whole order of administration and divine government itself),—the shaking of the heavens, in order to the appearing of the sign and government of the Son of man there: but this does not properly come in here; and therefore I have only thus noticed it. Its date in the course of events may be seen in Matthew 24 and Mark 13; but it forms no part of the course of mere human events, but is a change in the heavenly administration of their order. But the war in heaven, and the consequent casting down of Satan to earth, do alter altogether the relative position of the saints, heaven, and earth. The direct administrative exercise of all this is deferred for three years and a half, to give time for the ripening of God’s purposes, the separation of the remnant of the Jews in their tribulation, and the full satanic rising of the earth against heaven: but heaven could announce its joy at once, and woe to the inhabiters of the earth and of the sea. But, the administration not being yet changed, things otherwise went on unrebuked, until the earth being worse far by this, and in satanic energy enlisted against heaven, the Son of man has to take the power into His own hands, and the administration itself is changed. Then begins the administration of the world to come, whereof we speak. This last is a most important, and scripture speaks of it as a very solemn, event. It is what I apprehend is called the end: “Then shall the end come.” Sinai was the manifest beginning; though there were other points connected with it in the world and earth, to wit, Noah and Nebuchadnezzar.

111 Specially in his workings, in these last events.

112 i.e., of Daniel’s fourth beast with this.

113 This is an attempt to connect by general terms the protracted period of the beast’s existence and the crisis, or last half week; and till the clear light of the end, this served to guide the conscience in a general way.

114 That is, it was seen in this state subsequent to the healing what had received the deadly wound. I suppose the wounded head was imperial. Many considerations go, I think, to shew it, and make the point pretty clear. I doubt that it was fully developed as a beast till then.

115 Rather it was seen subsequent to it. First, he sees the general character of the beast as a whole, and where his throne and authority, there this particular characteristic in the state in which he considers him, not of the beast in himself, but of the beast as he then saw him.

116 Admiration implies the effect on a senseless imagination, though excited perhaps by a strong cause—not the judgment or affections.

117 This, however, is the apostasy of power.

118 This must be taken for the last period of half the week, if taken in crisis and applied to the full manifestation of his character, which the verse seems to do. It is no part of this passage to say it is the last half week, but merely to attach to the beast the characteristic period of his continuance. But it gives that period as the duration of his practising.

119 This is all he could do now. Satan the accuser was cast out of heaven, and indeed the saints are there. The beast’s tendencies would have pleased the Jews before.

Now it persecuted the saints on earth too. The other Jews would be how in rebellion.

120 This had been previously to this period, which commenced on the closing of that by the casting down of Satan. Up to that they had suffered actual death; at least they had not loved their lives unto death.

121 But I doubt that there is any dated period connected with verse 7. It is characteristic, not a question of time.

122 The elect there are saved as regards the flesh [save those who, being killed, get a heavenly portion, the saints of the heavenlies of Daniel and those particularly noticed as not worshipping him, in chapter 20, here].

123 This will have its literal force in crisis in the land.

124 “If, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God,” says the apostle Peter.

125 As the eighth head was the beast.

126 The trials under the beast are distinct from the mere preservation of purity; and the final warning to have nothing to do with the beast comes after the announcement of the fall of Babylon. Hence, we have the celebration of the hundred and forty-four thousand, who have kept themselves pure; and afterwards, distinct, those who have got the victory over the beast. It does not follow that some of them may not have been involved in both trials, or have kept themselves from one, and suffered under the other, but they are treated as distinct subjects; and there may be those who are under the trial of the beast’s actings, in general, preparatory to his final conflict in Judea, who have never been in the circumstances, at any rate fully, of the

hundred and forty-four thousand. They are numbered before Babylon falls. The warning against the beast has its peculiar force after. That chapter 13 has had accomplishment in the protracted period of years, may easily be understood; and if applied to what is closing, its application is rather preparatory, not final; when the second beast falls, as a false prophet merely (his secular character as a beast gone), this change has taken place in him; he has lost his secular character and power as a beast, and is merely a false prophet. It seems to me that all this is previous to the last actings of Antichrist in Judea as the wilful king* they are quite distinct in character. This is preparatory in order to bring them, the dwellers on earth, into his subjection, and carry them with him. The whole, save the period of his blasphemous continuance, is not here date, but character, or doings. He may draw after him the Gentile dwellers upon earth in this way; and, when in the land, the same process may locally and specifically continue there. The only date to the second beast is the restoration of the wounded (as I suppose) imperial head.

* This is a very important remark, which had long passed out of my mind. I doubt its being quite exact, in saying “all this is previous.” It is distinct in character; but both may go on together and in its distinct form at the end apply to Palestine, though dwellers on earth be still characteristic. When the beast falls in Palestine, the second beast is merely viewed as a false prophet; his person as kingly seems superseded by the beast’s presence. As in Isaiah 24, the difficulty is as to the force of earth. The whole passage requires maturer consideration. Note, the world, and kindred, tongues,

and nations are not formally put under the influence of the second beast.

127 Note here how solemn it is that he should give the sign, which under Elijah was test of Jehovah being God; and in 2 Thessalonians 2, what in Acts 2 is the proof of Jesus being the Christ.

128 I repeat the remark of the note on pp. 223, 224; all this is characteristic, not of time, save the restoration of the imperial head.

