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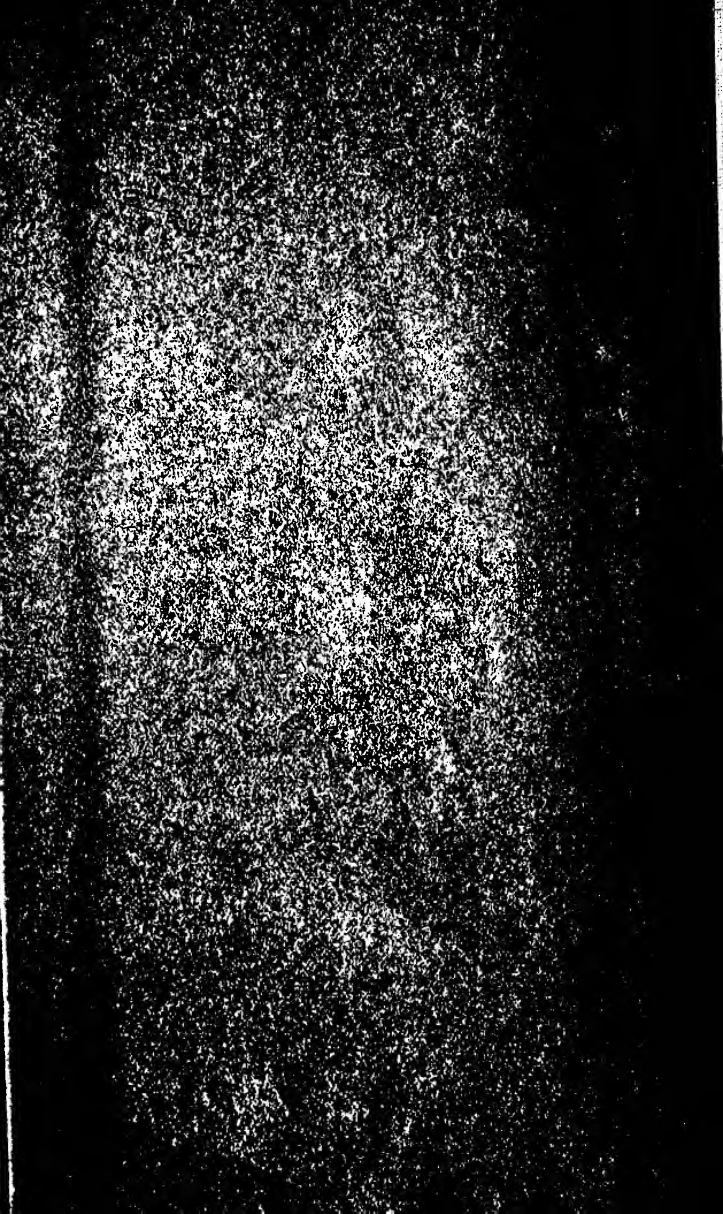


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There are some things

which we must do

to make them better

DISSERTATIONS

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ON THE

PROPHECIES

RELATIVE TO THE

SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.

BY

GEORGE DUFFIELD,

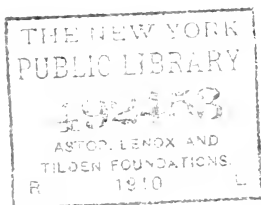
PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF DETROIT.

"I cannot believe that truth can be prejudiced by the discovery of truth, but I fear that the maintenance thereof by fallacy or falsehood may not end with a blessing."—MEDE.

NEW YORK:

PUBLISHED BY DAYTON & NEWMAN,  
199 Broadway.

1842.



Entered according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1842, by  
**DAYTON & NEWMAN,**  
In the Clerk's office of the District Court of the United States, for the Southern  
District of New York.

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S. W. BENEDICT, PRINT.

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## P R E F A C E .

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THE author of the following dissertations respectfully bespeaks the reader's attention before he enters on their perusal. They are the substance of part of a series of lectures delivered during the winter of 1841-2 to the people of his charge, and are now given to the public in compliance with the desire expressed by many to have them in some visible and permanent form.

He is aware that he needs the reader's favor, so far at least as to dismiss the influence of preconceived opinions, and dispassionately to examine the subject presented in these pages. But he is satisfied, that the intrinsic merit of the subject, as well as its important bearing on personal interests, on Christian practice, on social welfare, and on the destinies of nations, will gain the reader's attention sufficiently to examine the evidence presented whether these things are so.

The great question which forms the nucleus of the whole discussion, is one, and very simple, viz. Is the kingdom of heaven *a new dispensation*, to be introduced on earth by the visible personal coming of Jesus Christ? or has it been commenced, and is it now in the progress of its expansion, through the influence of moral and political causes, and especially the preaching of the gospel, designed in the providence of God to overcome human corruption, to prostrate every system of superstition, idolatry, and oppression, and to mould society, to control the legislation, to effect changes in the organic laws or constitutions of nations, and to restore to the world the dominion of truth, peace, and righteousness, without any accession of miraculous agency? The statesmen and politicians of the day will reason and speculate, intrigue and plan, and think that they descry, in the march of improvement, the increase of light, and the very posture of nations, the pledges that

earth shall be redeemed, and liberty, virtue, science, and intelligence bless the human race. The experience of the past presents but a sad, sad retrospect; and little, very little to afford a ground of hope for the future. What right have we to conclude, that as a people we have attained to superior knowledge and purity, and possess such superior skill in self-government, and such perfect social and political institutions, that we must certainly escape the disasters and ruin which have befallen the highly civilized and refined nations of antiquity. It is the dictate of wisdom to suspect the suggestions of self-flattery when they thus come athwart the experience of the world. Nor should we be blind to the numerous proofs apparent, that some cementing and consolidating principles are yet wanting to give permanence and perpetuity to our institutions.

The Christian will betake himself to the word of God as to his guide, when he attempts to forecast the political destinies of the nations of the earth. No book can be found so full of general politics, so replete with valuable instruction, and so essential to the right understanding of the means, securities, and very elements of national prosperity, as the Bible. It unravels a thousand perplexing mysteries in human government, and gives a clue to the profitable study and practical uses to be made of the great principles which mark the providence of God, and the development of the plans of Heaven. It is of infinite importance to him, that he should be familiar with this blessed Book, and have drunk deep of its spirit. Erroneous views entertained with regard to the general scheme of God's providence, will not, and cannot fail to leave us ever at fault in understanding its particular evolutions.

The writer of these dissertations looks to the "more sure word of prophecy" as to the best and safest guide for our researches into the future. God, who sees the end from the beginning, and has laid his wise and holy plans in full view of all contingencies, and of all the various events that might arise, is prepared for every exigency, and has apprised us of the great crises which shall occur, as he unfolds his wondrous scheme.- Nor has he left us without sufficient means of



knowing and judging what is the grand design towards which all his movements tend, and what shall be the great and glorious result in which they shall all ultimate. That, it will be admitted, by every student of the Bible, is THE COMING AND KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST. The first promise implied in the threat against the serpent, brings it into view; and the successive promises and dispensations of God have but enlarged, defined, and eclaircised the Christian's legitimate hopes and expectations.

These things will scarcely be denied by any professed believer in the truth and authority of the Sacred Scriptures. Yet great is the difference in the results which flow from the use and application of them. According as the church of God, considered as a spiritual society, visibly organized in this world, and destined to ascendant influence, may be regarded, will men's views of the divine plans and providence take their character, and their estimate of divine procedures affecting it, be made. If we believe that the world is to be converted and blessed by the expansion of the church, and the gradual diffusion of her light, and means of moral influence:—if, in other words, the Gospel is destined to find its consummation entirely through the action of secondary causes, and the moral means, and social and spiritual influences, at present possessed, it is easy to perceive, that our ideas of the second coming of Christ, and of the great results designed by that Gospel, will and must be essentially different from what they would be, were we persuaded, that that coming is as literally to occur as did this first, and the present to be superseded by, and find its consummation in, a new and glorious state of things, as miraculously to be introduced as have been any and all the dispensations of his grace before it.

Whether that long-predicted and expected coming of Jesus Christ, and of the kingdom of Heaven, are matters of literal verity, according to the grammatical import of the expressions, or analogically to be understood, and therefore to be interpreted altogether figuratively or spiritually, is a question of deep and wonderful bearing: nor is it to be slighted and sneered at, by any one professing to love and reverence the sacred oracles of God. It is vital to all our hopes, and forms

the very warp and woof of all the scriptural revelations on the subject. It must be met; and will be candidly examined by every man who loves the truth, and is unwilling to be swayed by the dogmas of others. The decision, we contend, must be had from the word of God itself. It seems reasonable, and is the very dictate of all simple and unsophisticated minds, that the ideas of those who indicted the Scriptures,—their notions of the things of which they wrote and spoke, and their rules and principles of interpretation,—should be respected by us. We are not at liberty to assign different meanings to their words, and to understand them as teaching things of which they had no conception. Nor are we to take any part of their writings, and apply them to scenes and events which we may have excogitated, and pass it off as their description. The same authority which dictated the oracles, in the first instance, must be appealed to, as interpreter of their meaning. *If words have changed their import, and a SPIRITUAL or analogical system has superseded a LITERAL, WE MUST BE DISTINCTLY APPRISED OF THE CHANGE.* It is easy for us to excogitate for ourselves an import of expressions which shall eviscerate the sacred oracles.

This, it is thought, by some excellent and beloved brethren, is what the millenarian has done; while he, in his turn, believes that the spiritualist is the aggressor here. The most common and plausible objection against the millenarians' literal interpretation of prophecy, grows out of an assumption of certain things, which must be PROVED, before they can be employed as the key to unlock its meaning. The conversion of the world, by means of present appliances and instrumentalities, increased in number and power,—and the universal and ascendant influence of Christianity, as a system of moral and religious truth, at present known and understood amid discordant philosophical and ecclesiastical sects, and expounded by different theologians and metaphysicians,—are points assumed, from which motives to exertion are drawn, and attempts made to urge the Christian community forward in deeds of Missionary daring and benevolent activity. Too much activity and benevolent expenditure cannot be made, for the accomplishment of the great end, which God designs by his

Gospel. Nor should we ever look indifferently on, or willingly and unnecessarily throw away, the motives by which the Christian church may be stimulated to action, in obedience to the command of Jesus Christ, to go and "teach all nations," to evangelize all nations, and to preach his Gospel to every creature.

But it certainly may be suggested, and is worthy of the gravest consideration, whether we may not appeal to and employ a class of motives, which neither the word nor providence of God will justify. The hope of success, it is correctly urged by Mr. Harris,\* is an essential element of activity, and if this be gone, and we are to believe that the world is not to be evangelized by the noiseless and gradually augmented instrumentality of the Christian church, accompanied by the energizing influence of the Holy Spirit, at least one powerful class of motives will be rendered unavailable or inoperative. He has made an issue between those who believe in the instrumentality of man, as designed of God, for the conversion of the world, and for the consummation of the Gospel scheme, and of those whose views in prophecy lead them to look for a fearful and solemn crisis, to be signalized by the personal coming of Jesus Christ for the introduction and establishment of his kingdom, on the ruins of existing nations hostile to his supremacy. He admits, that many, who adopt the latter view, are not only friendly to Missionary enterprise, but profess to derive from it motives to increased diligence in the cause of God: and he bears very honorable testimony to their piety, and to the fact, that some of them "number among the liberal and active supporters of our religious institutions." But he allows himself,—certainly by no means conformably with the Christian rule, or the Christian spirit,—to "suspect that in many of such instances, we are indebted for what they do, rather to the very natural desire of recommending their peculiar views to others, than to the views themselves,—that their conduct is in this respect better than their creed,—that it is the triumph of their piety over their opinions,"—and that whatever of Missionary zeal and benevolent activity they now evince, is to be referred rather to the influence of principles

\* See his Great Commission, p. 135.

which date anterior to their peculiar views of prophecy. The warrant he adduces for these suspicions and fears, will apply with equal force to many who adopt his own views, among whom, as numerous instances may be found, of those, who, at one period of their history, "did run well," but who have subsequently become as inactive in reference to the diffusion of the Gospel, as if a prophet had been deputed to say to them, "your strength is to sit still."

Such impeachment of motive is not allowable. It is the ARGUMENTUM AD INVIDIAM, and is totally unfounded, if not suggested by ignorance of the views condemned, and of their legitimate bearing on Christian practice.

Suppose that a man believes the world is to be gradually brought under the dominion of the Gospel, by the present instrumentalities employed. The prospect of success, it is true, will quicken effort, and induce liberality, just in proportion as his benevolence expands, and he longs for the welfare of the human race. But it is necessary, for the activity and efficiency of that motive, to keep him always advised of measurable success, and stimulated by bright and glowing pictures of the future. When disappointment, disasters, and defeat occur, as they often do, what then is the resource? nothing is left, but to fall back upon the promise of God, which presents the arm of Omnipotence, the faithfulness of Jehovah, for our sure reliance, and hope of ultimate victory. Who does not see that, in having recourse to such sources of hope and consolation, we must be sure that we understand the import of the promise, and know the mind of God expressed in it? Imagination may electrify; but it is not for one moment to be admitted as the expounder of God's word and promises.

As long as he can be kept stimulated, and his passions thus be fired, he may be roused to action. But the electric fires die—a morbid state of mind and heart ensues upon the excessive use of stimulants, applied to men's fancies and passions. It is only as we can fall back on fixed and stable principles, that we can look for continuous, increasing and devoted action. Those principles can never be found, but in intelligent and believing views of God's own mind and will. Our benevolence and action must embrace the objects, and take the

direction, and be with the design, of God's own, to be truly successful and permanently efficient. It would be just as legitimate here to *suspect*, were it proper so to do, that much of the fickleness and spasmodic action of many friends of Missions, who avow their expectation of the world's conversion by such instrumentality, may be referred to such causes.

Suppose, now, on the other hand, that a man believes in the approaching speedy personal coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to destroy the guilty nations of the earth by positive acts of retributive violence, to raise the bodies of his dead saints, to quicken the living, and to establish the kingdom of Heaven in their joint dominion, and that in the mean time, he will have his gospel preached as a witness to all nations, that he may visit the Gentiles, and take out of them a people for the glory of his own name,—with what peculiar emotions, and invincible energy, will he address himself to the great design and business of his Christian life? He looks upon the kingdoms of this world as being under the dominion of “the god of this world,” “the great enemy and avenger,” that foe of Jesus Christ, the old “roaring lion” which goeth about seeking whom he may devour. The kingdom of Heaven, he is persuaded, is designed to supersede this accursed dominion, and to fill the earth with joy and blessedness. Its honors, and privileges, and rewards, as administered by the subordinate agency of the saints, he believes can only be attained by the contempt of this world's wealth and greatness, power and glory, and by a life of suffering, devoted, and faithful attachment unto Jesus Christ. He may, indeed, in common with others, be blinded by a false philosophy, which will not permit him to make a right estimate of human agency, obligation, and instrumentality, in carrying on the designs of God. In this respect, he is, however, no otherwise affected than are multitudes, who do not believe in the personal, visible appearance of Christ, to introduce the reign of Heaven. Whatever inaction and indifference to the Missionary enterprise he may evince, must be referred to his system of philosophy, not to his faith in this matter. With right views of human obligation and instrumentality, and with intelligent views of the great scheme of providence, of which the coming and kingdom of Christ form

the grand result, he will find in his millenarian faith, not only a solace in the midst of sorrows, distresses, and disappointments, but an incentive to ever-active effort in bearing testimony to the glory of his Saviour, and in swelling the triumphs of his heavenly kingdom.

He is met, at the very moment of enlisting in the service of Christ, by a solemn question—whether to renounce his hopes and prospects, his pleasures and plans, so far as they stand connected with the kingdoms of this world, and are inspired by the promises of earth, to cast in his lot, for time and eternity, with the people of God, and to prefer the reproach of Christ to the treasures of Egypt. Till this question is decided, and with all his heart and soul he gives himself to Jesus Christ, he is none of his. There can be no neutrality here. Indifference and lukewarmness—an attempt to reconcile God and Mammon, Christ and Belial—will only cause him to be spewed out of the mouth of Christ, and to have his name blotted out of the book of life. It is “to him that overcometh,” and to him alone, that the promise will be verified, that Christ will give him “to sit down with him on his throne, as he hath sat down with the Father on his throne. He feels that as he enters on the service of Christ, he enlists as a soldier, commences a warfare, and that both the service and the war are for life. He is not dazzled by great and brilliant prospects of sharing with the world in its honors, and enriching himself by its spoils. He knows that victory is certain, and that nothing can more effectually promote his honor, and swell his share in the triumphs of the Great Captain of salvation, than to fall a sacrifice, as he did himself. He looks not on the governments of the earth, expecting them to be grasped, and under this dispensation subjected to the supremacy of Jesus Christ, but knows that they are under the influence and direction of intrigue and duplicity, of falsehood and treachery, of selfishness and corruption;—fit illustrations of his character, who has usurped the dominion of earth, and claimed its kingdoms as his own. He is thus fortified against their seductive influence.

If, in the providence of God, he is called to take a part, and to share in the obligations devolving on those who administer that rule which God has made essential to the welfare and

existence of society, he is reminded of an authority superior to that of man, and of the necessity of keeping a conscience void of offence towards both. He is a witness for Christ, let him be where he may or do what he will. Having made his choice, and preferred the glory of the heavenly kingdom to that of the kingdoms of this world, he is willing, if needs be, to seal his testimony with his blood, knowing that this will increase the brilliancy of his crown. Firmness, decision, uncompromising fidelity and attachment to Jesus Christ, are promoted by the views he takes, not of the blending, but of the contrast, of Christ's kingdom with those of this world. Believing that in the present dispensation of his grace, his Lord and Master is calling out a people from the Gentiles for his own glory, and preparing the whole elect company of his priests and kings, who are to share with him in the triumphs of his dominion; feeling the obligation of his Master's command to preach the good news of his kingdom to every creature, and to enlist recruits in his service; and not being paralyzed by a false philosophy relative to human agency, which has long pervaded the church, irrespective of millenarian views, he becomes, in fact, a Missionary, wherever he is and wherever he goes, telling of the doom of a guilty world, of the authority, glory, and claims of the Saviour, and of his grace and promises of pardon and blessedness to all that will come to him.

His story is very simple. His testimony is full, and it strikes as directly against the intrigue, selfishness, violence, and oppression of the haughty potentates of earth, as it does against the ambition, cupidities, and lusts of individuals. The native influence of his faith in this wondrous matter, is to disencumber him from earth, to relieve him of a thousand embarrassments, to fortify him against the ensnarements and fascinations of a world that lieth in wickedness, to enkindle his zeal and devotion to Christ and his cause, to direct him to the source of all inspiring influences, and to the treasures of wisdom and strength laid up for him in Jesus Christ. He is not to be excited and stimulated by the prospect of immediate and speedy or partial success, nor in danger of intriguing with princes, and rulers, and nobles of the earth, to secure the temporary triumph of Christianity. He falls back upon the re-

sources of his Saviour. He knows the end to be secured. Every sinner saved is a soul added to the number of the heavenly kingdom. He works in detail, and whether in the full tide of the Spirit's gracious influences, or in seasons of rebuke and blasphemy, of disappointment and disaster, he feels that the march is steady and onward, and that the triumph is to be hastened by the delivering of his testimony, in common with the whole company of the faithful, and the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world.

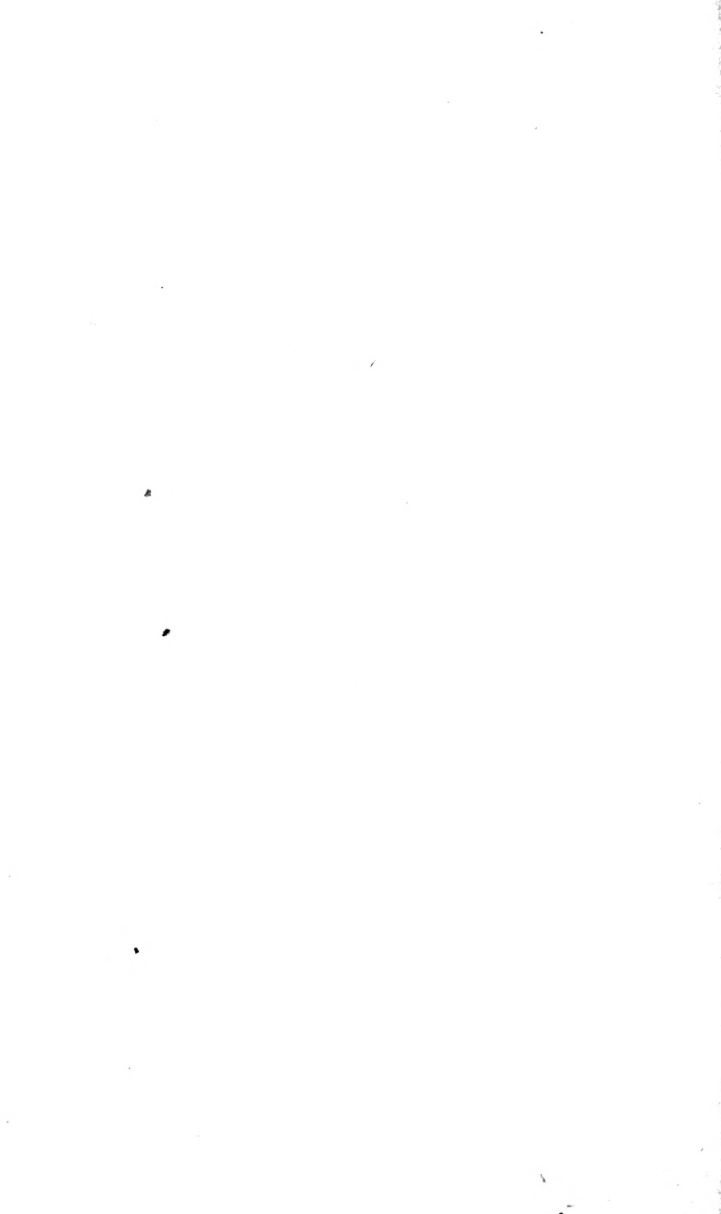
Thus did the apostles feel and act. Thus, too, did the primitive Christians. There was a simplicity, a moral sublimity of character, a transparency of principle, which kept them unharmed by the polluting influence of governmental intrigues, and ever true and faithful to their suffering and crucified Redeemer. To him they looked, and not to kings, and courts, and cabinets, for the success and triumph of their cause. Nor was it till the church construed herself into the kingdom of Christ on earth, the hierarchy rose, and governmental powers were claimed as best adapted to promote the Saviour's cause,—till reliance was placed more upon an arm of flesh than upon the grace and omnipotence of Jesus Christ and the influence of his Spirit, that the work of Missions became almost exclusively that of the officers of the church, and the object of Missions, not so much the conversion of souls, as the subjugation of dominions to her authority. There is no want of powerful motive to Christian activity, and to Missionary enterprise, in the millenarian faith. It exalts Christ, lifts the heart high as Heaven, and fires with the prospect of entering into the joy of our Lord, of living and reigning with him, if so be that we suffer with him; and thus reconciles us to toil and sorrow—nay, gives us a complacency in these very things, and helps us, as Paul did, to glory in tribulation.

It is ungenerous, and we feel it to be especially unkind to attempt to charge a faith so fertile in motive, with an inefficiency that might have been referred, legitimately, to other causes than to millenarianism, even to those which have more or less for centuries paralyzed the church, and which still affect the minds of many, whether believing or not in the pre-millennial advent of Christ.



The author of the following pages has deemed these remarks necessary, to bespeak a candid attention to the subject presented in them. He has not enlarged on the practical bearing of the millenarian faith, believing that it was unnecessary, and that the good sense and piety of professing Christians, under the guidance of God's Spirit, will make the proper use of them, whenever and wherever they are seen and felt to be the truth of God. He commends the work to the Christian public with much deference, and requests that the attention which the subject merits may be given, if not to these pages, certainly to their great and glorious theme. He offers no apologies for the imperfections which must necessarily mark a performance, prepared in the midst of extended pastoral care and labors, and with but limited means of access to the works of the learned, and especially those which are but rarely to be met with, except in large public libraries. The candid and discerning reader will make all due allowance.

The course of lectures, of which the dissertations are the substance, comprised a wider range, embracing, as well the *objects* or *designs*, as the *reality* of the Saviour's personal and pre-millennial coming. The author has thought it proper to preserve the unity of the work, by confining attention to the latter. Many and very interesting details, in the exposition of prophecy, have, by this course, been excluded. But should the providence of God indicate it, they may at some future day be given to the public.



DISSERTATIONS  
ON THE  
P R O P H E C I E S.

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CHAPTER I.

I N T R O D U C T I O N .

THE DUTY OF STUDYING THE PROPHECIES, AND THE  
OBJECTIONS COMMONLY URGED AGAINST IT.

THE diligent and careful study of prophecy is highly commended in the Sacred Scriptures. Motives urging to it also are suggested; so that, whoever may practically undervalue the prophetic parts of the word of God, cannot, with any fair pretext, question either the obligation or the importance of their study. Yet have both been done. In commencing a series of disquisitions, therefore, designed to aid in the discharge of this duty, it becomes proper and necessary to illustrate and to enforce, to some extent, the obligations binding all to it. Its importance will be manifest, at every stage, in the progress of the investigations proposed.

- I. THE SAME OBLIGATION WHICH BINDS US TO THE STUDY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, ALSO BINDS US TO THE STUDY OF THE PROPHECIES THEY CONTAIN.

The blessed Redeemer has commanded us to "search the Scriptures."\* In having so done, He has enjoined something more than the loose casual reading of them, or the things which pass current with many for their study. It will not suffice, having brought into view this or the other doctrine, the notions of this or the other theological school or professor, to examine and collate the texts by which they may be proved: nor will it suffice to search for all the texts, by which this or the other system of theological truth, this or the other body of divinity, this or the other theory of religion, may have its general and particular parts or features confirmed. This is but studying the doctrines or opinions, the theories or systems, of man's excogitation and arrangement.

Nor does the careful investigation of the creeds of different churches, and the adoption of that professed by the one to which we may belong, meet our obligations in this matter. It is not designed, either to disparage creeds, or to object to their legitimate use; but the study of any creed, or confession of faith, is not the study of the word of God. No man ever dreamed that he is studying Newton's Principia, Cavallo's Philosophy, Gibbon's Rome, or Hume's History of England, who does no more than consult the index, turn over their pages, and examine whether this or the other proposition or fact, previously stated, is contained in them. No more can he be said to study the Sacred Scriptures—no matter how diligent he may

\* John, 5. 39.

be in the use of his concordance—who merely collects and assort his texts under different heads, and either makes his own, or adopts some other, system of theology.

Nor can he be said to study the Scriptures, who consults this and the other commentator, and selects, from all their different commentaries, the opinions that strike him most favorably. A man may spend his life in this way, and manufacture volumes of notes, and scholia, and expositions, and yet, all the time, have been but studying the writings and opinions of men on particular passages, without digging into the inexhaustible mines of truth which the word of God contains.

Nor can he be called a student of the Scriptures, who is always on the search for novelties and recondite meanings, and betrays an anxiety to differ from all that have gone before him, and to startle by the unexpected and extraordinary interpretation given to plain and obvious passages. This is rather to affect a display of ingenuity, and to study to appear singular.

It behoves us to read the Scriptures attentively, carefully, and with a view to ascertain what *they* affirm; pondering the language, connection, arguments, and illustrations employed by the sacred writers, so as to ascertain, what *they* meant, and what *they* designed to teach. The obligation to this will be denied by no protestant. But if such be our obligations “to search the Scriptures,” it is impossible for us to discharge them without the diligent and careful study of the prophecies, which form so large a portion of them. It is not a part only—not the New Testament merely—not the Gospels—but both Old and New—the entire word of God, that we are bound, according to our time, means, and opportunities, to investigate. Whoso denies his obligation to study

the prophetic parts of Scripture, by the very same mode of reasoning, must deny his obligations to study the word of God at all. When did God give any of us the right to say what parts, or how much, of his revealed will we would attend to, and what we would neglect ?

## II. THE SPIRIT OF GOD HAS ESPECIALLY COMMANDED AND URGED THE STUDY OF THE PROPHECIES.

This He has done in several ways. First, He has distinctly and directly met that spirit of practical contempt, with which many are apt to treat the prophetic parts of Scripture, enjoining it on us to “despise not prophesyings.”\* And this injunction was immediately given after the solemn mandate, “quench not the Spirit,” as though one of the most common and effectual means to quench the Spirit, is to despise prophesyings. In addition to this, He has, in the most formal and explicit manner, expressed His approbation of those who were studious of the prophecies. The Bereans were commended as being “more noble† than they of Thessalonica, in that they re-

\* 1 Thes. 5. 20, *προφητειας*. The word is used in its generic import here. “Prophecy may include exhortation, and some sort of instruction, (Acts, 15. 32) as well as the faculty of foretelling distant events. *Lightfoot*. *Locke*. *Wells*. *Macknight*. See also Collyer’s *Sacred Interpreter*, p. 2, c. viii., sub fin.”—*Slade’s Annotations*, vol. i. p. 269.

The Hebrew *נביא*, or Greek *προφήτης*, denoted one who uttered the words of God, either as the organs or interpreters of the divine oracles. See also Gaussen’s *Theopneusty*, pp. 285, &c.

† Acts, 17. 11, *εὐγενέστεροι*. More ingenuous, of better spirit. “They were, say the Greek fathers, *ἐπιεικεστέροι*, more impartial; they thought patiently, meditated, and inquired diligently on the subject; they were *εὐθεύτεροι*, more apt towards the kingdom of God; they were more prepared or marshalled, *τεταγμένοι*, towards eternal life.—*Elsley’s Annotations*, vol. iii. pp. 285, 286.

ceived the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so." A reference to the subject of Paul's preaching will show, that they were the prophetic parts particularly which they searched. For he "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ."\*

Peter, speaking by the Holy Ghost, says, in the plainest manner, that we do well to "take heed" to the "more sure word of prophecy."† Surely if the Spirit of God commends, we should not care who condemns.

Beside, the example of the prophets themselves, yea and of the very angels, is referred to in proof of the propriety and obligation of this duty. "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 before hand 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."‡ It ill becomes us, therefore, with examples of such an elevated character before us,—when the very prophets themselves studied their own predictions, and the angels also desired to look into them,—to treat, with lightness or indifference, such an interesting, solemn, and wonderful portion of the word of God.

\* Acts, 17. 2, 3. † 2 Peter, 1. 19. ‡ 1 Peter, 1. 10-12.

Farther—the volume of inspiration closes with the most extended and intricate portion of the prophetical writings, the revelation of John the divine, in the commencement, and at the close of which, the study of the prophecies it contains is pointedly and solemnly commended. “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those sayings which are written therein.”\* “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.”† We know no more likely, or more dangerous way, for any one to incur the curse here denounced, than practically to disesteem, and to discourage, the study of the prophetical writings, by neglecting them altogether. It is virtually taking away the whole.

These considerations will justify this attempt, by a series of disquisitions, to induce the study of the prophecies. The obligation seems to be so clear and strong, as to excite surprise that it should have been questioned. Yet, by far the greatest portion, both of the ministry and laity, it is to be feared, accord with the proverb they had in the land of Israel, “in the days of Ezekiel the prophet,” saying, “The days are prolonged and every vision faileth. The vision that he seeth is for many days to come, and he prophesieth of the times that are far off.”‡ The very fact of many prophecies being unfulfilled, or of difficult and doubtful interpretation, is pleaded as sufficient reason for their being neglected.

In enforcing the obligation to study the prophecies, therefore, the motives appropriate, and furnished by the Spirit of God, ought not to be overlooked. He

\* Rev. 1. 3.

† Rev. 22, 19.

‡ Ezek. 12. 22.



has styled the whole system of prophecy “ a light shining in a dark place,” affirmed it to be “ a sure word,” and given to exert its cheering and enlightening influence “ till the day dawn, and the day-star arise in our hearts ;” \* that is, it is to be our light till the events predicted shall have transpired. The apostle Peter compares the knowledge of prophecy to the dawn, and morning star. The system itself is the midnight lamp, to guide our way, and to comfort us in the darkness that enshrouds us. It behoves us to take heed to it or study it, till, through our knowledge of prophecy, we feel the light break in upon us, like the dawn and morning star betokening the approach of the rising sun, or, in other words, the realization of the things predicted. The force of these motives will be most felt, and best appreciated, when it is seen how fully they meet and answer the objections commonly urged against the study of the prophecies.

1. It is objected, THAT MANY EMINENT MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL, ATTACH BUT LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO THE STUDY OF THE PROPHECIES, CONFESS THEMSELVES ENTIRELY IGNORANT OF THE IMPORT OF A LARGE PORTION OF THEM, AND PROFESS THEMSELVES SKEPTICAL AS TO THEIR LITERAL FULFILMENT. It by no means, however, follows from these facts, that the prophecies are unimportant, and the study of them may be well neglected. It is an argument wholly unbecoming a Christian man, to say, that this or the other great divine, this or the other good man, thinks thus or thus—regards with indifference the subject of prophecy, and does not believe in their literal fulfilment. The question of chief importance with us, should ever be, What doth God say—what

\* 2 Peter, 1. 19.

is the mind of Jesus Christ—how hath the Spirit testified? The opinions of men are not the rule of faith; not even the opinions of the fathers. They are of value no farther than, as matter of history, they help us to trace to the days of the apostles, what views were entertained by those to whom were first committed the oracles of God.

The authority of the fathers has been substituted, by the papal and other hierarchies, for the word of God. Wherever it has been improperly, superstitiously, or inordinately regarded, it has led to the worst of despotism. No man, no church, is infallible. Even the apostles themselves laid claim to no such thing. Their word and opinions are no law or authority, except as they were divinely inspired, and instructed by the Holy Spirit what to testify to the churches. Peter differed from Paul in relation to the circumcision of the Gentiles—a question involving the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith alone in the righteousness of Jesus Christ; and Barnabas was carried away by Peter's influence, so that he actually abandoned the views which he before held in common with Paul: yet were they both wrong; and Paul hesitated not to rebuke them.\* How foolish and dangerous, therefore, must it be, to make any man or set of men our standard, and to adopt their opinions—no matter what may have been their erudition or attainments in piety, even though they may have been "pillars" in the church. It is only wherein any have been actually inspired, that their word is authority.

It is no uncommon thing for men of undoubted piety to be slow of heart to believe things predicted, which the providence of God afterwards has made so

\* Gal. 2. 12, 14.

plain, that it seems wonderful how for one moment they could have doubted. Peter was skeptical in relation to the death of Christ, though He had taken pains "to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day."\* Here was plain minute detail, in the statement of events which were literally to transpire; but the things predicted so offended Peter, that he could not believe them; and he carried his skepticism so far, that he even rebuked the Saviour for having thus spoken. The Saviour, however, referred Peter's skepticism to the influence of Satan, and rebuked the devil in his mouth. "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence to me, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."†

In like manner, the two disciples that went to Emmaus, and Thomas, were so skeptical in relation to the resurrection of Christ, that they would not at first believe, even after the prediction had been literally fulfilled. The rebuke and reproach of the Saviour pronounced against the former, "Oh fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken,"‡ are enough to show the weakness and absurdity of the objection, against the study of the prophecies, founded on the opinions of great and good men. Deference to such authority may suit papists, and high church ecclesiastics, to be found in different denominations, but it illy becomes those revering His divine authority, who has enjoined it on us all, "Despise not prophesyings; but *prove* all things, and hold fast that which is good."§

\* Matt. 16. 21, 22.

† Luke, 24. 25.

‡ Mark, 8. 33.

§ 1 Thess. 5. 20, 21.

2. It is objected again, that while THE STUDY OF THE PROPHECIES ALREADY FULFILLED MAY BE PROPER AND USEFUL, THAT OF THE PROPHECIES UNFULFILLED IS BOTH USELESS AND DANGEROUS. There is a vast amount of, what appears to us, both effrontery and presumption in such an objection. The objection admits, that God has revealed a portion of his will in predictions yet unfulfilled. Who then gave the objector a right to say, that this portion of his revealed will is of no use to us, and dangerous to be studied till fulfilled, and therefore may well be neglected? Paul did not so teach, when, by the dictation of the Holy Ghost, he said "*All scripture* is profitable for instruction,"\* nor Peter when he said, that "we do well to take heed" to the "more true word of prophecy," and that the prophets themselves "inquired and searched diligently," and the holy "angels desire to look into" the things predicted.† The objection contradicts explicitly the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, it undervalues and pours contempt upon the experience of a large portion of the church of God for centuries. Did the ancient saints, from the days of Adam down till the coming of Christ, find it useless and dangerous to study unfulfilled prophecy? The time was when all the revelations, which God made of a Saviour, and of the way of salvation, were predictions not yet fulfilled. What, think you, would Seth, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and David, and all the prophets, have thought of such an objection? What, too, would have become of the church of God, and of the entire human race, if this objection had been universally adopted? Hundreds and thousands felt the benefit, yea, found their salva-

\* 2 Tim. 3, 16.

† 1 Pet. 1, 10-12, and 2 Pet. 1, 19.

tion, through the study of unfulfilled prophecy, and shall *we* be told, that it is useless and dangerous for us ?

The objection is just as opposed to the universal experience of the Christian church, as to that of ancient believers. What are *the promises* given for our support and consolation, but unfulfilled prophecy ? Many if not all of the most important promises, which form the foundation of hope, and serve for our encouragement and consolation, are part and parcel of the system of prophecy, and need, to their right understanding, to our knowledge of the use to be made of them, and of our warrant to apply them, that we be somewhat acquainted with that system. It is lamentable to see the ignorance that prevails on this subject, and how arbitrarily, capriciously, and confusedly, the promises, especially of the Old Testament, are often used and applied by Christians. Ask them for their warrant to apply them to their own case and circumstances, and to show how they intelligently extract their consolation from them, and they are wholly at fault. It is not surprising, that the faith of many should be so weak and sickly, when they neither understand the true import and bearing of many of the most precious promises of the word of God, nor how or upon what warrant they can apply them, and make use of them, for their own encouragement and confirmation.

The very first promise of mercy to the guilty race of man, was a prediction, which, even at this day, has not been wholly fulfilled. Multitudes, which comforted the hearts of believers in past ages, and yet are fraught with consolation to Christians, remain unfulfilled. By "these exceeding great and precious promises" do we "become partakers of the divine

nature," and find the exciting, purifying and rejoicing influence of the hope of "good things to come"—"the recompense of reward"—the heavenly glory. How rash and presumptuous, therefore, is it to tell us, that we have no interest in unfulfilled prophecies, and that it is dangerous for us to study them! Who gave the objector a right to draw a line of distinction here, or to say what is a precious promise, and what a useless prediction? It is all precious, and all profitable, which God has revealed for our hope and encouragement, in relation to his church on earth and his kingdom to come.

The objection is founded on a very false assumption, viz. an alleged impossibility of understanding, or judging, of a prediction, till *the event* has proved its meaning. There may be, and indeed are, some predictions so cautiously expressed, and so dependent on others to be previously fulfilled, as to create some difficulty, and require much diligent searching to understand them. But does it therefore follow, that *all* unfulfilled prophecy is equally difficult to be comprehended, and our study, even of what is obscure, unprofitable and dangerous? The Lord Jesus Christ thought otherwise, and Noah, Abraham, the children of Israel, and the Christians who escaped to Pella during the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman army, found it otherwise.

There is something, in the spirit of this objection, which seems to call for a rebuke, as well as a reply. Prejudices against the study of unfulfilled prophecy have been excited by various means, and all said, or preached, or written, on the subject, has been set aside with the invidious and sweeping charge of being mere speculations. "No speculations *on prophecy*

*yet unfulfilled* have CHARMS for us,"\* it has been boldly and publicly asserted, even by Christian editors; and we are gravely told, that the design of God in prophecy was "to assure us of the all-controlling providence of God, from the "beginning to the end," and to attest the truth of *doctrines* coming from the lips of prophets and apostles, for the instruction of the world." These, indeed, are some of the results which flow from the study of prophecy, but not the leading and primary design of God. Peter says expressly, the word of prophecy, not the events fulfilling the predictions, is a light for us, to supply, in the present darkness of our way, and *till* the things predicted occur, the place of the things themselves. It is for the support and consolation, the safety and sanctification, of his church that he has given us this light.

The design that the Saviour had, in giving his predictions to his disciples, was, that they should "take heed that no man deceive" them.† Paul expressly declares, that he delivered his predictions, that Christians might "comfort one another with these words,"—that they should not be in darkness, but having the light, should not "sleep as do others," but "watch" and "be sober" and "edify one another."‡ Peter also declares, that he delivered his predictions to forewarn Christians, and to put them on their guard, so that, while looking for the very things predicted, ye might, says he, "be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless" and not misinterpret the long-suffering of God, but account it salvation. He admits that there were "things hard to be understood" in the prophecies, and especially in

\* The Boston Recorder for Oct. 22, 1841.

† Mat. 24. 4.

‡ 1 Thess. 4. 13; 5. 11.

those delivered by Paul, which they that are unlearned and unstable, as they do also the other Scriptures, “wrest to their destruction,” but he would have Christians “to know these things *before*, not wait till the events fulfilled predictions; and understand beforehand, so as to “beware lest they should be led away by the error of the wicked, and fall from their own steadfastness.”\* And the angel, whom God sent, in answer to Daniel’s prayers and diligent study of unfulfilled prophecy, says expressly, that his design, in giving further predictions to him was, “to make thee understand what should befall thy people in the latter days.”† Christ also says, that he told his followers what things would come to pass as signs of the coming of his kingdom, expressly that they might “KNOW”‡ when it was nigh, i. e. *before it arrived*. He says, also, that he told them things beforehand, which he would have them consider, that when they came to pass, they might KNOW§ who he was, and what he was,—the promised Saviour and Deliverer. And John, both in the beginning, and at the close, of the book of Revelations, declares expressly, that they are given to show unto the servants of God beforehand “things which must shortly come to pass.”|| Now, after all this, what shall we think of those, who will tell us, unfulfilled prophecy needs not to be studied,—is of no use, but dangerous—till the events have fulfilled them? Assuredly, such instructors deserve reproof, and to be sent back to their Bibles, themselves to study more carefully lest they should mislead others.

They have reason to fear, that the charge, and cen-

\* 2 Pet. 3. 14–17.