129 We have the distinction of periods, I think, very distinctly marked in Daniel 7. The character of the little horn—the last evil form of presumption against the Most High in the beast—we have in verse 8: that is, its character before God. The prophet saw this till the thrones were set; in 9 and 10, judgment set and books opened, not now the time of testimony. Then again he beholds till the beast was slain (v. 11), because of the little horn's great words. After this, the Son of man's kingdom is spoken of as given; this in connection with the Lord. The saints, whether of the heavenly places or simply saints, are introduced in the explanation (v. 21); the character of the horn, as to the saints, is given—saints, whether of the heavenlies or not—it is the horn's character. Then this is till, first, the Ancient of days comes; then, judgment is given to the saints of the heavenlies; thirdly, the saints, heavenly or on earth, possess the kingdom. As to the acting of the little horn explained, we have, first, his presumption against the Most High; next, he wears out the saints of the heavenlies, and takes the Jewish times and festivals into his power, and they are given up to him for a prescribed period; then, the judgment sits, as in the close of verses

10, 11. Verse 25 seems to me, then, properly the three years and a half antecedent to the commencement of the judgment or the judgment-sitting; after that there is a process goes on to take away, to consume, and to destroy; and then the kingdom, under the whole heaven, is given to the people of the saints of the Most High, thus connecting the earthly people at Jerusalem, the city of the great King, with the heavenly people.

Chapter 8 I conclude to be an entirely different and opposed enemy; and I believe the confounding the Assyrian and Antichrist* has much tended to obscure prophecy, and embroil the mind as to the simplicity of its statements. One is the enemy of Christ as coming from heaven with the saints; the other His enemy, as associated with the accepted remnant of the Jews at Jerusalem. I see no reason to suppose that “they shall be given into his hand” (Dan. 7:25) means the saints, but rather times and laws.

* Or even the beast, for I do not hold the first beast as the personal Antichrist.

130 This is a very important epoch. In chapter 5:9, they sing a new song. There was new subject of praise when the Lamb who was, in the midst of the throne took the book, and assumed the development of what was to introduce the inheritance. The redeemed could say then, “They shall reign,” although the Lamb was still above, and the action of His power was only heavenly or providential. Here, the Lamb, not having yet laid aside this character and assumed that of Son of man, and judge, and warrior, yet is associated with earth, and stands on mount Sion. And therefore they sing a new song before the living creatures and before the elders:

these not themselves taking a part in it (for it was not the mystic church's portion, nor the great witness therefore of redemption for creation), but a special occasion of praise on the Lamb's taking a place on Mount Sion, and associating Himself, though in a special manner, with the earth [the once rejected Messiah].

131 This seems to me, as in John, the Father's name declared as He then revealed it, and as Christ said, "My Father, of whom ye say that he is your God."

132 The second beast had caused the earth to worship the first beast.

133 This, taken in the crisis, would seem to imply that, besides the church, properly so called, whose place was in heaven, and, in that sense, the earth done with, there would be a remnant redeemed from the earth still connected with the Lamb (i.e., the Sufferer owned by the name of His Father) and learning a song sung before the throne, and before the elders—a peculiar class, and having a song thus specially theirs. They were a firstfruits redeemed from the earth, redeemed from among men. The body of the church, in its heavenly character, had passed out of the scene before—had nothing to do with the earth. The refusing the beast after is for preservation in an earthly place—a preservation enforced by a warning of unmingled wrath in the presence of the holy angels, the ministers of His providence, and of the Lamb, the Sufferer, whose grace, and power, and title, they refused and rejected in the great controversy. These hundred and forty-four thousand are more circumstantially like the Lord in His earthly portion and taking up. They were not corporately looked at as the bride of Christ, but as holding a special

place as virgins—still, as contrasted with the harlotry of evil in the protracted period, the remnant peculiarly and separately preserved—in the crisis, a special remnant which we have noted.

134 [We must not confound the throne of God and the Lamb, and the revelation of the Father in the Son: our revelation of God is the latter, blessed be His name. The former is governmental glory. There is an analogy in the protracted period; but salvation ascribed to God and to the Lamb, and firstfruits from the earth, introduce the millennium. See following note.]

135 They were, rather, a witness of the purity of the throne and of the Lamb> as King of kings, and Lord of lords, for what became Him in the earth, and therefore, in the full sense, are the dawn of that bright and blessed morning of the earth from the Creator and Redeemer of it.

136 Everlasting I take to be distinguished from any temporary or provisional good news. Canaan was a gospel to Israel; the birth of Christ in the flesh was good news to Israel. But this is the everlasting gospel—the full complete promise of the results in the Son of man, formed on the intentions and rights of God; and that as by redemption. It involved, therefore, the kingdom; though, in some cases, only the basis might be laid. Any diligent student of the gospels will see the transition, from promises presented to the Jews in the Person of Christ in the flesh, to this everlasting gospel. Of this it is said, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God “; and then earthly things and heavenly are brought in.

137 [The time given to Jezebel to repent was, so to speak, run out then. Chapter 2.]

138 When the everlasting gospel then goes forth, it is not the bringing in a universal state of blessedness, but a call to fear God amongst widespread apostasy of all sorts, “for the hour of his judgment is come,” as “this gospel of the kingdom must first be preached to all nations, and then shall the end come,” i.e., of the age. And this last, while I fully recognise what precedes as involving the principles, is the strong final sense of the passage, and therefore, as noticed in the preceding note, God is announced as a Creator, who had a right to His creatures, and presented Himself as such to men on the earth, as against all their idolatries, resuming (first in testimony) His place as God in the earth. Babylon, which had been the great corrupter of the earth, and the centre of idolatry, is next judged of God.