† Dan. 10. 14.

‡ Mark, 13. 29; Luke, 21. 31.

§ John, 13. 19.

|| Rev. 1. 1; 22. 6.



sure of the Saviour, for hypocrisy, may be applicable. For, not a few of the unfulfilled prophecies are warnings against evils to come, with hints as to the way in which they may be avoided, and which, in the nature of things, must be of no use, if not to be regarded and studied previously to their fulfilment. The Pharisees, in the days of Christ, professed to be religious, and concerned about heavenly things. Their interest in worldly matters led them to discern the signs of the weather; but, although God had delivered abundant predictions indicating the coming of the Messiah, yet they took so little interest in studying the prophecies, and in watching the signs of coming events, that he reproachfully exclaimed: "Oh ye hypocrites! ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"\* It was the very circumstance of their neglecting prophecy, which subjected them to the charge of hypocrisy. It proved that they were not in earnest about heavenly things, which, nevertheless, they professed to seek and admire.

III. It is also objected, THAT EVEN THE APOSTLES, THOUGH DIVINELY INSPIRED, WERE GREATLY MISTAKEN IN THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROPHECIES, AND THAT THEREFORE IT MUST DEMAND REQUIREMENTS OF SO LOFTY A CHARACTER, AS TO RENDER IT ALMOST, IF NOT ALTOGETHER, IMPOSSIBLE FOR THOSE NOT INSPIRED TO COMPREHEND THEM.

This objection is founded on a false assumption. The apostles did not misunderstand the general scope of the prophecies. They confidently looked for the coming of Jesus, and for the establishment of his king-

\* Mat. 16. 3.

dom, and they preached these things wherever they went. They did not, indeed, comprehend all *the details*, nor would they speak pointedly as to the time of His manifestation. They erred chiefly, in confining their attention to one class of predictions, while they overlooked those, which showed, that Messiah must first suffer, and afterwards enter into His glory.

Whatever mistakes, however, they made on the subject of the predictions, before the resurrection of Christ, it does not appear that they erred afterward. He was with them forty days after he had risen, "speaking with them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."\* Even before his death, they seem to have had many of their mistakes, about the *nature* of his kingdom, corrected; for, after having carefully instructed them on this subject, by a great variety of comparisons and parables, He asked them, expressly, "Have ye understood all these things? and they say unto him, Yea, Lord,"† which he does not appear to have doubted. They did, indeed, just before his ascension, ask whether that was the period when he would "restore the kingdom to Israel,"‡ or, in other words, re-establish the Theocracy: but the question does not at all imply, that they mistook its nature, or that they even confidently expected it at that time. He had told them after they left Galilee, to tarry at Jerusalem, and to wait for the promise of his Father, of which he had spoken to them, for they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. Upon their re-assembling at Jerusalem, and his appearing among them, they naturally inquired, whether this baptizing of the Holy Ghost was to be the time, and the way, of the restoration of his king-

\* Acts, 1. 3.

† Matt. 13. 51.

‡ Acts, 1. 4-8.

dom to Israel. He told them that the times and seasons were not to be made known to them, but, they should be endowed with power from on high, by the Spirit coming on them,\* and that they should be dispersed, and go forth as his witnesses into Judea, and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. He very plainly taught them, that the descent and gifts of the Holy Spirit were not the kingdom; it was something yet future, whose precise date they were not to know. Who, therefore, will say, that the coming of the Spirit or His influence, was the kingdom, and that the apostles ignorantly mistook its nature? This is to impeach the instruction of Christ as utterly inefficacious, to reprove the apostles where He did not, and to claim for uninspired men, a knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom, which the apostles

\* v. 8. *αλλα ληψέσθε δύναμιν επελθοντος του αγιου πνευματος εφ' υμας.*  
 —The verb here is in the middle voice, and denotes evidently the active voluntary apprehension, or co-operation with the Spirit in the exercise and use, of the *δύναμιν* or power. The power, *δύναμις*, was not their own natural power, but the miraculous gifts and qualifications, for their official work, which should be imparted by the Spirit, *επελθοντος*. The idea clearly is, that the Holy Spirit, the personal Spirit, the third person of the Godhead, should put forth an efficient influence, imparting miraculous gifts and other influence, which they should, as voluntary agents, exercise, and by doing so, become active instruments in His hands, co-operating with Him in the great work for which they were called and commissioned, i. e. to be witnesses or bear testimony to Jesus Christ. This influence of the Spirit, of which they were to be the medium, is spoken of in contradistinction from ruling and governing in a kingdom. The right apprehension of the doctrine of the Spirit's influence, and especially the possession of that influence, is calculated most effectually to rebuke and repress all lust for governmental power with which to rule in the church of God, as though it were His kingdom, according to the opinion and spirit of the asserters and advocates of "HIGH CHURCH PRINCIPLES."

had not, and which Christ failed, notwithstanding all his pains, to impart to the apostles !

The objection is altogether inconsistent with itself ; for, to convict the apostles, though inspired, of mistakes, it attributes to uninspired men superior knowledge than they had, and then from the mistakes and ignorance of the apostles, thus fallaciously inferred, attempts to prove the utter impossibility of uninspired men knowing anything on the subject. But, not to take advantage of such sophistry, the objection, urged from the lofty requirements insisted on as necessary to the study of the prophecies, is much more imposing than real. Modest, humble-minded men, especially plain and unlettered persons, are indeed apt to be intimidated, when they hear this and the other learned divine say, how much reading, and how much learning, and how many and various qualifications and endowments of mind and spirit are necessary, and are therefore too apt to conclude, that to them the prophecies must ever be a sealed book. But who, we ask, are they that urge these high requirements ? Not those that have been laborious and studious themselves, but those who confessedly know little or nothing on the subject—who lay heavy burdens on other men's shoulders—who will not move a finger to lighten them, and who, claiming to have the key of knowledge, neither enter on the study themselves, nor suffer others that would. The essential requirements, in order to the study of the prophecies, are not the learning and wisdom of the world, but the spirit of faith and love, and that lowliness and docility of mind, which, as in Daniel and John, will lead to devout and prayerful study of the Sacred Scriptures.

IV. It is further objected ; THAT THE WHOLE SUBJECT OF PROPHECY IS SO VAGUE, THAT SO LITTLE CAN BE KNOWN WITH CERTAINTY AND SATISFACTION ABOUT IT, THAT IT IS, AND MUST BE, TOTALLY DEVOID OF ANY PRACTICAL UTILITY.

Thus speaks the infidel, in reference to the Bible altogether. He alleges, with just as much force and propriety, the discordant sects and contradictory creeds, among the professed believers of the Bible, as he does the objection against the study of the prophecies, because of the insobriety, dogmatism, extravagance, and speculations of some who have written on the subject. There has been just as much, and far more vagueness and obscurity, thrown around the doctrines of grace, the subjects of election, justification, regeneration, faith, repentance, pardon, the Spirit's influence, assurance of salvation, and eternal life, as there can be alleged to be, in relation to the prophecies ; and if the confusion and perplexity introduced by commentators and writers on the subject, is a valid objection against the latter, it is also against the former. Beware, lest in disparaging the prophecies by such objections against their study, you do not take the infidel's ground, and give him a fair pretext for rejecting the Bible altogether.

It is not the fact, that there is so much obscurity, and difficulty to understand the prophecies, as to render them totally devoid of practical utility. So far from it, the Bible employs the grand theme of prophecy, expressly, and in an endless variety of ways, for practical uses, exhorting by it to *repentance*,\* to *hope*,† to *love*,‡ to *obedience*,§ to *sanctification*,|| to *mortification*

\* Acts, 3. 19, 20.           § Matt. 16, 27. 1 John, 2. 28.

† 2 Peter, 3. 11, 12.       || 1 John, 3. 2, 3.   2 Pet. 3. 13, 14.

‡ 1 Thess. 3. 13. 1 Cor. 16. 22.

of *fleshly lusts*,\* to *spiritual-mindedness*,† to *beneficence* and *mercy*,‡ to *patience* and *endurance*,§ to *watchfulness* and *soberness*,|| to *charity in judgment*,¶ to *ministerial faithfulness* and *diligence*.\*\* To these and many other practical uses is the study of prophecy applied. So far from the objection having truth in it, the fact is, that nothing, according to the showing of the Bible, has a more practical tendency than this very thing.

V. It is still objected THAT SOME PERSONS HAVE BECOME DERANGED OR FANATICAL, AND UTTERLY DISQUALIFIED FOR THE DUTIES OF LIFE BY THE STUDY OF THE PROPHECIES.

The like objection has been urged against religion and the study of the Bible altogether. Peculiar temperaments,—men of weak minds and strong passions,—men of ardent fancies and of doubtful piety, may indeed be injured, as some have been, when they have turned their thoughts to religion; but these things are not to be referred to the prophecies,—nor to the Bible,—nor to religion,—any more than the derangements and fanaticism of men in business, in literature, and in scientific pursuits, are to be attributed to them as to their cause. For one Austin, or Irving, or others, whose derangement and fanaticism have shown themselves on the subject of the study of the prophecies, we can point to ten or more, whose business and literary and scientific pursuits, have rendered them insane. The truth is, some minds and temperaments are incapable of close and assiduous application; but does it therefore follow, that study

\* Col. 3. 4, 5. † Phil. 3. 20, 21. ‡ Mat. 25. 31–36.

§ 2 Thess. 1. 4–7. Heb. 10. 36, 37. James, 5. 7, 8. 1 Pet. 1. 6, 7; 4. 12, 13. || Matt. 24. 42, 44; 25. 13. Luke, 12. 35, 37. Rev. 16. 15. 1 Thess. 5. 4, 6. ¶ 1 Cor. 4. 3. \*\* Matt. 24. 46. 1 Tim. 6. 13, 14. 2 Tim. 4. 1, 2. 1 Thess. 2. 19. 1 Pet. 5. 1–4.

and business must be abandoned by all? This objection is exceedingly frivolous.

VI. THE WILD EXTRAVAGANT NOVELTY OF WHAT IS CALLED  
MODERN THEORIES ON THE SUBJECT OF THE PROPHECIES  
IS OFTEN ALLEGED AS AN OBJECTION AGAINST THEIR STUDY.

This term theory, is generally used, by those who are but little conversant with the study, and is generally applied to the views of those, who believe and teach the personal coming and glorious appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, prior and preparatory to the introduction of the Millenium, and the establishment of the kingdom of Heaven on earth, through the glorious reign, of Christ and of his risen saints. This is the view intended to be unfolded in these pages, and in reference to it, it is, at the very outset, denied, that there is any theory about it. It is a simple question of fact which is proposed for discussion, viz. does the Bible, or does it not, teach the premillennial coming of Christ? So far from having adopted a theory on the subject, the views that shall be exhibited have been the result of careful and painful study of the Sacred Scriptures, and have forced themselves upon the author's mind, not as the reasonings, or "speculations," or theories of men, but as the testimony of God, interpreted on principles of common sense, the very principles of interpretation which the Bible itself confirms. As to the charge of wild and extravagant novelty it may suffice to state, that so far from its applying to the doctrine of the premillennial advent of Christ, history will show, that no other belief obtained in the Christian church for nearly three centuries after the death of Christ; and that the present popular and prevailing notion of a Millenium, consisting of the universal triumph of the

gospel among all nations, and of a high degree of religious prosperity for 1,000 years before the coming of Christ, is itself the novelty, being of very recent origin, and receiving no countenance, either from the reformers, the fathers, the apostles, Christ Himself, or the prophets before him.

The objections noticed are chiefly those to be found in the mouths of professing Christians. A word in conclusion, in relation to that urged by the infidel, who alleges that the prophecies of Scripture are of no more value than those of the Pagan oracles; and are either so vague and ambiguous, as to be incapable of any well-defined interpretation, or have been written after the event.

Porphyry, a great enemy to Christianity, who flourished in the second century, urged the latter part of this objection, as the only answer he could make to the argument in favor of religion from the prophecies of Daniel. So far, however, from alleging that they were vague and unintelligible, he censured Origen, and as we think, very justly, for forsaking the plain and obvious import of the Jewish Scriptures, and substituting "expositions," of what, in the pride of his infidelity, he called their "absurdities inconsistent with themselves, and inapplicable to the writings. He was always, says Porphyry of this great scholar, in company with Plato, and had the works also of Numenius and Cranius, of Apollophanes and Longinus, of Moderatus and Miromachus, and others whose writings are valued, in his hands. He also read the works of Chæræmon the Stoic, and those of Cornutus. From these he derived *the allegorical* mode of interpretation usual in the mysteries of the Greeks, and applied it to the Jewish Scriptures.\*

\* Euseb. Hist. Eccles., lib. vi. cap. 9.



It was the strict, literal, historical accuracy of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament, which forced Porphyry to deny their genuineness, as the best and only way, in which he could waive the force of the argument, taken from them, in favor of divine revelation. Both Porphyry and Celsus have long since been refuted, and the authority, of Daniel, and of the Old and New Testaments, irrefutably established. If our modern infidels are ignorant of the fact, and now revive and urge objections long since exploded, it is only one among the many proofs we have, that ignorance is the greatest enemy with which Christianity has to combat. But little is to be feared from the ignorance of the infidel. Far more is to be dreaded from the ignorance of professed Christians. It is not with the former, that these disquisitions are so much concerned, as with the latter, whose neglect of their Bibles, and whose ignorance of the great and wonderful things contained in them, are a reproach to the religion they profess.

The prophetic portions of the Sacred Scriptures commend themselves to our study, by the most cogent arguments. They are in fact God's exposition of our hope, holding forth the great objects presented to the attention of our faith, and promised for our future enjoyment. They are a beacon light, in times of storm and agitation on the great ocean of human life, thrown out to guide us as we navigate, and to warn us of the breakers on dangerous coasts. They are the pledge and dawns of the glory to be realised by us. The careful and prayerful study of the prophetic writings, cannot be neglected without incurring guilt, and rendering us justly liable to the righteous condemnation of God.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE SYSTEM OF INTERPRETATION.

THE duty of studying the prophecies having been proved expressly from the word of God, and the fallacy of the objections commonly urged against it having been exposed, a question of deep interest presents itself, viz. "can they be understood?" On this subject many doubt, and their doubts contribute not a little to the practical neglect of the prophetic writings. These doubts often arise from, and are justified, in the opinion of many, by the different expositions given by different commentators. These expositions, it is alleged, depend on different principles of interpretation; and, in the midst of most discordant systems, and rules often adopted most arbitrarily, what, it is asked, is to become of the plain unlettered student?

This objection may be urged, with as much propriety, against the study of any other portion of the Scriptures, as against the prophecies. Historical narratives have been pronounced allegories,—a *mystical* meaning has been substituted for or enveloped in the *literal*,—what has been called *par excellence* the SPIRITUAL has claimed preference above that of common sense, and the recondite been sought after with eagerness, to the neglect of the obvious. The infidel has therefore turned away with contempt from the Bible altogether; and the advocates of the papal hierarchy have taken occasion to assert the claim of the Roman

pontiff to be the infallible interpreter, and to prescribe magisterially opinions and matters of faith for the minds and consciences of men. Even the grand fundamental rule of interpretation which the apostle Peter has inculcated, has been plead in support of such arrogant pretensions, and men have been prohibited from the study of the word of God, because He has said that "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation,"\* as though the decisions of his Holiness are to be accounted oracular, authoritative, and final.

The reference is most unfortunate. It furnishes no proof, in support either of the inexplicable nature of prophecy, or of the oracular gift of the self-styled successors of Peter. So far from Peter claiming for himself to be the infallible interpreter of Paul, whose predictions he confesses were hard to be understood, he admits the right of every one to examine and study for himself, though he says that "the unlearned and unstable wrest them to their own destruction," adding that this charge is not confined exclusively to their use of the prophecies, but is just as true in their perversion of "the other Scriptures."† If he, in the days of his apostolical authority, gave no hint whatever of an infallible interpreter, either in himself or

\* 2 Peter, 1. 20.

† 2 Peter, 3. 16. The admission of Peter has been sometimes employed very incorrectly and injuriously. He does not mean that Paul's style or language, his modes of reasoning or of writing, have anything peculiar in them, which, as pieces of composition, render his *epistles* obscure and difficult to be understood. His language is *εν δις* (not *επιστολαις*, but *πραγμασι*,) *εστι δυσνοητα τινα*, and the meaning is, that there were some *things*, some subjects or *facts*, brought into view by Paul, in his epistles, which were difficult to be understood, and liable to be wrested. His reference is to the coming and kingdom of Christ, as this verse shows.

in the other apostles, it is usurpation of the worst description to maintain that a living oracle has been perpetually established in a succession of Roman bishops. Equally preposterous and arrogant is it, to claim for the church, or for any other hierarchy, authority in these matters. All such ambitious pretensions Peter utterly overthrows, by laying down a plain rule of interpretation to assist the private Christian to interpret for himself, in all matters of general importance, "the written oracles of prophecy."

It is of chief moment, at this stage of our investigations, to observe, that the apostle does distinctly recognize some rule or standard of interpretation, and refers private Christians as well as others to it, for the correct understanding of that "more sure word of prophecy," "to which," he says, "we do well to take heed." What is that system?

Two very different, and in some respects, antagonistical systems are, and have been for centuries adopted by commentators. They may be designated the *literal* and the *spiritual*. By the LITERAL we understand that system which assumes the LITERALITY, or HISTORICAL REALITY of the events predicted, and resorts to the grammatical interpretation of the language of prophecy to determine its meaning. By the SPIRITUAL we understand that system which assumes the SPIRITUALITY of the events predicted. It traces something analogous, it may be, to the literal, but entirely different from it, and peculiar, of which the literal may be employed as the representative or allegorical exhibition. THE LITERAL is what Ernesti, in his "Tracts on the Interpretation of the Scriptures," has called the grammatical; and THE SPIRITUAL, the mystic, metaphysical, or philosophical.

The *grammatical method* "adheres to the words, and

directs us to comprehend *things* through the medium of words, and not *words* through the medium of things.\* The mystic or spiritual is that "which philosophizes rather than interprets, and prefers to be metaphysical rather than grammatical, or, as it is uncouthly expressed, *real* rather than *verbal*." His meaning is, that the grammatical or literal interpretation, which is concerned with the proper meaning of words, "proceeds entirely upon grammatical principles," and is first, in all cases, to be resorted to, to know what are *the things* which the writer asserts or means; but that the mystic or spiritual interpretation inverts this order, and undertakes to determine the meaning of words by preconceived notions about the things.

Right interpretation, Ernesti contends, "depends entirely upon the knowledge of words," with great force inquiring, "For what is the business of interpretation, but to make known the signification and sense of words? And in what does the signification and sense of words consist, but in the notions attached to each word? This connection between the words and ideas, in itself arbitrary, has been fixed by usage and custom. And what art, but that of the grammarian, is employed in discovering and teaching this usage and custom of speech, especially of the dead languages? To the grammarian this business has been conceded by every age. For the knowledge of this usage depends entirely upon observation, and not upon the nature of things ascertained by necessary inference in any science. Theologians are right, therefore, when they affirm *the literal sense*, or that which is derived from the knowledge of words, to be

\* Bib. Reper., vol. iii. p. 125.

the only true one; for that *mystical sense*, which, indeed, is incorrectly called a *sense*, belongs altogether to the *thing*, and not to the words. The former, accordingly, which is the only true sense, they denominate the *grammatical*, and some also, as Sixtus, of Sienna, because it is ascertained by an observation of facts, style it the *historical sense*.”\*

An example, by way of illustration, may make this description intelligible even to the feeblest mind. Suppose that certain commentators should assume, as it was done in the days of the apostles, that the resurrection of the body is a thing not to be comprehended, involving a thousand difficulties and mysteries altogether incredible; and suppose that, prepossessed with this metaphysical or theological notion, they should undertake to interpret the New Testament declarations on the subject. The grammatical interpretation would enable them to elicit no other sense than the literal fact, that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, and that, in like manner, the bodies of his saints should also be raised. Whatever difficulty they might think there was in believing the *thing*, the grammatical interpretation would not obviate it, but only present it in the strongest manner. Some other method of explaining the language, therefore, would have to be resorted to. The spiritual, mystical, or theological interpretation, which would enable them to bring their preconceived notions about the impossibility, absurdity, and incomprehensibility of a literal resurrection of the body, to bear on the passages, would at once suggest the explanation, actually given in the apostles' days, viz. “that the resurrection is past already,” whatever of literal resurrection of the

\* Bib. Reper., vol. iii. p. 126.

body there may have been, having been accomplished in that of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of his saints being but allegorical, i. e. their regeneration and rising, as it were, from the death of trespasses and sins to newness of life. This would be spiritual interpretation in opposition to literal.

Origen affords abundant specimens of this sort of spiritual interpretation. Although the best qualified, among the Greek fathers, by a knowledge of the Hebrew language, for the grammatical interpretation of the Old Testament, and although he actually did much, by his *HEXAPLA*, to facilitate the labors of grammatical interpreters, nevertheless he allowed himself to mingle his philosophical, metaphysical, and theological notions about the things asserted, in determining the meaning of many passages, and deviated most widely from the principles of grammatical interpretation. Thus he has furnished an example, which has been copied in every age, and contributed immensely, by his allegorical meaning, to introduce endless confusion into the interpretation of the Scriptures. Epiphanius says, and very truly, that, by his erroneous doctrinal views concerning faith, and his mal-interpretation of many passages of the Scriptures, he did a serious injury to the world at large.\* Even Ernesti, his apologist, is forced to confess "that Origen pressed the matter too far through a fondness for allegory, since in some passages he acknowledges no other than the allegorical sense. But adds, he seems to have come to this pitch of folly when he was now advanced in years, and after he had bestowed grammatical labor upon the sacred writings." †

\* De Pond. et Mens., c. 7.

† Bib. Reper., vol. iii. p. 269.

The radical difference, between the literal and spiritual interpretation, is nowhere more striking, or important, than on the great themes of prophecy, designed to be brought into view in these disquisitions, viz. the coming and kingdom of Jesus Christ. That the Sacred Scriptures speak of a second coming of the blessed Redeemer, and of a kingdom to be established at his coming, will not be denied. But how is that coming to be understood? and what is meant by his kingdom? The grammatical interpretation says, literally and truly, i. e. the second coming of Christ will take place, actually and visibly, as truly a matter of observation as was his first coming, long since become a matter of history, and the kingdom of Christ, a dominion which he will then establish in this world, as truly a matter of sensible observation, as was the Theocracy once established in Israel. Now, if it should be thought, by any metaphysical or theological commentator, that these things are incredible, and impossible to be believed and understood, or that they are, in themselves, absurd, foolish and visionary, of course, instead of taking the literal, grammatical interpretation as true, they will look for another and more recondite meaning,—some mystic or allegorical interpretation, as the only means of reconciling the language of the Bible with their previous notions. That is, they will make the *things*, according to their own metaphysical or theological notion of them, explain the words, and not suffer the words to guide them in their notion of the things.

It must be obvious to every one, at first sight, how greatly the two systems differ, and how widely different, too, must be the results obtained from them. The former or literal interpretation was adopted by Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, Bishops Newton and Horseley, and



other distinguished writers on prophecy. The latter, or the spiritual interpretation, was avowed by Bishop Hurd, and finds most favor with the great body of the ministry at the present day, in these United States. "It may be proper," says Bishop Hurd in his Lectures on Prophecy, "to observe that the *second* advent of the Messiah is not, like the *first*, confined to one single and precise period, but is gradual and successive. This distinction is founded in *the reason of the thing*. He *could* only come *in person* at one limited time. He comes in his power and providence through all ages of the church. His *first* coming was then over when he expired on the cross. His *second* commenced with his resurrection, and will continue to the end of the world. So that this *last* coming of Jesus is to be understood of his Spirit and kingdom; which is not one act of sovereignty exerted at once, but a *state* or constitution of government, subsisting through a long tract of time, unfolding itself by just degrees, and *coming*, as oft as the conductor of it thinks fit to interpose, by any signal acts of his administration."\*

We give this as the fairest and best specimen of their views, who reject the literal, and prefer the spiritual interpretation. Every one can see that it is, in the strictest sense, philosophical, founded, as the Bishop says, IN THE REASON OF THINGS,—of which, of course, he is the judge, and liable to err. The first advent was confined to a precise time, the second, he says, *could not be*,—but why not, he has not even hinted. Yet, on this metaphysical basis,—the impossibility, in his view, of its being a literal coming, has he reared a vast spiritual system, the mediatorial pro-

\* Hurd's Lect. on Proph., p. 102.

vidence of Jesus Christ, and his dispensation of the Spirit, in the progress of its development, as being the thing we are to understand by the words of prophecy, viz. the coming and kingdom of Christ. This is making preconceived notions of things, the interpreters of the words, directly in violation of Ernesti's principle, instead of gathering, from the words, the idea of what the coming and kingdom of Christ are to be. It is unquestionably allegorizing, and of the same general nature with the interpretations of Neological doctors,—divines who, assuming that there could have been no such things as miracles, and going with this notion to the Scriptures, allow themselves any and every licence of imagination to explain the language of the evangelists, describing the preternatural works of Christ, as though they meant to assert no miracle, but related mere natural phenomena.

Very different were the views of the learned Dr. Dodwell, who observes: "We should neither, with some, interpret it into allegory, nor depart from the literal sense of Scripture, without an absolute necessity for so doing,"—which, it may be remarked, is not the case here. "Neither should we with others," he adds, "indulge an extravagant fancy, nor explain too curiously the manner and circumstances of this future state"—as was done by many, in their sensual descriptions of Christ's kingdom. "It is safest and best, faithfully to adhere to the words of Scripture, or to fair deductions from Scripture, and to rest contented with a general account, till time shall accomplish and eclaircise all the particulars." Still more pointed is the learned Vitringa, who, in a tract on the Interpretation of Prophecy, first published in Latin in 1716, lays it down as a fundamental canon: "We must *never depart from the literal meaning of the subject* mentioned

in its own appropriate name, *if all or its principal attributes square with the subject of the prophecy*—an unerring canon, he adds, and of great use.”\*

These quotations may suffice for the general presentation of the two systems of interpretation. We adopt the LITERAL in preference to the ALLEGORICAL, for reasons we proceed to state.

I. IT IS THE MOST NATURAL, CONSISTENT, AND SATISFACTORY MODE OF INTERPRETATION, AND THEREFORE COMMENDS ITSELF TO THE COMMON SENSE OF MANKIND.

By the common sense of mankind, a thing often spoken of, frequently misunderstood, and by many abused, we mean nothing more nor less than the judgment of men, under the guidance of their unsophisticated, unperverted reason, in matters which legitimately fall within its sphere, and for judging of which it is competent. If asked to define it, we would say, that common sense is the common judgment of human reason, in matters about which it is competent to judge. We claim not the power for the human mind to excogitate the truths of revelation. Nor is it admissible to form our *à priori* judgment, on the nature of facts and phenomena, and in the light of our philosophical theories, and explanations of their *quo modo*, determine the meaning of the language of Scripture. We judge of God's meaning, and of the facts he states, as we do in other matters.

The great mass of readers instinctively adopt this very system. They naturally first inquire into the meaning of words, and that for the purpose of ascertaining what the writer asserts or teaches. In all matters of science also, the same course is pursued. All technical expressions, or terms of art, are first

\* Typus Doctrinæ Prophetiæ, Canon III.

carefully defined, or their meaning previously settled, before a man deems himself at all competent to understand the subject of which it treats. When addressed by another, whether in the set harangue, the popular oration, or familiar converse, we all most naturally apprehend his meaning, according to the common, prevailing, grammatical import of his terms.

We never dream of applying other rules of interpretation, until we are distinctly and formally apprised, that the author's or speaker's words conceal a recondite meaning, and his terms are used in a sense different from their common and obvious import. When this is the case, and a man writes or speaks to us, making use of words in some peculiar, mystic, concealed, or allegorical sense, we feel disappointed, and somewhat irritated, unless he is very careful to apprise us distinctly of the fact, and to give us a key by which to unlock his meaning. Nor will this always satisfy. The question will come up,—“Why should he thus speak? What is the use of perverting the import of terms, and wishing to be understood in a sense quite different from the common and obvious import of his language?” Persons engaged in plots of treason, of fraud or treachery, or in danger of their lives if detected, may perhaps feel satisfied, and understand the reason and necessity of such secret correspondence. But there must always be some special design, or obviously important use, to be subserved by such a style of language, to justify it, or even to suggest it; and then the import of terms must be well settled between the parties.

Now the whole volume of Revelation is delivered to us in styles of speech with which men in general are familiar, and is therefore to be interpreted in the very same way by which we discover the meaning of other

books. The prophetic parts of it possess the same character. The idea that prophecy is peculiar, and affects styles of speech different from all other writings, has led to much confusion and error in interpretation. It is the favorite notion of all enthusiasts and mystics, and especially of—Swedenborgians.

There may be, and are, occasionally, phrases and passages, the import of which is not immediately obvious—some that are ambiguous—and some, too, that must be understood by the rules of rhetoric, applicable to tropes and figures of speech. It is true, too, that there is also a style of speech, which may be justly called symbolical, and having its own appropriate meaning. But, in these respects, the language of the Bible, and of prophecy, is not peculiar; and the general principles of what is called grammatical interpretation, are abundantly sufficient to satisfy us as to their meaning. We never think of applying any other rules of interpretation, than those admitted to be correct, in reference to the ordinary forms of prosaic or poetic style and diction, or even where symbols are preferred for the purpose of instruction. “There is in fact,” says Ernesti, with great truth, “but one and the same method of interpretation common to all books, whatever be their subject. And the same grammatical principles and precepts ought to be the common guide in the interpretation of all.”\*

It behoves the advocates of the allegorical or spiritual interpretation, therefore, to show that the Bible is peculiar, and different from all other books, having its own particular rules of interpretation, by which to detect the

\* Bib. Rep. 3. 131. See also *Manual of Sacred Interpretation*, by Dr. M'Clelland, p. 10.

hidden meaning of its language. And it further behoves them to give us, from the Bible itself, the key to its meaning, those private definitions and hints which will enable the reader to determine when the meaning is to be taken in a sense quite foreign from its natural and literal, or grammatical import. This has never yet been done. It is true we have been told that the literal meaning is the lowest and most unimportant—that there is a style of speech peculiar to God alone—that when He speaks He is not to be understood in the ordinary sense of the terms He uses, but in some recondite spiritual sense—and that to understand which, a new faculty is necessary, or power to be imparted by the direct illumination or new creating agency of the Holy Ghost. And it is true, too, that some have even affected to be greatly shocked, and struck with horror, by the alleged impiety of those who have dared to say, that God has spoken to us in familiar language, and is to be understood, according to the dictates of common sense, upon principles of grammatical interpretation. But this feeling is the result of education sustained by a peculiar theology, fostered by a particular cast of preaching, and by no means natural and common. On the contrary, the spiritualising or allegorising of the Bible, is, to the great mass, as offensive as it is unintelligible; nor is it ever favorably received, till mistaken views of piety, of the very nature of inspiration, and of spiritual illumination, have led men to renounce their common sense.

Who does not see how disgusting and ridiculous the Bible must become, when interpreted by allegorising and spiritualising commentators, who, in every historical incident, prophecy, parable, or poem, are looking for a philosophical, or for a recondite spiritual

meaning ? We see no difference, as far as the principles of interpretation are concerned, between the Unitarian who tells us that the stories of the paradisiacal state and fall of Adam, of the temptation of Christ, and other historical matters in the Bible, are mere fables or allegories, and the Neologist, who, assuming the language of the sacred writer to be often that of the superstitious vulgar, or of the extravagant poet, accounts for every miracle upon natural principles, and the ignorant Mystic who sees no use or value in the Bible, but as he can give a spiritual gloss to its historical and literal statements. Our common sense, in each case, is insulted. We feel disappointed ; and the Bible is concluded to be a most uncertain and unsatisfactory book, just as truly, when, with the Unitarian we allegorize, the Neologist we philosophize, the Swedenborgian we spiritualize, as when with the Mystic we lose sight of plain history, and seek a recondite theological or spiritual meaning, as did that interpreter who made “the man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho (to be) Adam wandering in the wilderness of this world ; the thieves who robbed and wounded him, evil spirits ; the priest who passed by on the other side without relieving him, the Levitical law ; the Levite, good works ; the good Samaritan, Christ ; the oil and the wine, grace, &c.”\*

Such allegorising, for theological uses, is altogether gratuitous and censurable ; and such must the allegorising, or spiritual interpretation of prophecy be considered, till it is shown that the Spirit of God, in the mouth of the prophets, meant something very different from what their language imports, when that lan-

\* See *Elementary Principles of Interpretation* of J. A. Ernesti, by Moses Stuart. 3d ed. p. 79.

guage is interpreted grammatically, i. e. according to rhetorical rules applicable to their several styles of speech.

II. THE LITERAL OR GRAMMATICAL INTERPRETATION IS FAR MORE DEFINITE AND CERTAIN, AND FAR LESS LIABLE TO THE CHARGE OF VAGUENESS AND THE VAGARIES OF MEN'S IMAGINATIONS, THAN THE SPIRITUAL OR ALLEGORICAL.

“It will be acknowledged by all who would avoid the imputation of dulness in logical matters,” as Ernesti has well remarked, “that whatever, in any department of science, is certain and absolutely free from doubt, possesses this character of certainty from some necessity belonging to the thing itself; not indeed a necessity invariably the same in all cases, but such as the nature of the thing admits; so that the certainty of interpretation is derived from some necessity of signification. That there exists such a necessity of signification in words will easily be seen. For the connection between ideas and words, although at first arbitrary and unconstrained, nevertheless, when once fixed by use and custom, it becomes necessary, and preserves its necessity so long as this use and custom continue. It is left to our option, for example, whether to describe two parallelograms upon the same base and of the same altitude, or not. But as soon as we give the same base and altitude to both, the necessity of equality immediately follows, which is again removed when this condition is taken away. Nor do the frequent changes, to which the usage of speech is liable, and which, in all languages, so long as they continue to be spoken, are owing to various causes, destroy this necessity. For, as, in speaking of the usage of speech, we wish to be understood as



inquiring in what sense each word was employed, in each particular age, by every description of men, and in a certain connection; so also we understand the necessity of signification in words to be determined by the same circumstances of time and place. If these be changed a new necessity is induced. Wherefore, since the act of the grammarian alone ascertains and teaches this usage of speech, it follows, that from the knowledge of that art alone, a sure method of interpretation is to be sought, both in human writings and the inspired volume, so far as this is to be understood by human effort. But this point has already been decided by the most distinguished theologians and interpreters of the sacred books; and by their decision we ought certainly to abide, since it has been the result of reasonings so clear and necessary. It was said by Melancthon, that the Scriptures could not be understood *theologically*, without first of all being understood *grammatically*; and, in support of this assertion, he argues in very many places. Camerarius also, an eminently great man, urges, more than once, the same sentiment. But, omitting all other authorities, no one more earnestly or frequently commends the study of the original languages, which is altogether grammatical, and declares, that in it consists all true interpretations of the sacred books, than the illustrious Luther: particularly in that golden epistle, which he wrote concerning the establishment of schools throughout the German states; in which, among other things against the Waldenses, who despised the knowledge of languages in sacred things, and attributed everything to divine influence, he writes as follows: ‘ Spirit here or Spirit there, what signifies it? I also have been in the Spirit, and have also seen spiritual things (if a man may be per-

mitted to boast of himself) more, perhaps, than these same persons will see for a year to come, however they may glory. My spirit also has accomplished somewhat. But this I know, full well, that how much soever we are dependent on spiritual influences, I had been left entirely unmolested by my vigilant adversaries, if the languages had not come to my assistance, and afforded me confidence in the Scriptures. I might also have been very pious, and have preached well in retirement and quietness, but I must then have left the pope, and the sophists, and the whole regiment of their followers, just where they were. The devil gives himself much less concern about my spirit than about my tongue and pen. For my spiritual exercises take from him nothing but myself alone, whereas the knowledge of the Scriptures and of the sacred languages makes the world too narrow for him, and strikes at his kingdom.' Let such then as aim really to be, as well as to be accounted emulators of his example, respect the authority of this experienced man, without heeding those upstart advocates of ignorance, who recommend them to pursue that way to proficiency in interpretation, which conducts to the meaning and sense of words, through the knowledge of things. For, in this method of interpretation, it is impossible that either the necessity, of which we have already spoken, or the certainty, which should principally be aimed at in the interpreting, can exist. The reason is obvious. For who does not see, that a sense may be true in itself, which is not, however, conveyed by the words under consideration."\*

How much of scriptural interpretation possesses this character! Multitudes of promises and predictions are

\* Bib. Rep., iii. 129-132.

applied for various purposes of Christian experience, consolation and practice; and truths, exceedingly grateful and refreshing, are often presented, in the very language of the Scriptures, when the passages, interpreted grammatically, and the mind and meaning of the writer thus obtained, are widely different.

The extent to which this thing was carried, in the days of Cromwell, and the extravagancies to which it has led, at different times, and in different grades and states of society, cannot have escaped the notice of those acquainted with history. A text of Scripture, suddenly brought to recollection and powerfully impressed upon the mind, has been conceived to be the token of the Spirit's special agency. Although the words could easily be accommodated to the circumstances by a lively imagination, yet the truth taught in the text, viewed in its connection, had no relation whatever to them. The appositeness of the language, and the actual adaptation of it to the case and circumstances of the individual by the aid of his fancy, have been practically regarded as the intimation of the Spirit, and men have essayed to act as though they had been divinely instructed, and have dismissed all further care about the future, or attempt to estimate their duty. Fanatical views and practices, in reference to prayer, have hence been originated, and fostered by such fallacious assumptions. The authority of direct Revelation, and the fact of personal inspiration, have been plead, and all attempts to get men to look at the passage of Scripture in its proper connection, to ascertain thus the mind of the Spirit, and to bring their chastened judgment to the consideration of the word and promises of God, have been utterly ineffectual.

The subjects of such impressions commonly claim

to be taught directly by the Spirit of God ; and, to honor that teaching, they therefore feel themselves called upon to pour contempt on every effort to bring them to a sober and dispassionate examination, on ordinary principles of exegesis, of the passages of Scripture by which they are impressed, that they may thus determine whether it warranted them to judge, hope, or act, as they felt impressed to do. Rationality gives way, and the inspiration of the Spirit is claimed as the licence for reveries, extravagance, folly, and fanaticism. The biography of not a few, in the days of the puritans and since, might be cited in proof of these things.\*

The whole subject of Christian experience has been mixed up with, and shaped, sometimes, in the history of individuals, by means of allegorical interpretations, of historical passages of Scripture ; and an use, wholly unwarranted, has been made of them as vehicles of inspired instruction in matters of personal interest, and on points utterly foreign from the design of the Spirit in them. Halyburton's *Memoirs*, though teeming with valuable matter on the subject of Christian experience, nevertheless is fruitful in specimens of this sort of accommodating Scripture promises, precepts, and statements, by means of a strong and lively fancy. Wesley took a shorter course, and substituted the use of the lot for the aid of memory and the play of the imagination.† There is reason to fear that there is much, very much of these things to be found among professing Christians still, and that not a few quote, plead, believe, and apply promises, the genuine and legitimate import of which they know not, and care

\* See *Huntingdon's Bank of Faith*.

† See *Southey's Life of Wesley*.

not to understand, nor their warrant to appropriate them, but construe plain historical facts and statements into special spiritual revelations made to them, while utterly ignorant and reckless of the principles of Providence embodied in them, and of the true and proper principles of biblical exegesis.

It is not enough that a sentiment should be in itself true, nor that the language can be happily accommodated to express it. In order to correct interpretation, it must be, demonstrably, the very sentiment the sacred writer intended to teach by the words he spoke. But it is obvious, if words have no definite meaning, and must be understood, not literally and grammatically, according to rhetorical rules, but according to impressions or to preconceived spiritual notions of the truth of things, then must there, of necessity, be a vagueness and fluctuating import in the language of the Bible, just in proportion to the number, wildness, and extravagance of the imaginations of different individuals and commentators.

The truth and force of these remarks are felt by many in relation to the prophecies. Some, adopting the allegorising plan, and interpreting the language by their own assumed mystic or spiritual notions of the coming and kingdom of Christ, have confessed themselves perfectly at a loss, neglected the study of the prophecies,—yea, treated them with contempt,—and made no other use of them than their fanciful adaptations of them to the experience of the Christian, or to the spiritual condition and prospects, the hopes and benevolent efforts of the church. There is no telling where this spiritual interpretation too will end,—one carrying it to this and the other to a still greater extent; and different commentators quarreling about their interpretations, while all alike have lost sight of

the only true ground of certainty, the literal and grammatical interpretation.

III. THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION IS SANCTIONED BY THE EXAMPLE OF THE PATRIARCHS, THE PROPHETS, AND THE APOSTLES, IN THEIR STUDY AND EXPOSITION OF THE PROPHECIES.

The prediction relative to the flood was understood by Noah, in its literal sense, while the unbelieving world either esteemed it false altogether, or probably explained away its literal import. Noah did not suffer any preconceived notion of the impossibility of the thing predicted, to suggest to him what was the meaning of the prophecy. He made the word\* a guide to his notion of the thing. In like manner Abraham understood, literally, the predictions concerning the enslavement of his posterity in Egypt† and their emancipation; and especially that most extraordinary one of the birth of Isaac,—an event altogether contrary to the established laws and course of nature. So also did Sarah‡ and all the worthies of old.

The words which God employed were the expounders of the thing. Abraham's faith is extolled, expressly, in that he did not reason, did not philosophise, or allegorise about it at all. "He staggered not," says Paul, "at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was also able to perform."§ Isaac, Jacob, Moses, all believed that the predictions would be ful-

\* Heb. 11. 7.

† Heb. 11. 11–13.

‡ Gen. 15. 13–16.

§ Rom. 4. 20, 21.

filled, according to their grammatical import ; and those, too, with respect to the coming of the Messiah. They all expected it to be literal, an event historically to be true. No instance whatever occurs, in which they ever thought of interpreting prophecy, by making their notions of the thing explain the words, and by extracting a spiritual or allegorical import from the literal expressions, other than as the things themselves,—when the plain and obvious meaning of the words was understood—were of a spiritual nature.