There is another point connected with the hundred and forty-four thousand and the everlasting gospel. The hundred and forty-four thousand are redeemed from the earth, where the testimony is already a redemption from the midst of prevailing evil in the limited sphere so designated—in the crisis, probably, entirely confined to the land. Before the judgment (“the end “) comes, the everlasting gospel goes out afresh to the nations (many of them, doubtless, in actual idolatry) to announce the coming judgment, and to testify the good news of the coming millennial kingdom and blessedness. These two spheres— earth, and people and tongues and nations and languages—we have noticed as contrasted in repeated instances.

139 In the protracted period, verse 13 would refer, I apprehend, to the announcement of that blessedness of the saints, which the harvest, looked at as in Matthew 13, in its application to them, would accomplish —in the crisis, to their manifestation in this. This distinction is only what we actually find in the interpretation of that parable in Matthew. In the parable, the tares are gathered in bundles in the field, and the wheat into the garner: in the explanation, the tares are burned in the field, and the righteous shine forth. This is precisely the difference, and only this, I make here. The harvest and vintage are two acts of judgment, the harvest being of much wider scope; and, accordingly, in it there is not clear riddance of the corners of the field as to the wheat. It may distinctively clear and take the wicked, leaving those spared for earthly blessing. The vintage is pure vengeance on a specific object (the religious system), which has its character from earth—in the crisis, I apprehend, Jewish. Its grapes are now fully ripe. This vengeance is actual earthly judgment: “blood came out of the wine-press” far and wide. It was an actual and dreadful judgment in the land. All these—all the contents of this chapter—are God’s religious warnings or dealings with the earth.

140 There may be an application of what passes in this chapter to the crisis; and, in such case, many dates would be ascertained, but the application is less particular of part. Thus the song, being before the throne of God, must be taken only as the commencing association of heavenly with earthly things, and the recognition of the earthly by the heavenly powers. The Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, would recognise the return of the Jews into suffering associated with the

Lamb amongst them in grace (that is, of a remnant among them). The everlasting gospel would then be strictly that mentioned in Matthew, “the gospel of the kingdom “(i.e., that Christ was just coming in His kingdom), which I have no doubt will so go out in all nations before the end. The fall of Babylon would precede the harvest of the earth, and then the last time of trouble would be to the Jewish people such as never was, and Michael would stand up for them, and the sanctuary at length be cleansed. In this case, I am inclined to think, the vine of the earth would be rather the Jewish part of profession, as in Isaiah 65 and 66. Such judgment is certain. But there will be also the apostasy to be destroyed; but that is rather in war against the royalty of” Christ then, and has assumed a worse form than mere apostasy or profession. Viewed in this light, “without the city” would, in the general-application, refer to the great city of the corporate Roman empire; in the application in crisis it would, as before, be taken for Jerusalem.

In the application in the text (p. 229) of the claim of true worship, there are most important principles—the acknowledging God, not man, as the source in creative power of every blessing, or order of blessing, or power, or streams and fountains of true influence, and consequent condition of men—than which there cannot be a more important principle possible for daily use. The sense given above in the text I believe to be the most important for the church in the present time.

141 This is acknowledged to be the true reading.

142 Though this chapter be a distinct sign, yet, like the eleventh and twelfth, it is not unconnected. It seems to

apply itself to those who have passed through the fire—not merely escaped corruption when Babylon prevailed. And the judgment is not now the fall of Babylon and a warning against any's receiving the mark of the beast, but judgment and plague on those who had; the faithful being out of the way on the sea of glass mingled with fire. They had suffered, but were therefore out of the way of the judgments: still the judgment is in the earth.

In subject it follows, but is not, I apprehend, chronologically consequent, but a distinct design, more secular in its general character of judgments and dealings. The last of the saints too, not left on earth, were now out of the way. Compare chapter 14:13.

143 The imperial head subsisted in the apostolic times—Caesar. It may be noticed that that head was destroyed in the West, and, taken in the protracted sense, was restored and continued with the continuance of the hierarchy and the pope set up at Rome, who had the character of the image here described. Any further or more literal accomplishment of it will have its place more fitly in a subsequent chapter.

144 I doubt, as to the crisis, that the heavens were yet changed— whether these signs did not belong to the old heavens 145 Although I do not doubt this will have an actual physical accomplishment in gathering of the nations or their powers and armies to battle, yet, as that which concerns us all, I would say that in that which the church is entitled to understand—the more hidden working of the enemy in principle—this is just going on: that a moral, and so far partial, fulfilment of what preceded has taken place, and there is that which morally gathers them now taking place, so that we have

a date of locality as to the church's spiritual judgment and position given: the separation then only marked in character, and morally also.

146 Fornication seems to consist in living in wealth and luxuries, through intercourse with others, not the cultivation of her own resources; therefore it is referred to union with, and dependence on, the world in the case of the church, and to enriching commerce with other nations in the case of a city, as Tyre. Jerusalem is termed "adulteress," not whore, because she was married to the Lord; but in all these cases there will be found, I conceive, a worshipping of Satan, in this world, as its god, a seeking the power "of the age of this world," Eph. 2:2. Power national or imperial is a distinct thing, though it may be abused: it is given of God, though it may end in open rebellion.