Paul does, indeed, in one or two places, comment upon Abraham's faith in such terms as to have led many to think, and to affirm, that he sanctions the allegorical interpretation ; but on a close examination we shall find he does not. In the fourth chapter of Romans, this illustrious apostle explains the nature of the Abrahamic covenant, which brought, among other things, distinctly to Abraham's faith, the prospect of his being "*the heir of the world.*" This, he says, was represented to him by God, in such a way that he expected to be "the father of all" ; to stand at the head of the great family, of all the great company of nations who should exercise the like faith which he did in God—whether they were among his natural descendants, the Jewish race, or the Gentile nations ; all which things were to occur literally as matter of fact.

Abraham did not understand the prediction that he should be "heir of the world," to mean, that either himself or his progeny should possess the land of Canaan during their mortal life. This Paul expressly asserts, when he says that, "he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God ;" and that he and all his offspring who died in faith, while they actually dwelt in the land of Canaan,

did so, not as having received possession of the thing God had promised, but as "strangers and pilgrims on the earth." "By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of *the same promise.*"\* "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, (the promises not having been fulfilled,) but having seen them (the things promised) afar off, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims *on the earth.*"

Neither does the grammatical interpretation of the language of the covenant made with Abraham, imply or teach that any temporary occupation of Palestine or the land of promise, by the Jews, prior to the glorious advent of the Messiah, was the thing promised. It is true that the occupancy of Palestine, by Abraham's posterity during their mortal life, was a thing promised and confirmed to Abraham, but it was, by another covenant, entirely distinct from that pre-eminently called the Abrahamic covenant, in which God promised that he should be "heir of the world." The transactions related in the 17th and 22d chapters of Genesis,† although involving or implying some occupancy of the land of Palestine by Abraham and his seed, are connected with spiritual blessings to be enjoyed in the highest degree, and by all nations on the face of the earth. In the 12th, 13th, and 15th chapters of Genesis,‡ reference is made to the specific grant of the land for the occupancy of Abraham's posterity, at a future period not very remote, in the fourth generation, or four hundred years thereafter.

The promise of a numerous posterity, with a grant

\* Heb. 11. 9-16. † Gen. 17. 1-15; 22. 15-18.

‡ Genesis, 12. 7; 13. 14-17; 15. 13-16.



of the land of Canaan for their occupancy, made to Abraham, together with the covenant confirming the same, occurred fourteen years\* before the Abrahamic Covenant—strictly and properly so called—was instituted, in which God stipulates that Abraham shall be “heir of the world.” This phrase does not occur in the original record of the covenant, but is evidently the apostle’s short and pithy comment on or condensation of the import of the promises contained in it, that he should be “the father of many nations” that “kings should come out of him,”† and, as it is elsewhere expressed, “a company of nations,”‡ should be of him. The apostle means something very different from the temporal and temporary possession of the land of Palestine by Abraham’s posterity, which is the favorite opinion of some learned critics and commentators, as Schleusner§ and Rosenmüller.||

The phrase “heir of the world,” according to its grammatical import, means, lord, possessor, ¶ inheritor

\* See the Christian’s Magazine, vol. 1. p. 141, and Dr. Mason’s works. In his first essay on the church of God, the Doctor asserts and successfully maintains the distinction above referred to.

† Genesis, 17. 4–6.

‡ Genesis, 35. 11.

§ See Schleusner, Lex., Art. κληρονομός.

|| See Rosenmüller, ad Rom. 4. 13., tom. iii. p. 593. τὸ κληρονομον αὐτον εἶναι τοῦ κόσμου, fore, ut terram possideat. Tò est pleonasmus Atticus, κόσμος formula Judaica hic nihil aliud esse videtur, quam γῆ, פָּרָא, Gen. 12. 7, et in specie, terra Canaan, nam Palestina apud Hebræos κατ’ ἐξοχὴν פָּרָא dicta est. Facile tamen phrasis פָּרָא הַיָּמִינִים loc. cit., et aliis Geneseos locis de orbe terrarum universi intelligi potuit a Judæis, præsertim quum prophetæ sæpius populo Israelitico imperium in omnem terrarum orbem promiserint, e. c. Is. 54. 3.

¶ Κληρονομός non est hæres sed possessor, s. dominus, et proprius quidem, qui portionem terræ Cananæorum sorte accepit; α, νέμω distribuo, et κλῆρος calculus, quo Hebraici, ut videtur, usi sunt in

of the world, one who, by virtue of a bequest or grant, may rightly claim and occupy it as his own. Now, no occupancy which either Abraham or the Jews have as yet had of the land of Canaan, comes any way near to the grammatical import of that expression. Nor does the spiritual extension and enlargement of the Christian church, as some suppose; for it is just as obvious, according to the grammatical import of the prophecy of the Abrahamic covenant, that the occupancy of the land of Canaan, or the promised land, by Abraham and his seed, was to be in some way connected with his being "a blessing to all the nations and families of the earth," a thing not true to this hour.

The covenant, too, which guarantees the possession of the land of Canaan, with the fulfilment of the promise that he should be heir of the world, looks forward to something, then *only to be accomplished when both Abraham and all his seed should together enter upon it* as "an everlasting possession." Neither the temporary possession, therefore, of the land of Palestine, by the natural descendants of Abraham, nor the exten-

sortibus dandis, v. Jos. 11. 23; 14. 2. The above is the grammatical interpretation or criticism of Rosenmüller. The following is his exposition, as vague and indefinite, and unlike the text, and as wide from the promise, as it well can be, yet a fair specimen of the allegorical interpretation. "Videtur autem h. l. *possessione mundi* intelligi omnis generis felicitas Abrahami posteris promissa." Abraham should possess the world, be its lord or inheritor,—“the heir of the world,” says Paul. Abraham himself is the person spoken of; but Rosenmüller, and the whole class of interpreters who adopt his principles, tell us it means *all sort of happiness promised to Abraham's posterity!!* What part, interest, or concern had Abraham personally, in the Jews' temporary possession of Canaan? He did not care for it himself, and would he be more captivated by his children's temporary occupancy of it?

sion of the church of God among the Gentile nations, during the whole period of the rejection of the Jews, was, or could be, the thing intended by the prophecy, according to its literal or grammatical import. That teaches, that the blessed inheritance connected with, and intended by the land of Canaan for "an everlasting possession," is one, the enjoyment of which will belong, in some way or other, to Abraham, together with all who walk in the footsteps of his faith. "For," the apostle says, "the promise must be *sure to all the seed*, not to that only which is of the law, (viz. believers under the Mosaic dispensation, as he has explained himself to mean,) but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things that be not as though they were."\*

Here the apostle, who is explaining Abraham's faith of this promise, or, in other words, setting forth the things that Abraham expected, tells us expressly, that Abraham was regarded, and regarded himself, as the father or representative of a numerous seed BEFORE God, and that, too, as he who *raiseth the dead*, and calleth things that *be not AS THOUGH THEY WERE*. It was, *in the sight of God*, as raising the dead, and speaking of things far distant in futurity, as though they were present, that Abraham's faith looked forward to the events to be realized by the fulfilment of the promise. Some occupancy of the land of Canaan, therefore, which Abraham and all the saints should have together in the resurrection state, and when Abraham should be conspicuously and gloriously the

\* Romans, 4. 13.

heir or possessor of the world, was literally the thing promised of God, and expected by Abraham,—the heavenly city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, for which he looked, and of which Paul speaks,—the New Jerusalem, the holy city, which John in vision saw coming down from God out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband.

To make the promise refer to the spread and prevalence of the gospel, under the evangelical dispensation, and to say that Abraham becomes “heir of the world,” by the diffusion and triumph of the gospel, is to allegorise and to accommodate the language of the Spirit, to contradict the grammatical import, and not grammatically to interpret. For, to dwell a moment longer here—

Paul says explicitly, Abraham and all the fathers looked for a heavenly city, as one great and glorious thing held forth in “the covenant of promise.” That heavenly city, allegorically interpreted, must mean either the invisible state, i. e. the state of happiness into which the saints now enter, when they die, and pass into the heavenly paradise, or it must mean the church of God, enlarged, extended, and universally established—what the Spiritualists call the kingdom of God, etc., especially towards the close of the gospel dispensation, i. e. during the millennial glory. That it means the paradisiacal heaven, or the heavenly state, on which all the Fathers entered after death, Paul expressly denies, for he says, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon the earth; for they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they

came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is an heavenly ; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city."\* At their death they did not enter into that heavenly city for which they hoped, neither did the prophets, who succeeded the patriarchal fathers, such as Moses, David, Samuel, Isaiah, and many others ; for Paul says of them also, that "having in this life obtained a good report through faith, they received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect,"† i. e. be consummated in bliss.

The literal or grammatical meaning of this is, that the patriarchs and prophets were not to enter into the promised glory without, and consequently before, we Christians. But, lest it be said, that a change took place, after the death and ascension of Christ, in the heavenly state, and that Abraham and the prophets passed into the glory into which Christians now enter when they die—whatever may or may not be the truth of this, it is not, and cannot be, what the apostle understands by the thing promised. That, he uniformly speaks of as being the glory accruing to the saints, when Christ shall *return to earth*, raise their dead bodies, and establish His kingdom for ever and ever.

Of that inheritance, Peter says explicitly, they have not yet obtained possession, whether patriarchs, prophets, apostles, or any now with Christ, for it is "*reserved in heaven*," and "*ready to be revealed in the last time*."‡ The grace for which patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and Christians in all ages hope, is the

\* Heb. 11. 13–16. † Heb. 11. 39–40. ‡ 1 Peter, 1. 4, 5.

grace that is to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ, i. e. at his second coming. But if the heavenly city, the inheritance for which Abraham and all the fathers hoped, and for which Christians are yet hoping, be *not* the state immediately after death, and the allegorical interpretation fails here, much more must it, when it is alleged that it is the gospel state of the church on earth, especially in a millenium to be enjoyed before the return of Christ. In that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the dead saints have no part for which they now wait, the heavenly city is not to be entered until the resurrection, and the return of Christ to this world. It is explicitly said that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are to enter at that day into the kingdom, and "many from the East and from the West, from the North and from the South, are to come, not before, but at the day of Christ's appearing, and to sit down with them in the kingdom of heaven." The allegorical interpretation makes utter confusion of all this, but the grammatical interpretation sets it before us as clear and intelligible as it is transcendent in glory.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE SYSTEM OF INTERPRETATION.

Two very opposite systems of Scriptural interpretation have been brought into view ; the one denominated THE LITERAL OR GRAMMATICAL, and the other the ALLEGORICAL OR SPIRITUAL. The general nature of each has been defined, and to some extent illustrated ; the literal or grammatical having been shown to be the method commonly adopted by men in their attempts to understand each other's language, according to which, the words, grammatically understood, are taken as the proper guide to the meaning of the writer or the nature of the thing expressed ;—the allegorical or spiritual being an attempt to explain the meaning of the words according to some assumed or preconceived notions of the nature of the thing.

We have affirmed the literal system to be the true and proper one for the interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures ; because it is the most natural, consistent, and satisfactory mode of interpretation, commending itself to the common sense of mankind ; because it is more definite and certain, and far less liable to the charge of vagueness and to the vagaries of men's imaginations, than the spiritual or allegorical ; and because it is sanctioned by the example of the patriarchs, the prophets, and the apostles, in their study and exposition of the prophecies. We add another reason.

IV. THE ENTIRE SYSTEM OF PROPHECY CONTAINED IN THE SCRIPTURES, AS FAR AS IT HAS BEEN CONFIRMED AND EXPOUNDED BY THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, RECOGNIZES AND ESTABLISHES THE LITERAL OR GRAMMATICAL AS ITS APPROPRIATE METHOD OF INTERPRETATION.

In order to understand the force of this argument, it will be necessary to notice more particularly than we have done, the nature and character of prophecy. On this point there has been much confusion, which has not been much relieved by treatises designed expressly to give us philosophical explanations of the manner in which the minds of the prophets were affected. It has been taken for granted, that there is something essentially difficult to be understood in prophecy ; not only from the necessary obscurity in every attempt to describe future events, but especially from the mode in which the minds of the prophets were acted on and affected by the Spirit of God, who made to the prophets his revelations. Peter says, that prophecy is not the result of human excogitation. "It came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were *moved* by the Holy Ghost."\*

As to the precise amount of meaning in this word "MOVED," there has been much disagreement among those who have written on the nature of prophecy. This diversity of sentiment has ranged from those satisfied with a general knowledge of the fact that God acted on them in some miraculous way, and who attempted not even to form an idea as to the mode, believing that Peter intended to intimate no notion whatever on this subject—to those, who, supposing that he did, have allowed themselves to class the phrenzy of the

\* 2 Pet. 1. 21.



false prophets among the heathen, with the ecstasy of true, as being of the same essential nature. Accordingly, it has been assumed, that "the true explanation depends on a correct *theory* of prophecy."\* I quote the language of Dr. Hengstenburg,† of the University of Berlin. He admits it to have been the prevailing opinion of the church, since the controversies with the Montanists, "that the essential difference between the prophets of God and the heathen diviners, consists in the fact, that the latter spake in an ecstasy, but the former in full possession of reason and consciousness; and consequently with a clear knowledge of what they uttered." He does not seem satisfied with the orthodox belief on this subject, preferring the notions of Platonic philosophy as better adapted to his peculiar metaphysics. For, applying to the true prophets,

\* Christology of the O. T., vol. i. p. 217.

† This style of speech adopted by Professor Hengstenburg has become common in these United States. Editors of religious papers, professors, ministers and others, talk about *theory* on the subject of the prophecies, as though the study of prophecy was necessarily connected with theorising and speculations—favorite expressions used when it suits their convenience to condemn others and excuse their own ignorance. The predictions of Scripture seem to be regarded much in the same light that many do the phenomena of nature, as affording materials on which the student is to display his ingenuity by inventing some *theory* to explain them. Theory is out of place and unallowable in the study of prophecy; and as long as men assume it, and act on the principle that they are to excogitate some mode of explanation, some clue to the meaning, and by its guidance interpret particular parts, or weave the whole system of prophecy together, we shall have nothing but schemes originating in the imagination, and as endless varieties as we meet among cosmogonists. It is a simple question that in all cases must be asked, what is the fair and legitimate meaning of the words—a matter-of-fact investigation—no theorising, no speculations.

what Plato has enlarged upon in his *Ion* and *Phædrus*, viz. "that prophesying is necessarily accompanied by the suppression of human agency, intelligence, and consciousness," he is prepared to look for more or less obscurity growing out of the very mode in which the divine communication was made, although he has, notwithstanding, made many valuable remarks, and decidedly, but not designedly, favorable to the literal or grammatical interpretation.

It does not comport with our design, nor indeed is it necessary, to enter into any discussion as to the physiology of inspiration, a subject, of which it is utterly impossible for us to have any accurate knowledge, or any means of investigation. Those, who deny that prophecy is the revelation of future events made miraculously by the Spirit of God, and who assume it to be a mere natural gift or power, of the same character with the divinations among the heathen, may, very naturally, attempt the explanation of the one by the other, and class what Dr. Hengstenburg has called the *ECSTASY* of the prophets of Israel, with the *AFFLATUS* and phrenzy of the prophets among the heathen. But it does not appear, from anything recorded in the Scriptures, that the prophets of God were thrown into an ecstasy by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and deprived of intelligence, consciousness and voluntary agency, when they uttered his oracles.\* There is nothing in the character of the dreams and visions, etc., of the prophets to prove it. Whatever effects may have sometimes been produced upon their animal system and sensations, by the disclosures thus made to them,—and these, as in the case of Daniel and John and others, were very remarkable—

\* See Gausson's *Theopneusty*, pp. 313, 314.

the scriptural account of their visions and dreams and other divine communications made to them, does not intimate that they were unintelligible, or hard to be understood, in consequence of any supernatural mode by which they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

The obscurity of prophecy arises entirely from other sources, such as the partial character of the revelation ; the impossibility of forming any vivid ideas of things yet future and but partially described ; ignorance of the precise time and relations of distant events ; the want of well-defined views as to the nature of the language and style in which the several prophets may have delivered their several predictions ; the incidental difference, in the accounts of different prophets predicting the same things,—growing out of the circumstance, that some scenes connected with the events predicted, are noticed and more particularly described, by one prophet, while another has not even alluded to them ; the difficulty there ever must be in harmonising an almost endless variety of future scenes and circumstances not chronologically arranged by the prophets, but described in some order of succession, and at intervals not always disclosed ; and the pictorial character of the representations made to the prophets often in dreams, and more especially in visions, which doubtless often rendered them as much the matter of anxious study to the prophets themselves as to others in order to understand their import.\*

Professor Stewart† has fully and unanswerably vindicated the writings of the ancient prophets from any charge of obscurity founded on the peculiar psychological system of Dr. Hengstenburg, and his philoso-

\* 1 Pet. 1. 10, 11.

† Biblical Repository, vol. ii. p. 245.

phical theory of the mode of inspiration, and the nature of prophecy, and concludes: "I must believe that, when (God) reveals anything to men, he does not wrap it up in darkness. I must continue to cherish the belief, that when he undertakes to instruct them, he does not leave them ignorant. All which he intends to accomplish, he does accomplish. His accredited messengers are not "blind leaders of the blind," but "clothed with light and salvation." They are not men bereaved of their understanding, their reason, their consciousness, their free agency; but the most enlightened, the most free, of all men on the face of the earth.\*

Entertaining precisely such views of the nature of inspiration, whether of the prophetic or other parts of Scripture, we expect to find, in the word of God itself, a sanction of the principles of interpretation applicable to the speech and writings of men in general, in their application to the system of prophecy contained in it. In this we are not disappointed. For,

1. *The prophets' communications were so interpreted and understood generally by their cotemporaries who heard them.* I need not cite the examples of Micaiah,† Elijah‡ and Elisha,§ of Isaiah,|| Jeremiah,¶ Ezekiel,\*\*

\* Similar sentiments are to be found in Mr. Barnes' Introduction to his Notes on the book of Isaiah, when unfolding the views of Professor Hengstenburg and his own, on the nature of prophecy. "There was an essential difference between the effect of true inspiration on the mind, and the wild and frantic ravings of the pagan priests and the oracles of divination. Everything in the Scriptures is consistent, rational, sober, and in accordance with the laws of the animal economy: everything in the heathen idea of inspiration was wild, frantic, fevered and absurd."—Vol. i. p 19.

† 1 Kings, 22. 15–36.

‡ 2 Kings, 3. 10–27; 7. &c.

¶ Jerem. 32. &c.

‡ 1 Kings, 19. 20. 21; 2 Kings, 1.

|| Is. 37. 38. 39. &c.

\*\* Ezek. 4. 5. 6. &c.

Hosea,\* and others, many if not most of whose predictions were understood, and that so well, that, being contrary to their taste and prejudices, and consequently to their cordial reception, the people and rulers became so indignant with them, that scarcely any of them escaped without severe persecution,† and even unto death.

To avoid delay in the details of the argument, I prefer to avail myself of the reasonings and conclusion arrived at on this subject by Professor Stuart, whom I am the more disposed to quote, because he cannot be suspected of prejudice on this subject, having classed himself with those who, in reference to most of the *unfulfilled* predictions, interpret them allegorically or spiritually, and not literally. "Admitting," says he, "that the prophets spake intelligibly, and that they were actually understood by their cotemporaries, and this without any miraculous interposition, it follows of course that it was the usual laws of interpretation which enabled their hearers to understand them. They spontaneously applied to their words the same principles of interpretation which they were wont to do to the language of all who addressed them. By so doing, they rightly understood the prophets; at any rate, by so doing, they might have rightly understood them: and if so, then such laws of interpretation are the right ones; for those laws must be right which conduct us to the true meaning of a speaker. I can perceive no way of avoiding this conclusion, unless we deny that the prophets were understood, or could be understood, by their cotemporaries. But to deny this, would be denying facts so plain, so incontrovertible, that it would argue a desperate attachment to system, or something still more culpable."‡

\* Hos. 9. &c. † Acts, 7. 52.

‡ Biblical Repository, vol. ii. p. 132.

Those very just and excellent remarks, however, are by many admitted only with restrictions. So far as the predictions of the ancient prophets related to temporal events, it is admitted that these remarks are true; but not to be construed as applicable to the spiritual interests and events of Christ's kingdom. Here, it is contended, the cotemporaries of the prophets mistook their meaning, as have done and still do all others who understand them literally, instead of taking out of them a spiritual or allegorical meaning.\* This, however, is a point much more easily assumed than proved. It will be shown, in another and more convenient place, that the idea of the personal coming of the Messiah—for the purpose of judgment and of establishing His kingdom—the kingdom of Heaven on earth—upon the ruins of the great persecuting nations which for centuries have enslaved and oppressed the people of God—for the restoration of the tribes of Israel and of Judah to their own land, and for the perfection and glorious dominion of the Theocracy—was very common among the Jews, and can be traced far back in the traditionary interpretation of the prophets, even from the days of their cotemporaries till the first appearing of Jesus Christ, and consequently in the Christian church, without

\* For a striking example of this, see Lowth's Notes on Isaiah, chap. 63, p. 392, and also S. Noble's Lectures on the Plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures, p. 180-215, &c. After a metaphysical dissertation on the intellectual powers, the latter says: "And if we consider these three orders of intellectual powers to have three distinct *provinces* of the mind appropriated to them as their seat, we shall see why they are represented by the three countries of Egypt, Assyria, and Israel—such representation following accurately the law of that analogy, which, we have before seen, we all intuitively recognize, between the relations of mind and the relations of space."

denial or dispute, for three centuries after the Christian era.

There were, indeed, errors in relation to the time of Messiah's appearing, and a confounding of his first and second coming, with more or less of imaginary details in the description of his kingdom, not taken from the prophetic writings, but from the glosses of commentators; but even these errors, and whatever of extravagant imagination may be found in the detailed accounts of the nature of the Messiah's kingdom which have come down to us from antiquity, only prove our position, that the prophecies were interpreted and understood literally, as well those which relate to Messiah's kingdom, as to the nations of earth. They were admitted and known to be *the foretelling of certain things or events to happen, as really and literally true in their accomplishment with regard to the Messiah's appearing and reigning in his kingdom on this earth, as with regard to the kingdoms of this world, on whose ruins it should be established.*

Here again it will be objected, that the expectation of the Jews, founded on the literal interpretation of the prophecies, viz., that the Messiah would come and establish a glorious kingdom on the earth, making Jerusalem its centre and bringing all the nations of the earth in subjection to it, has been proved fallacious by the providence of God. It is freely admitted by those who urge this objection, or rather taken for granted, that the cotemporaries of the prophets, and others of the Jewish nation, were greatly in error on this subject; so much so, as to have their minds filled with prejudice and their hearts hardened through unbelief. Their error, we affirm, did not consist in the system of literal interpretation adopted by them, but in their very partial examination and knowledge of

what the prophets did utter. They did not perceive, that there were two distinct comings of their Messiah predicted ; that each of these comings had its own distinct attributes ; and that the first was so definitely marked out as to time, that attention to the chronology of certain events in their history, would have enabled them to come very near, if not exactly, to the period of it.

Neither did they seem to be aware, that the circumstances, occasion, manner, condition, and other particulars of their Messiah's first appearing, were all apparently inconsistent with, and contradictory of the pomp and glory, the splendor, and triumph, and lofty dominion, that should attend his second appearing. It was distinctly predicted, for example, where he should be born, and what should be his condition through life ; that he should be a man of sorrows, despised and rejected of the people, be put to death, rise from the grave, and ascend to Heaven. All this, doubtless, they could not reconcile with the other predictions relating to his coming, in triumph and glory, to establish his kingdom on the earth. But the careful and diligent study of prophecy would have enabled them generally, as it did some, to recognize and acknowledge him when he did come ; and, having done so, to get, from his own lips, the instruction necessary to understand that portion of the predictions remaining to be fulfilled. This they did not.

Attracted by the predictions relating to his kingdom—which comprehend by far the greatest part of the prophetic descriptions and communications—they lost sight, altogether, of those relating to his first personal coming.\* Having thus confounded the two comings of the Messiah, they were totally unprepared to recognize him, when he came, in his humiliation,

\* Is. 53.



to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. If, therefore, through ignorance and inattention, the Jews made mistakes, and looked for the glorious dominion of the Messiah to be set up at his first appearing, that does not at all prove the system of interpretation prevalent among them to be wrong. It only proves, that they were not accurate and diligent students of the prophecies—that they did not apply correctly their own principles. And the sad result, which flowed to *them*, through their neglect of the careful and prayerful study of the prophecies, and of the application of the literal principles of interpretation which they had adopted—even the unbelief and rejection of their whole nation—should administer a rebuke, and excite alarm on the part of those, who, at this day, neglect the study of the prophecies, and are just as incredulous and unprepared to meet him at his second coming in glory, to establish his kingdom on the earth, as they were at his first.

Neglect of the prophecies led to the ruin of their church and nation; and the same neglect so extensive at the present day, we doubt not, will lead to the ruin of many more churches and nations, now just as confident, in their belief, that the providence of God has falsified the Jews' expectation as to the Messiah's kingdom, and proved the error of the literal principles of interpretation adopted by them. There is great reason to fear that the coming of Jesus Christ in glory and triumph, to establish his kingdom on the earth, has proved, and will continue to prove, as great a stumbling-block to the mass of Christian ministers and professors, as his coming, in humiliation and sorrow, for suffering and death, did to the learned doctors of the Sanhedrim, and to the majority of the Jewish nation.

The weakness of this objection, as well as the fallacy of this conclusion, may be rendered yet more apparent, if we advert to the singular coincidence, in sentiment and practice, between the Jews since the death of Christ, and the great mass of the Christian ministry and churches at the present day, in relation to the spiritual or allegorical interpretation. The Jew contends just as strenuously for the spiritual interpretation of the predictions, which the spiritualist says have been literally fulfilled, as does the spiritualist for the spiritual interpretation of those remaining to be accomplished, and which the Jew says must be literally fulfilled. Together, they present the most singular phenomenon. Although agreeing, as to the system of interpretation in part to be applied, it is utterly impossible for them to agree as to the results derived from their application of them. The Christian, who adopts the spiritual interpretation of the prophecies, in relation to the second coming of Jesus Christ in his kingdom, approaches the Jew, and telling him, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, exhorts him to cease from his unbelief, and to embrace the Saviour of the world.

The Jew, in his infidelity, denies the fact, and asking him how he knows that, calls upon him to prove it. The Christian reads to him the psalm which says, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture,"\* and tells him, this and other particulars stated in this prophetic psalm, were literally accomplished in the sufferings, and circumstances of the death, of Jesus Christ. The Jew replies, "Admit it as your historian Matthew and others have related: but cast your eye forward and there read, 'All the

\* Psalm 22. 18.

ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's, and He is governor among the nations.\* What do you make of this? When did ever such a thing as this occur? The kingdom is not Christ's. He is not governor among the nations. Where is there a nation, on the face of the earth, that, since his crucifixion, has ever, in its national character, owned and honored, and in all things submitted to, Jesus Christ as its governor?"

The Christian replies, "You mistake: these predictions about his kingdom, and being governor among the nations, are to be understood spiritually. They refer to his spiritual kingdom, the church, or to his invisible kingdom, and to the influence of his grace, in subduing impenitent rebels, and in bringing them to the obedience of the faith, and more especially to that period yet future, the millennial glory, when, by increased missionary zeal and labors, by the universal preaching of the gospel, by the effusions of the Holy Spirit, and by great and extensive revivals of religion, the great mass of mankind will be converted, and the kings, and princes, and rulers of the earth, the executive, legislative and judicial functionaries of the nations, be universally brought under the influence of Christianity."

To this the Jew rejoins, "I object to your principles of interpretation. You make one part literal, and another spiritual, just as it suits you. Now I claim, that the whole psalm be interpreted either literally or spiritually. I have just as good a right to say, as I do, of that part which you tell me was literally fulfilled, in the sufferings and death of Jesus

\* Psalm 22. 27, 28.

Christ, that it must be understood spiritually, as you have of the other." Thus they are at perfect issue, and yet agreed as to the principles of interpretation. This first effort therefore fails.

But the Christian brings another and most remarkable passage to his aid from the psalm where it is said, "Thou hast ascended on high, and hast led captivity captive," &c.\* This, he says, was literally and truly fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and reads the story of the ascension of Christ from the evangelists in proof. "Admit it," replies the Jew, "but pray read the verses of this same psalm, in which it is said, 'They have seen thy goings, O God, even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary. The singers went before, the players on instruments followed after: among them were the damsels playing with timbrels. Bless ye God in the congregations, even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel. There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah and their counsel, the princes of Zebulon and the princes of Naphtali. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.'† "All this," the Jew says, "the prophet has predicted, shall come after the ascension of God. We yet look for our Messiah, who will bring us to our land, and show himself in his temple to be built at Jerusalem. What make you of all this?"

To this the Christian replies, "You mistake: this must all be understood spiritually of the presence of Christ in his church, which is his temple—not literally but allegorically, or retrospectively, at least to the days of Solomon."

\* Psalm 68. 18.

† Psalm 68. 24-29.

“Then,” rejoins the Jew, “was the ascension of God all spiritual; and I will not consent that you take advantage of this one verse in the psalm to apply it literally to Jesus of Nazareth, and understand all the rest, which you cannot literally apply to him, as true allegorically or spiritually. I claim,” says the Jew, “that it must be all interpreted on the same general principles, either all spiritual or all literal. If you say the predictions relating to the humiliation, and sufferings, and death of the Messiah are literal, then must those also be literal which relate to his glory and the triumphant establishment of his kingdom on the earth. If the predictions relating to his second coming in his kingdom and glory must be spiritually understood, then must those also be spiritual, which relate to his first coming, in his humiliation, and sufferings, and death. You may take your choice.”

The same issue may be made by the Jew, with equally unanswerable point, let the spiritualist quote from any portions of the Scriptures whatever, which speak of “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.”

Who does not see how greatly the Jew has the advantage of the Christian, who interprets prophecy in this chameleon-like method? It is unjust and ungenerous, uncandid, undignified, and inconsistent with all sound logic, honorable argument, fair dealing, and common sense, to treat the Jew or any one else thus. No wonder, therefore, that for centuries so little impression has been made upon him. Certainly the allegorizing interpretation of the Scriptures is not calculated to convince or to convert him. He may most equitably demand that one or other system be adopted, and adhered to consistently. The spiritual interpretation cannot universally apply to the system of

prophecy, for he that attempts it will be involved in endless embarrassments and difficulties, and must of necessity, by the licence it gives his imagination, render the Bible a vague, uncertain, and unsatisfactory book, and prophecy a thing utterly contemptible, and fit to be classed with the ambiguities and equivokes, and unmeaning rhapsodies of the oracles of the heathen. The literal interpretation, however, is wholly devoid of such embarrassment; and while it is the only system which can present the argument fairly, fully, and consistently, to convince the Jew that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah predicted, cuts him off from all objections urged from the predictions of his coming in glory in his kingdom, and renders the Bible a plain, intelligible, and consistent book. This leads to a second remark in the exhibition of the argument.

2. *That the adoption of the literal system of interpretation by the cotemporaries of the prophets—according to which the ancient Jews expected the literal coming of the Messiah, and the literal accomplishment of the events predicted, has been sanctioned and confirmed by the providence of God, in the actual literal fulfilment of all the prophecies relating to it, yea, and of the entire system of prophecy, as far as it has been verified.*

It is impossible here to give anything more than general references, inasmuch as the argument would be much too far extended were we to enter into minute details. Every one, however, acquainted with his Bible, must know, that the prophecies of Scripture are a vast chain, beginning and ending with the course of this present world:—one end of that chain lay in Paradise lost, commencing in the prediction, that if man should eat the forbidden fruit, he should die: nor shall we reach the other end,—pursue it as we may, through the histories of ages and nations, and midst its thousand

times ten thousand convolutions,—till it brings us back again to Paradise restored,—the glorious dominion of Jesus Christ over all the earth, in more than Eden-like blessedness. “This chain of prophecy,” says the Rev. D. Simpson,\* “is so evident in the Sacred Scriptures, that we are more embarrassed with the selection and arrangement of that vast profusion of them, than doubtful of their import and accomplishment. To a superficial observer, they may seem to be without order or connection; but, to a well-informed mind, they are all disposed, in such a mode and succession, as to form a regular system, all whose parts harmonize in one amazing and consistent plan, which runs parallel with the history of mankind, past, present and to come.” But one and the same principle of interpretation runs throughout the system, whatever may be the character and style of its language, and that is **THE LITERALITY OR HISTORICAL VERITY OF THE EVENTS AND THINGS PREDICTED.**

The predictions delivered immediately after the fall, with regard to the seed of the woman’s bruising the serpent’s head,† though uttered in symbolical language, and perhaps partly at the time illustrated by symbolical transactions,‡ as well

\* Key to the Prophecies, p. 30.

† Genesis, 3. 15.

‡ It is not at all improbable that God, our first parents, and the serpent in its pristine form, while yet possessed by Satan, and actuated as his instrument, were all visibly present together. The curse pronounced upon the serpent, (v. 11), was calculated and doubtless designed, in the most cautious manner, to apprise our first parents of the presence of a malignant spirit, without exciting too much their fears. Dr. Hengstenburg has some excellent remarks on this subject in his *Christology*, vol. i. 34, 36. There was nothing in the nature of things, or in the obligations of God as moral governor, to prevent a sudden, violent, visible, and mira-

as those relating to the curse, upon the man, and soil, and the female sex,\*—all contemplated historical verities;—so too did the predictions of Lamech† concerning his son Noah;—of Noah concerning the deluge,‡ and his sons§ Shem, Ham and Japhet;—of the angel of the covenant concerning Abraham;||—of Abraham concerning the afflictions and emancipations of his posterity by Isaac;¶ and the condition of those by Ishmael;\*\*—of Isaac concerning Jacob and Esau†† and the coming of Shiloh;‡‡ of Jacob concerning his twelve sons, the heads of as many tribes;§§ of Joseph concerning his own promotion; the fate of the butler and baker, the famine in Egypt, and the deliverance of his nation;—of Moses concerning the plagues of Egypt,||| the overthrow of Pharaoh,¶¶ and the extirpation of the Amorite and other Canaanitish nations;\*\*\* the fortunes of the twelve tribes;†††—their renunciation of the worship of Jehovah, and the establishment of idolatry;‡‡‡—the appearance of a prophet like himself;§§§ the sieges and disasters which should attend their city; the invasions and the captivity of the tribes

culous change of the external form and appearance of the animal, and of its instincts and habits. Our first parents, seeing a sudden degradation of the serpent take place, would be apprised of some intelligent agent concealed in it, against whom the blow was directed, of whose degradation and exemplary punishment the scenic transformation of the animal before them from an upright form and manly gait to the reptile crawling in the dust, would be a pledge of the ultimate triumph over Satan by the seed of the woman.

\* Gen. 3. 16–19.

† Gen. 5. 29.

‡ Gen. 8. 21.

§ Gen. 9. 25.

|| Gen. 16. 5.

¶ Gen. 15. 13–21.

\*\* Gen. 21. 13–18.

†† Gen. 27. 27–29, and 39, 40.

‡‡ Gen. 49. 1–28.

§§ Gen. 37. 5–10; 40 and 41, and 50. 24.

||| Exod. 8. 9. 10.

¶¶ Genesis, 11.

\*\*\* Deut. 31. 3–5.

††† Deut. 33.

‡‡‡ Deut. 31. 16–18. §§§ Deut. 18. 15–18.



by the Assyrians and Babylonians and Romans ; the distresses of the Jews during their long dispersion and their second captivity in Egypt ;\* the calling of the Gentiles ; the eventual and final return of the Jews to their own land, and their glorious and happy condition under the dominion of the Messiah. †

All these things, with the exception of the two last, have been literally verified, according to the plain grammatical import of the words of the prophecy. Why, therefore, we ask, when nearly all Moses' predictions, with those of all before him, have been literally fulfilled, must we apply a different rule, and say, the balance, yet unfulfilled, must be understood spiritually ? Being part of the same system, some divine warrant must be produced for interpreting *unfulfilled* prophecy on different principles from that fulfilled. To the predictions just referred to, we might add those of Joshua against the re-building of Jericho ; ‡ of Balaam, § of Deborah, ||—the predictions concerning Gideon ¶ and Samson, \*\* those of Hannah, †† and Samuel, †† and the man of God §§ who foretold the destruction of Eli and his house ; of Nathan ; ||| of David concerning the sufferings of the Messiah, and the opposition he should meet with from the kings and governors of this world, but of his eventual overthrow and destruction of all his enemies, and establishment of his kingdom on their ruins ; ¶¶—of the prophet of

\* Deut. 28. 21-68.

† Deut. 32.

‡ Josh. 6. 26, compared with 1 Kings, 16. 34.

§ Num. 23. & 24.

|| Judges, 4. 9, 21.

¶ Judges, 6. 11-16, and ch. 7. & 8.

\*\* Judges, 13-16.

†† 1 Sam. 2. 10, and 7. 10.

†† 1 Sam. 10. also 18. 19, and 31. 6.

§§ 1 Sam. 2. 27-36 ; 4. 10-22 ; 22. 9-23 ; and 1 Kings, 2. 26, 27.

||| 2 Sam. 7. 15, 16 ; 12. 10-29, &c.

¶¶ Psalms, 22. 2. 69. 110.

Bethel concerning the name and conduct of Josiah; of Abijah concerning the advancement of Jeroboam and his ruin; \* of the old prophet of Bethel; † of Abijah; ‡ of Micaiah, who announced the destruction of Ahab and the defeat of his army; § of Shemaiah concerning the affliction of Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak; || of Azariah concerning the success of Asa; ¶ of Hanani concerning the wars of Asa; \*\* of Jehu and Eleazar against Jehoshaphat; †† and of Jahaziel in his favor; †††—the predictions of Elijah §§ and Elisha; ||| of Zechariah the priest against Joash; ¶¶ of Huldah concerning the death of Josiah, and the Babylonish captivity; \*\*\*—the predictions that after that captivity, the Jews should have no king of their own till the Messiah came; ††††—of Isaiah, who predicted the humiliation and downfall of all the rich and great men among the Jews, and the subversion of idolatry among his countrymen, ††††† the general distress and ruin of his nation, §§§§ the shame and confusion of the fashionable and gay-dressed women of his country, ||||| the infatuation of his countrymen, till their country should become desolate; ¶¶¶ of the invasion of Egypt and Ethiopia by the Assyrians; \*\*\*\* and of Kedar in Arabia; ††††† of the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib—the destruction of his army; †††††† of the destruction of the kingdom of Israel and capture of

\* 1 Kings, 13. 1–3, compared with 2 Kings, 22. 23.

† 1 Kings, 13. 11–34.

‡ 1 Kings, 11. 12.; 14. 1–20, and 15. 29, 30.

§ 1 Kings, 22.

|| 2 Chron. 12.

¶ 2 Chron. 15.

\*\* 2 Chron. 16. 9.

†† 2 Chron. 19. 2, and 20. 1, 2 & 37.

‡‡ 2 Chron. 20.

§§ 1 Kings, 17. 18. 19. 21. 22.

||| 2 Kings, 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 12. 13.

¶¶ 2 Chron. 24. 15–26.

\*\*\* 2 Kings, 22. 14–20; 23. 29, 25.

††† Ezek. 21. 27.

†††† Is. 2. 10–17; 21. 18–21.

§§§ Is. 3. 16–26.

|||| Is. 3. 16–26.

¶¶¶ Is. 6, 9–12.

\*\*\*\* Is. 20.

††††† Is. 21. 13–17.

†††††† 2 Kings, 19, and Is. 10. & 29. 1–8.

the ten tribes,\* of the destruction of the Assyrian empire,† and of Babylon and the Babylonian empire,‡ of the birth, name, fame, and fortune of Cyrus, king of Persia,§ of the preservation of the Jews as a distinct people,—of the conception, birth, character, sufferings, and circumstances of the life and death of the Messiah,||—and, together with other historical incidents, of the glorious triumph and reign of the Messiah, when he should have executed the vengeance of Heaven against his and their enemies, restored, in his person, the throne and dynasty of David, and established his kingdom over all the earth. Similar predictions might be referred to in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, Amos, Micah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, and others of the prophets, who have predicted the political fortunes of many, and the fate of all the nations of the earth, and the final and glorious establishment of the kingdom of the Messiah, combining, in one blessed and happy confederacy of nations, Gentiles and Jews, and all people under heaven, joyfully and gratefully submissive to his sway.

These predictions are all parts of one vast system, comprising alike the unfulfilled with those fulfilled. So far as the system has been developed, and, without possibility of denial, up to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, the predictions have been LITERALLY FULFILLED. The grammatical construction is proved, by the providence of God, to be the true and proper guide to the meaning of the prophecy. We ask, then, for the proof, *that any other method or system of interpretation is to be applied to the balance which remain to be fulfilled.* They are but part and

\* Is. 7. 8.

† Is. 17. 12–14, and 37. 36.

‡ Is. ch. 13. &amp; 14. § Is. 44. 45. and 2 Chron. 36. 22, 23.

|| Is. 7. 14, and 53.

parcel of the one system—the one great chain of prophecy, contained in the Sacred Scriptures, many links of which have been unfolded, and confirmed, by the providence of God. To Him therefore do we look, as to the only true and faithful interpreter of prophecy. Having spoken to us, in familiar language, by the mouths of our fellow-men—to whom He directs his communications—we interpret His language, on the same principles of grammatical construction, which we apply to that of each other. And having, Himself, by His providence, illustrated, and verified, the principles of literal interpretation, *by the most minute and accurate fulfilment of every particular iota predicted*, we give up our reasonings and objections, submit our judgment entirely to Him, believing that, unless He has distinctly apprised us of a change made in the principles of interpretation, we are bound, implicitly and rigidly, to interpret the prophecies yet remaining unfulfilled, BY THE VERY SAME RULES, AND UPON THE VERY SAME PRINCIPLES, WHICH HE HIMSELF HAS SANCTIONED AND ESTABLISHED, IN HIS PROVIDENCE, BY THE VERIFICATION OF THOSE FULFILLED. This leads to a third remark.

3. That *there is no intimation whatever, in the word of God, nor has there been any given by the providence of God, that any other principles of interpretation are to be applied to that part of the system of prophecy remaining unfulfilled, than what God has taught us are to be applied to that fulfilled.* If there is, we claim that it be pointed out. A divine warrant must be produced for the change. We must have it distinctly and definitely made known. The key to the meaning must either be given us directly by some new revelation from Jesus Christ, or his apostles; or the providence of God must so clearly and fully indicate the meaning,

that no room shall be left us to doubt. Neither of these things is the fact.

In all the conversations of Jesus Christ, and in all the preaching and writings of the apostles, there is not the most remote hint dropped, that any such change has been made—that the spiritual or allegorical is to be substituted for the literal or grammatical. On the contrary, we find, that when they acted as prophets, and added to the system their several predictions, they adopted the very same style, often the very same terms, and recognized in their auditors the right and propriety of their applying the same principles of interpretation to them, that they themselves did to the former prophets.

The predictions of Christ, with regard to his sufferings and death, his resurrection and ascension, are precisely of this character.\* They were literally, yea, most punctiliously and minutely verified. So also were his predictions in relation to the treatment which his disciples should receive from the world. Their trials and afflictions, and the persecutions they should endure on his account, are graphically described.†

Such too were his predictions relative to the destruction of Jerusalem, and all that he uttered in the 24th and 25th chapters of Matthew, in answer to the questions of his disciples. As he spake of the destruction of the temple, they put to him three very distinct questions, “When shall these things be? What shall be the sign of thy coming?” and what the sign “of the end of the world?”‡ To each of

\* Matt. 20. 18, 19.

† Matt. 10. 16–22.

‡ Matth. 24. 3, τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος. It is universally admitted, that the Greek word αἰων does not denote the astronomical

these questions he replies definitely and in order, after having given some general cautions and advice

world—the planet or globe we inhabit—nor the physical constitution of things, but an age or dispensation. Its period or duration must be determined by a reference to the subject spoken of. Used absolutely,—εις τον αιωνα των αιωνων—it is comprehensive of all, and, in this form, denotes eternity. Scapula gives *seculum, id est, 70 annorum spatium—vita, tempus vitæ hominis, and ævum*, as its appropriate meaning in Hieron., Hom., Herodot., and Xen.

Mede says, *Seculum futurum Hebræis est* אַבְתַּח עָלְיָהּ. Unde, Mark 10. 30, Luke, 18. 30, αιων ο̄ ερχομενος. Ephes. 2. 7, εν τοις αιωσι τοις παρερχομενοις. Vide Psalm 71. 18, אֲבִי-לֵלֵךְ. Is. 27. 6, אִם-בָּהָא, *ventururis sub diebus, id est, posthac Imposterum*.—Mede's Works, fol. 907-8.

Cuninghame says, "The word *world* is given up by the majority of English commentators, as an improper rendering; and in the Latin versions of Jerome, Erasmus, Beza, and Montanus, *αιωνος* is not translated *mundi*, but, *seculi*." He quotes Waple on the Revelations, p. 248; Dr. Hammond on Luke, 1. 70; Leigh, in his *Critica Sacra*, as authority.\*

The apostles' inquiry related to the end of the dispensation, when another *αιων*, or dispensation, was to be introduced. And accordingly in the writings of the fathers (see Suicerus), the word *αιων* frequently stood for this last period, that is to say, for a thousand years. From Tobit, 14. 5, it appears manifestly to signify the first of these great periods; viz. that which is to continue till the commencement of the Millenium; for it is there said of the Jews, that when the times of the age are fulfilled (*πληρωθωσι καιροι του αιωνος*, are the words of the Septuagint), they shall return from all places of their captivity. In Isaiah, 66. 18, the *age to come* signifies the second of these long periods, viz., the Millenium. So Christ is called (Is. 9. 6.) *πατηρ του μελλοντος αιωνος*. See Cuninghame on the Apocalypse, 3d ed. pp. 295, 296.

In the question, as propounded by the apostles, they contemplated the end of the one dispensation, which should give way to the other and more glorious, to be introduced at the coming of Christ. In Heb. 9. 26, *επι συντελεια των αιωνων*, and in 1 Cor. 10. 11, reference is had to the Christian dispensation, as succeeding the Jewish, and as the last of all the dispensations, preparatory to the kingdom which is to be eternal.

\* See Cuninghame on the Apocalypse, pp. 294, 296.

to prevent their being imposed upon. The cautions and advice, according to the plain grammatical interpretation, grow out of the condition of things in the world, which he foresaw would continue till the very time of his coming, i. e. the end of the dispensation, viz. there should be impostors, false Christs, wars and rumors of wars, nations rising up against nations, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. These things should be but the harbingers or the beginning of sorrows, leading to the persecution and martyrdom of Christians, to offences and treachery in the church, to false teaching, to apostasies, and aboundings of corruption, while, nevertheless, the gospel would work its way through the earth, and be preached as a witness among all nations; and then, but not till then, should the end come. This general description of the state of things during the evangelical dispensation up to the time of the end, is given from the 4th to the 14th verse of the 24th chapter of Matthew, inclusive.

From the 15th to the 28th verse, he answers the first question,—referring to the predictions of Daniel describing the time when Jerusalem should be laid waste and the temple destroyed—not by chronological dates, but by indicating certain events which should take place—and exhorting his followers, whenever they should occur, to hasten from the place. These things were so well understood beforehand, according to their plain grammatical import, that there was not a Christian that perished in the overthrow of Jerusalem, all having previously escaped out of it to Pella. At the same time he told them distinctly, that they were not to look for his coming at that time, notwithstanding many false Christs should arise, and it should be said, Lo, he had come here, or, Lo, he was there. His

coming would be like the lightning's flash, whenever it should take place, and not be reported beforehand. The tribulations that should commence in the world, at the destruction of Jerusalem, should not terminate until the time of his coming, but for the elect's sake they would be shortened. There would be troubles such as the world had never seen before, and never would again, after they should have terminated with his coming.\* These things have been literally fulfilled, and are now at this day still going on.

\* Matth. 24. 21, 22. It is taken for granted by many commentators, that these unparalleled tribulations occurred during the siege, and at the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; and therefore it is inferred that the prediction of Dan. 12. 1-3, which apparently dates that tribulation at the final destruction of Antichrist, Dan. 11. 44, 45, and at the resurrection, Dan. 12. 3, must either be spiritually interpreted, or the one must be regarded as the type, and the other the antetype, or must be explained in some other way than according to the literal or grammatical interpretation, which, if applied to both the predictions of Christ and Daniel, would make them contradict each other. There is no necessity, however, for a departure from the grammatical interpretation; nor is there any contradiction between Christ and Daniel.

From Luke, 21. 20-24, which is parallel to Matth. 24. 15-22, it is obvious, that the tribulation of which Christ speaks, is not restricted to the days of Titus, as though it had reached its crisis in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem; but extends through the whole period of Gentile oppression and of Jewish depression, even to the *termination* of what is called "*the times of the Gentiles.*" Christ, in Matthew, and Daniel, both make the tribulation to be *unprecedented*; but the former comprehends the whole period of Jewish oppression and Gentile domination, from the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, till the fulfilling of "*the times of the Gentiles,*" i.e. to their complete termination—comparing this last with other periods of Jewish tribulation, which whole period he calls in Luke, 21. 22, "*THESE DAYS OF VENGEANCE,*" during whose continuance, "*all things which are written are to be fulfilled.*" The tribulations of the Jews, in other words, Christ says, should be greater, during the whole period in which "*Jerusalem shall be*



Having answered the first question, he proceeds, from the 29th to the 35th verse, to answer the second, stating, in symbolical language, that after the destruction of Jerusalem, both the political and ecclesiastical world, designated by the symbols of the sun, moon, and stars, should be in a state of confusion, even unto shaking down and utter dissolution; and that when this shaking and utter dissolution of the ecclesiastical and political governments of earth should occur, then, and in them, would the world have the sign of his coming—which would be, at the proper time, a visible coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, for the gathering of his elect from one end of heaven to the other. As certainly as the putting forth of leaves by the fig tree, indicates the approach of summer, so certainly should these things indicate his coming.

The generation then present when he spoke, should not have left the earth till all these things begin to

trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled," (Luke, 21. 24,) than ever they had been previously, or shall be thereafter—strictly and properly designated as "THE DAYS OF VENGEANCE," expressly arranged and marked out by God, for the purpose of executing his predicted wrath—fulfilling all the predictions—*ἡμέραι ἐκδικήσεως αὐταὶ εἰσι, τοῦ πληρωθῆναι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα.* Daniel, in ch. 12. 1, 2, speaks of the close of this same extended period, when the times of the Gentiles shall be nearly fulfilled, and when the Jewish tribulation, which commenced under Titus, and has been ever since prolonged, is about reaching its climax. "The time of Jacob's trouble," (Jer. 30. 7,) out of which he shall be saved, will prove the time for the overthrow of the Gentile nations, when Jerusalem shall prove a cup of trembling, and a burdensome stone to all that come against it, (Zech. 12. 1, 2,) and the fearful, terrible, and unprecedented crisis when the symbolical "earthquake such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty and so great," (Rev. 16. 18,) shall occur.

be,\* which is the meaning of the word “fulfilled,” in verse 34. What he had said was more certainly to take place, than the continuance of heaven and earth.

\* Matth. 34. 34, *ἕως αν παντα ταυτα γενηται*. Mr. Cuninghame remarks that the most proper and original signification of the verb *γινομαι* is not *to be completely fulfilled*, as it is rendered in our English version of this passage; but rather, “*commencement, running into subsequent continuance, of action.*” This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be fulfilling:—the aorist subjunctive. He quotes Luke, 21. 24, to show that *γενωνται* cannot be understood as synonymous with *πληρωθωσι*, and Rev. 15. 8, that it cannot mean *τελεσθωσιν*. In confirmation of this meaning, he says, “It may be observed that the phrase *α δει γενεσθαι εν ταχει*, in Rev. 1. 1, is explained on the same principle by Vitringa, Doddridge, Dr. Cressner, Woodhouse, the Jesuit Ribera, and others. So in Matth. 8, 24, *Σεισμος μεγας εγενετο*, does not signify that the storm was over, but *was begun*. In Matth. 8. 16, we have the words, *οψιας δε γενομενης*, the evening *being come*; in Mark, 6. 2, *γενομενου σαββατου*, the Sabbath *being come*; John, 8. 58, *πριν Αβρααμ γενεσθαι*, before Abraham *was born*; John, 13. 2, *δειπνου γενομενου*, according to our version is rendered, *supper being ended*; but according to Whitby, Doddridge, Macknight, Schleusner, &c., *supper being come*.—See Cuninghame on the Apocalypse, pp. 313–323, where the merits of the criticism are fully discussed. I only add, that Scapula gives the meaning of the word *γινομαι*, *nascor, orior*.

Nothing more can be fairly inferred from the Saviour’s use of the word *γενηται*, if the word *γενεα* be used in the common sense, to denote the period during which men simultaneously dwell together on the earth, a period of thirty years, than that, during the age of the inhabitants of the world, then living in his day, there would be the commencement, the rise, the opening, of the series; the birth of that course of events, he was then predicting. The scenes he predicted, in other words, would soon begin. With this view we are satisfied, as being conformable alike with the import of the Saviour’s language, and the comment of His providence.

But if any prefer the criticism which determines the meaning of *γενεα* differently from the current acceptance of the word generation, we do not object. In either case, the text cannot be understood to mean that all should be accomplished during the lifetime of the men who were cotemporary with Christ; and we are relieved from the

In the 36th verse he replies to the third and last question, stating that, as to the precise day and hour when the end should come, it was not to be made

labored efforts of those who make the destruction of Jerusalem to be the main event referred to, and typical of that of the world, at the day of Judgment, and who quote this passage in proof of what they call a double sense of prophecy, and of the fallacious rule of interpretation founded on it.

It is certain that the word *γενεα* very often, both in sacred and profane writers, means a race, a family, a tribe, a nation, a class of persons united by sameness of character, disposition, or other ties, a people of common origin. Scapula assigns *genus, progenies*, as its proper meaning, and quotes Philo de Vita Mosis, as authority—*καταλείπει μὲν πατρίδα καὶ γενεὰν καὶ πατρῶν οἶκον*. A writer in the Investigator, vol. i. pp. 53–56, has quoted, in proof of this meaning, from Homer, *Iliad* γ. 303, 304,—

Ὀφρα μὲν ἀσπερμος γενεῆ καὶ ἀφαντος ὀληταὶ  
Δαρδανῶν·

“That the race (or posterity) of Dardanus become not extinct.”  
*Iliad* φ. 191,—

Κρείσσων δ' αὐτὲ Δίος γενεῆ ποταμοὶ τετυκταῖ,

“The race (or descendant) of Jove is superior to a river.”  
And from Hesiod, *E. καὶ H.* 281,—

Τοῦδε τ' ἀμαρροτερῆ γενεῆ μετοπισθε λειπταί.

“The race (or progeny) of the perjurer is left to more' obscurity.”

And Josephus, *A. J.* 1. 10,—Ὁ Θεὸς καὶ παῖδα αὐτῷ γενήσεσθαι ἐξαγγέλλει καὶ πολλὴν ἐξ ἐκείνου γενεὰν,—“a numerous race.”—And Septuagint, *Josh.* 22. 27,—Τῶν γενεῶν ἡμῶν μεθ' ἡμᾶς.—“Our generations after us.”

The following passages are given in proof of the absolute import of the word, as synonymous with a tribe, or people, or nation, without reference to the ancestor :

Sophocles, *Ajax*, 190—Τὰς ἀσωτου Σιουφιδαν γενεας. Euripides, *Hecuba*, 470—Τιτανων γενεαν—“The race of the Titans.” Æschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1538—

ὁ δὲ λοιπὸν ἰοιτ'  
ἐκ τῶνδε δομῶν ἀλλῆν γενεαν  
τριβεῖν θάνατοῖς ἀθθενταῖσιν.

“To afflict another race (or family); opposed to that of the Plis-thenidæ.”

known, but it should come upon the world just as the flood did in the days of Noah. It behoved them,

Pindar, Nem., VI. 54—παλαιφάτος γενεα, “an anciently celebrated family.”—Homer, Iliad E. 265,—

Της γὰρ τοι γενεῆς ἥς Τρωὶ περ εὐροπῶα Ζεὺς  
δῶχ’ ἕϊος ποιήην Γανυμήδεως.

“Of that breed (or race) of horses.”

The following, among other passages from the Septuagint, may be added to the above:—Psalm, 14. 5; 24. 6; 73. 15. Gen. 31. 13. Lev. 25. 41. The word is used in the New Testament in the sense of race, tribe, people, nation. See Phil. 2. 15, where our translators render it nation. The above is sufficient to justify the remarks of the learned Mede, who in Epist. 12, p. 752 of his works, says, “I prefer, as I said,” speaking of the import of the word in this passage, “*gens Judæorum*; for what reasons *nihil nunc attinet dicere*. No man can deny but this is one of the native notions of *γενεα*, yea, and so taken in the gospels: as in the foregoing chapter, Matth. 23. 36, *Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come ἐπὶ τὴν γενεὰν ταύτην*—upon this nation. So Beza renders it twice in the parallel place, Luke, 10. 50, 51, and seven times in this gospel. Again, Luke, 17. 25, *The Son of Man must be first rejected ἀπὸ τῆς γενεᾶς ταύτης*—Beza, à *gente istà*. The LXX. renders by this word עַם, *populus*, מִשְׁפָּחָה, *familia*, מוֹלָדוֹת, *progenies*, *patria*. See Gen. 25. 13, and 43. 7; Numbers, 10. 30, &c. I suppose here is enough for the signification of the word.”

We are not concerned to decide which one, or whether both of these critical expositions should be adopted. The idea evidently is, that the things which Christ predicted, should now begin to develop themselves. The Jewish people, or race, should not perish till all should be fulfilled: according to Mede, or according to Cuninghame, the men of that day should not all have died, till the scenes Christ predicted should begin; or blending both,—the Jewish race should not become extinct during the whole course of the days of vengeance, in which all the things he predicted were to be fulfilled. See Stoner’s Dissert. on the Disc. of Christ, pp. 188-193.

Much more might be added here. Sufficient has been said to rescue this passage from the use which has been made of it, for confirming the double sense of prophecy, and introducing that confusion, which the spiritual interpreter and the rules of exegesis founded on the assumed double sense of prophecy, have always led to, in the interpretation of these predictions of Jesus Christ.

therefore, to watch, for, ere they were aware, they should be involved in the terrible scenes connected with his coming to judgment, which he describes in the remainder of the 24th and through the 25th chapters of Matthew. We shall have occasion, hereafter, to refer to these chapters for another purpose. We have given this brief exposition at present, merely to confirm the truth of our position, that the predictions of Christ recognize no new principles of interpretation, but are as literally to be verified as those of the ancient prophets, and to be understood according to the grammatical construction and import of the language employed in delivering them.

Equally true is it of the predictions of Paul, of Peter, and of Jude. They plainly refer to events in the church and world, to be literally, historically verified, i. e. matters of direct, public, visible observation, not allegorical resemblances, and are easiest and best understood according to the grammatical interpretation. As for those of John, in the book of Revelations, they are indeed delivered mainly in symbolical language, but the symbols are not all new. They are chiefly taken from Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah, and are an exposition of many things contained in them, and therefore must be subjected to the same principles of interpretation applicable to them—which is not the allegorical but grammatical interpretation—according to the established import of the symbols, and to designate THINGS, AS REALLY AND HISTORICALLY TRUE, i. e. EVENTS TO OCCUR, as if they had been described in alphabetical terms.\*

Besides, they are interspersed with alphabetical interpretations, which serve as the clue to the mean-

\* See Rev. 1. 20; 4. 5; 5. 8; 7. 13-16; 11. 3, 4, 8; 17. 13, 14, 15, 18; 19. 8, 10; 20. 2, 4, 5.

ing of some of the more complicated symbols. Symbolical language has indeed been called figurative, and made a pretext for the spiritual interpretation, founded on a hidden sense. But we shall have occasion, elsewhere, to show that symbolical language is even more definite and immutable, as to its import, than alphabetical—that it does not possess the character of what rhetoricians call allegory—and that it is used, as truly and designedly as the alphabetical, to designate events and scenes that are to occur in the church and world, as literally matters of public observation, events of history.

The common and most plausible attempt made to prove the allegorical or spiritual interpretation to be correctly applicable to unfulfilled prophecy, is the following.—The phrase, the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, or, the kingdom of the heavens, it is said, evidently, very often in the New Testament, denotes the church of God as a spiritual society, and, therefore, the language of prophecy relating to it, must, of course, possess an allegorical or spiritual meaning. In like manner, it is said, that the coming of Christ is a phrase employed in the New Testament, not in its literal sense, but analogically, to denote some special movement, or interposition of his providence, and, therefore must be analogically and spiritually understood.

In reply to this, we remark, that the thing thus assumed must be proved. The phrase, the kingdom of heaven, we affirm, is not of mutable import, according to men's fancies—now denoting the church of God on earth, as it is visibly organized, and then, its invisible members, the elect of God—then, again, the intermediate state after death—then, the Millennium—and then, eternal glory. It properly, according

to fair grammatical construction, denotes the glorious dominion of Jesus Christ, to be established on earth at his coming, not a kingdom *in* the heavens, sometimes illustrated, it is true, and frequently spoken of, as in its embryo condition, in its forming, preparatory, or inchoate state, comprising the saints on earth with the saints in heaven—destined to a future state of triumph and joint dominion with Jesus Christ, but never as an organized spiritual society, either in union with, or opposition to, or in contradistinction from, the kingdoms of this world.

And as to His coming,\* we utterly deny, that the phrases which are employed by Christ himself, and the New Testament writers, to designate His interposition for the introduction and establishment of His kingdom, either do, or can, upon any fair principles of grammatical construction, mean anything but His VISIBLE PERSONAL APPEARING—His second coming, or glorious return to earth. The assumptions, therefore, on which this whole system of spiritual interpretation is based, we pronounce to be altogether fallacious and untenable. They never have been proved.

In a proper place, we shall show, that the idea of the church being the kingdom of God, was not current in the world for several centuries after the Christian era; yea, was not excogitated till after the introduction of the Platonic philosophy, from the schools of Alexandria, by Origen, and the rise of the spiritual interpreters. After the conversion of the Emperor Constantine to Christianity, and the establishment of the church and of the Christian religion by the laws of the Roman empire, the idea of an allegorical kingdom was conceived and adopted, and became, through

\* See Chap. XI.

the corruptions of the times, the grand means, the ladder, as it has been called,\* by which the Bishop of Rome ascended to his lofty seat, where, claiming the kingdoms of this world, as the vicegerent of Jesus Christ, "he opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."†

There is, indeed, an analogical use of language, which, founded on an assumed relation between moral, spiritual, and intellectual things, and physical, sensible, and material forms, determines the meaning and use of terms originally taken from the latter, as suitable representatives or expressions of our thoughts in relation to the former. It cannot, however, be claimed as a basis for Scriptural exegesis any more than for any other description of exposition. It, however, has been carried by a writer on the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, to the most extravagant results, and claimed as ample warrant for the double sense, allegorical or spiritual interpretation of the Scriptures. But the author's whole system is founded on the following vague, mystic, Aristotelian assumption, "that all things in nature, being outward productions from inward essences, are natural, sensible, and material types, of moral, intellectual, and spiritual antitypes, and finally of their prototypes in God."‡ This is avowedly making a physico-theological, or metaphysical speculation about the origin of creation, the philosophical key for the interpretation of the Scriptures, and needs but to be stated for its refutation. It dif-

\* The Glad Tidings, by H. D. Ward, p. 65, 82. † 2 Thess. 2. 4.

‡ S. Noble's Lectures on the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, pp. 156, 157.



fers in its characteristic details, but is essentially of like character with the system of interpretation introduced by Origen, and which, in the progress of our discussions, we shall have occasion to notice.

Whether, therefore, we contemplate the manner in which the cotemporaries of the prophets interpreted their predictions,—the manner in which the providence of God has interpreted, by their actual accomplishment, those which have been fulfilled—and the manner in which Christ and his apostles delivered theirs—using the very same phrases and language with the former prophets, and never giving the least intimation of any change to be made in the principles of interpretation—there is but one conclusion to which we can come, viz.—THAT THE ENTIRE SYSTEM OF PROPHECY, UNFOLDED IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, RECOGNIZES AND ESTABLISHES, THE LITERAL OR GRAMMATICAL INTERPRETATION, AS THE ONLY APPROPRIATE METHOD.

Here we might rest, but we advance a step further. We claim for this system of interpretation the explicit direction and sanction of God himself.

4. The spirit of inspiration long since authorized us to expect, and has pledged the literal fulfillment of prophecy, and God himself authoritatively and formally ordained that to this test must every prophet subject his predictions. The prophet exhorts us to study the predictions, and to compare them carefully with their accomplishment.\*

“ Seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read:  
No one of these shall fail;  
None shall want her mate:  
For my mouth it hath commanded,  
And his Spirit it hath gathered them.”

\* Isaiah, 34. 16.

It is admitted by commentators\* that while the language here is taken from the pairing of animals, it is designed to teach, that, as each has its mate, so shall it be with the prediction and its accomplishment. They shall be as certainly paired ; none shall want its fulfillment.

But over and above this, it was formally enacted by Jehovah, as a fundamental law in His government of His people, that this should be the rule or test, which, down to the time of the end, they should apply to the sayings of any prophet, who might arise among them. Moses commanded in the name of the Lord, in all cases of doubt about the genuineness and divine authority of a prediction, that if events did not verify the word of the prophet literally interpreted as men are wont to do the language of each other, they were to be set aside. "The prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken ? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, *if the thing follow* not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously."† The common sense of mankind requires the application of the same test or rule to every one still who pretends to be a prophet ; and it is equally important for the cause of truth and the honor of God's word, that in the study and interpretation of the divine predictions, it should be as rigidly observed.

\* See Barnes on Isaiah, ad loc.

† Deuter. 18. 20-22.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE SYSTEM OF INTERPRETATION.—THE NATURE OF FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.

THE general nature of the system of interpretation, applicable to the prophetic writings, has been affirmed to be THE LITERAL, in contradistinction from THE SPIRITUAL. Various arguments have been adduced to prove the affirmation. In presenting those arguments, it has not been deemed necessary to give anything more than a very general definition or description of the two systems. It is possible, however, that mistakes and misapprehensions may exist, in relation to the distinctive features of the system of literal interpretation, and that further information and illustration may be desired by those who would pursue, for their own benefit, the study of the prophecies. It is important, therefore, to correct such mistakes, and to meet such wishes. It is possible that some may claim the authority of the apostle, for spiritualizing or explaining by way of allegory, important moral and religious truths.\* He did unquestionably employ allegory for the illustration and enforcement of the important truth, that no one minister in the Christian church should be vaingloriously exalted and honored for his work, above another. He selected the case of Apollos and himself, who were the favorites of particular portions or parties in the church of Corinth, and by means of an allegory, suggested by the process of building a temple, undertook to show that all who

\* 1 Cor. 4. 6.

contributed, of whatever material, to the growth of the edifice, were co-workers; and that, so far from men's sitting in judgment, and condemning or honoring one laborer more than another, God was the only proper judge, who, as umpire does the building, would try the relative and absolute value of the materials and labor contributed by each. "These things," says he, "I have transferred to myself and Apollos, in a figure." He made Apollos and himself examples, and schemed from them an illustration, on rhetorical principles, suited to the taste and genius of the Greeks, who were fond of eloquence, for the purpose of reprovng the spirit of rivalry and faction among them. This is all he means, \* and it is a great mistake to plead this as a sanction for the general and indiscriminate spiritualizing of the Scriptures.

The literal interpretation has been defined to be what Ernesti has called the grammatical, and cannot better be exhibited in a few words, than in those which Dr. John Pye Smith states to be "the common rule of all rational interpretation; viz., the *sense* afforded by a cautious and critical examination of the terms of the passage, and an impartial construction of the whole sentence, according to the known usage of the language and the writer." †

From this general view of its nature, it is obvious that there must be a careful attention to the different styles of speech, or modes of writing, adopted by the prophetic writers. By the different *styles of speech* we do not mean the varieties and peculiarities observable between different writers—the things which distinguish the composition of one from another; but those modes of speech which the same speaker or

\* See Bloomfield's Greek Test. ad loc.

† Smith's Script. Test. to the Messiah. vol. i. p. 214.

writer is apt to adopt under different circumstances and states of feeling, and which are easily and generally interpreted by the rules of rhetoric, founded on the well-established and essential laws of human thought. In unfolding the features, therefore, of LITERAL INTERPRETATION, we remark—

I. THAT IT DOES NOT REJECT THE TROPES OF SPEECH AND RHETORICAL EMBELLISHMENTS OF STYLE, BUT INTERPRETS THE MEANING OF THE PROPHET ALWAYS BY THE SAME RULES OF EXEGESIS THAT WOULD BE APPLIED TO THE SAME KINDS OF COMPOSITION.

In doing so, however, it does not admit any preconceived notion of the nature of things, according to any metaphysical, philosophical, or theological views, to be the guide and interpreter as to what the language of the prophet means. In this respect, it differs radically from the course adopted and sanctioned by the spiritual interpretation. Thus, for example, when the prophets speak of the coming and kingdom of Jesus Christ, whatever style of speech they may see fit to employ, the literal interpretation inquires first what is the true and proper meaning of the prophet's words—that which he himself attached to them, and designed to convey. In order to determine this, resort is had, not to any *theory* of prophecy, or preconceived opinions, but to the ordinary rules of rhetoric, applicable to the particular style of speech employed by the prophets. That is, he first inquires whether, in the predictions examined, the prophet's language contains any of the tropes of speech, or whether it is a plain historical statement, free from any rhetorical embellishments of diction. Having done so, he takes the appropriate meaning of the words, determined by the character of style, as the ideas designed by the prophet to be communicated. Whether that coming and kingdom,

therefore, are events literally and historically to occur, or are to be understood figuratively, the literalist determines by his previous examination of the language of the prediction, whether tropical or not. The spiritual interpreter, however, pursues a different course. Having conceived beforehand, whether from education or the authority of commentators, that the coming and kingdom of Christ are and must be wholly spiritual,—that is, invisible interpositions of his divine power and influence, to affect and control the minds and hearts of men,—he takes it for granted, that the words are, and can only be, strong rhetorical figures of speech, employed to express merely some general resemblance. The thing, he says, is spoken of as though it were really the fact that Christ should visibly appear and set up a kingdom on earth, to be visibly administered by him ; but is not so to be understood, the language being merely figurative—strong metaphors to express the resemblance or analogy between Christ's invisible influence, and the visible means of influence by which the kings of this world assert and maintain their power—a mere rhetorical accommodation of language.

Because, confessedly, a portion of prophetic language is delivered with metaphorical and other tropical embellishments of diction, the spiritual interpreter thinks that he triumphantly answers the literal interpreter, by arrogantly refusing to concede to him any right at all to apply the rules of rhetoric, and requiring him, *in all cases*, to interpret the words literally, that is, in his sense of the word, totally devoid of figure. Attempting thus to force the literal interpreter into the assertion of things monstrous and absurd, he flatters himself, or with great self-complacency concludes, that he has triumphantly answered and exposed his folly. How often have we heard such

attempts at wit and ribaldry—such satirical flings as these! Shall the sun be literally turned into darkness, and the moon into blood? Shall such wonders occur in Heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath, as literal blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke? Do we not read of the stars falling from Heaven, of a beast with seven heads and ten horns, of a little horn behind the ten, having a mouth speaking blasphemy; and of a certain lady that had her seat upon seven mountains? Must not all these, and such like monstrous and incredible things, the spiritualist asks, be spiritually understood? Who can be so weak and foolish as to understand them literally? Such things being evidently figurative, he concluded that the spiritual interpretation is and must be the only true system, and consequently that all who advocate the literal only betray their own weakness.

Such sophistry almost destroys the respect we wish to entertain for the men that employ it. Because we advocate the literal verity of the *events* or *things* predicted, interpreting the language of prophecy according to the grammatical or rhetorical rules applicable to its particular character, it does not therefore follow, that every metaphor and symbol, or trope of speech, must be stripped of all its ornament, and we be charged with absurdly maintaining, either directly or by fair implication, that when a man is called a lion he is a lion indeed, or when a woman is said to have appeared in heaven clothed with the sun, having the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars, there ever, literally or in reality, was such a thing. It is disingenuous, yea, worse than puerile, to endeavor to excite odium against, or to pour ridicule upon, the literal interpretation of such sophistry. For we remark—

II. THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION CAREFULLY SEARCHES FOR THE GREAT AND LEADING THEME OF PROPHECY, WHICH GIVES SHAPE, CHARACTER, AND IMPORT, TO THE ENTIRE SYSTEM, AND APPLYING TO THEM THE RULES OF PHILOSOPHICAL AND BIBLICAL EXEGESIS, THE PRINCIPLES OF GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTION AND INTERPRETATION, DETERMINES WHETHER THEY ARE TO BE INTERPRETED LITERALLY OR ALLEGORICALLY.

Admitting the existence of tropes, or figures of speech, in the different predictions, the literal interpreter, however, assumes no general notion or preconceived opinion about the nature of the thing, for the interpretation, in any case, of the language of a prophecy, until its import has been established by the ordinary rules of exegesis.

It is true, that some ignorant sectaries and wild fanatics, such as the Mormons, and a certain class of perfectionists, who adopt the views of a Mr. Beman, on the subject of the kingdom of Heaven, and others of kindred ignorance and error, insist upon every expression being taken literally, without any reference whatever to any tropes of speech, so that when God is called a rock and Christ a lamb, and Christians sheep, they are not to be understood as metaphorically, but really such—a pretence so utterly absurd and insolently ignorant, as to merit nothing but pity for the weakness, or contempt for the nonsense of those that make it. The literal interpretation, for which we contend, knows no alliance with such absurdity; and they who object to it, as identical with such nonsense, only display their own ignorance or malice.

To this, perhaps, it will be objected; where then is the difference between the literal and spiritual interpretation? If the literalist admits the existence of



figurative expressions in prophecy, and the spiritualist admits the literal character of many predictions, wherein do they differ? Do they not after all substantially come to the same thing? To this we reply, that they differ as greatly in their *mode of interpreting* as in their *results*. The spiritualist, for example, *assumes* that THE COMING AND KINGDOM OF CHRIST are things which are not and cannot be literally meant and understood, but wholly figurative representations of something spiritual. By means of this assumption, every expression inconsistent with his spiritual idea of the nature of Christ's coming and kingdom, also becomes figurative, and his whole interpretation of the prophecies and exposition of the Scriptures, assumes a correspondent spiritual hue or character. His assumed or preconceived notion of the nature of the things, is the colored glass or lens through which he reads the Sacred Scriptures. The literalist denies all such assumptions, and calls for proof, subjecting the language of the prophets, on these points, to the most careful investigation by means of philological and rhetorical tests and rules. The spiritualist, however, does not in the first instance, by the application of philological and rhetorical tests and rules, determine whether these terms, THE COMING AND KINGDOM OF CHRIST, are, or are not, literally to be understood; nor does he undertake to prove either from Scripture or from any other source, that his assumed notion or opinion of the nature of the things is correct. That must not be disputed. Here, then, is one essential difference between them.

These expressions obviously are the key-note to the entire system of prophecy. If they are literal, at once they give the pitch, or help us to fix the meaning of many predictions, and to judge when other expressions

used by the prophets, are metaphorical or literal. If they are spiritual, in the same way they give tone to the entire language of prophecy, and shape its meaning accordingly. It is not our design at present philologically or grammatically, to settle the meaning of these terms. That must be done in another place. Our object here is merely to unfold the principles by which the literalist proceeds in his investigation of the language of the prophets.

Here, perhaps, it will be objected, how is it possible to settle this difference between the two systems, and to determine whether these expressions are figurative, or whether they are not. We reply, as we have already stated, that recourse must be had to the ordinary and well-established rules of rhetoric. How, we ask, do you tell when another uses metaphors and figures of speech, or when he speaks according to the plain alphabetical import of his language? Although the reader may be just as ignorant as a little child of the rules of rhetoric, yet he finds no difficulty, nor does the child. According to the established laws of human thought, on which those rules are founded, the meaning is at once perceived. The import of the metaphor at once appears when you call a man a lion to denote his strength and magnanimity, or a puppy to denote his meanness, impertinence, and insignificance; or when you compliment a lady by telling her she has a rosy face and a snowy skin.

We are not concerned to quote the rules of rhetoric applicable to tropical words; but it may be proper to remark, that the evidence of our senses and that of intuition and of consciousness, which we all have in common, enables us, whether children or adults, at once, as the case may be, to perceive whether the thing asserted be literally or figuratively spoken. If

literally taken, as when we call a man a lion or an ass, we see it would contradict the evidence of our senses or involve an absurdity. At once, therefore, we apprehend the speaker's design to denote some resemblance of properties, and not identity of substance. No one ever dreams of interpreting language literally, when it is directly contradictory of the evidence of his senses at the time, or his consciousness, or any intuitive truth.

There is nothing in the idea of Christ's visible coming, and of the establishment of a kingdom on the earth, with a visible administration adapted to its elevated nature and designs, at all contradictory of any evidence of sense or of consciousness, or inconsistent with any intuitive truth. Yet is it manifest, that if the literal idea be esteemed absurd, and the notion of his coming and kingdom as mere spiritual matters be adopted, there is much in the language of the prophets that must be accounted figurative, which would otherwise be plain enough literally understood. To the allegorical or figurative import of these words the literalist objects, affirming that the only correct philological and biblical interpretation requires them to be understood literally, and consequently, that the general import of the prophecies must be determined accordingly.

### III. THE LITERAL INTERPRETATION REQUIRES A CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THE DIFFERENT STYLES OF PROPHETICAL LANGUAGE, FOR THE PURPOSE OF APPLYING THE APPROPRIATE RULES BY WHICH TO ASCERTAIN THEIR IMPORT.

No one can long turn his attention to this subject without discovering that there are various styles of speech employed in the prophetic Scriptures, which

may be, and are properly denominated THE ALPHABETICAL, THE TROPICAL OR FIGURATIVE, THE SYMBOLICAL, AND THE TYPICAL.

1. ALPHABETICAL LANGUAGE is the plain ordinary style of speech which men employ to state or to set forth simple matters of history, and unembellished by figurative expressions. Many of the predictions are expressed in this style, entirely devoid of figures and tropes of speech. Occasionally, passages are thrown into the book of Revelations in the same style, intended as a clue to the meaning of some of its highly-wrought and complicated symbolical descriptions. In alphabetical language, words are used in their proper sense, i. e. "the sense which is so connected with them that is first in order, and is spontaneously presented to the mind, as soon as the sound or the word is heard."\*

2. Beside alphabetical language, there is what may be called TROPICAL OR FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE. This the prophets use, in common with all writers, sacred or profane, who, discussing or describing things which deeply interest their feelings, naturally employ figures and tropes of speech, to express, in a more lively manner, their ideas. Thus, proud and stately aristocrats are called cedars of Lebanon and oaks of Bashan; † the troops of Egypt and of Assyria are called the fly of Egypt and the bee of Assyria; and God is said to shave with a hired razor, ‡ and his hand to be stretched out still, and many such like mere tropical words, which the parallelism of Hebrew poetry, the rules of rhetoric, and the connection of thought, generally enable the reader to understand.

Here, it may be proper to remark, that in the prophets' use of figurative language, we meet with every variety of tropical expressions and rhetorical embel-

\* Ernesti on Int. p. 7. † Isaiah, 2. 13. ‡ Isaiah 7. 18-20.

lishments. It is perfectly natural to expect this, as well from the very nature of their commission—which was to enlighten, reprove, comfort, and reform—as from the condition and circumstances of those whom they addressed. The very nature of their messages rendered it impracticable for them to speak without emotion. Different emotions, however, have different ways of expressing themselves; and, therefore, the method adopted by those under their influence, and who seek to persuade others, will not be, by logical investigation, or cool dispassionate argument, to enlighten and convince, but, by exciting and enlisting the affections and passions appropriate to the nature of the subject, or to the purpose of the speaker, to gain the party addressed. The language of the prophets, therefore, naturally became that of the passions. They appeal, not directly to reason, but use it only as auxiliary. Often, indeed, they are highly poetical, adapted in this respect to the mass of common people, who are swayed infinitely more by feeling than reason. Accordingly, the prophetic writings are far more replete with feeling than argument, highly descriptive, often exceedingly impassioned, and therefore abound with all those tropes and figures of speech, which nature suggests and which the rhetorical art has classified.

This feature of prophetic language has furnished occasion to the spiritualist, to claim for his method of interpretation, entire respect and confidence, as the only true and proper system. And, accordingly, we hear a great deal about the extravagance or intensity of Hebrew poetry, the turgid, hyperbolical cast of oriental imagery, and the semi-barbarous taste, which is pleased with and requires such things. On this ground some have given undue prominence to the prophets' use of figure, and deprived the prophecies of

all substance and meaning, until with the rationalists of Germany, and certain Unitarians of the United States,\* having so generalized, or spiritually explained the predictions, they have utterly destroyed all coincidence† between the prophecies thus explained, and the events which were their literal fulfillment, and have thus prepared the way for the denial of such a thing as prophecy altogether.

To all this the literal interpretation objects, contending, that however abundant may be the employment of figures and tropes of speech, by the prophets, we are not authorised to allegorise the whole, any more than your friend or neighbor, addressing you under the influence of impassioned feeling, and abounding in

\* See Gesenius on Isaiah. A late Unitarian discourse preached in Boston, (May 19, 1841,) may be quoted in proof of the tendency of this system of spiritual interpretation. Speaking of the simple faith, required to be given to the Bible, according to its plain grammatical import—because of its infallible inspiration, the author says: “On the authority of the written Word, man was taught to believe impossible legends, conflicting assertions; to take fiction for fact; a dream for a miraculous revelation of God; an oriental poem for a grave history of miraculous events; a collection of amatory idylls for a serious discourse, ‘touching the mutual love of Christ and the church;’ they have been taught to accept a picture, sketched by some glowing eastern imagination, never intended to be taken for a reality, as a proof that the infinite God has spoken in human words, appeared in the shape of a cloud, a flaming bush, or a man who ate and drank and vanished into smoke; that he gave counsels to-day, and the opposite to-morrow; that he violated his own laws, was angry, and was only dissuaded by a mortal man from destroying at once a whole nation,—millions of men who rebelled against their leader in a moment of anguish.” Th. Parker’s discourse on the transient and permanent in Christianity, pp. 19, 20. “The most distant events, even such as are still in the arms of time, were supposed to be clearly foreseen and predicted by pious Hebrews several centuries before Christ.”—p. 20. See also p. 30.

† Hengstenburg, *Christol.*, vol. i. p. 233.

figurative expressions, must be understood, in all he says, to speak allegorically, and not just what the rhetorical import of his words expresses. All that the fact of the prophets' language abounding with figures of speech, does or can prove, is, that we must be careful, according to proper rhetorical rules, to distinguish between the images or figures employed, and the facts they are designed to represent,—that is, to interpret similes and allegories, metaphors and metonymies, synecdoches and antitheses, hyperboles and irony, prosopopœias and apostrophes, and all such rhetorical embellishments, just as we would in any other writings.

Here, perhaps, a few general remarks on the interpretation of figurative language, may be proper. If words occur together, which, the evidence of our senses shows, are perfectly contradictory and inconsistent with each other in their literal meaning, we at once detect a metaphor, and search for the resemblance, as when God calls Jacob his battle-axe,\* Jerusalem a burdensome stone,† Moab his washpot,‡ and the like. The very nature of things, in such cases, intuitively proves the language to be figurative. So when Christ said to his disciples, taking and holding the bread in his hand, which he brake before their eyes, “This is my body which is given for you,”§ their sight taught them that he spake metaphorically, and could not possibly, without absolute rejection and contempt of the evidence of their senses, be understood literally, according to the absurd pretence of the Papists, who reject the evidence of their senses.

The metaphorical import of expressions, however, cannot always be thus easily detected; for often their

\* Jer. 51. 20. † Zech. 12. 3. ‡ Psalm, 60. 8. § Luke, 22. 19.

figurative import depends upon the nature of some truth or fact either proved or assumed to be true, with which it is utterly inconsistent to interpret them literally. Here, therefore, there is great danger of false interpretation, and the greatest care should be taken, lest we assume things to be true which are not, and think we have demonstrated positions, which are untenable. A vast amount of error and confusion, in the interpretation of the figurative language of prophecy, arises from this source. A thing may seem to us to be contrary to our physiological and philosophical theories; yea, to some known and established law of nature, altogether inconsistent with our experience and observation, a perfect miracle, and yet, in the nature of things, it be not impossible for the power of God to accomplish. In itself there may be nothing absurd and contradictory, although, to our limited knowledge, and within our contracted sphere of observation, it may appear so. In such cases we must be very cautious how we pronounce the language of prophecy to be figurative.