147 The prince and king of Tyre are, however, different. It is the king of whom the position is so astonishingly traced by the divine hand.

148 I feel that probably this has passed, if we take the protracted course, in Charlemagne; if the closing scene, in Buonaparte, because the Roman empire had been destroyed in its full character before Charlemagne; and his was a renewal of what was not. Nominally it continued until Buonaparte, who, as the agent of the French republic, broke it to pieces and renewed the imperial power for a little season.

149 It may have that force as to the last form of the beast out of the abyss.

150 The better reading, however, adds 'the beast.'

151 Such as Rome, for example, before even imperial times.

152 I know that many take Babylon as merely a great worldly system. That it is a great worldly system is freely admitted. But the exclusion of the ecclesiastical character in this place seems to me a great error: it is the virus of her active will in this place, though clothed with the world. She is not viewed here as the city of the apostate king at all, though, in the wordly sense, she may be the beginning of his kingdom. He comes in here, as the eighth head of the beast, supplanting the woman. The kings lay her waste to give their power to him; for power, not wealth, is the last form of evil presented, and that against the Lamb, which is true, active rebellion, and more than mere apostasy. God therefore judges Babylon; and the destroyers of her wealth and importance are those who give their kingdom to the beast: thereupon and then war against the Lamb comes. I have no doubt the principles of Babylon were manifested in her—not royal power. Though Babylon was the beginning of his power in whom royal power was first displayed, yet it was specially what the confederate will of man had done; its first form was confederate will in independence of God. This is shewn in the character which constituted the whore, yet had its development by her corruption and fornication: and the effects of this are supplanted by another confederacy, which is not only apostasy, as all human will apart from God is, but active war against God’s King, the Lamb.

As to the ten kings, I would here also notice, what, not being the direct subject of the book, I have not noticed hitherto. It appears to me a mistake to include the Grecian or eastern part of the Roman empire in the ten

kings or direct power of the beast, though he may seek to possess himself of it as his dominion, and in a measure may do so. The little book of the eleventh chapter takes up the beast in his last satanic character, in order to complete the scene of the final catastrophe and woe; but the first two woes seem to me to embrace the eastern or Grecian part of the great scene of the prophetic earth. When we come to the geographical divisions and actings at the close (for all are aware that the catastrophe of all the powers of the earth is in the east, in Judea), then the king of the north and the king of the south seem to me to occupy the Grecian part, not the ten kings, though the beast may be seeking to possess himself, as of old, of their territory, and may in part succeed. I allude here to Daniel n, as may readily be seen.

153 The full judgment comes after God's people are come out of her. Her fall is a warning to them, these are rapidly brought together here at her judgment. [I have left this statement as it is, though its full force may be questioned, because it is a very nice point of interpretation, and it was no harm to have this view before us.]

154 See Ezekiel 27:35, 36, and the previous verses. The prince of Tyre sits in the midst of the seas.

155 There seems to me, an intimate connection between the continuance of Babylon and the serpent being in heavenly places. He exercises his power thus as influence, secretly, as false worship. He is the object of false worship; and hence, in this dispensation, he works by the corruption of Christian profession; and yet this still as the god of this world, which title he cannot lose,

for it is all he has: “the course of this world … the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” This is said of him as still in the heavenlies.

False worship, as the source of power, would be its heathen character; false worship, as the source or means of fellowship, its Babylonish character in the Christian dispensation. In a word, this is rather His anti-priestly character and spiritual influence: the man of sin, or lawless one, is not revealed. Power continues outwardly owned of God, and the letter [he that letteth] remains. When he is cast down, he loses this character, which is opposed to Christ as Priest, and to Him as acting by His Spirit in maintaining the holy communion of His saints and washing their feet. He then raises power as of earth (the king doing according to his will) against the heavens, for he has no place in them even falsely. He could render his influence as anti-priest paramount to supreme civil authority, which is of God, using the name of God falsely in religion; but he cannot, save in open rebellion when cast down, bring power against God. [The substance of this note is of great importance;. only it must not be supposed that the first sentence is to be taken strictly as the existence of Babylon. But I apprehend there will be a total change when Satan is cast down, perhaps practically prepared before. The principles, I have no doubt, are already at work.]

156 The character of Babylon as whore seems lost by the enmity of the ten horns, because she cannot help it. The religious mischief is, after this, done by the false prophet, the other form of the two-horned beast. Thereon the character of Babylon becomes more purely

secular; but the devil dwells there, or it is the habitation of demons, and not therefore simply worldly interests.

157 [I have still left this, though it may be too precise as a system. Still both are spoken of. There is an excessive degradation; the fair form of ecclesiastical character is gone, and it is thorough demon wickedness. In this case, chapter 18:4-8, and verse 21, would seem to coalesce with chapter 16:19.]

158 When God takes to Himself His power and reigns, and the worldly kingdom of our Lord and of His anointed is come. It is taken up here on the actual judgment and removal out of the way of Babylon, as the earthly mystery opposed to the heavenly bride of Christ: so that, as the Lord God Omnipotent takes His power, the Lamb thereupon takes His bride. Babylon's fall, which seems more connected with the fall of Satan from heaven, is a previous thing.

159 The marriage of the Lamb was not before the world: though, having espoused her in the heavens, He may then in the gladness of His heart bring her forth in glory.