Thus God promised to Abraham, that Sarah should have a son. This was a thing altogether inconsistent with the established order of nature as Paul has shown,\* and might, at first, have created a doubt in Abraham's mind, whether it would be or ought at all to be literally understood, and whether there might not be some recondite spiritual meaning involved in the words. But the thing, though inconsistent with the ordinary operations of nature, was not impossible with God, and the event proved that God meant that Abraham should believe it as a thing to be literally true, and no figure about it. He has given

\* Romans, 4. 19.



us also a valuable hint here, because this very thing so wonderful was made a type or symbol of further things which God intended to do. So the prophecy of the miraculous conception of the Messiah, delivered by Isaiah, when he said, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,"\* might have been supposed for the same reason, altogether figurative; and the very minute incidents, apparently inconsistent with other descriptions of the Messiah, viz. that he should ride upon an ass,† that he should be prized at and sold for thirty pieces‡ of silver, the price of a slave, and similar prophecies, might have been judged altogether contradictory of other and glorious things predicted of him, and therefore to be incapable of any other than some allegorical or spiritual explanation. But the event has shown how far they would have erred who should have thus allowed themselves to interpret the prophecies.

Ernesti has correctly remarked, that in relation to uninspired writings, it very rarely happens, that there is any doubt about (the meaning of metaphorical language,) because the objects spoken of are such as may be examined by our senses external or internal, and therefore the language may be easily understood."§ The remark is just as applicable to the metaphorical language of the prophecies, and proves the principle which he has quoted from Donhauer, Tarnoff and Calovius, to be the true one, viz. "that the literal meaning is not to be deserted without evident reason or necessity." We must therefore beware, how we assume a thing to be true, which is not either intuitively so, or obvious to the senses, and

\* Isai. 7. 14.

† Zech. 9. 9.

‡ Zech. 11. 12, 13.

§ Elementary Principles of Interpretation, p. 72.

then, in the light of that assumption, pronounce this and the other statement of a prophet to be inconsistent, and contradictory, and consequently of necessity figurative. It is lamentable to see, how much of this is done.

Theology has suffered, nearly, if not fully, as much as prophecy, from this thing. How are men's views of regeneration, and their interpretation of the language of the Bible on the subject, founded on certain physiological notions and theories of the nature of life, or on metaphysical opinions about the nature of the will, and of human dispositions and states of mind, and the language of inspiration made to teach their theories, their systems, and their philosophy, and to mean more and other things than the Spirit of God intended. In like manner, we can trace the influence of their views as to the nature of justice upon the interpretation of scriptural language in relation to the atonement of Jesus Christ, and of their metaphysical notions about the foundation and certainty of knowledge in relation to the doctrine of election. The same may be said of justification, and sanctification, and holiness.

A specimen or two of inattention to the principle just stated from Ernesti, we give, in relation to the prophecies, from the interpretation of the spiritualists. Dr. Hengstenburg allows himself thus to reason. "The prophets, in many places, give especial prominence to the fact, that the kingdom of the Messiah is to be a kingdom of peace, and all the heathen, under a divine influence, are voluntarily to become its subjects. If now the same prophets, who describe the kingdom of the Messiah as entirely peaceful, nevertheless speak of wars and triumphs of the Theocracy, (comp. Is. chap. 2. with chap. 9, &c.,) in the one

case or the other, their expressions must necessarily be figurative.”\*

This we deny—the inference is by no means just : for it is easy to conceive, that the wars and triumphs of the Messiah, of which the prophets speak, relate to the period of vengeance to be executed upon the guilty nations that opposed his sway, and that they are designed and prosecuted expressly to prepare the way for the introduction and establishment of that kingdom of heaven, which is “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”

A careful attention to times and dates, as contemplated by the prophets, will show that they describe two great epochs in the Messiah’s kingdom, the first of retributive vengeance and destruction on anti-Christian nations, and the second, its peaceful, prosperous, and universal establishment throughout the earth. Yet have spiritual interpreters, by assuming false positions, and judging by them, whether language is figurative or not, instead of confining themselves to plain rhetorical rules, actually lost sight of, and explained away, those fearful and appalling predictions, hereafter to be fulfilled, which describe the revolutions, convulsions, conspiracies, overthrow, and political destruction of the existing nations lying within the field of prophecy.

An example of the same kind may be cited, from the manner in which they explain the coming and appearance of Jesus Christ. There is nothing in the thing itself, literally understood, that is contradictory or absurd—nothing at all impossible or inconsistent for God. It is just and reasonable to believe that He will personally come, and appear in triumph and

\* Christology, vi. p. 237.

glory, as that He actually did so come, and appeared in humiliation and suffering—yea, far more so. But the spiritual interpreters, assuming that *the visible church* is the kingdom of Heaven, and that its general and universal influence and establishment among the nations of the earth, constitute the triumph and glory of Christ in His kingdom, of course are forced to interpret the expressions metaphorically, and consequently to allegorize or spiritualise all the descriptions of the prophets on these themes. They have assumed, too, a vague spiritual notion of the day of judgment, as though it were simply and exclusively a short period allotted for judiciary purposes and none other, when there would be a universal, simultaneous assemblage of mankind before God for judicial trial, and with this limited and imperfect notion, taken from human tribunals, have undertaken to judge what is and what is not figurative in the language of the prophets, in reference to the coming and kingdom of Christ. They should have compared prophecy with prophecy, thoroughly examined the dates and epochs of the scenes described, grouped together the whole description of what the prophets meant by the day of judgment, weighed well the character of all the several acts, and whether they do not comprehend much more in their account of it, even all the functions of government, legislative and executive, as well as judiciary, instead of taking up a partial, imperfect, imaginary idea, running an analogy with human courts, and in the light of such an assumed idea, rather than by the careful investigation and application of rhetorical rules, judging what is figurative and what is not, and so mistaking altogether the *Scriptural* notion of the day of judgment.

It is unnecessary to add anything further on the

figurative language of prophecy than that the ordinary rhetorical rules will enable us to judge,—when the prophet employs the tropes of speech ;—when he uses metaphor or metonymy, synecdoche or hyperbole, prosopopæia or apostrophe ;—when he employs a simile, or extends his similes into an allegory ;—when, assuming the narrative or historical style, his allegory becomes a fable or parable, as in Ezekiel's lamentation over the princes of Israel,\* he speaks of them, and of their doom, as of the whelps of a lioness, one of whom should be caught and caged by the king of Babylon ;—when in the same chapter he describes the history and fate of the commonwealth and church of Israel, by a vine, for a season prosperous in its growth, but afterwards rooted up and scattered abroad, and burned with fire; †—or when by the parable or riddle of two eagles and a vine, he showed the judgments of God, on Zedekiah's ‡ minute rules on this subject, may be learned from hermeneutical and rhetorical works ; but none, or all, are of any great value, without that common sense which men feel to be important and necessary in their study of other books than the Bible. Valuable hints may be obtained from Mede, Vitringa, Newton, Bishop Horsley, Cuninghame, Brooks, Anderson, and other writers on prophecy ; but especially from Bickersteth, § who, although he has not been as discriminating as he might have been in reference to the principles of interpretation, has nevertheless “ suggested some excellent rules and cautions, most of which commend themselves to the good sense and piety of the reader.”

\* Ezek. 19. 1-9.    † Ezek. 19. 10-14.    ‡ Ezek. 17. 2-10.

§ See Bickersteth's Practical Guide to the Prophecies, chap. 2. pp. 12-40.

3. There is yet a third style of prophetic language, characteristically different from tropical, or that sort of figurative language which is to be interpreted by the application of the ordinary rules of rhetoric, viz. SYMBOLICAL LANGUAGE. Symbols are very frequently confounded with ordinary figures, although they have their own peculiar and distinctive traits. Similes state distinctly the resemblance between two things, as when the Psalmist says, the righteous is like an evergreen.\* Allegories are extended resemblances. Metaphors are implied resemblances, as when we describe the property of one person or thing, by giving to it the name of another person or thing, in which that property may be particularly conspicuous, calling an eminent statesman a pillar of state, or, as Christ did the Pharisees, "a generation of vipers." Symbols are yet more general, and imply more than metaphors. They are things, either of nature or art, used and understood to be the signs or representatives of some intellectual, moral, political, or historical truth. Symbolical language speaks to the mind, as the picture does to the eye. It is rather a language represented by things than by *words*. The fixed unalterable nature of things, in the various objects presented in the physical world, the prophets have preferred, as furnishing a better means to convey definite and immutable ideas, than even the definitions, which men frame, in the use of alphabetical language.

These remarks will be better understood from a brief and comprehensive account of the origin, use, and nature of symbolical language, in giving which we avail ourselves of the very lucid and valuable

\* Psalm, 1.

chapter of Mr. Faber on this subject.\* In the infancy of all nations and languages, ideas are much more numerous than words. The few words which men possess, such as the names of animals, and of things around them, are therefore used, not only in their natural and primary sense, but also in an artificial, tropical, or figurative sense. Hence, all infant nations, and half civilized tribes, abound in metaphors, and allegories, and various styles of figurative speech. We hear a great deal about Oriental imagery, and the highly wrought figurative style of the Hebrew prophets, as though there was something peculiar to the East in general, and in the highest degree among the Hebrew prophets; but the Indians of our own forests abound, as much as they do, in the tropes of speech. It is not any peculiar taste for poetry, but sheer necessity, induced by the poverty of language, that leads to this.

The Indian, devoid of language suited to diplomacy, resorts to significant objects and acts, and talks of burying the tomahawk and lighting the pipe, by the very same law of human thought, which made the ancient Hebrew talk of *cutting* a covenant, or lifting his hand, both alluding to ceremonies well known and understood to be emblematic.

This sort of tropical language is perfectly natural, and the very child soon becomes familiar with it. How natural is it to call warlike and ferocious men, and tribes, lions or tigers, and artful, insidious, malicious persons, vipers, snakes in the grass,—the plodding industrious man an ox,—the cunning knave a fox,—the quick-sighted attorney a lynx,—the vigilant and prowling adventurer a hawk,—the faithful and affectionate

\* See Faber's Sacred Calendar of Prophecy, vol. i. chap. 1.

domestic a spaniel, and the like ? The names of lion, tiger, panther, great buffalo, bloodhound, &c., given by our savages to their warriors, are in accordance with the fact, that in proportion to the poverty of a language, and to the want of abstract terms,—which is always the case where there is defective civilisation,—will the language of people become more or less symbolical, that is, they will be disposed to employ things as the representatives of ideas.

Now, supposing that such a people should have occasion to communicate with each other at a distance, of necessity they would revert to pictures,\* being as closely analogous as possible to their spoken language. The image of a man would be the most natural sign of a man, but if it should be desired to describe some particular properties of that man, the most natural method would be to delineate, in connection with the image of a man, the likeness of some animal or object remarkable for that property, until, presently, the natural object would be used as the shortest and best description,—the picture of a snake, a fox, a lion, or a dog, as the case might be, being substituted for the man. These things would then acquire a permanent meaning, and be used to denote a whole class of men of like properties. Hence originated the hieroglyphical style of writing. Carrying the system out, and applying it to families and nations, in the most natural and easy way, it would lead to what has been called the tropical hieroglyphics of Egypt, and lay the foundation of the whole science of heraldry.

Accordingly we find that it was anciently, and continues still to be, the practice of nations to use symbols, or *things*, as signs and representatives of their

\* See Warburton's *Divine Legation*, vol. ii. p. 234, &c.



character,—the dove being the device of the ancient Assyrian empire,—the lion of the Babylonish,—the ram of the Medo-Persian—the he-goat of the Grecian or Macedonian, and the eagle of the Roman. So at this day, the lion is the device of Great Britain, the bear of Russia, and the spread-eagle of the United States. From such a use of language and style of writing, very naturally arose what is called the fable, or apologue, or parable, in which objects in nature are made to represent persons, and the whole to conceal some moral or historical truth, of which we have a very striking example in the fable or parable of Jotham,\* and abundant among other nations than the Hebrews, as the Greek fables of Æsop, the Roman fables of Menenius Agrippa, the Arabic fables by Lochman, the Indian fables by Pidpay, and the French fables by Lafontaine. The fable is a speaking hieroglyphic, and if the story of it be delineated, either by the pencil or the chisel, it becomes at once a painted or a sculptured hieroglyphic.

It was on this very same foundation, the poverty of language, that the whole system of the Oneirocritics, as they are called, i.e. interpreters of dreams—supposed to be prophetic, was built, of which we have specimens in Jacob's interpretation of Joseph's dreams,† Joseph's interpretation of the baker's and butler's and Pharaoh's dreams,‡ and Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's.§ The interpretation was not arbitrary or imaginary, according to the whim and caprice of the soothsayer, but proceeded according to fixed and definite rules, founded on the import of symbolic language, so that this branch of divining became a science, which was studied and practised among heathen nations, highly respected and honored in Egypt and

\* Judges, 9. 8-15.

† Gen. 37. 10.

‡ Gen. 40. 5-20 ; 42. 1-32.

§ Dan. 2. 31-45.

Babylon, and cultivated by the Hebrews.\* There is reason to believe, that much of the studies pursued in the school of the prophets, instituted in the days of Samuel, was designed to qualify for the right use and interpretation of symbolic language. The dreams related by Herodotus,† of Astyages, that a vine sprang from the womb of his daughter, and rapidly overspread all Asia, and of Xerxes that he was crowned with the wreath of an olive tree which covered all the earth, but which suddenly and totally disappeared, may have been, for anything we can say to the contrary, as truly from God as those of Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, and capable of being interpreted even by the heathen Oneirocritics correctly, according to the definite and established import of symbols.

Mr. Faber has referred to Artemidorus, Astrampsychnus, and Achmetes, and the other Oneirocritics, who are mentioned by them, as assuming the general principle, that such and such hieroglyphics bear such and such a meaning; and this point having been laid down, they very readily fabricate their interpretations of dreams accordingly. "Thus," adds he, "because poverty of language had anciently produced such a figurative mode of expression,—heaven, from its exalted situation, having been made the symbol or hieroglyphic of supreme regal power,—if a king dreamed that he ascended into heaven, the ancient Indians and Persians, and Egyptians, as we learn from Achmetes, interpreted his dream to signify, that he would obtain the pre-eminence over all other kings. And thus, an earthquake being, very naturally, for the same reason, made a symbol of a political revolution, if a king dreamed that his capital or his country was shaken by an earthquake, his dream, according to the same writer,

\* Warburton's *Divine Legation*, vol. ii. p. 67.

† Herod. l. i. c. 108, and l. vii. c. 19.

was explained to portend the harassing of his dominions by external or internal violence.”\*

Such is the principle, on which is built the symbolical language of prophecy. Like the ancient hieroglyphics, and like those non-alphabetical characters, which are divided from them, it is a language of ideas, rather than words. It speaks by pictures quite as much as by sounds ; and through the medium of those pictures, rather than through the medium of a labored verbal definition, it sets forth with equal ease and precision, the nature and relations of the matters predicted.† Hieroglyphics are the painted or sculptured images of the things employed to represent or express some moral, political, historical or religious ideas. Symbols are those things themselves, and symbolical language but the setting forth or expressing such ideas by means of the names of those things which represent them.

Many of the predictions of Isaiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and other of the Old Testament prophets, were delivered in this style of speech. The Revelations of the apostle John are almost wholly of this character. But it must be obvious to every intelligent reader, that the language of symbols is no less appropriately employed to represent *real* things, events literally and historically to occur, than is either alphabetical or metaphorical language. All that is requisite, is to ascertain the import of the symbol, and to apply the rules appropriate for the interpretation of such language. So far from being vague, and liable to the whims and caprice and fancies of interpreters, it is even more fixed and definite in its import than alphabetical language.

\* Faber's Sac. Cal., v. i. p. 10.

† Faber's Sacred Calendar, v. i. c. 1.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE SYSTEM OF INTERPRETATION.—SYMBOLICAL AND TYPICAL LANGUAGE.

THE fact that the Sacred Scriptures, and especially the prophetic parts, abound in figurative language, is not to be questioned. God has expressly declared, that He sometimes spoke alphabetically by the prophets; at other times employed visions, and at others still, used similitudes, i. e. symbolical objects and actions, for the purpose of making known his will: "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions and used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets."\* The style of speech, therefore, adopted by Him, must be duly and carefully attended to, in order to understand his meaning. It would be altogether inappropriate, to interpret alphabetical speech by the rules applicable to tropical language. Equally so would it be to lose sight of the peculiar nature of symbolical language, and to interpret it as we would ordinary metaphors. Each has its own character; and the rules of rhetoric and the general laws of human thought must be appealed to, in order to understand its import.

This, we have shown, does not militate against what is called the literal, in contradistinction from the spiritual interpretation, the leading and essential characteristic of which is, that the prophecies set forth

\* Hos. 12. 10.

real persons and events, as literally and historically to arise and occur in the world, as any matters of historical observation and verity which have already transpired. In defending and illustrating this position, we noticed, in the last chapter, the alphabetical style of writing, which is devoid of rhetorical embellishment and explains itself, and the metaphorical or tropical, to be interpreted according to the ordinary rules of rhetoric. Notice, too, was taken of a third style of speech in the prophetic Scriptures, viz. symbolical language; on the origin, use and nature of which some remarks were submitted. We resume the consideration of this subject.

It was shown that symbols are things, used as signs or representatives of ideas, instead of words; that this style of speech originated in the poverty of language, and is the most natural, appropriate, and universal method adopted by infant nations and half-civilized tribes, to express their thoughts to each other; and that hieroglyphics are but the painting or exhibition to the eye, which the sound or name of the things are to the ear, both being the representatives or signs of thought. Symbolical language, it was shown, was the language of ideas rather than of words, and founded on some definite, established, and well-understood import of the thing, when used as an emblem or symbol of thought. This well-understood import of symbols, it was further shown, formed the foundation on the one hand of the whole science of heraldry—yet prized in some parts of the world—and on the other hand, of the whole system of the Oneirocritics, or of divining future events by dreams believed to be prophetic—pretensions to which sort of sorcery are yet made, even in Christian countries, and books circulated purporting to aid the fortune-teller and others in

the interpretation of symbols. There is scarcely a nation on the face of the earth, among whom, in some form or other, either of science or of superstition, the language of symbols does not to some extent obtain.

It is characteristically different from what are called emblems, though symbols and emblems are often confounded. Symbols, as we have shown, are things, either of nature or of art, used to denote ideas. Emblems are no more than paintings, carvings, engravings, basso-relievos, or other representations intended to hold forth some moral or political instruction—presenting one thing to the eye and another to the understanding. Inlaid Mosaic works and all kinds of ornaments, vases, statues, sculptured and fine-wrought productions, were called emblems by the Greeks. We more commonly mean by them, some pictured representation with a device, such as are found on seals, or use the word in a tropic sense. Some, who have undertaken to write what are called symbolical dictionaries, as Daubuz, and Wemyss who has followed him very closely, are not careful to distinguish between metaphors, emblems, symbols, and allegories, but use the term synonymously with figurative—a thing very common among commentators, and which, we doubt not, has contributed to much confusion in the study and interpretation of the prophecies. Bishop Warburton has shown,\* that the hieroglyphical style of writing, which led to the employment of emblems, and, in the progress of idolatry and superstition, to the use of sacred gems called abraxas and of the talisman, grew most naturally out of the necessity there was in infant nations and high antiquity, before language was refined and extended, to employ symbols, or make things the representatives of ideas.

\* Divine Legation, v. ii. sec. iv.

The practice of the Mexicans, whose only method of writing their laws and history was by means of picture writing—the hieroglyphics of Egypt—the present characters of the Chinese, which are an improvement on the hieroglyphics of Egypt, the images having been thrown out, and the outlines and contracted marks only being retained—all are to be traced to the necessity there was for the employment of symbols. He accounts it the uniform voice of nature speaking to the rude conceptions of mankind; for not only the Chinese of the East, the Mexicans of the West, and the Egyptians of the South, but the Scythians, likewise, of the North, and the intermediate inhabitants of the earth, viz. the Indians, Phœnicians, Ethiopians, &c., used the same way of writing by pictures and hieroglyphics—written symbols.

That the prophets, who had alphabetical characters, and were thus enabled to write in a manner entirely different from these rude attempts, should nevertheless preserve in their writings a large amount of symbolical expressions, need not be thought a strange thing, nor derogatory to the spirit of inspiration, which indicted their communications. For, the language of symbols is not only the natural language of men in the primitive state of society, but also the most universal—all nations, whether civilized or barbarous, being capable of understanding it much better than the abstract alphabetical, or unfigurative language of those highly cultivated. It is, therefore, the fittest and most appropriate, for the Spirit of God to employ, in uttering those predictions, which involve the interests of the world. None can be more universal. In order to understand symbolical language, it is not necessary to understand the vernacular language of the nation which uses it. It is said that those who understand

the import of the hieroglyphical characters employed by the Chinese, can read their books, though they may not understand a word of their spoken language, because its characters are not alphabetic, the signs of words, but of things.

The immutable nature of the thing which is used as a symbol, forms a better representative, than the changing character of the words which denote that thing. It matters not how much living languages may change, or how much the sounds of words, which express things, may vary, if we understand the thing that forms the symbol, we catch more readily the idea symbolised by that thing. Thus, for example, it is a matter of little moment with us, when we understand what the sun symbolises, whether it is called *Schemesch* by the Hebrew, *Shemsco* by the Syrian, *Schams* by the Arab, *Schims* by the Moor, *Je* by the Chinese, *Zahado* by the Ethiopian, *Helios* by the Greek, *Sol* by the Latin, *Soleil* by the Frenchman, *Sonne* by the German, *Schiin* by the Mantschou Tartar, *Sunna* by the Anglo-Saxon, or *Sun* by the English. Whatever may be the written mark or character, or syllabic sounds, which in different languages denote the thing, the thing itself is the same, and stands an immutable symbol, much to be preferred as a representative of thought, than naked unfigurative language. What we thus say of one is true of every symbol, and therefore the definite and fixed import of symbolical language, renders it the best and fittest vehicle of prophecy.

This conclusion contradicts the opinion of many. For, against such language it has been often objected, and especially by persons predisposed to infidelity, that it is of necessity very obscure and uncertain in its meaning. Persons of this description, having read the prophecies of Daniel, of Zechariah, and of the



apostle John, which abound in symbolical language, and having met with some symbols exceedingly complicated and monstrous, are apt to lay the Bible down, and to pronounce the whole prophetic portion of it unintelligible. It would be just as rational and becoming, to reject every work written in a foreign dialect, and to pronounce it unintelligible. Let but the key to the meaning of the words, or of the characters we attempt to decipher, be obtained, and there will be comparatively little difficulty.

Now the key to the meaning of the symbols used by the prophets, is to be found in the Sacred Scriptures. Symbols are often used and interpreted precisely as did the ancient Oneirocritics, that is, upon the known and admitted import of the thing as the representative of ideas; examples of which we referred to in the last chapter, in the interpretation of the dreams of Joseph, and Pharaoh, and Nebuchadnezzar. At other times, where the import of the symbol is not so obvious, where it may be a complicated symbol, and nothing like it exists in nature, but be the creation of the prophet, or description of something seen by him in vision, there there is generally found a clue to the interpretation in some alphabetical hints or definitions incidentally thrown in. We give a few examples.

Daniel, in describing the things he saw in one of his visions, speaks of a ram with two horns,\* one higher than the other, seen in the very act of growing out of his head, the higher one growing up last; which ram pushed westward, and northward, and southward from the river Ulai in Persia, and fought with the other beasts, so that none could stand before him. He also tells us, that some time after, while he

\* Dan. 8. 1-12.

was yet considering the exploits of this ram, he saw a he-goat come from the west with astonishing rapidity, bounding, as it were, on the face of the whole earth, and not even touching the ground. This goat, which he describes as having one notable horn between his eyes, came against the ram, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. "I saw him," says he, "come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns, and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him, and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand."\* This he-goat became exceeding strong; but presently his notable horn was broken, and in its place came up four other notable horns toward the four winds of Heaven, i. e., north, south, east and west, out of one of which came a little horn whose exploits also he describes. This is not metaphorical language, but symbolical; and the clue to its interpretation† is afterwards given in alphabetical words so plain that they cannot be mistaken, the ram being the Medo-Persian empire, established by Cyrus, and the he-goat the Grecian empire established by Alexander of Macedon, the histories of which empires, both in their rise and overthrow, correspond exactly, I may say literally, with the description given of these two beasts.

Another example is taken from the Revelations of John the apostle,‡ where, relating his vision, he describes a lascivious and lecherous woman, who had yielded her embraces to the kings of the earth, and was riding on a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. On

\* Dan. 8. 7.

† Dan. 8. 19-25.

‡ Rev. 17. 1-18.

her forehead was a name written,—*Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth.* Arrayed in purple and scarlet color, decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication, she became drunk with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus.

This is a complicated symbol, but there are alphabetical hints and definitions given in the very same chapter\* and other parts of Scripture, which furnish the key to unlock its meaning. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth, and also seven kings or forms of sovereignty, five of which had fallen or ceased, at the time John prophecied, the sixth being then extant; and the seventh, another form of sovereignty, to arise at a future period, and to last but a short time, but be resuscitated shortly in some one of the seven, prior to the destruction of the beast and the woman together. The ten horns of the beast are ten kingdoms, which were not in being when John wrote, but should arise, and conjointly persecute the saints, and afterwards turn against the woman that rode upon the beast. The woman is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth. And her name was Babylon the Great, the very title by which Peter, writing from Rome, metaphorically designated that city.†

\* Rev. 17. 9–18.

† 1 Pet. 5. 13. The church that is at Babylon elected, &c. “On the *Βαβυλῶνι* there has been no little diversity of opinion. Some as Mill, Bertram, Pearson, Wolf, Wall, and Fabrie, take to denote *Babylon in Egypt.* But this has no probability, and has been refuted by Lardner, who with the ancients, and many eminent moderns, as Grotius, Hamm., Whitby and most of the *Romanists,* think that by *Babylon* is figuratively meant Rome † and this is

We need scarcely name the complicated power here described. The picture speaks for itself to every one acquainted with the history of the Roman empire, the rise, growth, and abominations of popery, and the persecutions for a time while devoted to the see of Rome, of the ten papal kingdoms that originated contemporaneously with popery, but which have since, one after another, begun to hate the whore. There are yet parts of the prediction remaining to be fulfilled, the resuscitation of one of the heads of the beast, a form of sovereignty which had previously existed—which, however, we are not told, and therefore whether it is to be the consular, republican, or imperial form, the dictatorship, the decemvirate, the military tribunate, or its last and now defunct form, time must show. Were we to hazard a conjecture here, we should say with Mr. Faber,\* that in all probability, the seventh and last head of the beast, the political Roman empire, was the military empire of France, which reached its greatest power and glory under Napoleon,—which continued but a short time, and was killed by the sword of the allied sovereigns; and which will revive in some ascendant political and military dynasty, in the formation and development of which, France is destined to act a conspicuous part, and by means of which, we add, the way will be prepared for the exhibition of the last and infidel phase of popery, under which aspect she is to be suddenly, violently, and irrecoverably destroyed by the desolating vengeance of Heaven inflicted on the city of

supported by the united voice of antiquity. Certain it is there are many points of resemblance between that queen of cities, and what we conceive of ancient Babylon.”—Bloomfield’s *Recensio Synoptica*, Ann. Sac., vol. viii. p. 692, ad loc.

\* Faber’s *Sacred Calendar of Prophecy*, vol. iii. p. 177–218.

Rome, and the system which has so long made Rome its capital.\*

Whatever may be the truth or probability of such conjectures, in relation to the parts of this extended symbolical prophecy remaining to be fulfilled, certain it is, that the alphabetical interpretations given in the seventeenth chapter of Revelations, the accuracy of the description, both of the beast, viz., the political Roman empire, and of the woman riding on the beast, i. e. papal Rome, and the amount of the prediction already fulfilled, direct us to *literal historical verities* which have occurred in the world, and are yet destined to occur, in the cotemporaneous destruction of the ten kingdoms and of the papacy. Other examples might be adduced, but these may suffice to prepare the reader to understand what we mean by the literal interpretation of symbolical prophecy, and to appreciate a few further remarks on the subject.

In alphabetical language, words are signs of things, and often different words are used to denote the same thing, giving rise to what we call *synonyms*, which, instead of rendering language obscure, only serve to render it more precise and beautiful. When a word, however, as is sometimes the case, is used to denote different things, or as Paul does the word law, in different senses, then obscurity is apt to arise. Symbolical language avoids this obscurity. The same symbol is not used to denote different things, which have no analogical resemblance and relation to each other, for there would then be inextricable confusion in the interpretation of prophecy. Different symbols are indeed used to denote the same thing, but the same symbol is not used to denote different things, unless,

\* Rev. 18. 21.

indeed, there is a close relationship and a manifest resemblance between them ; as when the sun is made the symbol of supreme power, it may denote the supreme power either in the church or state, according to the nature of the subject spoken of. "Hence," as Mr. Faber has remarked,\* "the language of symbols, being purely a language of ideas, is, in one respect, more perfect than any varied language ever known and employed ; it possesses the varied elegance of synonyms, without the obscurity which springs from the use of ambiguous terms."

The symbols employed in the prophetic Scriptures, may be divided into PURE and MIXED, and the former again into SIMPLE or natural, and COMPOUND or artificial. MIXED SYMBOLS are those which possess sometimes a metaphorical and sometimes a symbolical character, being found in allegorical description, in theological and didactic statements, and in prophetic story. Thus, *parturition* or *birth* is used metaphorically† to denote the sinner's change of heart, and symbolically‡ the origin of a community. The *world*, metaphorically,§ denotes wicked men, but symbolically,|| a body politic, either ecclesiastical or political, or a dispensation. *Sores*, metaphorically speaking, denote both morally and theologically the vices or corruptions of society, and symbolically the profligacy of a state, or the corrupt notions and principles in the body politic, after they have broken out into overt action, as Isaiah has allegorically described the condition of a corrupt and degenerate church and state.¶ It is unnecessary to multiply examples : but it must be obvious, that, in the interpretation of this class of symbols, great care and discrimination are necessary, to deter-

\* Sacred Calendar of Prophecy, vol. i. p. 15. † John, 3. 5, 6.

‡ Is. 66. 8. § John, 17. 14, &c. || Heb. 2. 5 ; 6. 5. ¶ Is. 1. 6.

mine when the prophet speaks metaphorically, merely to embellish his description or to illustrate a truth, and when he speaks symbolically, to set forth things or events to occur. The neglect of this sort of discrimination, has led to much confusion with some, as to the nature of symbols, and of the figurative language of prophecy in general, as well as to their interpretation of it.

PURE SYMBOLS comprehend those things, which, either in their simple state, as existing in nature or art, or as compounded by the fancy of the prophet, are used as the representatives of ideas. Of SIMPLE SYMBOLS, the most numerous class is those taken from the natural world, with its various divisions and constituent parts. As a whole, the world symbolically denotes a body politic, and that, according to the analogy above referred to, may be either sacred or profane, ecclesiastical or secular.

But, as the world may be viewed as associated with other parts of the universe, as for example, the heavens, the sun, the moon, the stars, the clouds, and the earth, as comprising several constituent parts, such as the seas, the rivers, the islands, the mountains, &c., so, each part becomes in its turn a distinct symbol:—*the Heavens*, from their high elevation, and from their being the region or space in which the sun and stars, &c., are placed, denoting in general the constitution or fundamental structure or basis of the government,—*the sun*, the supreme authority—*the moon*, the next highest co-ordinate authority, the Queen, for example, in regal governments—*the stars*, the principal officers, such as princes and magistrates of the realm, or of the territorial domain—*the mountains*, principal kingdoms—*the islands*, inferior states—*the sea*, the mass of the people collectively taken,—*rivers*, the people of

different provinces, or the subordinate kingdoms of an empire—and *floods*, the irruption and invasion of hostile armies or predatory communities.

These symbols, applied to ecclesiastical bodies or churches, possess an analogous import. Accordingly, when applied to secular empires, the *blackening of the sun* or a solar eclipse, denotes the destruction or suspension of the supreme authority—the *turning the moon into blood*, the destruction of the higher subordinate authorities—the *falling of the stars*, the revolt or destruction of the princes, or principal officers of state—the *rolling of the heavens together like a scroll*, great revolutions issuing in the destruction of the constitution—and taking all together, in general, great political convulsions tending to the subversion of the state or empire.

In reference to ecclesiastical and spiritual things, the *darkening of the sun* will denote the decay of evangelical religion by obscuring the light and influence of Jesus Christ, who is metaphorically and symbolically the Sun of Righteousness—the *turning the moon into blood*, the calamities, afflictions, and persecution of the church—the *falling of the stars*, apostasies among ministers of religion—the *heavens rolling together like a scroll*, the revolution and subversion of the visible church.

In like manner, an *earthquake*, politically, denotes a revolution—a *storm of hail and fire*, the desolation of an empire by invasion, or the irruption of barbarian hordes—the *removal of mountains and islands*, the subversion of kingdoms and communities—the *turning of the sea and rivers into blood*, the destruction by sanguinary war of large masses of people—and the *drying up of rivers*, the wasting of the population and revenues of a kingdom. These may be called SIMPLE



OR NATURAL SYMBOLS, whether used singly or grouped together, for they, both individually and collectively, really exist in nature.

COMPOUND SYMBOLS are those which, although in their individual or integral parts they have a veritable existence in nature, are nevertheless grouped or combined together, sometimes in monstrous forms, and always in such combinations as find nothing answerable to them in nature, but are the creations of the prophet's mind, or the pictures that were presented to him in vision. Of this sort are the wild beasts described by the prophets, differing, sometimes monstrously, from any actually existing. A *beast* being the symbol of an empire, its different members are employed to denote something pertaining to that empire. Thus, the beast with the seven heads and ten horns, is explained to denote the political or secular Roman empire—the *heads*, distinct forms of supreme authority—and the *horns*, separate and distinct kingdoms. Others of like complicated character might be noticed, such as the woman clothed with the sun,\* having the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars, while in parturition attacked by a great red dragon with seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his head, having a tail which drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth, all which, when interpreted according to the import of the symbols, gives us, as we are disposed to believe, though differing from most commentators on this subject, a description of the opposition made by the secular government of pagan Rome against the piety of the Christian church, and which finally issued in the birth and prevalence of popery for 1260 years.

\* Rev. 12.

It is unnecessary to notice the variety and desultory character of many other symbols, taken from the elements—thunder and lightning, hail and tornado, tempests and volcanoes, from a great city, from a sealed book, from the harvest, and the vintage, a supper, and a great battle, and the like. Nor is it necessary to detail the rules which different commentators have laid down, by which to determine the import of a symbol, in any of its particular uses; some excellent remarks on which subject may be found in Johnson's introduction to his Exposition of the book of Revelations, and Mr. Faber's Calendar of Sacred Prophecy, and other works of kindred character. Enough has been brought into view to give some general idea of the nature and structure of symbolical language, and to show that while things, either simple or compounded, are made the representatives of ideas, such language, nevertheless, as distinctly and definitely as alphabetical, directs us to LITERAL MATTERS OF FACT, REAL OBJECTS AND EVENTS, *matters of visible observation in this world*, HISTORICALLY TO BE VERIFIED.

4. There is yet what may be called a fourth style of language in which prophecy has been sometimes delivered, viz. that of TYPES.

YPES are often confounded with symbols, because they bear a very strong resemblance to them, being visible signs, figures, actions, persons, rites, or institutions, representing something intended to be made known. There are, however, one or two essential points of difference. A type was understood to represent something future, just as a copy does the original, and in this sense, the word is generally used in contradistinction from antetype, which denotes the original or thing itself.\* In this sense Paul† says

\* See Warburton's Div. Leg., vol. ii. pp. 646, 647. † Rom. 5. 14.

Adam was a type of Christ. Isaac, too, as required by God to be sacrificed, and as offered by Abraham,\* was a type of Christ, by which Paul says Abraham received some clearer views as to the love and providences of God in sacrificing the Lord Jesus Christ, his Son, the Messiah. The paschal lamb was a type of redemption by Jesus Christ. The brazen serpent was a type of the cross of Christ as the means of salvation. The Levitical priesthood, and, indeed, the whole tabernacle and its furniture, with its various ordinances and worldly sanctuary, were types† of Christ, the great High-priest of our profession, officiating, as He now does, in a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, the original or antetype which the tabernacle, suited to a migrating state in the wilderness, and the temple afterwards adapted to a more permanent state, were designed to represent.

Another difference between types and symbols is, that the import and use of the latter grew naturally out of the poverty of language, whereas the former depend, originally and entirely, upon the appointment of God, or the fact that He designedly employed them as a means of instruction. This, idea is of great importance in the study and interpretation of the Scriptures; for it will administer, in THE FIRST PLACE, a necessary check to those who are disposed to give loose to their imaginations, and interpret everything historical and ceremonial, under the Old Testament, as typical of something under the New—and, in THE SECOND PLACE, supply the proper guide and limitations as to what is called the secondary, occult, or double sense of prophecy. We are not authorized to say this action or the other, this person, event, cere-

\* Heb. 11. 17-19.

† Heb. 9. 9; 10. 1.

monial, or the other, was typical, unless we learn, from the Sacred Scriptures, directly or indirectly, that God so intended it to be. Nor are we to take it up as a general principle, and employ it for the interpretation of all prophecy, that because some predictions have been unquestionably delivered intentionally with a double reference, therefore we must seek a double meaning—first a literal, and then a spiritual—in all.

These remarks will be better understood from a brief view of the nature and origin of types. One of the most ancient, simple, and natural modes of communicating men's conceptions to each other, is by expressive actions. It is equally applicable to civil and religious matters. There is reason to believe that the very first revelation God ever made to man, of the fact and scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ, was made in this way. From the historical account given by Moses in the 3d chapter of Genesis, of the pronouncing of the curse on the human race, it would appear that God, Adam, Eve, and the serpent, were all present. Whatever may have been the original form or character of the serpent, which there is reason, from the very words of the curse pronounced on it, to believe was different from what it is now, one thing is certain, that it was but the innocent visible instrument, employed and actuated by an invisible and malignant spirit for the seduction of the "Mother of us all."

One design of the pronounciation of the curse was, to teach our first parents the existence and presence of a malignant, invisible being,\* hostile to their happiness; and also that, notwithstanding his temporary triumph over them, he should nevertheless be overcome, and there be escape for men from under his do-

\* See Hengstenburg's Christology, v. i. p. 26 41.

minion. God can change at will, without violating any moral obligation or impeaching his benevolence, the form and functions of any mere animal devoid of a rational soul; especially should this be done for the purpose of illustrating or giving a lively exhibition of important moral truth. Presuming, as we may justly, that the serpent instantly, on the pronouncing of the curse, changed its form, and, falling prostrate on the earth, began to creep abjectly and disgustingly on its belly, there could not have been given to our first parents a more significant illustration, and pledge of the ultimate fulfilment of the prediction, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." And if, as is most likely, the special dislike of mankind to the serpent, where the light of revelation is had, was the result of these historical recollections, we have, in these very feelings, a perpetuated proof of God's veracity and faithfulness in the fulfilment of his promise, to destroy the dominion of Satan, and to establish a lasting enmity between him and the seed of the woman. While the whole was veritable matter of history, obvious to the eye, it became a very appropriate and significant type of other things, as literally and truly to occur. Such typical actions were afterwards very common—examples of which we have in the significant or typical actions of the prophets Ezekiel, Jeremiah, Hosea, Isaiah, and others: such as the carrying out of the household stuff;\* the portraying of Jerusalem on a tile† and laying siege to it; the burying of a linen girdle;‡ the lying on the side so many days;§ the marring of the vessel on the potter's wheel;|| the breaking of the potter's vessel;¶ the marriage of

\* Ezek. 12. 1-11.

† Ezek. 4. 1-3.

‡ Jer. 13. 1-15.

§ Ezek. 4. 4-6.

|| Jer. 18. 1-10.

¶ Jer. 19. 1-15.

whoredoms, and birth and names of the prophets' children.\*

Whatever may be the truth and force of these remarks, as to the typical actions of God when he first pronounced the curse, it is certain, that very soon after the fall of our first parents, God ordained the rite of sacrifice, which afterwards was adopted into the Levitical ritual, and was, as we learn, from the beginning, a type of the sacrifice of the woman's seed—the atonement of Jesus Christ for the redemption of the world.†

The passover, a rite divinely instituted to commemorate the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, was also a type of redemption from sin, and death, and hell, by the sacrifice of Christ, our passover or paschal lamb without spot and blemish, who was offered for us.‡ We need not notice further examples. Suffice it to say, that the priesthood of Melchizedek and of Aaron the high priest, and the essential ordinances of the Mosaic ritual, were all divinely appointed types or foreshadowing resemblances and copies of the great original, Jesus Christ. For it was not only actions that were made typical, but also persons. Thus, Isaac offered for sacrifice by his father Abraham, Israel collectively called and delivered out of Egypt, Moses as a prophet and mediator, David as a conqueror, and Solomon as a peaceful and glorious king, and others, were employed by God, and in his providence placed in circumstances, to foreshadow or represent some attributes and features in the character and work of Jesus Christ. The one was the type of the other, but both were equally veritable persons, and real actors in

\* Hos. 1. 2. 3.

† See Delancy's *Revelation Examined*, v. i. Diss. 8.

‡ Warburton's *Divine Legation*, v. ii. p. 499.

scenes and events bearing a strong and striking resemblance.

It is of very great importance to attend to this principle in the interpretation of the book of Psalms. The typical character of David, known and understood by himself to be a type of Christ, and the typical character of many of the great events in his history, are the only true clue to his meaning in many of the Psalms. Primarily he may have had his eye on the events and circumstances of his own life; but it is only as he saw and understood them to be typical, and illustrative of something correspondent in the character and history of the Messiah, towards whom his hopes and aspirations were directed, that they excited the deep interest of his heart. The Spirit thus gave him typical revelations, and through him the church. For thus were they understood and quoted by Christ and his apostles. So too did the ancient rabbinical writers among the Jews understand the Psalms. The 22d and 69th psalms are a striking description of the sufferings of the Messiah; the 2d, 21st, 45th, 68th, 72d, 89th and 110th, of the triumph of the Messiah; the 16th, 35th, 40th, 102d, and others, of his humiliation and exaltation, actually so understood and quoted in the New Testament. So frequent and indeed continual are the references in the Psalms to the Messiah, upon the principle just stated, as to justify the position taken by the Rev. John Fry,\* Rector of Desford, Leicestershire, and formerly of the University College, Oxford, that Christ and the events of his first or his second advent are the perpetual theme from one end to the other of this sacred book. This fact affords an abundantly satisfactory solution of what in that book appears to be inconsistent with a Christian spirit, and

\* See his *New Translation and Exposition of the Psalms*.

has led some to denominate particular parts of it cursing psalms—such as the 109th, &c. They are but denunciations and predictions of divine vengeance on the enemies of Christ, and might have been just as correctly translated in the future tense as in the imperative mode.

This typical character of some predictions not being duly considered, has led some to great mistakes about what has been called the secondary or double sense. It is undoubtedly the fact, that sometimes predictions have been delivered in terms which describe a near and literal fulfilment, and yet look forward to a more remote and analogous fulfilment. Hence some have contended, as they thought unanswerably, in favor of the allegorical or spiritual interpretation, as though there is always an occult sense behind the literal expressions. But a closer attention to this subject will show that the argument is fallacious.

One or two examples, and the statement of the obvious principle of interpretation in relation to them, will set this matter in a plain and intelligible light. Joel, in his first and second chapters, predicted approaching ravages of the land of Israel by the palmer-worm, the locust, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar. Afterwards he predicts the invasion of the country by a mighty "*nation*," whose strength and numbers and ravages, he describes, by language suggested from the desolating character, numbers, progress, and effects of an army of locusts. These two events are so blended together in that description, as to make it evident, that the first desolation by the locusts was regarded by the prophet as a type of the more terrible desolation to follow by the Assyrian army. A careful attention to the language of the prophet, shows evidently that he had the two literal events in view, and, in filling up his description taken from the



type, i. e. the locust ravages, uses terms applicable and evidently pointing to the antetype, i. e. the Assyrian invasion.\*

Of like character are other typical predictions, of which we notice that of the destruction of Babylon, given in the 13th and 14th chapters of Isaiah. The description is most graphic, so far as the literal Babylon is concerned, and all has been verified to the very letter; but both at the commencement (ch. 12. 6-16) and at the close (ch. 13. 24-27), the language directs us to a far more terrible and extensive desolation of the kingdoms of this world than took place at the overthrow of ancient Babylon by the Medes.

Other prophets and Christ himself adopted the very words of Isaiah, and especially the apostle John, when they predicted the great convulsions, revolutions, and overthrow of nations, which should take place at the destruction of the Roman power, whose capitol has been metaphorically denominated "great Babylon"—the first literal Babylon being the type of the last, and the destruction of the first being the type and pledge of the destruction of the last.

The same thing is also true in relation to the predictions concerning Edom, and Moab, and other wicked nations, whose destruction was predicted by the prophets as events not very remote from their day, but which *events* were spoken of as types and proofs or pledges of the fulfilment of predictions looking to a much more remote period and to future powers to arise in the world, not having, as yet, in the days of

\* Joel, 1. 2. Warburton did not discern the peculiar force of Joel's expressions, (1. 6, compared with 1. 4,) and has supposed the whole to be allegorical, without any private hint, as in v. 6, that Joel referred to two literal events—the locust and Assyrian devastation—the one a type of the other.—*Divine Legation*, v. ii. 499.

the prophet, even been organized or received a name, and which therefore were named, metaphorically, descriptively, or typically, from nations then known, whose character and destruction those of the more distant nations, yet to be developed in the political world, should resemble.

The principle on which all such predictions are to be understood, and which predictions have led to much confusion about "the double sense," is a very simple and intelligible one. The prophets looked down the long vista of the world's and church's history, to the day and hour of the Messiah's ultimate and glorious triumph, and of the establishment of his kingdom on the earth. When the church was in distress, and calamities threatening her from the invasion of hostile nations, they delivered, under the direction of God, predictions for her comfort and hope. These brought distinctly into view, the final hour of glory and triumph, as the true reason and ground of hope for deliverance and redemption from any intervening seasons of distress and peril, of disaster and apparent desolation. In disclosing these sources of hope, the prophets sometimes began their predictions with a reference to the greatest and final deliverance, and then prophesied, in relation to the calamities or deliverances nearer hand, from which again they glanced to the last, and which precedent events themselves they described as types and pledges of its glorious accomplishment. Sometimes the prophets, in administering consolation, would predict and describe the last coming of the Messiah, and glance from it to the second, viewing both as reasons for the events which should occur nearer at hand, and which, when verified, would be types and pledges of still greater. Sometimes, too, even symbolical language, such as the sun being darkened, the moon being apparently

turned into blood, and the stars falling from Heaven, would receive a literal verification in the extraordinary celestial and atmospheric phenomena which should occur before, or simultaneously with the events predicted by the symbols, and be, as it were, God's sensible exhibition of the symbol or type itself, as was remarkably the case towards the destruction of Jerusalem; and indeed has been, at different periods since in the world's history, so as to have swayed men into the superstitious notion, that frequent extraordinary eclipses of the sun and moon, the appearance of comets, unwonted brilliancy and forms of the Aurora Borealis, the decadence of meteoric vapors, and explosion of meteoric bodies, which astronomers and natural philosophers know not how to account for, are sure signs and omens of wars and calamities about to come upon the nations of the earth.\*

The nature and use of types and of typical language as employed by the prophets, enable us easily and satisfactorily to understand all these things, so that, while we are delivered from all superstitious fears, we may know exactly, what use to make of, and what lessons to learn from, the prophetic writings.

Two things are obvious from the prophets' use of types—the first is, that while types are not to be rejected utterly, *they are not to be multiplied at the will of the interpreter.* We must look carefully through the whole compass of the prophet's view, study well the import of his words, and only admit typical events, where the prophets themselves meant that the events should be so regarded. It will not do for us to assume it as a universal principle, which we may apply according to our own whims and conceits, and on the

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\* See N. Webster's History of Pla ues, Comets, &c.

foundation of which we shall claim, as some have done,\* that because Edom, Moab, Babylon, the Assyrian, are unquestionably used as metaphorical descriptions or types of wicked nations, not yet arisen, nor known by name in the world in the days of the prophets, therefore such words are to be generalized or spiritualized in their import, as denoting comprehensively and only, wicked men in general.

In this, we conceive, consists one of the fundamental mistakes of Mr. Miller, and of those who, with him, confidently assert the coming of Christ in the year 1843. Although he and his school differ greatly in their result from the great body of the spiritualists in this country, yet do they practically hold the same principles of spiritual interpretation in common, with this leading exception, that Mr. Miller affirms the visible coming of Christ to be before the Millenium. In this respect he agrees with the millenarians or literalists, but this is almost the only one. In all other particulars he is with the spiritualists, and his whole system is but the legitimate application and carrying out of their principles of interpretation to the prophecies.† He has infinitely more in common with

\* Jones' Spiritual Interpretation.

† By spiritualists here, we mean those in general who make the kingdom of Christ altogether an allegorical thing, denying his visible appearance and personal administration in it, and maintaining, that it and the Millenium consist, mainly, in the dominion of abstract truth or evangelic doctrine, swaying the minds of men, and thus the nations of the earth. Some who hold these views have advanced and reasoned conclusively and happily, in reference to the true principles of interpretation, opposing successfully the allegorical system of Origen; and the occult or double sense of prophecy. But they have very often practically departed from their own principles, and by their exegesis in particular cases, violated their own rules.—See some excellent remarks in Professor Stuart's Hints on the Int. of Proph. p. 11-47.

them than the literalists; though he is by far more injuriously and slanderously treated, and frequently styled a fanatic and madman, by certain spiritualists with whom he holds so much in common, than by the literalists, who can agree with him in so very little.

The other thing that obviously results from the prophets' use of types and typical language, is the literality of the results predicted in both cases, as fully and as certainly in those most remote, as in those near at hand, which were their types and pledge. The brazen serpent, for example, was a literal carnal ordinance, but the type of Christ upon the cross as the means of healing, just as literally and truly lifted up from the earth. The locusts were literally an army of devastation, but the type of the Assyrian army, which, too, was as literal a verity as the locusts themselves. So, too, the ancient Assyrian and his destruction, Moab, Edom, and the ancient Babylon and their destruction, were literal types of Rome and of its veritable destruction, as the last political power and empire that should arise in the world, and be destroyed by the coming of Christ; and therefore, on the principles of literal interpretation, we look for something more than the meliorating influence of Christianity, the reformation of popery, and the evangelization and civilisation or conversion of the world, even the violent and terrible destruction of the city of Rome, of the whole ecclesiastico-political system of popery, and of all the anti-Christian nations and powers which form the constituent parts of the last universal Roman empire.

## CHAPTER VI.

### A GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE LITERAL AND SPIRITUAL SYSTEM OF INTERPRETING THE PROPHECIES.

THE importance, in the study of the prophecies, of having correct principles of interpretation, has induced us to pursue the subject more extensively than we had at first designed. Having affirmed them to be the same substantially with those we apply to all ordinary works, written in the same characters of style; having at some length unfolded the varieties of prophetic style, comprising, in general, the Alphabetical, the Tropical, the Symbolical, and the Typical; having, as we think, proved the literal system of interpretation in contradistinction from the spiritual or allegorical to be the true;—and having endeavored to guard against the more common mistakes and misapprehensions growing out of ignorance, as to what the literal system is, we deem it proper, before applying these principles of interpretation, to the *predictions* concerning THE COMING AND KINGDOM OF JESUS CHRIST, to lay before the reader a general outline of the two systems as applied to these subjects, and brought out in their general results, and after having done so, to TRACE THEIR HISTORY, so far as traditionary records may throw any light upon them.

We do not, it is true, hold to tradition as decisive authority; nor do we admit it, for one moment, to be either a source of original information, of equal

value with the written Scriptures, or the only infallible interpreter: but we nevertheless affirm that as history, it is of great use in determining how primitive Christians, either in the apostolic days, or immediately after, understood the language of the inspired writers. We value the writings of the fathers, and of the ancient Jewish Rabbis, as exponents of the views entertained in the church, both before, and immediately after the coming of Christ. When those views coincide with the written Scriptures, as grammatically interpreted, we feel bound to treat them with respect.

Retracing the stream of traditionary history on this subject, we admit that much will be found deserving of no respect whatever, being the opinions, the speculations, and the additions of different individuals and ages. Because certain heretics, as Cerinthus and others, who, according to Eusebius' account of this heresiarch, adopted some of the leading features of the millenarian views, and gave them altogether a sensual dress,\* until they were incorporated into the belief of the eastern nations, who adopted the religion of Mahomet, and indulged the expectation of a sensual Heaven, is no more reason why the whole of their views, and the system of literal interpretation, should be rejected, than the anti-millenarian, or spiritualist, would feel it to be a good and valid reason for rejecting his views, and the spiritual system of interpretation, because some of his notions about the coming of Christ, and the nature of the kingdom of Heaven, together with his system of spiritual interpretation, have led to the despotism and splendid extravagance of Papal and other hierarchies;—to the reveries and mysticism, and unintelligible allegories of the Hon. Emanuel Sweden-

\* Eusebii Pamphili Ecclesiasticæ Historiæ, lib. iii. cap. 28.

borg and his followers, or to the generalization and philosophical expositions of the Neologists of Germany, and of the Unitarians of Great Britain and the United States, who boldly, but falsely, and as we think, blasphemously speak, of “the contradictions of the Old Testament, its legends, so beautiful as fictions, so appalling as facts, its predictions that have never been fulfilled, its puerile conceptions of God, and the cruel denunciations that disfigure both Psalm and prophecy.”\*

Our object is; not to give the history of either system in its details; nor to contrast them minutely; but merely to present the general outlines of both, as they take their form from the leading and essential ideas on which they are respectively founded.

Both admit the fact of the second coming of Jesus Christ, suddenly, visibly, and gloriously, for the purpose of raising the dead bodies of his saints, quickening the living, judging the world, and establishing for ever the glorious dominion or kingdom of Heaven. They, therefore, both believe and teach these five great general facts, viz. the visible appearance of Jesus Christ—the resurrection of the bodies of the dead—a day of universal judgment—a Millenium, and a kingdom of glory inconceivable and eternal. They differ greatly, however, as to the import of these facts, and the time, order, and manner of their occurrence.

The spiritualist objects to any attention being given to chronological prophecy, affirming that it is designedly kept secret, and therefore almost impious to attempt to determine when Jesus Christ shall come again to this world, partly, because he says it is not revealed, and partly, because he takes it for granted,

\* Th. Parker's Discourse, p. 31.



that it is not to be expected, at all events, till some time after the Millenium. He pleads that the Saviour, after his resurrection, rebuked the disciples for prying into this matter, observing that it was not for them "to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power,"\* and had previously and explicitly declared "of that day and of that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."†

It is worthy of remark, that since the time these things were said by the Saviour, the counsels and plans of the Father have been further revealed, and that since the return of the Saviour to the Father, He has given very copious comments on former predictions, and added greatly to the field of prophecy by the revelations which he has made through the Spirit, by the apostles, and especially by John, who carries us down to the very time of the end. We do not, indeed, plead for any attempts to fix certainly the date of the Saviour's second coming, and the epoch of the resurrection of the saints, and of the introduction of His glorious kingdom: but this we affirm, that it will not do, as it is very often done, to plead the remarks made by the Saviour, which were literally true up to the date when they were made, and appeal to them as authoritative and absolute, in reference to a later period, in the discharge of the duties confided to him by the Father, and when, from the fact of extended revelations having been subsequently made, and chronological prophecies too, delivered, it is evident that the Father has subsequently made known to the Son, officiating as the Mediator, more of his counsels and plans. Still we do not mean to say, that the precise day and hour

\* Acts, 1. 7.

† Mat. 24. 36.

can be known; nevertheless, every one can see, that while *these* may be unknown, nevertheless the general season, or period of the world's history, if not the *year*, may be known, and there be no real contradiction between these things. Even should we be able to come within a century of the truth here, we come sufficiently near for all practical purposes of warning, preparation, and watchfulness to the church and to the world.

That this may be done, will be obvious to all, who will look so far into the prophecies, as to see, that there is a definite order in the succession of certain great epochs, connected with the introduction and establishment of Christ's kingdom. For example, as the personal coming of Christ, the resurrection of the saints, the judgment, the Millenium, and the eternal kingdom, are all admitted, by both the literalist and spiritualist, it becomes a very appropriate inquiry, in what order will these great events occur? Does prophecy say anything on the subject? or give us any hints, whether the Millenium is to precede the second coming of Christ, or the second coming precede it? Is the judgment, a mere judging or trial of all mankind, simultaneously collected, and speedily despatched? or is it a new and wonderful, and glorious dispensation, having its distinct epochs, at its commencement and its close, and calling into exercise other than Judiciary powers, even the Legislative and Executive, and all that pertains to the work of government, which is the sense of the word to judge, as often used in the Sacred Scriptures? \* Is there to be any difference,

\* The work of a JUDGE, as given in the Sacred Scriptures, is to *rule* or *govern*, to deliver and protect his people—to execute the laws, and to avenge or punish enemies or transgressors. Such were Gideon, Sampson, Jephtha, Samuel, and others. When Christ is pre-

in point of time, between the resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, and if so, what are the accompaniments, and peculiarities, of each of these great events? In what specifically does the kingdom of Heaven consist? By what means, and agencies, is it conducted and administered? and what are its distinctive features?

These, and similar inquiries, which every one must see may be started, are not to be met and answered by any preconceived notions had as to the nature of the coming of Christ, of the kingdom of Heaven, or of the Millenium. We must do here, as did the ancient prophets, viz. search "what, or what manner of time the Spirit which was in them did signify when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."\*

It is obvious, that there is room for difference, as to the general import of these facts, their mutual relations, and the order of their succession. To the word of God alone, must the appeal be made—as all admit. The spiritualist explains the general import of the facts in one way, and the literalist in another. Each states their mutual relation, and the order of their succession, differently.

The spiritualist believes that the Millenium is nothing more than a highly-prosperous state of the church, which shall be introduced through the gradual diffusion of light and knowledge, by means of missionaries, bibles, tracts, and other instrumentalities employed for that purpose; that during this illustrious period, Satan will be restrained from the practice of his

dicted as Judge, it is often as exercising princely and governmental rule. Psalm, 9. 7, 8; 10. 14-18; 67. 4; 72. 1-4, 7, 8; 96. 13; 98. 9; 99. 4; Isaiah, 2. 4; Mic. 4. 3; Jer. 23. 5.

\* 1 Peter, 1. 11.

deceitful and corrupting arts, and his influence almost, if not entirely, suppressed;—that the Jews in their dispersion, and the Gentile heathen nations throughout the whole world, shall be converted;—the church enjoy an increased and astonishing influence of the Spirit of God, of like character with that which he exerts in extensive and powerful revivals of pure religion, and in this way realize all the glowing and glorious anticipations of the Old Testament prophets;—that the principles of the gospel becoming universally prevalent, all wars will cease;—that the nations of the earth becoming a vast confederated family for the preservation of peace, and for the promotion of human happiness, shall no longer cultivate the warlike arts—civilisation be carried to the highest pitch, the blessings of civil, political, and religious liberty universally be enjoyed—all forms of oppression cease,—the rulers of this world becoming righteous and religious, rule in the fear and love of God—and the entire population of the globe, increased and enriched by industry, frugality, virtue, and piety, present an Eden-like scene of prosperity, and glory, and blessedness;—that at the end of a thousand years, or of this Halcyon period, the spirit of piety, which, like that of the martyrs of Jesus, had prevailed in the world, will begin to decline,—the great adversary who had been imprisoned, be let loose again, and gain an influence over the nations so as to deceive them, and to produce a general defection from the millennial purity and truth;—that the apostate nations, under the denomination of Gog and Magog, shall conspire together, and commence hostile movements for the destruction of “the camp of the saints and the beloved city,” and bring about a general and dreadful corruption of morals and of religion in the world;—that then, but not till then, the

Lord shall suddenly rain down fire from Heaven and destroy them all;—that immediately thereafter, the second personal visible coming of Jesus Christ shall take place, and the resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, and the dissolution by fire of this entire globe ensue;—and that then, but not till then, will the new Heavens and the new earth be created, and that glorious heavenly kingdom be established, which is to be the inheritance of the saints for ever.

Among those who in the main adopt the spiritual system of interpretation, many are to be found differing as to the extent to which its principles are to be applied, and who therefore shape their theory of the prophecies, in some respects, different from the above outline, and from each other. Thus, there are some who find it impossible to believe that all the predictions about the return of the Jews and restoration to their own land, and the recovery of the ten lost tribes, with their reunion unto and re-establishment with the two tribes again, as one nation in Palestine, in more than the pristine glories of the theocracy, are mere allegorical descriptions of their conversion, and absorption into the church, in the lands of their dispersion. They therefore dissent from the above view in this particular, and look for the national and political restoration and re-establishment of the twelve tribes in the land of Palestine, as well as their conversion to Christianity. Of this class is Mr. Faber, and others, who, although they defer the visible coming of Christ till after the Millenium, and spiritually interpret what is said in relation to that glorious epoch, nevertheless, cannot apply their own principles to the prophecies concerning the Jews. Not a few, however, in these United States, feel the obligation that consistency imposes on them, to allegorize the prophecies about

the Jews, as well as about the Millenium and the kingdom of heaven.

Others again, believing in the literal restoration of the Jews, are not prepared to admit that the Millenium will be ushered in by the gradual increase of missionary labors and success, and the multiplication of revivals of religion. They look,—for a fearful crisis in the affairs of the world,—a time of trouble, growing out of the conflict between truth and error, between tyranny and liberty,—for terrible judgments from heaven on the guilty nations of the earth, especially the anti-Christian,—for some sudden, signal, marked, and astonishing interpositions of divine Providence, which will, in a surprising manner, prepare the way for the rapid spread of the gospel. The national conversion of the Jews, they believe, will have a powerful influence, and throw out, in all parts of the earth, innumerable teachers of religion, ministers, and ambassadors of Christ, acquainted with the languages of the people among whom they dwell, and fitted to preach the gospel with powerful success, so that their conversion, scattered as they now are through the earth, will, like the match applied to trains of powder, now laid by Missionary, and Bible, and Tract societies all over the earth, suddenly fill the world with the full blaze of “the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” This event they designate as the metaphorical “coming of Christ,” and as “the brightness of his appearing.”

How far the spiritual interpreters, however, go in their explanations, it is not easy to say. Some have carried out the system still further, and allegorized all the existing churches into Antichrist, and the kingdom of heaven into the pure and perfect ones, who have advanced farthest in piety; while others have

actually proclaimed the New Jerusalem already to have descended from heaven, and to be found, either among the followers of the Hon. Emanuel Swedenborg, or some other self-applauding sect.

Others still have made war against all organizations, and all government—even the marriage relation and family ties,—and announced the Millenium to have already dawned, and to be destined speedily to pervade the earth, in the universal prevalence of the principles which they advocate, viz. unrestricted liberty, equality of property, and community of wives.

Others still, more speciously infidel in their allegories, have predicted the golden age, when the transient in Christianity shall have been fully separated from the permanent—when religion shall bring the world to adopt “the only creed it lays down, the great truth which springs up spontaneous in every heart—there is a God; the only form it will demand will be a divine life, doing the best thing in the best way, from the highest motives, perfect obedience to the great law of God, its sanctions be the voice of God in the heart, the perpetual presence of Him who made us, and the stars over our head, Christ and the Father abiding in us,”\* bringing all of the Godhead which flesh can receive, and leading man to worship the divine Being without any mediator, or anything whatever, between God and the mind. Others still, modify their views differently, as the Shaking Quakers, some Universalists, and other heretical sects, the varieties of whose opinions it is not necessary to detail.

Mr. Miller and his followers, who believe in the personal coming of Jesus Christ and the great day of judgment and general conflagration in the year 1843,

\* Th. Parker's Discourse.

are the most ultra spiritualists of the day. They have calculated, as they think, from chronological prophecy, the time of Christ's coming to be pre-millennial, and fixed its very date; and seeing no other way to get rid of those prophecies which speak of the restoration of the Jews, the battles of Gog and Magog, the destruction of Antichrist, the Millenium, &c., which, by the post-millennial spiritualists are believed to precede and to prepare the way for the coming of Christ and day of judgment, they allegorize the whole, and say they will have their accomplishment in the resurrection of the dead, the renovation of the globe, and the eternal state of things to be introduced immediately at Christ's coming.

However discordant in their views as to the results are all these different commentators on prophecy, yet do they more or less adopt the system of spiritual interpretation. The diverseness and contrariety of these results, we think, afford ground for valid objection against the system. It is a system which has no standard, which gives an unbridled rein to men's imaginations, and which has engendered some of the most pestiferous heresies and ridiculous and fanatical sects that have disgraced the Christian name.

But, lest we may be suspected of not dealing fairly in the statement of views, so diverse and difficult to be determined, existing mostly in vague and ill-defined notions and speculations, most frequently found in speeches and addresses before missionary and other societies, and seldom well arranged and digested, we present the following extract, as furnishing the more general opinions of the spiritualists on the subject. After affirming that the church will arrive at a state of unprecedented prosperity, which will last a thousand years, the writer *conjectures* that the world will



be so filled with real Christians, and be kept so full by constant propagation, to supply the place of those who die, that there will be many thousands born and live on the earth, to each man and woman who has lived the six thousand previous years; so that if most of them, as is probable, be saved, there will, on the whole, be many thousands of mankind saved, to one that shall be lost.

This state, continues the writer, will be one of great happiness and glory. Nothing more is meant by the predictions of Christ's coming with his saints and reigning on the earth, than that, before the general judgment, the Jews shall be converted, genuine Christianity be diffused through all nations, and Christ shall reign by his spiritual presence in a glorious manner. It will, however, be a time of eminent holiness, clear light and knowledge, love, peace and friendship, and agreement in doctrine and worship. Human life, perhaps, will rarely be endangered by the poisons of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. Beasts of prey will perhaps be extirpated or tamed by the power of man. The inhabitants of every place will rest secure from fear of robbery and murder. War shall be entirely ended; capital crimes and punishments be heard of no more; and governments placed on fair, just, and humane foundations. The torch of civil discord will be extinguished. Perhaps Pagans, Turks, Deists, and Jews, will be as few in number as Christians are now. Kings, nobles, magistrates, and rulers in churches, shall act with principle, and be forward to promote the best interests of men. Tyranny, oppression, persecution, bigotry, and cruelty, shall cease. Business shall be attended to without contention, dishonesty, and covetousness. Trades and manufactures will be carried on with a design to promote the

general good of mankind, and not with selfish interests, as now. Merchandize between distant countries will be conducted without fear of an enemy; and works of ornament and beauty, perhaps, shall not be wanting in those days. Learning, which has always flourished in proportion as religion has spread, shall then greatly increase, and be employed for the best of purposes; astronomy, geography, natural history, metaphysics, and all the useful sciences, be better understood, and consecrated to the service of God. And "I cannot help thinking," adds the author, "that by the improvements which have been made and are making in ship-building, navigation, electricity, medicine, &c., that 'the tempest will lose half its force, the lightning lose half its terrors, and the human frame be not near so much exposed to danger.' Above all, the Bible will be more highly appreciated, its harmony perceived, its superiority owned, and its energy felt, by millions of human beings. In fact, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

"The time when this Millenium will commence," says the author, "cannot be fully ascertained, but the common idea is, that it will be in the seven thousandth year of the world. It will most probably come on by degrees, and be, in a manner, introduced before that time. And who knows but the present convulsions among different nations; the overthrow which popery has had in places where it has been so dominant for hundreds of years;\* the fulfilment of prophecy respecting infidels, and the falling away of many in the last times; and yet, in the midst of all, the number of missionaries sent into different parts of the

\* The author wrote more than thirty years ago, but events are falsifying his anticipations.

world, together with the increase of gospel ministers, the thousands of ignorant children that have been taught to read the Bible, and the vast number of different societies that have been lately instituted for the benevolent purpose of informing the minds and improving the hearts of the ignorant ; who knows, I say, but what these things are the forerunners of events of the most delightful nature, and which may usher in the happy morn of that bright and glorious day, when the whole world shall be filled with his glory, and all the ends of the earth see the salvation of God.\* These are the prevailing views.

We have exhibited them in the language of the author, because they are the more current, by reason of being found in a very popular work, extensively circulated, and doubtless contributing, no little, to mould the prevalent opinions on the subject of the prophecies, as interpreted by the spiritualists.

The literalists differ greatly in their views from them, and what is remarkable, they mostly agree among themselves in the general outline and results. It is true, they sometimes differ as to minor and subordinate prophecies not yet fulfilled, but not as to the general system, in its bold and radical features. The Millenium is regarded by them, not as the expansion and universal diffusion of the gospel, in a season of unprecedented religious prosperity—not as the consummation of the present evangelical dispensation, but as a new dispensation, to be miraculously introduced, as all the former dispensations were, and to possess its own distinct and peculiar attributes. The gospel dispensation, which commenced with the ministry of Christ, and was fully introduced on the day of Pente

\* See Buck's Theological Dictionary, art. Millenium.

cost, they believe—as Christ and the apostles styled it—is the dispensation of *the good news of the kingdom of Heaven drawing nigh*, but the Millenium, the kingdom itself, commenced with the awful retributions of Divine justice on the enemies of Christ—the one, the proclamation or heralding of the kingdom coming, and the other, the kingdom come, introduced by terrible displays of divine vengeance, and established and perpetuated by the exercise of all the high functions of executive, legislative, and judicial sway, entitling it to the denomination of **THE DAY OF JUDGMENT**.

This kingdom, they affirm, is not the Church of God, as she now exists in her visible organizations, and in which Christians, or the saints, are *the subjects*, yielding obedience to the commands of Jesus Christ; but it is a new and glorious development of Almighty power, and grace, and justice, in which the saints of all ages, that have died in the faith, and been with Christ, shall return with him to the earth, and receive their bodies raised from the dead, and made like to his most glorious body; when those that love the Lord and his appearing, alive on the earth at the period of his coming, shall undergo an instantaneous change in their mortal bodies, assimilating them to the saints of the resurrection, and shall all be employed by Jesus Christ as *his kings and priests*, his subordinate agents and officers, to administer under him the government to be then established over the nations that shall yet remain in the flesh. The saints in the millennial state are to *reign with Christ*—to be the *rulers* and not the *ruled*—having been schooled in affliction, persecuted, tried, and many of them put to death for the testimony of Jesus, and no longer selfish, ambitious, covetous, and vindictive, like most rulers of this world, become fit and safe depositaries

of power for the government of the nations of the earth.

Such is the general idea of those who adopt the literal interpretation. As to the nature, order, and succession of events, preparatory and designed to usher in and to establish this kingdom, there are, as has been hinted, some differences; but the following are among the points, or facts, believed by different writers\* who have pursued their investigations farthest, to be taught in prophecy, viz.: That the Jews will be restored to their own land;—that this will become the occasion, or be in the midst of great revolutions and convulsions among the European and Asiatic nations, particularly those that occupy the territory of the Roman empire, embracing Western and Central Asia, and Northern and North-eastern Africa;—that a general dissolution of society shall take place through the spirit of lawlessness and violence, of corruption and revolution, which shall prevail, and be especially promoted by the irruption of Northern hordes into Southern Europe and Western Asia, like a devastating storm of hail;—that there shall be a great conspiracy among the anti-Christian nations, led on by some one

\* See Rev. J. W. Brooks on the Advent and Kingdom of Christ; also, his Elements of Prophetic Interpretation. Sermons on the Second Advent, by Rev. Hugh M'Neile; also his Prospects of the Jews. Hon. Gerard T. Noel's Brief Inquiry into the Prospects of the Church of Christ. Cox on the Coming and Kingdom of Christ. Letters by Joseph D'Arcy Sirr, on the First Resurrection, and other works, to be met in the Literalist, published by O. Rogers of Philadelphia—especially Cuninghame on the Apocalypse, and Habershon on the Prophecies and on the Revelation. Also, Frazer on the Prophecies, though not believing in the personal advent, the Investigator, the Morning Watch, Fry on the Second Advent, Mede's Clavis Apocalyptica, and various letters and discourses contained in his works, Begg on the Prophecies, &c. &c.

of the ten sovereignties of Europe, or of some new oriental power to arise within the bounds of the old Roman empire, which sovereignty shall be the Assyrian of Isaiah, the last form of Antichrist;—that this conspiracy will lead to the great war of Gog and Magog predicted by Ezekiel, and the battle of Armageddon, by John, issuing in the terrible destruction of the anti-Christian nations;—that some time, either previous to, or during these movements, the sign of the Son of man coming in the heavens, shall be seen, and He descending from Heaven into the air, with his saints for the resurrection of their bodies, and catching up the saints alive on the earth into the presence of the Lord;—that at this coming, which will be sudden and unexpected, he will inflict dreadful judgments on the apostate nations by means of volcanic and other fires, which will destroy the seat of the Beast, the mystic Babylon, but not all the nations of the earth;—that while his saints remain for a series of years in the immediate presence of Christ, before He descends from the air to the earth, being judged and allotted to their stations and work, He will be conducting his retributive judgment on the nations of the earth, preparing the way for the full restoration of Israel, and their national conversion, in a manner analogous with his Providence toward them for forty years in the wilderness;—and that when the work of judgment by various interpositions of His Providence, shall have gone on, and the wickedness of the anti-Christian nations shall have come to the full, at the last signal stroke of Divine vengeance, he will descend from the air, and stand upon the Mount of Olives, utterly to destroy the hosts of the wicked, to change the geological structure of Jerusalem and its vicinity, by a terrible earthquake, and to produce those transformations designed to fit it for being made the metropolis

of the world;—that He will re-establish the Theocracy in Jerusalem in more than its pristine glory, with its temple rebuilt, and rites of worship adapted to the dispensation in which Jerusalem and the Jewish nation are to stand pre-eminent among the nations;—that having concluded his work of retributive justice by various means, through a series of years, to the entire extermination of the wicked on the face of the whole Roman earth, there shall be found remnants of people on whom the abundant and mighty influences of the Spirit of God shall have been poured out, and nations be born in a day, by their thorough conversion and cordial submission to the dominion of Heaven by means of the saints;—that these powerful effusions of the Spirit, and the dominion of Christ by means of his raised and quickened saints, will bring the heathen nations and the uttermost parts of the earth, the whole world, into peaceful blessed subjection;—that the risen and glorified saints will be His kings and priests for the administration of the political and religious interests of the nation;—that the Theocracy, with its temple rebuilt as described by Ezekiel, and established in Jerusalem, shall be the nucleus and centre of all political and religious influences, and all the nations of the earth be united to it;—that while Christ will indeed dwell on the earth, his presence will be displayed but occasionally at Jerusalem as King, according to rites and at seasons appointed by him;—that his constant and immediate presence will be in the Heavenly City, the New Jerusalem, not built by the hands of men, but directly and miraculously by God, in which there shall be no temple, but Christ's presence constitute its glory, and the delight of His risen saints;—that while Heaven shall thus descend on earth, the saints will have communication with the

nations in the flesh, and the Theocracy be made the channel of Heavenly influence for the happiness of the world ;—that this glorious dominion as established at its first epoch, shall last a thousand years, during which time Satan shall be confined, and his power to tempt and corrupt the nations be restrained ;—that although during this period death will still prevail among the nations in the flesh ; yet the climates and habits of earth having undergone such a remarkable transformation, by great geological and atmospheric changes, as to be denominated a new heaven, and a new earth, death will not be so common, the age of man will be prolonged like that of a tree, and a hundred years be but the time of youth ;—that thus the judgment of Heaven will be prolonged upon the earth, and the righteous be made to triumph ;—that at the close of this blessed period, the last act in the great work and day, or dispensation of judgment, shall take place, when Satan shall be released from his confinement, all the nations of the wicked raised from the dead, the Gog and Magog of John metaphorically or typically described by the Gog and Magog of Ezekiel, and be summoned before Christ to receive their final sentence ;—that then, in mad desperation, these hosts of hell, led on by the Devil and his angels, shall make their last and violent assault upon the holy city where Christ and his saints dwell, and think to storm the heavenly city, which shall be but the occasion for the last signal interposition of Divine justice and Almighty vengeance for their eternal destruction ;—and that doomed and hurled to the bottomless abyss by the power of Omnipotence, earth shall be for ever purged and redeemed from the dominion of Satan, placed back again amidst the heavenly worlds—restored to more than paradisiacal purity and glory—death for ever cease in it, and that state of glory and blessed-



ness be confirmed in which the dominion of Heaven shall be absolutely, immutably, and eternally established in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and this ransomed, renovated, and recovered globe, shine resplendent in Heaven's brilliancy, never more to be invaded or polluted by the entrance of sin.

Well might the prophets, who caught a distant glimpse of these stupendous glories, be wrapt in ecstasy! Truly, "eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things prepared for them that love God." "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Loud and ecstatic shall be the shout of triumph, when earth and heaven shall mingle in full chorus, as "the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of many thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!" My heart kindles at the prospect, and is ready to catch the strain of Heaven:

Glory to God!

And to the Lamb, who bought us with his blood,  
 From every kindred, nation, people, tongue,  
 And washed, and sanctified, and saved our souls,  
 And gave us robes of linen pure, and crowns  
 Of life, and made us kings and priests to God!  
 Shout back to ancient time! Sing loud, and wave  
 Your palms of triumph! Sing, "Where is thy sting,  
 Oh death! where is thy victory, oh grave!"  
 Thanks be to God, eternal thanks, who gave  
 Us victory through Jesus Christ our Lord!  
 Harp, lift thy voice on high!—shout! angels, shout!  
 And loudest ye redeemed! glory to God,  
 And to the Lamb all glory and all praise!  
 All glory and all praise at morn and even,  
 That come and go eternally, and find  
 Us happy still, and thee for ever blest!  
 Glory to God and to the Lamb!—Amen!  
 For ever and for ever more—Amen!

Impenitent reader ! will you participate in the glory and triumph of that scene ? or shall you perish in the overthrow of the ungodly ? Fearful and horrible shall be the doom of the wicked. Devils and damned spirits, as hell pours forth her millions to be judged, may think to storm the citadel of heaven, and compass the camp of the servants of the Most High, led on by the madness of desperation ; but it will prove like the last gleam of hope that flares in the socket for an instant, and then is quenched in the blackness of darkness for ever ! Methinks I see them, as they fall before God and the Lamb, repulsed and driven by the fierce blast of Almighty vengeance.

They upon the verge

Of Erebus, a moment, pausing stood,  
 And saw, below, the unfathomable lake,  
 Tossing with tides of dark, tempestuous wrath,  
 And would have looked behind ; but greater wrath  
 Behind forbade, which now no respite gave  
 To final misery. God, in the grasp  
 Of his almighty strength, took them, upraised,  
 And threw them down unto the yawning pit  
 Of bottomless perdition, ruined ! damned !  
 Fast bound in chains of darkness ever more !  
 And second death and the undying worm  
 Opening their jaws with hideous yell,  
 Falling, received their everlasting prey.  
 A groan returned ! as down they sunk, and sunk,  
 And ever sunk, among the utter dark !  
 A groan returned ! The righteous heard the groan—  
 The groan of all the reprobate—when first  
 They felt damnation sure ! and heard hell close !  
 And heard Jehovah and his love retire !  
 A groan returned ! The righteous heard the groan,  
 As if all misery, all sorrow, grief,  
 All pain, all anguish, all despair, which all  
 Have suffered, or shall feel from first to last—  
 Eternity—had gathered to one pang,  
 And issued in one groan of boundless woe !

## CHAPTER VII.

### TRADITIONAL HISTORY.

OUR object in this chapter is to unfold the traditional history of what has been called Millenarian doctrine. The term Millenarian is sometimes used as a term of contempt; but is, nevertheless, admitted by those who adopt the literal system of prophetic interpretation, to be an appropriate designation, in contradistinction from the spiritualists, who, in their turn, are denominated Anti-millenarian. It is intended by it to denote those who believe that the prophets of the Old and New Testament predict the personal visible coming of Jesus Christ with his saints before the Millenium, to raise their dead bodies, to destroy the anti-Christian nations, and to establish his glorious kingdom or dominion over all the earth, in which, by the ministry of his saints raised from the dead, and quickened at his coming, He will reign for 1,000 years and judge the world. The term Anti-millenarian denotes those, who affirm that the coming of Christ to judgment will not take place till after 1,000 years' great prosperity in religion, during which He may be said spiritually, that is allegorically, to be present and to reign with his saints on the earth.

It is a matter of some interest to inquire what were the views on this subject, entertained by the successors of the prophets and the early Fathers of the Christian church—those who lived nearest the days of the prophets and apostles, and who may be, therefore, presumed to have derived by tradition their views

relative to the meaning of the prophecies concerning the coming and kingdom of Jesus Christ. Were they Millenarians or Anti-millenarians? Did they expect the personal visible coming of Christ, before or after the Millenium? The views they entertained on this subject will enable us to decide, whether they understood the prophets and apostles to predict a literal or metaphorical coming of Christ; and also, what principles of interpretation they adopted in relation to the prophecies.

It is certainly a reasonable presumption, that those who lived nearest the apostles, would be most likely to understand the general import of their teaching and charges and exhortations about the coming of Christ, and practically to adopt their principles of interpretation.

We cordially subscribe to the remarks of Mr. Faber, on the subject of historical testimony, in reference to the doctrine of election, although he has failed to apply them to the important themes of prophecy on which he has so largely written. "In revealed religion, by the very nature and necessity of things, as Tertullian well teaches us: *Whatever is first is true, whatever is later is adulterate.* If a doctrine *totally unknown* to the primitive church, which received her theology immediately from the hands of the apostles, and which continued long to receive it from the hands of the disciples of the apostles, springs up in a *subsequent* age, let that age be the fifth century or let it be the tenth century, or let it be the sixteenth century, such doctrine stands, on its very front, impressed with the brand of mere *human* invention. Hence, in the language of Tertullian, it is *adulterate*: and hence, with whatever plausibility it may be fetched out of a particular interpretation of Scripture, and with what-

ever practical piety on the part of its advocates, it may be attended, we cannot *evidentially* admit it to be part and parcel of the divine revelation of Christianity."\* We claim no greater respect than this for traditional testimony as to the doctrine of Christ's coming and kingdom. The views entertained by the early fathers, expressed their understanding of the Scriptures on this subject, and is valuable historical testimony as to their principles of interpretation. This cannot well be denied by the spiritualist; for we find that the principles of allegorical interpretation, which originated in the schools of philosophy and religion, and which, though originated in the second century, were first brought out and applied by Origen in the exposition of the Sacred Scriptures, have actually been respected for centuries, and even now serve to shape the views of a large portion of the church of God. The question then is, shall tradition, starting with Clement of Alexandria and Theophilus, and systematized by Origen, who lived three centuries later, or tradition starting with the apostles, or the prophets before them, be most regarded?

We are free to say, that much greater deference is due to the traditions starting with the apostles, or respected by them, and found embodied in the views, opinions and comments of the early fathers of the Christian church, than to those of later origin; and that for the following reasons:—

1. The apostle Paul states expressly, that there were traditions in his day on this very subject, which he had taught the Thessalonian Christians, and which he exhorted them to maintain. "Stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by

\* Faber's *Primitive Doctrine of Election*, pp. 158, 159.

word or our epistle.”\* He commended also the Corinthians for this thing,† and exhorted Timothy to “hold fast the form of sound words which he had heard of him.”‡ We shall have occasion presently to see how tenacious primitive Christians were on this very matter; and although afterwards, the disposition to adhere to apostolic traditions, became the means of gross corruptions, which the church of Rome, by the council of Trent and the decretals of popes, imposed on popular credulity, when piety had greatly deteriorated; yet, in the primitive church, this respect for traditional information operated so beneficially, as to prevent schismatic divisions, and to render specific creeds, which have since become the badges of sect, unnecessary.