The marriage supper seems to be rather the manifestation, as His companions in glory; as the "blessed are the dead," etc., is the rest from their labours, and reception of reward; I do not say the time, but the peculiar blessedness is different. I have some notion that the blessing (chapter 14), has special connection with chapter 13:10, and the blessing here with chapter 14:12.

160 Note, sonship is not the point of this book, but dealings on earth: therefore the angel says, "fellow servant" to those who, in their higher character, are really sons and joint heirs.

161 I have long felt, and it is clear from this passage, that the church is actually with Christ in heavenly places before this; for they come forth with Him. See Colossians 3:1-4.

162 “Judgment shall return to righteousness; and all the upright in heart shall follow it,” Psalm 94:15.

163 Only that the kings of earth compose the ideal completeness of the earth under the beast.

164 Of this idolatrous and worldly power, Egypt, Babylon, and Tyre (from which last the worldly and apostate character is specially drawn) were the great centres mentioned in Scripture. The last committed fornication with all the kingdoms of the earth (this in connection with her trade, etc.).

165 As Babylon, or the great city, Tyre: adulterous Israel and idolatry.

166 I think I see here an assertion of threefold presentation of those who shall occupy the thrones, or at least live and reign with Christ a thousand years. First, the general body of the saints of the heavenlies, including the church—they sat on thrones; next, those beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and the word of God; thirdly, those who had not worshipped the beast. This is important as shewing the place of all these classes.

167 If any ask what comes of the living saints as to their change at the close of the millennium, the answer is—Scripture says nothing, save that from other passages we know, on principle, they will have incorruptible natures in that scene when all things are made new.

168 Chapter 21:8, closes the historical statement: what follows is description, and that of the millennial effect of the city as well as of the city itself.

169 The Spirit saying it shewed that it was not merely a holy though untaught desire, but the mind of the Spirit itself, in and to the church, who, what He hears, speaks. It was the divine mind, but, so taught, all the bride's affections, separated in heart and spirit to Christ, centre and express themselves in this desire. "He that heareth" is he whose heart is opened to the truth, but has not learnt the separated bridal state of the church, espoused as a chaste virgin unto Christ.

The Purpose of God

Editor's Note170

“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself; that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.”—Ephesians 1:9, 10.

Introduction

The good pleasure of the Godhead was that all its fulness should dwell and manifest itself in Christ. Such was the purpose of God, a purpose full of blessing. The way in which God is about to manifest that purpose, and in which we are associated with its blessings, is infinitely interesting to us.

In the following pages only a small part of that purpose has been treated of, the outward part, so to speak, a part which nevertheless is none the less interesting.

It was designedly that God was pleased to accomplish it in a visible way, in order that that purpose might be revealed to us by means of positive truths, which, while bringing the Christian into fellowship with God, who is their source, preserve him—weak creature that he is—from substituting the wanderings of his own imagination for the holy manifestations which God has given unto us of Himself. The subject we are treating is contained in the prayer of the apostle Paul, which we find at the end of Ephesians 1. This subject finds a still deeper source (to which we have alluded) in what is announced to us at

the end of Ephesians 3, and we cannot truly enjoy the subject treated in Ephesians 1, without having felt in some measure the power of Ephesians 3.

For the rest, in communicating what follows, I only respond in weakness to the desires of a few persons, and I am confident that God will deign to make up for what is lacking.

The Church And The Jews The Respective Centres Of The Heavenly Glory And Of The Earthly Glory In Christ.

Two great objects are presented to our contemplation by the prophecies and testimonies of the Scriptures, which refer to the millennium: on one hand, the church and its glory in Christ; on the other, the Jews and the glory which they are to possess as a nation redeemed by Christ. It is the heavenly people and the earthly people. The Son Himself, who is the image and glory of God, will be their common centre, and the sun which will enlighten them both; and although the place where His glory dwells in the church be the heavens, where He has "set a tabernacle for the sun" (Ps. 19:4), the nations will walk in the light thereof. It will be manifested on the earth, and the earth will enjoy its blessings. When all is accomplished God will be all in all. The tabernacle of God will be with men, not coming down, so to speak, but come down from heaven.

All these things, and the way in which they will have their accomplishment, are revealed in detail in the Scriptures. Although the church and the people of Israel are each respectively the centres of the heavenly glory and of the earthly glory, in their connection with Christ, and although they cast on each other a mutual

brightness of blessedness and joy, yet each of them has a sphere which is proper to itself, and in which all things are subordinate to it. With respect to the church, angels, principalities, and powers, with all that belongs to heaven—the domain of its glory; with respect to the people of Israel, the nations of the earth.

We will confine ourselves here to the history and condition of the church, on one hand, and to those of the people of Israel, on the other.

“In the beginning God created,” the Old Testament tells us. “In the beginning was the Word,” says the New, proclaiming the foundation of a higher glory and more durable than that of the first creation, and on which was to rest the restoration of the latter, when ruined by the weakness of man and by sin.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” When they came forth from the hand of the Creator, all His works were “very good.” Sin appeared, and they were marred. Compare Colossians 1:20, with Ephesians 2:10. For a moment, God rested, so to speak, in them; but that rest came to an end. The Scriptures say but little as to the evil which sullied the heavens: all that we know is, that there were angels who fell. But it was on the earth and among men that the divine and wonderful work of redemption was to be displayed; and this subject is revealed to us in all its fulness.