2. There was a greater lenity and simplicity of faith, too, during that period, and much less of the subtleties, speculations, and refinements of philosophy than afterwards. Christianity was the religion of the heart and of the life, and remained more pure, more elementary, more influential, more efficacious, during the trials and persecutions of plain, humble, unlettered early Christians and martyrs, than when Platonic philosophers, subsequently converted, and dwelling at ease, began to incorporate their mysticism and metaphysics, with its precious and efficacious truths. “Because it is of the very essence of *truth in religion*,” observes Isaac Taylor, the author of *Ancient Christianity*, “to blend itself with a certain series of events, and to mix itself with history; example more than precept, biography more than abstract doctrine, are made to convey to us in the Scriptures the various elements of piety. Truth in religion is something that

\* 2 Thess. 2. 15.

† 1 Cor. 11. 2.

‡ 2 Tim. 1. 13.

has been acted and transacted ; it is something that has been embodied in persons and societies.”

These remarks apply, in some degree, equally to the primitive history of the Christian church. It is in the sentiments, writings, lives, sufferings, and martyrdom of primitive Christians, that we are to get an acquaintance with the motives, hopes, and views that animated and sustained them ; or in other words, the manner in which they apprehended the grand distinctive influential truths and facts revealed in the Sacred Scriptures. “ All mystification apart, as well as a superstitious and overweening deference to antiquity, nothing can be more simple than the facts on which rest the legitimate use and value of the ancient documents of Christianity, considered as the repositories of those practices and opinions which, obscurely or ambiguously alluded to in the canonical writings, are found drawn forth and illustrated in the records of the times immediately succeeding. These records contain at once a testimony in behalf of the capital articles of our faith, and an exposition of minor sentiments and ecclesiastical usages, neither of which can be surrendered without some serious loss and damage.”\*

While, therefore, we do not overvalue and exalt tradition as of equal authority with the written word, yet are we far from undervaluing it as a legitimate aid in attempting to ascertain the import of that written word, being, as far as it goes, the exponent of their views who lived nearest the apostles, and possessed much of their spirit. We claim, however, that this remark be not understood to apply to a later period, however far in antiquity from us, when we know, from abundant historical documents, that the church,

\* Ancient Christianity, pp. 71, 72.

agreeably to apostolical predictions, had become greatly corrupted through philosophy and vain deceit.

With these preliminary remarks, we are prepared to trace the history of the views entertained by the primitive church, relative to the coming and kingdom of Jesus Christ. They did not apprehend such a Millenium as the spiritualists anticipate ; nor did they regard the church to be the kingdom of Heaven. They looked for the personal visible coming of Jesus Christ and his kingdom *as drawing nigh*. All their joy and hope of triumph centred in His "*appearing*," nor did they look for the arrival of his kingdom on earth, till he should have destroyed the Antichrist, which the apostles had predicted would arise, and was destined to be destroyed "by the brightness of Christ's appearing."

It is proper, however, in order to the full and fair exhibition of the views of the primitive church on this subject, to remark, that we must first start with the traditions, so far as we can ascertain them, which were current before Christ, and sanctioned and transmitted by the apostles. Here, too, we must discriminate between what were matters of faith, simple statements of their belief, founded on the word of God,—and what were conjectures and opinions, founded on their inferences. This is always necessary, for we cannot long or often speak on the mere facts of Christianity, without mixing up with them more or less of our own reasonings and philosophy, which may or may not be erroneous, but which do not form part of revelation.

Whoever will read the New Testament attentively, cannot fail to perceive that John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, Christ himself, and his apostles, adopted phrases, and a style of speech on various subjects, quite current among the Jews of that day.



The burden of their preaching was, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand;"\* i. e. is drawing nigh, approaching. They assumed that their hearers had some ideas in common with them, about an approaching kingdom, called sometimes *the kingdom of Heaven*, and sometimes *the kingdom of God*. They did not commence it as *a new thing*, and startling to the Jewish faith. Nor did they deem it necessary to define their terms, and carefully correct any current mistakes and misapprehensions about its nature, although the Saviour took occasion, both for the benefit of his disciples, and for the reproof of the Pharisees, to illustrate, by similes and parables, many of its important features. The points inculcated, were the motives and obligations to repentance drawn from the fact, that the kingdom of Heaven was *drawing nigh*, of course *not yet* arrived. Thus John the Baptist preached, till God out of Heaven, by miraculous sights and sounds at his baptism, proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth to be his beloved Son the Messiah, and John announced him to be "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,"† and quickly ended his ministry.

The general opinion of the Jews was, that, immediately on the appearance of the Messiah, He would set up his kingdom so long predicted. On one occasion, multitudes collected around Jesus of Nazareth ready to enlist under his banner, and to embark in any measures for the purpose of proclaiming and establishing him as their king. But the Saviour, so far from favoring the idea that his kingdom had arrived, disdained all their professions of attachment, and proffers of help to make him a king. He never, how-

\* Mat. 3. 2; 4. 17; 10. 7.

† John 1. 29.

ever, for a moment, denied, either that he was a king or the king's son. On the contrary, he distinctly affirmed it, thus directing the Jews, to whom his ministry was restricted, to look to him for the verification of all the great and wondrous things, which their prophets had proclaimed about him and his kingdom. At the same time, he expressly intimated, that his kingdom had not yet come. All that He proclaimed on the subject was, that it was *at hand*—approaching—how near or how far off, he thought not proper to declare.

It is, therefore, of some moment for us to inquire, what were the views entertained by the Jews prior to the coming of Christ, we mean, especially, by the more devout? What was their exposition of the prophecies? We cite them not as decisive authority, but as historical testimony of value, under all the circumstances of the case, in attempting to ascertain the import of Christ's preaching and predictions. It is true, there is but little testimony up to the time of Christ, beside that of the inspired writers, which latter we do not now bring into view,—the question being, how were, and are, they to be understood? Still there is enough of orthodox Jewish testimony, which deserves not to be confounded with the writings of later and anti-Christian Rabbis.

The writer of the Apocryphal book of Esdras II. who was captive in the land of the Medes, in the reign of Artaxerxes, king of the Persians,\* relates a dream which he had, with the interpretation, which we quote, not as of canonical authority, but as historical testimony to the manner in which the ancient Jews understood the prophecies before the coming of Christ.

\* 2 Esdras, 13. 25-50.

“ This is the meaning of the vision ; whereas thou sawest a man coming up from the midst of the sea. The same is he whom God the highest hath kept a great season, which by his own self shall deliver his creature—and he shall order them that are left behind. And whereas thou sawest that out of his mouth there came as a blast of wind, and fire, and storm ; and that he held neither sword nor any instrument of war, but that the rushing in of him destroyed the whole multitude that came to subdue him. This is the interpretation—Behold the day is come when the Most High will begin to deliver them that are upon the earth—and He shall come to the astonishment of them that dwell upon the earth—and one shall undertake to fight against another, one city against another, one place against another, one people against another, one realm against another. And the time shall be when these things shall come to pass, and the signs shall happen which I showed thee before, and then shall my Son be declared, whom thou sawest as a man ascending. And when all the people hear his voice, every man shall leave the battle they have one against another. And an innumerable multitude shall be gathered together as thou sawest them, willing to come and to overcome him by fighting. But he shall stand upon the top of the Mount Sion—and Sion shall come and be showed to all men, being prepared and builded, like as thou sawest the hill graven without hands. And this my Son shall rebuke the wicked inventions of those nations which for their wicked life are fallen into the tempest. And they shall lay before them their evil thoughts ; and the torments wherewith they shall begin to be tormented, which are like unto a flame, and he shall destroy them without labor by the law which is like unto fire. And

whereas thou sawest that he gathered another peaceable multitude unto him ; these are the tribes which were carried away prisoners out of their own land, in the time of Osea the king, whom Salmanassar, the king of Assyria, led away captive, and he carried them over the waters, and so came they into another land. But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country where never mankind dwelt—that they might there keep their statutes which they never kept in their own land—and they entered into Euphrates by the narrow passage of the river. For the Most High then showed signs for them, and held still the flood, until they were passed over. For through the country there was a great way to go, namely, of a year and a half ; and the same region is called Arsareth. Then dwelt they there until the latter time ; and now, when they shall begin to come, the Highest shall stay the springs of the stream again, that they may go through ; therefore sawest thou the multitude with peace. But those that he left behind of thy people, are they that are found within my borders. Now, when he destroyeth the multitude of the nations that are gathered together, he shall defend his people that remain—and then shall he show them great wonders.”

The writer also of the book of Tobit, which, according to Dr. Gray and other critics, was written in Chaldaic, during or soon after the captivity, expresses the same sentiments. “ Go into Media, my son, for I surely believe those things which Jonas the prophet spake of Nineveh, that it shall be overthrown ; and that for a time peace shall rather be in Media ; and that our brethren shall be scattered in the earth from that good land ; and Jerusalem shall be desolate, and

the house of God in it shall be burned and shall be desolate for a time. And that again God will have mercy on them and bring them again into the land, where they shall build a temple, but not like to the first, until the time of that age be fulfilled; and afterwards they shall return from all places of their captivity, and build up Jerusalem gloriously, and the house of God shall be built in it for ever with a glorious building, as the prophets have spoken thereof. And all nations shall turn and fear the Lord God truly, and shall bury their idols. So shall all nations praise the Lord, and his people shall confess God, and the Lord shall exalt his people, and all those which love the Lord God in truth and justice shall rejoice, showing mercy to our brethren.”\*

The writer of the book of Wisdom,† who was certainly a Jew of high antiquity, supposed by Grotius to have lived between the time of Ezra and Simon the Just, says of the dead, “In the time of their *visitation* they shall shine, and run to and fro like sparks among the stubble; they shall *judge* the *nations* and have dominion over the people, and their Lord shall rule for ever.” These testimonies carry tradition back to the very days of Daniel, and the prophets of the captivity; which, although we receive it not as canonical, is nevertheless of value as the current exposition of prophecy, showing the manner in which the prophecies were interpreted and understood in that early age.

The Targums of the Jews were paraphrases of the law, supposed to have been first used in Ezra’s time, but not reduced to writing till the days of Onkelos and Jonathan, about thirty years before Christ. The

\* Tobit, 14. 4-7.

† Chap. 2. 7, 8.

Babylonian Targum says, "Christ shall come, whose is the kingdom, and him shall the nations serve."\*

The Jerusalem Targum on the same passage says, "the king Christ shall come, whose is the kingdom, and all nations shall be subject to Him." These, it is true, are general statements, and will be admitted by all to be correct expositions of the passage, but in what sense they were understood will appear from the writings of their ancient Rabbinical doctors.

Rabbi Eliezar† the Great, supposed to have lived soon after the second temple was built, referring to Hosea 14. 8, applies it to the pious Jews, who seemed likely to die without seeing the glory of the Lord, saying, "As I live, saith Jehovah, I will raise *you* up, in the time to come, in the *resurrection* of the dead, and I will gather you with *all Israel*."

Mr. Brooks,‡ in his Elements of Prophetical Interpretation, states that "the Sadducees are related to have asked Rabbi Gamaliel, the preceptor of Paul, whence he could prove that God would raise the dead. Nor could he silence them until he brought against them, Deut. 11. 21, 'which land the Lord, moreover, sware he would give to your *fathers*.' The Rabbi argued, as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had it not, and God cannot lie, therefore they must be raised from the dead to inherit it." Christ's argument from the Pen'ateuch, in favor of the resurrection, is substantially the same, taken from the Abrahamic Covenant.

Mede quotes the testimony of Rabbi Simai, though of later date, who argues the resurrection from

\* On Gen. 49. 10.

† See his Capitula, c. 34, referred to in Elements of Prophetical Interpretation, by Brooks, p. 33.

‡ El. Proph. Int. 33.

Exodus 6. 4, insisting, that the law asserts, in this place, the resurrection from the dead, viz. when it is said, "and also I have established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan;" for he adds, it is not said to *you* but to *them*.

We deem it pertinent here, having traced the chain of tradition, from the days of Daniel down through the Jewish church, to refer to the traditionary testimony, starting from the same date, and running down through a much more corrupt channel, the Gentile philosophy. We refer to the testimony of Zoroaster, which, although given in the midst of all the fables and falsehoods of his Zendavesta, the work of an arrant impostor, and which laid the foundation of the whole system of Islamism, the religion of Mahomet, yet, nevertheless, embodies, distinctly, the same general views received by the Jews from their prophets. Zoroaster, the author of the Zendavesta of the Persians, and the restorer of the religion of the ancient Magians, was, as Dr. Prideaux\* has shown, the servant of the prophet Daniel, and not, as Dr. Burnet supposes, a cotemporary of Abraham and Job. In that work, he has copiously borrowed from the writings of Isaiah and the book of Psalms, mixing up with them his own heathenish philosophy in various allegorical illustrations of the origin and destruction of evil. Although he attributes the renovation of the world to three miraculously begotten persons, or prophets, whose origin he immediately derived from himself; yet his plagiarisms can be detected, and his pre-

\* See Prideaux's Connection of Old and New Testament, vol. i. p. 203, Oxford edition. See also Frazer's Hist. and Descript. Account of Persia, p. 147, referring to the Abbé Foucher as his authority, in Mémoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, vol. xxvii., xxix., xxxi., xxxix.

dictions traced to the Hebrew prophets, and to their references to the things spoken concerning Jesus Christ, the Messiah. "In the last times," says Zoroaster, "after the earth shall have been afflicted with evil of every kind, plague, pestilence, hail, famine and war, Oschederbami and Oschedermah first appear, with great and supernatural powers, and effect the conversion of a large portion of mankind. At last Sosioch, (a name resembling very nearly in sound the Hebrew Messiah), makes his appearance. Under him follows the resurrection. He will judge the living and the dead, give new glory to the earth, and remove from a world of sorrows the germ of evil. And finally, at the command of the righteous judge Ormuzd, Sosioch will, from an elevated place, render to all men what their deeds deserve. The dwelling of the pure will be the splendid Gorotmann—Ormuzd himself will take their bodies to his presence on high."

Dr. Hengstenburg,\* in commenting on these and other passages extracted from the Zendavesta, says—"If we leave out of view the division of that among three persons, which belongs only to one, analogous to which is the notion of the two Messiahs among the later Jews and the Samaritans, we shall not fail to perceive the coincidence of this expectation, with the prophecies of the Old Testament and the fulfilment, and shall not be disposed to ascribe it to any mere human origin." He means that it is the truths of revelation which Zoroaster, that successful impostor, stole from the Jewish prophets, adulterated and worked up in his own splendid and artful imposition of a false religion, which although the parent of Islamism, and superseded

\* Hengstenburg's Christology, v. i. pp. 16, 17.



by it, nevertheless still exists to some extent among the Ghebres in Persia and the Parsees of India.\*

We quote and value this testimony, only as historical evidence of the manner in which the writings of Isaiah, Daniel, and other prophets, were interpreted and understood by their cotemporaries and successors. The grammatical or literal interpretation, and not the mystical or allegorical, evidently formed the guide to the leading import of the predictions, understood to authorise the expectation of the personal appearance of the Messiah for judgment, the resurrection of the dead, the renovation of the world, and the consequent universal happiness of mankind.

It is not necessary to trace the entire stream of profane tradition, which has flowed down among the oriental nations. It may suffice to add one or two general testimonies on this subject. Plutarch quotes the views of Zoroaster, and adds, "that Theopompus relates it as the opinion of the Magians, that the struggle between the evil and the good principles of Zoroaster is to continue 6,000 years, and that, at the end of this time, the evil principle should be utterly overthrown, and that then mankind should be happy."

The doctrine of the revolution of all things, and of the renovation of the world consequent thereon, was taught by Plato and his followers. But Dr. Burnet has shown,† that he received it from the barbaric philosophers, and particularly the Egyptian priests. The Sibyls sung this song of old, as we find it copied by Virgil in his fourth Eclogue. Pythagoras, the pupil of Zoroaster, taught it before Plato, and Orpheus before both. The tradition reaches as high as the Greek philosophy. The barbaric nations, as they were

\* See Frazer's *Hist. and Descript. Account of Persia*, pp. 141, 161.

† Burnet on *Creation*, p. 607.

called, the Egyptians, Persians, Chaldeans, Indians, Brachmans, and other oriental nations, were more ancient than the Greeks. They all had this doctrine of the future renovation of the earth. It supposed, says Dr. Burnet, an *Annus Magnus* or great year, at the end of which, an entire mundane revolution should be performed, when all the celestial bodies should have finished their courses, and be come about to the same point in the heavens, and the same position with regard to each other, they were in, when first created, and that when this great round of time (or cycle) should be performed, a restoration of the moral world should likewise ensue, and universal nature be recovered from all its disorders, and reinstated in its pristine happy condition. Accordingly, this doctrine is called *Palingenesia*,\* the Scripture term for the regeneration or renovation of all things. Gale,† in his *Court of the Gentiles*, has traced certain Ethnic stories of the last judgment, man's future immortal state, and the resurrection of the body, from the Sacred Scriptures, and styles the Platonic year an ape of the last judgment.

In addition to these testimonies, which are mostly written tradition, embodied in the formal interpretation of scriptural passages, by Jewish writers, and transferred to those of profane authors, we may notice some of the more general and floating traditions of the early Jewish church, which do not find any direct support from any part of the Scriptures, but seem to have been deduced analogically, or from the assumption, generally entertained, that the six days' work of creation and the Sabbath, were typical, as well as the

\* Burnet on Creation, p. 611.

† See Gale's *Court of the Gentiles*, v. i. ch. 6.

Sabbatical and Jubilean cycles. It was a commonly received opinion, that the world was to last, in its present state, 6,000 years, and in the seventh should be renewed, when all the promises of God, made to the fathers, should be accomplished.\* Losing sight of the fact, that the prophets predict two comings of the Messiah, this tradition contributed to confirm the Jews in their unbelief, replying to the Christian proofs of the Messiah having come in the person of Jesus Christ, that the world was not yet 6,000 years old.† Still they were not agreed as to which of the seven millenaries would be selected for the coming of the Messiah. “The more general one was, that the world was to be 2,000 years void of the law, 2,000 under the law, and 2,000 under the Messiah.” This opinion, which Christians employed against the Jews’ rejection of Jesus Christ, was called “a tradition of the house of Elias,” an eminent Rabbi, who lived before Christ. The same tradition also taught, that, in the seventh millenary, the earth would be renewed, and the right-

\* Mede quotes Irenæus, lib. v. c. 28. 30, Justin Martyr, in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, Cyprian, lib. de exhortatione martyrii, Lactantius, de div. præm. lib. 7. c. 14, as entertaining this idea.

The ancient Jews, he says, also had a tradition to the same purpose, as appears by these testimonies recorded in the *Gemara* or *Gloss* of their *Talmud*, *Cod. Sanhedrim cap. Kcl. Jisrael*. For there, concerning that of Esay chap. 2. (*Exaltabitur Dominus solus die illo*) thus speaks the Talmudical Gloss.

*Dixit Rabbi Ketina, Sex annorum Millibus stat Mundus, et uno (Millenario) vastabitur; de quo dicitur, ATQUE EXALTABITUR DOMINUS SOLUS DIE ILLO.* Note.—By *vastabitur*, they mean the vastation of the world by fire in the day of judgment, whereby it shall become new, or a *New Heaven* and *New Earth*.—*Mede's Works*, lib. 5. c. 3. p. 893.

He gives also the tradition of the house of Elias to the same effect, pp. 776 and 893.

† See Pezron's *Antiquities*, ch. 4. 27.

eous dead raised ; that these should not again be turned to dust, and that the just then alive should mount up with wings as the eagle ; so that, in that day, they would not need to fear though the mountains (quoting Ps. 46. 3) should be cast into the midst of the sea.

These traditions we do not quote, as authority, but as historical evidence of what the views and expectations of the church were, during the period that elapsed from the captivity to the coming of Christ. And they are of value as such, inasmuch as they originated about the time the splendid predictions of Daniel and Ezekiel were delivered, and embody in them ample proof, that, from the very days of the prophets themselves, long prior to the first coming of Christ, the literal system of interpretation prevailed. If the rule of Tertullian, as quoted by Mr. Faber, be applied here, that what is first is true, and what is later is adulterate, the spiritual system of interpretation will find no support.

But lest it may be said these were Jewish fables, deserving of no alteration, and condemned by Christ and his apostles, who introduced and sanctioned the spiritual interpretation, let us next inquire whether there is any proof that they did so, or that they taught different views about the Millenium, and the kingdom of Heaven, and what were the views of the primitive church on these subjects. As has been already intimated, neither Christ nor his apostles, saw fit to change the general style of speech prevailing, but talked of the kingdom of Heaven as *approaching*, not as arrived. Not one word or hint is heard from any of them, about the gospel's enjoying a thousand years' prosperity before his coming. Not the slightest trace of such a Millenium as the spiritualists describe, consisting in the universal prevalence and prosperity of the gospel,

is to be found in the New Testament, excepting the disputed passage in Revelations. From the Saviour's lips there never dropped the most remote hint on the subject. On the contrary, he said that in the world his disciples would have tribulation; he forewarned them of persecutions and trials as their uniform lot, and of such nature as to be totally incompatible with the idea of a temporal Millenium, of the character expected by the spiritualists. Nay, more; He expressly predicted, that down to the very time of the end, his followers would have to guard against deception, and the imposition of false Christs and pretenders—that wars and rumors of wars should prevail, and instead of a thousand years of universal peace, under the preaching of the gospel, nation would rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there should be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places,\* and other things wholly inconsistent with the spiritualists' notions of a Millennium.

So far from the kingdom being established, he says, the *gospel* of the kingdom, i. e. the *good news* of the kingdom, not the kingdom itself—the very thing both He and John the Baptist were preaching—would be preached in all the world, not as the reign of Heaven on earth, not as actually converting the world, but “FOR A WITNESS† to all nations,” and that “then the end would come.” The nations would be agitated, and continue to be so, in their wars with each other, down to the very time of the end, while, nevertheless, His gospel, the glad news of the kingdom of Heaven, the only hope of man and of this fallen world, should be preached or heralded. God would bear his testimony of grace and mercy,

\* Mat. 24. 4–14.

† Mat. 24. 14.

in a fallen world, proclaiming the coming of his kingdom in the midst of the din and confusion, the clangor of arms, the thunder of cannons, the shocks of earthquakes, the roar of volcanoes, the wail of famine and pestilence, and the awful inflictions of Divine judgment upon the nations that reject his sway. Nor would he make an end of them, till in despite of all their conspiracies, persecutions, and vengeance, his gospel had delivered his testimony among them all, but that then the end would come, and come with fury and desolation, just as the flood broke loose upon the guilty inhabitants of the old world.

Where is there the least hint in all this, or in any other of the predictions of Christ, of such a Millenium as the spiritualist expects? We defy any man to produce a single passage on the subject from the lips of Christ; and is it at all likely that, if the prophets had predicted such a Millenium, and sung so nobly and sweetly, and in such exalted and extravagant strains about it, he would have never referred to it during the whole period of his ministry—especially when he undertook expressly to expound one of the most important predictions of Daniel, and to answer explicitly his disciples' question, what should be the sign of his coming and of the end of the world?

If the Saviour knew that a thousand years, of religious prosperity before his coming, are to supervene, after all wars, and famines, and earthquakes, and pestilences cease—and if he meant a spiritual coming, when they asked about, and understood him to speak of, his personal visible coming—he certainly evaded the disciples' question, and led them wide astray from the truth. For we do not hear one of them ever breathe the least hint of such a period. We defy any evidence of such a thing to be produced from them. Paul, on

the contrary, delivers a prediction about the judgment, and the resurrection, exactly in accordance\* with the tradition of the house of Elias. Moreover, he often spake of the coming of Christ to judge the nations, and to establish his kingdom; in accordance with the notions of the more eminent and devout Jews, he employed language which actually filled the Thessalonians with alarm, as though the day of his coming had already arrived, and afterwards allayed their terrors by predicting the terrible apostacy that should take place in the Christian church, and the general and frightful corruption of society which should precede his actual appearance. Peter, too, and Jude, also, express themselves in the very same way; but are just as silent, as were Christ and Paul, on the subject of a great day of religious prosperity, to occur one thousand years previous to the coming of Christ. And, surely, if any one would be likely to have given a hint of such a period, it would have been Peter, whose visions carried him forward to the coming of Christ—to the conflagration of the soil and of men's works—and to the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.†

There is nothing in the predictions of Christ and his apostles, or in their style of speech, which is inconsistent with the views expressed by the angel Gabriel, in his revelation to Mary, that the child to be born of her should be called "The Son of the Highest, and that the Lord God shall give unto him *the throne* of his father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."‡

The apostle John does, indeed, expressly predict

\* 1 Thess. 4. 16, 17.    † 2 Pet. 3. 13.    ‡ Luke, 1. 32, 33.

a Millenium; and he is the only writer in the New Testament that does. But the Millenium John predicts is exactly coincident, in its leading features, with the expectations of the pious Jews before the days of Christ. He falls in, precisely, with the current of traditional testimony, and proclaims a Millenium, which is to be introduced by violence done to the old serpent, the devil and Satan, and by the resurrection of the saints, called the first resurrection, and which is to be characterized by Christ's reigning with them a thousand years.

Leaving now the writings of the New Testament, which are in accordance with the old traditions from the days of Daniel, and starting again from this point, in following down the chain of traditional or historical testimony in the primitive church, we find nothing for the first century even approximating the views of the spiritualists. The prophecies were *not allegorically, but literally, interpreted and understood.*

But little from the pens of the writers of the first century has been preserved; yet, what little has, affords its testimony in favor of the literal interpretation, and against the spiritualists' views of the millenium. *Barnabas*, affirmed to be the companion and fellow-laborer of Paul the apostle, was, if not the same person, of very high antiquity. The epistle under his name, first published by Archbishop Usher and two years afterwards by Hugo Menardus, was declared to be genuine by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Jerome.

Giessler,\* after detailing the authorities who had questioned its authenticity, and indeed the whole controversy on the subject decides, along with Archbishops

\* See his Text Book of Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. pp. 67, 68.



Usher, Wake, Vossius, and others, in its favor, and admits that it must have been written soon after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. In this ancient epistle, Barnabas declares that the Abrahamic covenant survives and supersedes the Mosaic; and, inquiring whether it has been fulfilled, argues that it has only been so fulfilled, that God has sent Christ, who is to be the covenant pledge for the remainder of it; and having quoted and commented on Is. 42. 6, and 61. 1, 2, notices the typical character of the six days' work of creation and of the Sabbath as the old Jews understood them, saying, "Consider, my children, what that signifies: 'He *finished* them in six days.' The meaning is this: that in 6,000 years the Lord will bring all things to an end; for with Him one day is a thousand years, as himself testifieth, saying, 'Behold this day shall be as a thousand years;' therefore, children, in six days (i. e. 6,000 years) shall all things be accomplished. And what is that He saith, 'He rested the seventh day?' He meaneth, that when his Son shall come and abolish the wicked one, and judge the ungodly, and change the sun, and moon, and stars, then He shall gloriously rest on the seventh day. Behold, He will *then* truly sanctify it with blessed rest, when we have received *the righteous promise*—when iniquity shall be no more, *all things being renewed* by the Lord."\*

The next testimony, which we adduce from the first century, is that of Clement of Rome, supposed to be the friend and "fellow-laborer" of Paul, whom he commends to the Philippian church, who was one of the most distinguished Roman Christians, became pastor of the church in that city towards the close of the

\* See Bibliotheca Vet. Pat., tom. ii. p. 21.

first century, and is said to have lived till the third year of the reign of Trajan, or about A. D. 100. Of his writings, there are extant two epistles to the Corinthians. The first is generally admitted to be genuine, and to it Eusebius\* has borne a very high testimony. Of the second, the same early historian† says, “We know not that this is as highly approved as the former, and know not that it has been in use with the ancients.” He does not deny its existence, nor even its authenticity. All he says about it is, he knows not that it was as highly approved, or as much in use by the ancients.‡ In this epistle, Clement says, “Miserable are they of doubtful mind and uncertain heart, who say (in reference to the promise of future delights and glory) ‘All these things we have also heard from our fathers; but we, expecting day after day, have seen none of these things.’ Ye fools! compare yourselves to the tree. Take ye a vine: first indeed it casts off its leaves; then it begins to bud; afterwards comes the sour grape; and then the ripe grape. So also hath my people borne agitation and tribulation; but afterwards they shall receive the good things. Therefore, my brethren, let us not vacillate in our mind, but abide in hope, that we may receive the reward. For he is faithful who hath promised that he would render to every one according to his works. If, therefore, we shall place righteousness before God, we shall enter into his kingdom, and receive the promises which ear hath not heard, nor eye seen, and the things which have not entered into the heart of

\* Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. iii. ch. 16.—Τούτου δὴ οὖν τοῦ Κλημεντος ὁμολογουμένη μία ἐπιστολὴ φέρεται, μεγάλη τε καὶ θαυμασία.

† Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. iii. ch. 38.—Οὐ μὲν ἔσ’ ὁμοίως τῆ προτέρα καὶ ταυτην γνῶριμον ἐπισταμεθα, ὅτι μὴ δε τους ἀρχαίους αὐτῆ κεχρημενους ἴσμεν.

‡ Patres Apostol., vol. i. pp. 245–7, Oxf. ed.

man. Therefore, let us hourly expect the kingdom of God in love and righteousness, since we know not the day of the advent of God."

Here the kingdom of God is spoken of as future, and to be enjoyed, not after death, but at the coming of Christ—an object of ardent and constant expectation in this life. But lest the spuriousness of this second epistle of Clement be plead, it may suffice to remark, that almost the very same words occur in the first epistle admitted to be genuine, differing only in the extent to which the simile is carried, and the manner in which it is applied. "Ye see how in a little time the fruit of the tree comes to maturity. Of a truth, shortly and suddenly shall His will be accomplished, the Scripture even testifying, that 'He will quickly come and not tarry; and suddenly the Lord shall come into his temple, and the Holy One whom ye expect.'"\* The illustrations he afterwards introduces from the succession of day to night, the stories related among the Arabs about the bird called phœnix, and from the sower casting his seed into the ground, in order to set forth the resurrection, show plainly that this coming of the Lord, which he exhorted Christians continually to expect, was not a spiritual coming, but his personal appearance at the resurrection, for the introduction of his kingdom. There is not the most remote hint of a temporal Millenium, consisting in 1,000 years' religious prosperity before the coming of Christ, but that coming was the object of anxious, diligent, daily expectation.

Thus also does Ignatius,† another of the apostolic fathers as they are called—who, according to Eusebius, succeeded Peter at Antioch, who died an illustrious

\* *Patres Apostol.*, vol. i. pp. 97-99, Oxf. ed.

† *Patres Apostol.*, vol. ii. pp. 455-6, Oxford ed.

martyr, A. D. 107, and who, speaking in several of his epistles, of the expectation of Christ's coming, and particularly in that to Polycarp, says: "It behoves us especially to endure all things for God's sake, that he also may endure us. Become more studious than you are. Consider the times: expect Him who is above time, the eternal invisible, for our sakes visible." The same expectation of Christ's coming so commonly and forcibly urged by Christ and his apostles, continued to be the expectation of their successors.

Polycarp, who was the angel of the church in Smyrna, to whom Christ, it is supposed, addressed one of his seven epistles by John, and who was ordained by the latter,\* to whom Eusebius bears the highest testimony, saying that he had been instructed by the apostles, and had familiar intercourse with many that had seen Christ, and whom, he says, he had himself seen, while he was a youth, having lived to a great age, and died at last a martyr, A. D. 167—this pattern of orthodoxy, as he was regarded by Eusebius, beside other allusions to the same subject, says, in his epistle to the Philippians, so therefore let us serve (Christ) with fear and all reverence, according as He commanded, and the apostles have preached the Gospel to us, and the prophets who have heralded the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, "being zealous of good works, abstaining from scandals and false brethren, even those who hypocritically bear the name of the Lord, and who make vain men to err. For every one who confesseth not that Jesus Christ hath come in the flesh is Antichrist: and whosoever confesseth not the martyrdom of His cross is of the devil: and

\* See Spanheim's *Hist.*, p. 192.

whosoever perverts the discourses of the Lord to his own desires, and hath said there is neither a resurrection nor a judgment, he is the first born of Satan.”\* “If we please (the Lord) in this dispensation, we shall also partake of that which is to come, according as He has promised us to raise us from the dead, and that if we demean ourselves worthy of Him and truly believe, we shall also reign with Him.”†

Papias is the next writer of the first century, whose testimony we quote. He was bishop, or pastor, of Hierapolis in Phrygia, and supposed, by Irenæus, to have been instructed by John‡ the apostle. Eusebius says, he was a hearer of John, and associate of Polycarp, and quotes from his historical work, in five books, not now extant, entitled an explanation or account of the Lord’s sayings or oracles. The following is Papias’s own account of the authorities he refers to, as reported by Eusebius. “Whatsoever I have at any time accurately ascertained and treasured up in my memory, as I have received it from the elders, I have recorded it in order to give additional confirmation to the truth by my testimony. For I have never, like many, delighted to hear those that tell many things, but those that teach the truth, neither those that record foreign precepts, but those that are given from the Lord to our faith, and that come from the truth itself. But if I met with any one, who had been a follower of the elders anywhere, I made it a point to inquire, what were the declarations of the elders, what was said by Andrew, Peter or Philip, what by Thomas, James, John, Matthew, or any other of the disciples of our Lord; what was said by Aristion, and

\* Patres Apostol., v. ii. pp. 498-501, Oxford ed.

† Patres Apostol., v. ii. pp. 494-497, Oxford ed.

‡ Spanheim’s Hist., p. 194.

the presbyter John, disciples of the Lord, for I do not think I derived so much benefit from books, as from the living voice of those that are still surviving."

This is the very method which should be adopted by, and these the essential qualifications of, a faithful historian. What his language was in setting forth the faith of the apostles, and their cotemporaries, about the Millenium, and the kingdom of Christ, we do not know, but his statements come to us through a prejudiced channel, through Eusebius, who was a courtier and philosopher of the Platonic school, who lived 200 years after Christ, and adopted and extolled the allegorical or mystical interpretation. The following, nevertheless, is Eusebius's account of Papias's sentiments and interpretation of the Scriptures. "He says there would be a certain Millenium *after the resurrection*, and that there would be a corporeal sign of Christ on this very earth: which things, adds Eusebius, he appears to have imagined, as if they were authorized by the apostolic narrations, not understanding correctly those matters which *they propounded mystically* in their representations."\*

It is worthy of remark here, that Eusebius does not impeach the veracity of Papias, who does not profess to discuss doctrines; but simply to give a narrative of the traditions he derived from those that conversed with the apostles, and which, he says, were, in the very words of the apostles themselves, for the truth and fidelity of which, he pledges himself. It is also worthy of remark, that Eusebius admits, that the plain and literal meaning of the apostolical narratives, would seem to sanction the views of Papias, because he charges him with taking the plain meaning, instead

\* Eusebius's Hist., v. iii. p. 110.

of understanding them "*mystically*," and by this means with being led into error.

Because Papias displayed no skill in the allegorical or mystical interpretation, Eusebius says he was very limited in his comprehension. That is, his millenarianism was proof of folly, according to Eusebius, whose principles of interpretation were so opposite; yet he admits that he was both eloquent and learned in the Scriptures—a far better learning than the philosophy of the schools.

It is also still more worthy of remark, that however foolish the views of Papias appeared to Eusebius, he was constrained to admit, that the great body of ecclesiastical writers coincided with Papias; and he endeavors to account for the fact, by his antiquity. "He was the cause," says Eusebius, "why most of the ecclesiastical writers, urging the antiquity of the man, were carried away by the same error."\*

With the testimony of Papias we conclude that of the first century. In review of what has been adduced, and what shall be submitted in the next chapters, the following facts, we think, are abundantly established.

1. That cotemporaneously, almost, with the prophets of the captivity, who are the most remarkable in the fulness and precision of their predictions, relative to the coming and kingdom of Christ, there arose the belief, that the Messiah would come, and personally appearing, raise the dead, and establish His kingdom in this world.

2. That this belief was propagated, and may be traced down, through the Jewish church, to the days of Christ, not in the legends of the nation, but in the influential views of the most devout and godly of that people.

\* Eusebius's Hist., lib. iii. p. 110.

3. That neither the Saviour, nor his apostles, ever undertook to deny or disown this belief, but, on the contrary, used the very same technicalities and style of speech on the subject, with which the ears of the Jewish church had been long familiar, holding forth the coming and kingdom of the Messiah in this world, as the grand inducement to faith and repentance, and making it the very burden, the sum and substance of their preaching.

4. That immediately after their day, in the direct line of their successors, and in the writings of all the fathers of the first century that are extant, the same unbroken testimony is to be found, in favor of the literal interpretation of prophecy, as it held forth the approaching, personal, and visible coming of Christ to judgment, and for the establishment of his kingdom, as the great object of earnest and universal hope and expectation in the church of God.

5. That nowhere throughout this whole period, do we meet with the least hint of a 1,000 years' universal religious prosperity, or the conversion of the world, before Christ's coming to judgment.

6. And that even, by the testimony of its enemies, it appears to have been the general expectation of the church—which contributed to their self-denial and holiness and practice of Christian graces—that Christ would visibly come, and, having raised his saints, reign with them 1,000 years on the earth; nor was it ever for a moment questioned, till a new style of interpreting the Scriptures—which, originating with Platonic philosophers, found favor with heretics, was commended by Eusebius, and admired and adopted by the learned—led the wise and philosophical to pour contempt upon the simplicity of the ancient faith, as the merest credulity, fostered by the wild and extravagant legends of the Jews.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### TRADITIONARY HISTORY.

OUR examination of traditionary history, in the last chapter, brought us down to the close of the first century. Beginning with the prophets of the captivity, we traced the stream of tradition through two channels: 1. The Jewish, flowing in the testimony of their Targums, their apocryphal historians, their learned and pious Rabbis, down to the days of Christ. 2. The profane, flowing down through the Gentile nations, in the writings of Zoroaster, the servant of Daniel, the instructor of Pythagoras, and the restorer of the Magian religion in Persia.

These five things formed the object of ancient expectation, and prevailed, to a greater or less degree, in greater or less distinctness, through the Oriental nations, and among the Greeks and Romans of the West; viz. the coming of some illustrious being,—the destruction of the dominion of evil in this world,—the resurrection of the dead,—the dispensation of judgment,—and the consequent happiness of the world. This testimony, it was remarked, is not quoted, as evidence of any other value than to establish the fact, that the prophetic writings—as grammatically interpreted in the traditionary explanations of the Jews, from the very days of the captivity—have made an extensive impression on the world, and may be traced, even to this day, among the Oriental sects and nations.

We resume the chain of historical testimony, where we left it, at the close of the first century.

The first author, in the second century, whose testimony we quote, is Justin Martyr. He was born A. D. 89, and suffered martyrdom A. D. 163. He was in his early life cotemporary with Papias and Polycarp, was originally "a Platonic philosopher, but was converted to the Christian faith. He taught the gospel," says Spanheim,\* "at Rome, with great success and boldness until he suffered martyrdom in the reign of Antoninus Pius. Many of his writings against the heretics have perished. His genuine works are two apologies, and his dialogue with Trypho, the Jew, which are still extant."

Eusebius speaks in high terms of him, saying, "This Justin has left us many monuments of a mind well stored with learning, and devoted to sacred things, replete with matter profitable in every respect." † This learned and excellent writer, in his dialogue with Trypho, the Jew, on the advent of Christ, expresses himself in the most pointed terms, and quotes passage after passage, from the writings of Isaiah, and from the revelations of John, in proof of the visible coming of Christ to raise the dead, to establish his kingdom, and to reign with his saints on the earth.

"Tell me," ‡ says Trypho, "do you honestly allow

\* Spanh. Eccles. Annal., p. 194. † Euseb. Eccles. Hist., p. 137.

‡ Καὶ ὁ Τρύφων πρὸς ταῦτα εἶπεν πρὸς σε, ὦ ἄνθρωπε, ὅτι ἀσφαλῆς ἐν πᾶσι σπουδίσις εἶναι ταῖς γραφαῖς προσπλεκόμενος. εἰπὲ δὲ μοι, ἀληθῶς ὑμεῖς ἀνοικοδομηθῆναι τὸν τύπον Ἱερουσαλὴμ τοῦτον ὑμολογεῖτε, καὶ συναχθῆσθαι τὸν λαὸν ὑμῶν, καὶ εὐφρανθῆναι σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἅμα τοῖς πατριάρχαις καὶ τοῖς προφήταις, καὶ τοῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡμετέρου γενόμενοις, ἢ καὶ τῶν προσηλύτων γενομένων πρὶν ἔλθειν ὑμῶν τὸν Χριστὸν προσδοκᾶτε, ἢ ἕνα δόξης περικρατεῖν ἡμῶν ἐν ταῖς ζητήσεσι πρὸς τὰ ταῦτα ὑμολογεῖν ἐχωρησαίς. Καγὼ εἶπον· οὐχ οὕτω τάλας ἐγώ, ὡς Τρύφων, ὡς ἕτερα λέγειν παρ' ἡ φρονῶ. Ὑμολογησαὶ οὖν σοι καὶ πρότερον, ὅτι ἐγὼ μὲν καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ ταῦτα φρονοῦμεν, ὡς καὶ παντὸς ἐπίστασθε τοῦτο γενησόμενον· πολλοὶς δὲ αὖ καὶ τῶν τῆς καθαρᾶς καὶ

this Jerusalem will be rebuilt, and do you expect our nation will be gathered, and with joy be brought back together with the Messiah, and the patriarchs, and prophets, and proselytes, before the coming of your Messiah ; or do you hold this that you may seem to triumph in argument ?”