The Rest Of God In The New Creation By Means Of The Second Adam

The rest of God, after the first creation, was short. The rest of man with God passed away like a morning-dream. But the blessing of God was not to pass away in the

same manner. That which was transient, on account of the weakness of the first Adam, was to be restored on an infinitely more excellent footing by the display of the might and power of the Second Adam; the will of God being to head up in Him all things which are in the heavens and upon the earth; Eph. 1:10.

Christ The Heir—The Church Joint-Heir With Him, Through Resurrection

It is on this gathering together of all things unto Christ and in Christ, as their Head (Greek, anakephalaiosis—heading up), that depends the character and the substance of the hope of the church, until God be all in all. In this point of view, Scripture speaks of Christ manifested, as being Heir of all these things, and of the church as being joint-heir with Him. This is, as it were, the formal character which is attributed to Him with regard to all things; that we may understand what is our place with Him. Thus it is written, that God has appointed Christ "heir of all things "(Heb. 1:2); that, in Him, "we have obtained an inheritance" (Eph. 1:11); that we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ," Rom. 8:17. This glorious title of Christ—the Heir—has a still more glorious origin. He is "the firstborn of every creature, for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth … and for him," Col. 1:15, 16. The church, the children of God, are therefore joint-heirs with Christ. How are they such? It is this which we are about to develop. Christ receives the inheritance in His character of man, of risen Man, once our companion in sufferings because of sin, and then the Head, the root and spring of all blessing.

We must first remark that the first Adam, “the figure of him that was to come,” is a type and figure of the Second Adam of whom we are speaking. He is referred to in this respect in Ephesians 5:30, 31. Before His manifestation, the last Adam is, as it were, hidden, as the first Adam was buried in sleep;171 Eve, who prefigures the church, is taken from his side, and God presents her to him as the help meet for him, to be his companion in the government and the inheritance of all things given to him of God in paradise.

Thus Christ, who is God as well as man, presents the church to Himself, when He awakes in His glory, that it may share that glory with Him and that dominion which He already possesses in title and by the gift of God. “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them,” John 17:22.

Adam and Eve, taken collectively, are called Adam, as if they were but one (Gen. 1:27; 5:2), although, in a certain sense, Eve was inferior to her husband, and had come after him. So it is with Christ and the church, who are but one mystical body. This type, familiar to those who read the Scriptures, presents, in a most simple way, all the forms of the reality prefigured, with this exception, that the Second Man, being “out of heaven” (1 Cor. 15:47), is also the Head and Lord of the heavenly things.

All Things Put Under The Feet Of Man

Let us now consider the passages which speak of the dominion of man, and of the union of the church with Christ in that dominion.172 It clearly results, from the terms in which they are worded, that their accomplishment has not yet taken place. All these passages rest on Psalm 8. There the Holy Ghost says,

“Thou hast … crowned him” (man, the Son of man) “with glory and honour, … thou hast put all things under his feet”; then He tells us (Heb. 2:7, 8, 9) that this is not seen as yet, but that Jesus has been “crowned with glory and honour,” that He might be pointed out to the church as the one who, as man, is to have all things put under His feet. Meanwhile, and until the purposes of God are accomplished, until the enemies of Christ, who hold the power in unrighteousness, are made to be His footstool —in a word, during the period of the present dispensation—Christ is seated on the right hand of the Majesty on high; He sits, as having overcome, at the right hand of God the Father. It is thus that He will grant to him that overcometh, to sit on His own throne (Rev. 3:21), when He takes possession of it and reigns.

Ephesians 1:17 to 2:7 shews us the church united to Christ in all these circumstances, according to the working of the might by which Christ was raised from the dead; chapter 2:7 points out the cause, the glorious motive of it. In chapter 1:22 we find again the quotation of Psalm 8: “And hath put all things under his feet.” The apostle adds: “And gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.”

Thus, therefore, the church is united to Christ, as a body of which He is the Head, and under whose feet God has put all things. “Christ is head over all things to the church, which is his body.” See the Greek. As to this character, it is as having been raised from the dead that He possesses it, as the passage itself clearly establishes. But this last point is treated in a special way in 1 Corinthians 15, in which we find again the quotation from Psalm 8.

‘Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom [that which He possesses as being risen, which is the subject of the chapter] to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet/ But when he saith, all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject [always as last Adam, as risen man; for it is always in this character that He is spoken of in this chapter] unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all,”173 1 Cor. 15:21-28.

Christ, in His character of risen man, reigns therefore over a kingdom which He will deliver up, that God may be all in all. All this administration, and this human dominion, which is brought out in Psalm 8, comes to an end, that the glory of God, simply, may be universal. As to the way in which these things are accomplished other passages present it to us.

Christ As Heir Receives The Inheritance In The Way Of Promise

We have seen that Christ is Heir, in title, as being Creator of all things—all things having been made by Him and for Him, as the Son; and also because He has been established such in the purpose of God. So that,

God [acting] in the way of promise, all the promises find their centre in Christ. “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ,” Gal. 3:16. “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us,” 2 Cor. 1:20. Thus Christ is the Heir, the Seed, to whom the promise was made.

The Rejection By The Natural Seed Gives Occasion For The Introduction Of The Spiritual Seed Into The Heavenly Places As Joint-Heirs.

As regards this earth, the people of Israel, the seed according to the flesh, were, of all mankind, in the best position to receive the Lord, in a world that knew Him not; in coming unto them, “He came unto his own,” John 1:11. That people possessed the law, the promises, the covenants, the oracles of God; it was in their midst that, according to the promise, the Lord was to come, and that He actually came; Rom. 9:4, 5. It was this people which, in the midst of a lost world, possessed, through their relationship with God, the sabbath—that sign which was to remind them of the hope of Jehovah’s rest. But when the Messiah appeared, although His coming was in perfect harmony with the predictions of their own prophets, the Jews did not receive Him. It is true, they said, and this rightly, “This is the heir”; but as they hated Him, they added, “Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours,” Mark 12:7. Thus vanished the last hope of God’s rest upon the earth. After all that had come to pass, God had yet been pleased to send His own Son; but this trial served to complete the evidence that

man is absolutely without any resource, and that “every man at his best state is altogether vanity,” Psalm 39:5.

But that only opened the way for a dispensation far more admirable, far more glorious. The earth and the people of Israel as a nation were set aside for a time; although “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” The design which was hidden in God for ages past was about to be revealed (that is, the gathering together into one body, and in Christ, the remnant of the Jews and the fulness of the Gentiles, in order to bring them into the heavenly places). The companion and bride of the One who had been rejected, but who is risen— the church—is gathered from among all nations, while her Bridegroom is seated at the right hand of God; and she will shine forth in the same glory as Himself, when He shall appear; Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2.

Christ, in His character of Seed of Abraham, is the Heir of the promises. If He had taken possession of this inheritance during His life here below, He would have possessed it for Himself alone. In fact, after He had manifested His glory as Son of God by the resurrection of Lazarus, and as King of the Jews by His entry into Jerusalem, when the Greeks came also to seek Him, He said that the hour was come when (in spite of the rejection of the promised Seed by the Jews) the Son of man should be glorified; but, as the Lord immediately adds, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit,” John 12:1-24.

It was as risen that Christ was to enter into the possession of the inheritance with the church—the ear, sprung from that grain of wheat cast into the tomb—

with the church henceforth perfectly justified; Rom. 4:25. Thus Christ inherits the promises, not as having come in the flesh on earth, but as risen. He inherits them, after having done all that was necessary for the redemption of the church, and in the power of that life which He has taken again, of which He makes His bride to partake. The result of this union is, that the souls which form the church, when they are born of the Holy Ghost, are considered as risen with Him. In a word, Christ is heir, in His character of risen Man—of risen Head of the church.

Paul, in Galatians 3:17, speaks of the confirmation of the promise, made to Christ, and what he says perfectly agrees with what we have just been saying. Moreover, the apostle is quoting Genesis 22:18, “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.” In these words we find indeed that the promise, made to Abraham in chapter 12 and referring to the blessing of the nations, is confirmed to the seed of the patriarch, after that seed had been restored to him in a figure of resurrection; Heb. 11:19.

Thus we have seen how the scripture establishes, under divers aspects, this blessed truth, that the church is redeemed to be united to Jesus, in order that, when He takes possession of His inheritance, He may have a companion meet for Him, to be associated with Him in all things, and perfectly like unto her glorified Bridegroom. For the complete fulfilment of these things, it was necessary, not only that the church should be redeemed, but also that Christ should go to prepare a place for her.

Christ Exalted In The Heavens Prepares A Place For The Church, And Can Fulfil The Promises Made To Israel— Meanwhile The Church Is Called.

The resurrection of the Saviour had the double result of accomplishing the redemption of the church, and of putting Christ in a place where He could secure the sure mercies of David (Acts 13:34), that is to say, confirm in His own name all the promises made to Israel. Moreover, it was needful also that He should take possession of the heavenly places, in order to establish the kingdom of heaven and to fill all things (Eph. 4:10); 174 as well as to associate the church with that glory—new, and yet eternal—prepared before the foundation of the world, and yet hidden from the former ages, but the manifestation of which had been determined according to the wisdom of God by the rejection of the Messiah by the Jewish people.

We must here distinguish two things: Christ preparing a place, a heavenly habitation; and Christ gathering from among all nations those who are to be His joint-heirs, calling the bride who is to enter into possession with Himself. Thus, in John 14:2, 3 the Lord says, “I go to prepare a place for you. And 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.” In John 17:24: “Father, I will 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 foundation of the world.”

In Romans 8:29, it is written: “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of

his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

At His Coming, He Receives The Inheritance With The Risen Church.

In Colossians 1:18, Christ is called "the head of the body, the church … the firstborn from the dead."

But in what manner do these things take place?— "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." These words are found in 1 Corinthians 15, where we find the subject of the resurrection exclusively treated. Thus again it is also written in Romans 8:30, and that in reference not to sanctification, but to glory— "Whom he justified, them he also glorified"; without any mention of sanctification. Philippians 3:21: "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

The time when these things will be accomplished is clearly taught in Scripture. Christ is now hid in God, and our life is hid with Him there; Col. 3:3. The present time is that during which are gathered, by the Holy Ghost, the members of His body, His joint-heirs, while He is seated at the right hand of Jehovah, until His enemies are made His footstool. The apostle says, "But he, having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God, waiting from henceforth until his enemies be set for the footstool of his feet," Heb. 10:12-14. He has accomplished all that was to be done for the redemption of us, His friends; and while He is still gathering His own by the power of the Holy Ghost whom He has sent, and who reveals Him,

and the Father through Him, He is seated, in the expectation of the possession —and not in the effective possession—of the earth, of creation; until the number of the joint-heirs is completed. He is sitting on the Father's throne, and it is there that the church knows Him at the present time.

But while He is waiting, we wait also; and even as regards the whole creation, it waits also: it waits for the manifestation of the children of God. As for the time and manner of that manifestation, the Scriptures are clear.

Since we are to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus, it is evident that it must be by resurrection and by glorification; for He is risen and glorified. Therefore it is said that the whole creation waits for the manifestation of the children of God; and the apostle adds, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," Rom. 8:19, 23. Again, it is written, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory," Col. 3:4. "We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is," 1 John 3:2.

The Saints Judge The World.

We have already seen that the Lord says, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3); and this is what will take place, either by resurrection, or by being changed; for "we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," 1 Cor. 15:51. This is the entrance of the church into glory, as we are taught in detail by 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17: "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."

One may read in Revelation 19 the description of this scene— the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the subsequent judgment of the earth, or at least of the heads of the antichristian revolt. This judgment is again described in more general terms in Jude 14, 15: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment," etc.; and in Zechariah 14:5, it is said, "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."

How blessed the time when Christ shall have presented the church to Himself, as a glorious spouse, "not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing!" Eph. 5:27. Clothed with the beauty and glory which belong to her, seeing in her Lord the beauty and glory of the Father, she is moreover associated with the glory of her Bridegroom in the power of that love wherewith He loved her, and in which He gave Himself for her, that she might be perfectly cleansed and made glorious with Him, even where He is; then manifested in glory, surrounded with honours such as He receives Himself; made partaker of all His glory, of that glory which the Father gave Him, that the world might know that the Father has loved her, as He has loved Him. Associated with the Lord of glory, the saints will judge angels and the world; they will be the servants and instruments who will dispense the light and the blessings of His kingdom over an earth delivered of all its sorrows, and where Satan is no longer. "For unto the angels hath he not put in

subjection the world to come, whereof we speak," Heb. 2:5. "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world [age] "to come," and the resurrection from the dead," can die no more; Luke 20:35, 36. "On such the second death hath no power," but they live and reign with Christ a thousand years; Rev. 20:6. Happy those believers!

At the coming of Christ, these (already risen as to their souls) will rise as regards their bodies, by His Spirit that dwells in them; Rom. 8:11. This is that resurrection—not of judgment, but of life (John 5:29)—which belongs to the church in virtue of her union with Christ by the Holy Ghost. It cannot therefore concern the wicked; although they also must be raised up in their own time by the word of Christ, but to be judged. Those who belong to Christ will be raised at His coming; as for the rest of the dead, their resurrection will take place when Christ, after having delivered up the kingdom, will be seated, as Son of man, on the great white throne, to judge the dead, when the earth and the heaven have fled away before His face; Rev. 20:11.

Such is the teaching of the word of God. The taking possession of the kingdom by Christ is described in Daniel; but to treat this subject would lead to our second part, the earthly glory: we shall therefore lay it aside for the present. Our only desire here was to shew the place which the church occupies in this scene, and the connection which exists in Scripture between that doctrine—well understood—and the most fundamental and comforting truths which form the hope and the joy of the believer.

The Kingdom Of The Father.

There is a point in this subject which we have scarcely touched upon, but the contemplation of which would lead us too far away from our main object, and might expose us to the danger of losing sight of it. It is the place which the Father's love has here—a subject equally full of deep comfort. It is for the kingdom of the Father that Jesus taught His disciples to pray: it is in the Father's kingdom that the righteous shall shine forth as the sun (Matt. 13:43), that is, as Christ, the Sun of righteousness. It is in the glory of the Father that Christ is to appear, and that is for us a most happy circumstance in the blessedness of that great day. Here we enter into deeper waters, and yet more calm; into that eternity which is an unruffled and boundless ocean of infinite joy—a joy of which, however, we shall know the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, which pass all knowledge; for it is there that we shall learn these things; it is there we shall study the glory. Here below we may feel perhaps more deeply what grace is; there we shall be the full manifestation of it, we sinners made like unto Christ Himself; Eph. 2:7.

But the passages which have placed under the eyes of the reader, with the reflections which are added, may suffice to guide those who desire to inquire further as to this simple but blessed truth, and to receive the revelation of it in their souls. They will not be long without feeling that it contains everything; that it is the fulness of Him, who, without having had a beginning, was pleased to be born, and who, having no end, is pleased to accomplish eternally in us that infinite joy, the realisation of which will even render us capable of enjoying it in a measure always increasing. We shall

have great lessons to learn in glory with Christ, the Lamb, in whom the Father is fully revealed. The life we have received gives us even now a right and title to all these blessings as ours.

This is only a simple outline of the position the church will occupy, when Christ shall be revealed in His power and glory. Then will it be manifested as His bride, His companion, in the same glory with Himself; and all things will be blessed through it. For it will be the sphere and means of the display of the glory and blessing of Christ.

170 Geneva, about 1839. Translated from the French.

171 This analogy is very questionable. It is rather as dead that Adam is a figure here of Christ.

172 Note to translation.—The association with Christ, we must remember, is more blessed than the dominion which flows from it.

173 God, but not Christ, considered under the aspect of His mediatorial character. It is not said, “that the Father may be all in all”; because, although Christ delivers up the kingdom as Man-mediator, He is none the less God over all things, blessed eternally with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

174 Compare with John 20:17.