Justin, in reply, protests that he was honest in his sentiments, and that the Jew need not fear to be caught in a trap by what appeared to him a new and ingenious mode of argument. According to some copies, he admits that some Christians reputed orthodox, did *not* acknowledge (*non agnoscere*) these sentiments. That this is the genuine reading, however, both Mede and Bishop Newton and Mr. Vint deny, affirming, what Mr. Homes, by a diligent examination of manuscript copies, has proved, that the word “ not”

εὐσεβοῦς ὄντων χριστιανῶν γνώμης, τοῦτο μὴ γνωρίζειν εσῆμανα σοι. Τοῦς γὰρ λεγομένοις μὲν χριστιανοῖς, ὄντας δὲ ἀθείοις καὶ ἀσηβεῖς ἀίρεσιωτας, ὅτι κατὰ πάντα βλάσφημα καὶ ἄθεα καὶ ἀνοητα διδάσκουσιν, ἐδηλωσά σοι. ὅτι δὲ οὐκ ἐβ’ ὑμῶν μόνων τοῦτο λέγειν με ἐπιστάσθε, τῶν γεγεννημένων ἡμῖν λογῶν ἅπαντων, ὡς δυνάμεις μου, σύνταξιν ποιήσομαι· ἐν οἷς καὶ τοῦτο ὁμολογοῦντά με ὃ καὶ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ὁμολογῶ, ἐγράψω. Οὐ γάρ ἀνθρώποις μᾶλλον ἢ ἀνθρωπίνοις διδάγμασιν ἀίρυνται ἀκολουθεῖν, ἀλλὰ Θεῶ, καὶ τοῖς παρ’ ἐκείνου διδάγμασιν, εἰ γὰρ καὶ συνεβίβατε ὑμεῖς τισι λεγομένοις χριστιανοῖς, καὶ τοῦτο μὴ ὁμολογοῦσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ βλασφημεῖν τολμῶσι τὸν Θεὸν Ἀβραάμ, καὶ τὸν Ἰσαακ, καὶ τὸν Θεὸν Ἰακῶβ, οἳ καὶ λέγουσι μὴ εἶναι νεκρῶν ἀναστάσιν, ἀλλὰ ἅμα τῷ ἀποθνήσκειν, τὰς ψυχὰς αὐτῶν ἀναλαμβάνεσθαι εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν, μὴ ὑπολάβητε αὐτοὺς χριστιανοῖς. ὥσπερ οὐδὲ Ἰουδαίους, ἂν τις ὀρθῶς ἐξετάσῃ, ὁμολογήσαι εἶναι τοῖς Σαδδουκαίοις, ἢ τὰς ὁμοίους αἵρεσας Γενιτιστῶν, καὶ Μεριστῶν, καὶ Γαλιλαίων, καὶ Ἑλληνιανῶν, καὶ Φαρισαίων βαπτιστῶν· (καὶ μὴ ἀρῶς ἀκουσῆτε μου πάντα ἃ φρονῶ λέγοντες) ἀλλὰ, λεγομένοις μετὰ Ἰουδαίοις τε· ἔκκα Ἀβραάμ, καὶ χεῖλεσιν ὁμολογοῦντας τὸν Θεόν, ὡς αὐτὸς κέκραγεν ὁ Θεός, τὴν δὲ καρδίαν πρόβῳ εχειν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ. ἐγὼ δὲ, τε εἴ τις εἰσιν ὀρθογνώμονες κατὰ πάντα χριστιανοί, δε σαρκὸς ἀνύστασιν γενήσεσθαι ἐπιστάμεθα· καὶ χίλια ἐτη ἐν Ἱερουσαλὴμ οἰκοδομηθεῖσιν καὶ κοσμηθεῖσιν τε πλατυνθεῖσιν, οἱ προφήται Ἰεζεκιὴλ καὶ Ησαΐας, καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ὁμολογοῦσιν.—Justini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone Judæo. Op. Om. Paris Ed. Sec. 80, pp. 177, 178.

is an interpolation, and that Justin Martyr affirmed that orthodox Christians universally believed it. He tells Trypho, "That some indeed called Christians, are in fact atheists, and impious heretics, because, in every way, they teach blasphemy, impiety, and folly." He gives proof of his sincerity, and protests that he was "determined to follow not men, nor human authority, but God, and the doctrine taught by Him;" adding, "Should you happen upon some who are called Christians, indeed, and yet are far from holding these sentiments," (which is a blow at the Platonism then beginning to creep into the church,) "but even dare to assail the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob with blasphemy, and say, '*There is no resurrection of the dead; but instantly when they die, their souls are received up into heaven,*' do not count these among Christians, even as *they* are not Jews, if accurately considered, who are called Sadducees, and the like sects of Genistæ, Meristæ, Galileans, Hellenists, Pharisees, and Baptists, and others, (that I may not tire you to hear me express all I think,) but under the name of Jews and sons of Abraham, they worship God, as he accuses them, with their lips only, while their heart is far from him. But I, and all that are orthodox Christians, are acquainted with the resurrection of the body, and the thousand years in Jerusalem, that shall be rebuilt, adorned and enlarged, as the prophets Ezekiel, Isaiah, and others, declare." Then he quotes a variety of passages from Isaiah, commenting on them, and concluding with this testimony from the book of Revelations. "Moreover, a certain man *among us*, whose name is John, being one of the twelve apostles of Christ, in that Revelation which was shown to him, prophesied that those who believe in our Christ shall fulfil a thousand years at Jerusalem; and after that the general, and in a

word, the everlasting resurrection and last judgment of all together.\*

This testimony scarcely needs a comment, but it is the more valuable, inasmuch as it is confessed by Dr. Murdock, translator of Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, that his writings are numerous, erudite, all of them theological, all of a polemical character, and, "being the first of the learned divines, and a very zealous and active Christian, he merits our particular attention."† It proves what were Justin's principles of interpretation. Although once a Platonic philosopher, "having had successive masters in philosophy, Stoic, Peripatetic, Pythagorean, and lastly Platonic," he had received the Scriptures, and interpreted the prophecies in their plain, literal import, and not as mystically or allegorically understood. It proves, also, what was his judgment in reference to those who did not so receive and believe the Scriptures. He denounced them as heretics, and exhorted Trypho to shun them.

The next author of the second century whose testimony we cite, is Irenæus. He was successor to Pothinus,‡ as pastor of the church of Lyons, about A. D. 171, and was martyred A. D. 202 or 208. He was a disciple of Polycarp, of whom Irenæus§ says, that "having been instructed by the apostles, he always taught what he had learned from them, what the

\* Brooks' Elements of Scriptural Interpretation, p. 38. First Report of Second Advent Gen. Conf., p. 15.

† Murdock's Tr. of Mosheim, vol. i. p. 118.

‡ Scriptor. Eccles. Hist. Lit. Gulielmi Cave. pp. 39, 40.

§ Καὶ περὶ τοῦ Κυρίου τινα ἦν ἂ παρ' ἐκείνων ακηκόει, καὶ περὶ τῶν δυναμῶν αὐτοῦ, καὶ περὶ τῆς διδασκαλίας, ὡς παρὰ τῶν αυτοπτιῶν τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ λόγου παρεληφώς ὁ Πολύκαρπος, ἀπήγγελλε πάντα συμφωνῶνται ταῖς γραφαῖς.—Fragment Epist. ad Florinum. Irenæi, p. 464. Oxon. Ed.

church had handed down, and what is the true doctrine." He has left behind him, what Mosheim calls "a splendid monument of antiquity,"\* a work in five books against the Valentinian heresy, originally written in Greek, but preserved only in a Latin translation, of rather barbarous style and diction. In this work, Irenæus having noticed certain heretical opinions on the subject, springing from ignorance of the mystery of the resurrection and of the kingdom of the just, proceeds to state the true doctrine. "It is fitting," says he, "that the just rising at the appearing of God, should, in the renewed state, receive the promise of the inheritance which God *covenanted to the fathers*, and should *reign* in it; and that then should come the final judgment." This fitness he sets forth, confirming his views by a reference to the promise which God made to Abraham, concluding, "Thus, therefore, as God promised to him the inheritance of the earth, and he received it not during the whole time he lived in it, it is necessary that he should receive it, together with his seed, that is, with such of them as fear God and believe in him—in the resurrection of the just."† Having so concluded, he goes on to show

\* Murdock's Tr. of Mosheim, vol. i. p. 120.

† Oportet justos primos in conditione hac quæ renovatur, ad apparitionem Dei resurgentes recipere promissionem hæreditatis, quam Deus promisit patribus, et regnare in ea: *post deinde fieri judicium*. In qua enim conditione laboraverunt, sive afflicti sunt, omnibus modis probati per sufferentiam, justum est in ipsâ recipere eos fructus sufferentiæ; et quâ conditione interfecti sunt propter Dei dilectionem, in ipsa vivificare: et in qua conditione servitutum sustinuerunt in ipsa regnare eos.—Repromisit autem Deus hæreditatem terræ Abrahæ et semini ejus: et neque Abraham neque semen ejus, hoc est, qui ex fide justificantur, nunc sumunt in ea hæreditatem; accipient autem eam in resurrectione justorum.—*Irenæi*, lib. v., adversus Hæreses, pp. 452, 453.

that Christ, and believers or true Christians, being of the seed of Abraham, and partakers of the promise, according to the apostles' showing, and having as yet enjoyed no inheritance in the land of promise, will undoubtedly receive it at the resurrection of the just. In his 34th chapter he quotes Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jeremiah, and Revelations, in support of these views, showing that he adopted the same principles of interpretation with Polycarp, and Papias, and Justin Martyr, and expected the personal visible coming of Christ, for the resurrection of his saints, and for the establishment of his kingdom on the earth. In his 35th and 36th chapters he says, that in the end of Antichrist's time, "the Lord will come from Heaven with clouds, in the glory of his Father, and hurl him and his followers into the lake of fire; but he will introduce the times of his righteous reign, i. e. *the rest, the seventh day sanctified*, and will restore to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom, the Lord says, many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob." He identifies the kingdom of Heaven and the Millenium, and the times of the kingdom he makes to be, when consequent on the coming of Christ, the earth shall be renovated, and Jerusalem that now is, be rebuilt after the fashion of the Jerusalem above,\* but distinct from that heavenly city, which John in vision, saw descending out of Heaven to earth.

Tatian, a rhetorician and disciple of Justin Martyr, who flourished about A. D. 170, after the death of his master, swerved from the faith, and became the founder

\* Nihil allegorizari potest, sed omnia firma et vera, et substantiam habentia, ad fruitionem hominum justorum a Deo facta.—*Iren. adv. Hæres.*, lib. v. ch. 35. p. 460.

of a rigorous sect called Encratites. There is nothing in his writings on the subject of the Millenium. While he professes his belief in the resurrection of the body and a day of judgment, he says nothing about any great glory and religious prosperity of the church, before the coming of Christ. Nothing can be inferred from his writings as to the views of the churches on the subject of the kingdom of Heaven.

Athenagoras, pronounced by Dr. Murdock to have been one of the most elegant and able writers the church has produced, but scarcely mentioned by any of the fathers, belongs to this century. It is reported that he was converted to Christianity by reading the Scriptures with a design to confute them. He was principal of the school at Alexandria, and in A. D. 177, wrote an apology for the Christian religion addressed to the Emperors Aurelian and Commodus, descanting on the same topics, and employing the same arguments with Justin Martyr. He also wrote another work on the subject of the resurrection, designed to meet the philosophical objections of the heathen against the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and containing no intimation as to the time, place, circumstances, or condition of the resurrection. There is no direct testimony in his writings on the subject of the prophecies; nor is there any intimation given of an allegorical Millenium, a period of great religious prosperity prior to the resurrection, such as the spiritualist accounts the hope of the church and the world. This writer, therefore, is no witness either way.

Tertullian and Clement of Alexandria are the only writers of this century which we deem it necessary particularly to notice. They properly belong, as authors, to the second century, though they did not die till some time in the third. Tertullian is the first Christian



writer in Latin, whose works have come down to us. "He was the son of a pagan centurion of proconsular rank, and born at Carthage, A. D. 160. He was bred to the law, but becoming a Christian, was made a proselyte in the church of Carthage, where he appears to have spent his whole life.' Mosheim\* says, "Which were the greatest, his excellences or defects, it is difficult to say. He possessed great genius, but it was wild and unchastened. His piety was active and fervent, but likewise gloomy and austere. He had much learning and knowledge, but lacked discretion and judgment: he was more acute than solid."

Milner speaks in very harsh strains of him, particularly on account of his paying so much attention to the dress of Christians and their style of living, urging simplicity and nonconformity to the pagan fashions and extravagance. "All his writings," he says, "betray the same sour, monastic, harsh, and severe turn of mind." Yet, after having freely censured and severely condemned the man, he says, "The abilities of Tertullian as an orator and a scholar, are far from being contemptible. It is not for us to condemn, after all, a man who certainly honored Christ, defended several fundamental Christian doctrines, took large pains in supporting what he took to be true religion, and ever meant to serve God."† Spanheim says that "he occupies a place in the first rank of the fathers, in erudition, acumen, and eloquence."‡

The testimony of Tertullian is very explicit. "We also," says he, "confess that a kingdom is promised us *on earth*, before that in Heaven, but in another state,

\* Murdock's Tr. of Mosheim's Hist., vol. i. p. 122, note.

† Milner's Ch. Hist., vol. i. p. 270.

‡ Spanheim's Hist., p. 195.

viz. after the resurrection; for it will be 1,000 years in a city of divine workmanship, viz. *Jerusalem brought down from Heaven*; and this city Ezekiel knew, and the apostle John saw,"\* &c. "This is the city provided of God to receive the saints in the resurrection, wherein to refresh them with an abundance of all spiritual good things, in recompense of those which, in the world, we have either despised or lost. For it is both just and worthy of God, that his servants should there triumph and rejoice where they have been afflicted for his name's sake. This is the manner of the heavenly kingdom."† Again he says, "After the 1,000 years, in which is included the resurrection of the saints, rising earlier or later according to their merits, then we, being changed in a moment into angelic matter, shall be transported to the heavenly kingdom."‡ Moreover, he says, that it was customary

\* Nam et confitemur in terra nobis regnum repromissum sed ante cælum, sed alio statu, utpote post resurrectionem in mille annos in civitate divini operis Jerusalem cælo delata, quam et apostolus matrem nostram sursum designat, et πολιτευμα nostrum, id est, municipatum in cælis esse pronuntians, alicui utique cælesti civitati eum deputat. Hanc et Ezechiel novit, et Apostolus Joannes vidit, et qui apud fidem nostram est novæ Prophetiæ sermo testatur, ut etiam effigiem civitatis ante repræsentationem ejus conspectui futuram in signum prædicant. —*Tertullian adv. Marcionem*, liber iii. page 680.

† Hunc dicimus excipiendis resurrectione sanctis, et refovendis omnium bonorum utique spiritualium copiâ in compensationem eorum quæ in seculo vel despeximus vel amisimus, a Deo prospectam, siquidem et justum et Deo dignum illis quoque exsultare famulos ejus, ubi sunt et afflicti in nomine ipsius.—*Adv. Merc. lib. iii. cap. 24*, on which Mede remarks (N. B. hic vocat quod in terris futurum asserit, utpote de cælo sine cælitis, vel in quo cælestis e angelica vivetur vita.) B. iii. p. 618.

‡ Post cujus mille annos, intra quam ætatem concluditur sanctorum resurrectio, pro meritis maturiùs vel tardiùs resurgentium,

for Christians in his times to pray "that they might have part in the first resurrection;" and it is confessed by Cyprian, of the following century, that it was the belief that those who suffered martyrdom for Christ, should have their part in the first resurrection, which made them to glory in their persecutions, and even ambitious of suffering and dying for Christ.

The literal interpretation of the prophecies was, obviously, that adopted by Tertullian,\* who stands acknowledged to have been the great defender of the Christian faith in the second century.

The last writer of note in this century, was Clement, of Alexandria. He was, by his own confession, a scholar of Pantænus, who, although professing Christianity, and the first master of whom we have information in the Christian school at Alexandria, said to be established by Mark, nevertheless retained the title of the stoic philosopher. "This sect of stoic philosophers," Milner says, "were a sort of romantic pretenders to perfection, which doctrine flattered human pride,

tunc et mundi destructione et iudicii conflagratione commissa, demutati in atomo; in angelicam substantiam, scilicet per illud incorruptelæ superindumentum transferemur in cœleste regnum.—*Tertullian adv. Marcionem*, lib. iii. ch. 24. page 680.

\* We give some further testimony from Tertullian. "Etiam in\* Apocalypsi Joannis ordo temporum sternitur, quem Martyrum quoque animæ sub altari ultionem et iudicium flagitantes sustinere didicerunt; ut prius et orbis† de pateris angelorum plagas suas ebibat, et prostituta illa‡ civitas a decem regibus dignos exitus referat, et§ Bestia Antichristus cum suo Pseudopropheta certamen. Ecclesiæ Dei inferat, atque ita Diabolo in|| abyssum interim relegato, PRIMÆ RESURRECTIONIS prærogativa de solis ordinetur; dehinc et igni dato, universalis resurrectionis censura de libris iudicetur.—*De Resurrectione Carnis*. Cap. 25.

\* Ap. 6. † Ap. 15, 16. ‡ Ap. 17. § Ap. 19.

|| Ap. 20. See also, *adv. Hermogenem*, cap. 11; quoted by Mede, p. 619.

but was surely ill adapted to our natural imbecility, and the views of innate depravity. The combination of this with Christianity must have debased the divine doctrine very much, in the system of Pantænus; and although his instructions clouded the light of the gospel, among those who were disposed implicitly to follow his dictates, yet it is not improbable but that many of the simple illiterate Christians there, might happily escape the infection, and preserve, unadulterated, the genuine simplicity of the faith of Christ. The bait of reasoning pride lies more in the way of the learned, and in all ages they are more prone to snatch at it.”\*

Clemens was of the same philosophical cast of mind with his master. Justin Martyr, as we have observed, though essentially orthodox in his faith, was among the first to sanction a philosophizing spirit, and was commended for his learning. However innocent it proved in him, it did not remain so in others. Clement avowed that the Gentile philosophy was important to prepare the way, and lay the foundation for Christianity.

Dr. Murdock, in his notes to his translation of Moseheim's Ecclesiastical History, says, “Clement had vast learning, a lively imagination, great fluency, considerable discrimination, and was a bold and independent speculator. No one of the fathers, except Origen, has been more censured in modern times for an excessive attachment to philosophy, or metaphysical theology. His education, and the atmosphere in which he lived, led him towards Platonism and Stoicism. His great error was, that he overrated the value of philosophy or human reason, as a guide in matters of religion. He also indulged his imagina-

\* Milner's Eccl. Hist., vol. i. p. 276.

tion, as all the learned of his age did, to excess, and construed the Bible allegorically and fancifully.”\*

We need not, therefore, expect to find much in his writings, nor anything very distinct, on the subject of the coming and kingdom of Christ; for the simplicity of faith on these themes, is and has always been impaired by human philosophy. A modern author says of him, “This writer seems to me the most vapid of the fathers, having no salt in him; and though quoting the pure word, yet losing it again instantly as a man does the fashion of his face—the moment he turns from the glass. I have no pleasure in his pages. He says much more of Plato than of Christ, and takes notice, neither of the Millenium nor of the coming of Christ, nor of the judgment, nor scarcely of the kingdom of heaven.”† Yet even this author, in his address to the heathen, betrays the influence of what we have seen was the general belief of the Christian church in the first and second centuries; viz. that the kingdom of heaven had not yet arrived. “Therefore Jesus cries aloud, personally urging us, because the kingdom of heaven is at hand; he converts men by fear.” This remark proves that he regarded the kingdom of heaven, as we have seen the prophets and traditions testify, to be introduced by judgment, so that the prospect of its approach to mankind generally, was more an object of terror than joy, and therefore an efficient means of exciting their fears, and, through fear, of converting them from the error of their ways. The doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, as advocated by the spiritualists, can in no sense be said to appeal directly to men’s fears, and, therefore, notwithstanding

\* Murdock’s Translation of Mosheim, vol. i. pp. 121, 122.

† Ward’s History and Doctrine of the Millenium, p. 17.

all Clement's philosophy and mystification, his ideas of that kingdom must have been radically different. His language is perfectly intelligible and forcible, however, according to the views of the literalists, who apprehend the Scriptures to teach that the kingdom of heaven is to be introduced by the personal, visible coming of Christ, and terrible visitations of divine judgment on the wicked. It is the very argument of Peter when he says, "The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer:\* and if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear."†

The other writers of this century, whose works are extant, are few, and the object of their writings seems to have been, either to offer an apology for the Christian religion in opposition to pagan infidelity, or to confute some particular heresy. Of this description were the Apologies of Quadratus, bishop of Athens, and of Aristides, his cotemporary, an eloquent Christian philosopher of that city, which made such an impression on the Emperor Adrian, to whom they were presented, that Lampridius says he intended to have built a temple for Christ.

To these may be added the names of Agrippa Castor, of Athanagoras, Pantæus, Melito, Claudius Apollinarius, Theophilus, Serapion of Antioch, and perhaps Hermias, Philip of Gortyra, Modestus, Miltiades, and Apollonius, most of whose writings are lost, and whose testimony, therefore, cannot be obtained.

In closing up the testimony of this period, it is worthy of notice, as Mr. Brooks has stated, that,

\* 1 Peter, 4. 7.

† 1 Peter, 1. 17.

although Dr. Hamilton, of Strathblaine, in his work against Millenarians, has said, that the principles of Millenarianism were opposed and rejected, by almost every father of the church, with the exception of Barnabas, Clement, and others whom he mentions, he does not seem to have been aware, that his numerous exceptions are almost the whole of those whose works have been preserved down to the time of Origen. "He may be safely challenged to adduce one single passage in any father, during that period, *opposing* or *rejecting* the view. The utmost that can be said of any is, that they do not mention the subject; when they do advert to it, they support and maintain the view that has been here given."\*

To the testimony of Christian writers, in the first and second centuries, it may be proper, before we pass to that of the third and later centuries, to add that of profane history. Eusebius quotes a passage from the writings of Hegesippus, a converted Jew of the second century, to whom he bears honorable testimony as an historian, giving an account of his writings, and showing what impression the doctrine of Christ's coming and kingdom made upon the mind of the emperor Domitian, who, in the year A. D. 93 or 94, authorised the second base and cruel persecution against Christians; and, during which, the Apostle John was banished to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the book of Revelations.

The immediate cause of this persecution, according to Hegesippus, was the alarm of the emperor, at the appearance of Christ, which, he says, was as great as that of Herod, whose conduct he imitated, seeking, especially, by murdering the kindred of Christ accord-

\* El. Proph. Int., p. 36.

ing to the flesh, and those of the Jews of the lineage of David, to prevent the appearance of any aspirant to his throne. He is related to have had an interview with some of the relatives of the Saviour, and that when he found they expected the appearance of their *deceased* Saviour, and the kingdom of heaven *at the end of the world*, he dismissed them as simpletons, and ordered the persecution to cease.\*

Gibbon has noticed this fact at some length, and Mosheim also. It is of value, as collateral testimony, showing what were the expectations of Christians, and their style of speech at that time, in relation to the coming and kingdom of Christ. The language of Gibbon is well worthy of being quoted on the subject.† “It was universally believed,” he says, “that the end of the world, and the kingdom of heaven, were at hand. The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the apostles; the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples, and those who understood, in their literal sense, the discourses of Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the son of man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished, which had beheld his humble condition upon earth.” This is rather Gibbon’s own version of the matter than a faithful report of the actual views of Christians. They did, indeed, look for the speedy coming of Christ, but they did not feel themselves bound to give the same meaning to the Saviour’s use of the word “generation” which this sneering historian has done.

“The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium,” continues Gibbon, “was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ.” Having stated

\* Euseb. Hist. Eccles., lib. iii. ch. 19.

† Hist. of the Decline and Fall of the Rom. Emp., vol. ii. pp. 25, 26.



the views we have already quoted, of the ancient Jewish and Christian expectations, founded on the prophecies relative to the Millenium, though with his own gloss, he adds, "the assurance of such a Millenium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers, from Justin Martyr and Irenæus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down to Lactantius, who was preceptor to the son of Constantine. Though it might not be universally received, it appears to have been *the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers*; and it seems so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, that it must have contributed, in a very considerable degree, to the progress of the Christian faith. But when the edifice of the church was almost completed the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign on the earth was, at first, treated as a profound allegory, was considered, by degrees, as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected, as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism. A mysterious prophecy, which still forms a part of the sacred canon, but which was thought to favor the exploded sentiment, has very narrowly escaped the proscription of the church."\*

From this unbroken chain of testimony, during the first and second centuries, in favor of the pre-millennial coming of Christ, to establish his kingdom on the earth, we pass to the third. Gibbon has correctly stated the case. It was not till two centuries had passed away, that anything unfavorable to this belief seems to have been entertained in the primitive church. Toward the close of the second century, the

\* Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, vol. i. pp. 411-413.

allegorical style of interpretation began to find favor. A tendency to it had gradually manifested itself. Theophilus of Antioch, who died A. D. 182 or 183, displayed a great fondness for allegorical and fanciful interpretations, and founded many of his arguments in vindication of Christianity on them, assuming that many things, both in nature and revelation, were of typical import, confounding analogy and allegory with types.\* It is not surprising that he, and other apologists for Christianity, who adopted this method, should have failed to make any great impression on the minds of pagan unbelievers.

Pantænus, of whom we have already spoken, as having introduced the Platonic philosophy into the Alexandrian school, exerted a powerful influence on the minds of his pupils, among whom were Clement of Alexandria and Origen, both of whose writings contributed greatly to form the taste for the allegorical or mystical style of interpretation. Nothing, however, appears in the writings opposed to the millenarian views of the personal coming of Christ and his kingdom on the earth. There were differences of opinion among many, about the enjoyments and the employments in the millennial state, some describing the happiness in more sensual strains than others. "That the Saviour," says Mosheim, "is to reign 1,000 years among men, before the end of the world, had been believed by many in the preceding (second) century, without offence to any: all, however, had not explained the doctrine in the same manner, nor indulged hopes of the same kind of pleasures during that reign. In this century (i. e. third) the millenarian doctrines fell into disrepute through the influence, especially, of

\* Murdock's Tr. of Mosheim's Ecc. Hist., vol. i. p. 121.

*Origen*, who strenuously opposed it, because it contravened some of his opinions. But *Nepos*, an Egyptian bishop, attempted to revive its authority, in a work written *against the Allegorists*, as he contemptuously styled the opposers of the Millenium. The book and its arguments were approved by many in the province of *Arsinoe*, and particularly by *Coracion*, a presbyter of some respectability and influence. But *Dionysius of Alexandria*, a disciple of *Origen*, allayed the rising storm, by his oral discussions and his two books on the divine promises."\*

This is *Mosheim's* account of the rise of Anti-millenarian views, whom *Gibbon* accuses of a want of candor in what he has written on the subject, having referred its origin to Jewish fables, and supposed that Christian doctors received or tolerated it, because they hoped, by it, to make the Jews more willing to embrace Christianity. *Dr. Murdock*, the American translator of *Mosheim*, says that *Dr. Walch*, a German writer, admits that the doctrine had a Bible origin, but that the *explanation* of it, from which he (*Dr. M.*) dissents, was Jewish. We may hereafter have occasion to notice this subject more critically; at present it may suffice to say, that gradually, as piety decayed in the primitive church, more or less of sensual enjoyment was comprehended in the descriptions which were given of the pleasures of the kingdom of Heaven; and thence a prejudice was excited, which became very strong, in the minds of those whose ideas of holiness had been impaired, and which, through the influence of Gnosticism, they were led to believe, consisted mainly in the subjugation of the senses, and especially in chastity and the extirpation of the sexual appetite.

\* *Murdock's Tr. of Mosheim's Ecc. Hist.*, vol. i. pp. 185, 186.

Origen had these ideas of holiness, and emasculated himself to attain to it, and therefore could not look favorably on any view of Christ's corporeal presence and millennial reign on the earth, which admitted those yet in the flesh to be, in any way, included in it, or that recognized the holiness in the marriage relation. In order to estimate rightly the objections of such men as Origen, against what they call the sensual character of the millenarian views, it is necessary to examine carefully their ideas of the nature of holiness, and to discriminate, in examining the millennial views, between the pleasures of the millennial state appropriated to the risen saints, and those appropriated to that portion of mankind who, during that state, shall survive the terrible convulsions, and remain in the flesh, and over whom, and their offspring, the sway of the heavenly kingdom is to be extended.\* The confounding these things has doubtless led to much error and prejudice, and prepared the way for offensive sensual descriptions of the heavenly state.

“The first open opposer of Chiliasm that we meet with was Caius, a teacher in the church of Rome, towards the end of the second century. On this ground he denied that the Apocalypse was written by John, and ascribed it rather to Cerinthus. But he effected very little.”† Yet this old and exploded story has of late years been revived, and some modern Anti-millenarians have, in their profound ignorance of the subject, pronounced

\* Dr. Whitby, the originator, as we shall presently show, of the modern doctrine of the Millennium, has been very, and culpably, neglectful here, having taken the representations of millenarian views in the primitive church, made by avowed enemies, and condemned them on the authority of Origen and Dionysius Alexandrinus, both prejudiced witnesses in this matter.

† Murdock's Trans. of Mosheim's Ecc. Hist., vol. i. p. 186.

Cerinthus, the heretic, to have been the author of millenarian views. "Origen," says Dr. Murdoch, "was a more powerful opposer of the doctrine. He did not, like Caius, deny the canonical authority of the Apoccalypse, but explained the passages in it, which described the millennial reign of Christ, allegorically, as referring to spiritual delights suited to the nature of spirits raised to perfection, and then to be enjoyed, not on the earth, but in the world to come."\*

Of Caius, Mede says, "Eusebius, who found out one Caius to father it upon Cerinthus, deserves no credit. He was a party, and one of those which did his best to undermine the authority of the *Apoccalypse*. Nor did any know of any such Caius but from his relation; and, if there were any such, he should seem to be one of the heretics called *Alogi*, who denied both St. John's Gospel and Apoccalypse, as is testified in Epiphanius; and their time jumps with the age which Eusebius assigns to Caius. Yet I deny not but some might maintain very carnal and intolerable conceits about this regnum of a thousand years, as the Mahometans do about their paradise; but these are not to be imputed unto those primitive fathers and orthodox Christians."†

Origen was the first who gave form, and symmetry, and system to the allegorical interpretation. The great influence of his learning and talents soon gave it authority. He was born A. D. 185, and died A. D. 254. His learning, labors, writings, and proofs of ardor and sincerity, are wonderful. "His genius," says Spanheim,‡ "was too luxuriant and inclined to allegory: and he fell into several doctrinal errors,

\* Murdock's Trans. of Mosheim's Ecc. Hist., vol. i. p. 186.

† Mede's Works, lib. iii. p. 602.

‡ Spanheim's Hist., p. 219.

which afterwards supplied fuel for the flames of discord, and produced deplorable effects in the church."

"He was first," says Mosheim, "among those who have found, in the Sacred Scriptures, a secure retreat for all errors and idle fancies. As this most ingenious man could see no feasible method of vindicating, what is said in the Scriptures, against the cavils of the heretics, and the enemies of Christianity, provided he interpreted the language of the Bible literally, he concluded, that he must expound the sacred volume in the way in which the Platonists were accustomed to explain the history of their gods. He therefore taught, that the words, in many parts of the Bible, convey no meaning at all; and in some places where he acknowledged there was some meaning in the words, he maintained, that under the things there expressed, there was contained a hidden and concealed sense, which was much to be preferred to the literal meaning of the words. And this hidden sense it is, that he searches after in his commentaries, ingeniously indeed, but perversely and generally to the entire neglect and contempt of the literal meaning."\*

We think it proper to give, here, a more minute account of his system of interpretation, which has done so much to neutralise the influence of the Sacred Scriptures in the world. His system of philosophy could not be reconciled with the Sacred Scriptures, except by a resort to allegories, and therefore they must be allegorically interpreted. His Platonic idea of a twofold world, a visible and invisible, the one emblematic of the other—or according to the philosophy and metaphysics of Noble—analogically related, led him to search for a figurative description of the invisible world, in the Biblical history of the nations

\* Murdock's Translation of Mosheim, v. i. p. 181.

of the earth. He thought that he honored the Sacred Scriptures by considering them different from all other compositions, and containing hidden mysteries, a conceit that has done much for ignorance and mysticism. His general principles of interpretation resolve themselves into the following positions, as stated by Dr. Murdock. 1. The Sacred Scriptures resemble man. As a man consists of three parts, a rational mind, a sensitive soul, and a visible body, so the Scriptures have a threefold sense, a literal sense corresponding with the body, a moral sense analogous to the soul, and a mystical or spiritual sense corresponding with the rational mind. 2. As the body is the baser part of man, so the *literal* is the less worthy sense of Scripture. And as the body often betrays men into sin, so the literal sense often leads us into error. 3. Yet the literal sense is not wholly useless. 4. They who would see further into the Scriptures than the common people, must search out the moral sense. 5. And the perfect, or those who have attained to the highest degree of blessedness, must also investigate the spiritual sense. 6. The moral sense of Scripture instructs us relative to the changes in the mind of man, and gives rules for regulating his heart and life. 7. The spiritual sense acquaints us with the nature and state and history of the spiritual world. For, besides this material world, there is a spiritual world, composed of two parts, the heavenly and the earthly. The earthly mystical, or spiritual world, is the Christian church on earth: the heavenly mystical world is above, and corresponds, in all its parts, with the lower world, which was formed after its model. 8. As the Scriptures contain the history of the twofold mystical world, so there is a twofold mystic sense of Scriptures, an *allegorical* and *anagogical*. 9.

The mystic sense is diffused throughout the Scriptures. 10. Yet we do not always meet with both the allegorical sense, and the anagogical, in every passage. 11. The moral sense likewise pervades the whole Bible. 12. But the literal sense does not occur everywhere, for many passages have no literal meaning. 13. Some passages have only two senses, viz. a moral and a mystical (the mystical being either allegorical or anagogical, rarely both); other passages have three senses, the moral, the mystical, and the literal. 14. The *literal* sense is perceived by every attentive reader. The *moral* sense is somewhat more difficult to be understood. 15. But the *mystic* sense none can discover with certainty, unless they are wise men, and also taught of God. 16. Neither can ever such men hope to fathom all the mysteries of the Sacred volume."\* No wonder that when such principles of interpretation became current, and such a cloud of mist and darkness was thrown around the Sacred Scriptures, the way was soon prepared for the priests to claim exclusive right to interpret the Scriptures, and to deny the common people access to them; and that the common people should have consented to get rid of them.

Origen had the boldness to affirm, that the Scripture does not much help those who understand it as it is written. He could not discover in the sacred books all that he considered true, so long as he adhered to the literal sense: but allow him to abandon the literal sense, and to search for recondite or occult spiritual meanings, and those books would contain Plato, Aristotle, Zeno, and the whole tribe of philosophers. And thus nearly all those who would

\* See Murdock's Translation of Mosheim's Ecc. Hist., v. i. p. 181.



model Christianity, according to their own fancy, or their favorite system of philosophy, or pre-conceived notions, have run into this mode of interpreting Scripture.

There is no reason to wonder, that in the thick cloud of darkness, which he drew over the word of God, he should have lost sight of a Millennium altogether, and made the church on earth the mystic kingdom of Heaven. The opposition of Nepos to his views, and the influence of Coracion in Arsinoe, in preserving, for a season, the ancient faith on the subject, have already been noticed. It was left, however, for Dionysius of Alexandria, a disciple of Origen, to establish the authority and system of his master. Eusebius has an extract from Dionysius's works, in which he gives an account of his oral discussion with the presbyters and teachers of Arsinoe, and how he induced Coracion, and, as he says, with "him all the rest, to promise that they would no longer adhere to the millenarian view, nor discuss it; neither mention nor teach it," having, as he not very modestly says of himself, "been fully convinced by the opposite arguments."\*

Yet this same Dionysius, while he professed not to do so in reality, rejected the book of Revelations, and gives a long argument† founded on the comparison of the style of the Apocalypse with that of the three Epistles of John, the absence of John's name in the latter and its announcement in the former, and what he calls idiotisms or odd peculiarities of expression, to prove that the book of Revelations was not the production of John the apostle. After stating how

\* Euseb. Ecc. Hist., p. 278.

† Which Dr. Lardner has examined and refuted in his *Credibilia*, vol. ii.

some attributed it to Cerinthus, and set it aside altogether, pronouncing it without sense or reason, he says: "For my part I would not venture to set this book aside," and then states the reason, not because he believed it to be canonical, but from mere policy; "because," says he, "there are many brethren that value it much; but having formed a conception of its subject as exceeding my capacity, I consider it also containing a certain concealed and wonderful intimation in each particular. For though I do not understand, yet I suspect, that some deeper sense is enveloped in the words, and these I do not measure and judge by my private reason; but allowing more to faith, I have regarded them as too lofty to be comprehended by me, and those things which I do not understand, I do not reject, but I wonder, the more I cannot comprehend." This all seems very humble and pious; yet it is obvious, that he was much more disposed to be skeptical, and to act the part of a critic in reference to the book of Revelations, than to study and prize it as a divinely inspired work. For, after having said many things to prove, that the apostle John was not its author,—all of them mere presumptions founded on his criticism,—he remarks, as though the truth might be suspected as to his skepticism, "neither would I have any one suppose, that I am saying these things by way of derision, but only with the view to point out the great difference between the writings of these men, that is, the apostle John who wrote the Epistles, and another John, who Dionysius persuaded himself was the author of the book of Revelations."\*

In concluding this chapter, the following facts are worthy of being recapitulated.

\* Euseb. Ecc. Hist., p. 276.

1. That while the primitive church retained her greatest simplicity of faith, and purity of life, and spirit of martyrdom, the pre-millennial coming of Christ for the establishment of his kingdom on the earth, was extensively and generally received, and used for the purposes of holy living.

2. That the very first evidences of dissent from it, appear among those who attempted to unite philosophy with Christianity, and to adapt the truths of Scripture to the decisions of human reason.

3. That it was not till Cerinthus, and other heretics, had perverted and given a sensual gloss to the millenarian doctrine, and the notions of Origen and of other converts from Platonism as to the nature of holiness, had undergone a very important change, that opposition to millenarian views began to find favor. In the first and second centuries, holiness was understood to be, as it is in truth, the love of God and of man, regulating the feelings of men and all their senses, appetites, and actions. There was nothing felt to be sinful in the senses and appetites, but only in their illicit and excessive exercise. But the Platonic notions of the nature and origin of evil, led the wise and learned to suppose that sin sprung from the contact of spirit with matter, and therefore to regard the appetites themselves as sinful, and to make holiness to consist in sexual chastity, celibacy, virginity, and only to be perfectly attained by the extirpation of the appetites, and liberation from the body. It was a false philosophy, therefore, against which the apostles warned the church, and which they predicted would corrupt it, that excited prejudices against the millenarian doctrine, and prepared the way for its rejection.

4. That even when those prejudices, engendered by a false philosophy, had been excited, still success did

not crown the attempt to get rid of millenarian doctrine, till a style of interpretation was introduced, sanctioned, and worked into a system, which actually rendered the Sacred Scriptures useless to common people, and prepared the way for their becoming the exclusive possession of the priests.

5. And that it became necessary, on the part of the first opposers, to deny or to doubt the canonical authority of the book of Revelations, or practically and skeptically to reject, and to undervalue a portion of the Word of God, from the beginning admitted to be genuine and of divine authority, and especially commended to our study and valuation.

## CHAPTER IX.

### TRADITIONAL HISTORY.

IN pursuing the history of the views entertained in the primitive church, relative to the coming and kingdom of Jesus Christ, we have found but one unbroken chain of testimony in favor of the personal pre-millennial advent and appearance of the Saviour until the close of the second century. The opposition first publicly raised by Caius, against what was called the orthodox faith on this subject, became subsequently much more formidable, as prosecuted by Origen, and his disciple, Dionysius of Alexandria. It was not, however, till an entire new system of interpreting the Scriptures had been excogitated, and received the sanction of the wise and learned, that the millenarian views began to fall into disrepute.

In speaking of this method of interpretation, wrought into a system by Origen, Milner says, "No man, not altogether unsound and hypocritical, ever more hurt the church of Christ, than Origen. From the fanciful mode of allegory introduced by him, uncontrolled by Scriptural rule and order, arose a vitiated method of commenting on the Scriptures, which has been succeeded by a contempt of types and figures altogether, just as his fanciful ideas of letter and spirit, tended to remove from men's minds, all right conception of genuine Christianity. A thick mist, for ages, pervaded the Christian world, supported by his absurd allegorical mode. The learned alone

were looked at as guides implicitly to be followed; and the vulgar, when the literal sense was hissed off the stage, had nothing to do but to follow the authority of the learned. It was not till the days of Luther and Melancthon that this evil was fairly and successfully opposed.”\*

With Origen commenced a new era in the church. He prepared the way for that union of paganism and Christianity, which, soon after his day, became so extensive and corrupting in the world. This he did by means of his philosophy, being, according to Milner, “full of Platonic notions concerning the soul of the world, the transmigration of spirits, free will, the pre-existence of souls, and allegorical interpretations without end.”†

Echard says, that “being a vast proficient in philosophy, and too much possess’d with the notions of Plato’s school, he grew very solicitous to accommodate the divine truths to his beloved opinions. And from three of them, all his errors seem to have proceeded, 1. That all intelligent beings ever did and ever shall exist; 2. That they have always been free to do good and evil; and 3. That they have been precipitated in lower places and confined to bodies for a punishment of their sins.”‡ The allegorical system of Scriptural interpretation, which he introduced, was itself the genuine offspring of his pagan philosophy.

Mr. Taylor, in his work on Ancient Christianity, has shown, that the evangelical truths of redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ, which lie everywhere on the very surface of the Sacred Scriptures, attracted very little of Origen’s attention, and that his whole

\* Milner’s Ch. Hist., vol. i. pp. 435–6.

† Milner’s Ch. Hist., vol. i. p. 428.

‡ Echard’s Ecc. History, b. iii. p. 609.

system of mythic interpretation, as he calls it, had its origin and foundation in Gnostic sentiments and feelings. By these, he understands those particular notions with regard to the nature of God, engendered by the Platonic philosophy, and which compromise his moral, by means of a refinement of his natural attributes, and fashions a Deity allied to the imagination,\* and not to the conscience.

The elements of the Gnostic philosophy were in existence in the days of the apostle. It was but the Oriental philosophy, which Cerinthus, the heretic, first wrought into a system, although they were not by him fully and consistently developed, but in some respects accommodated to Jewish opinions. "The Alexandrian Gnostics," says Giessler,† "in their speculations on these subjects, (viz. the origin of evil, the creation of the world, and the internal relations of the world of light), followed vaguely a notion borrowed from the Platonic doctrine of ideas, that the visible world is an image of the invisible. With this, they readily united the allegorical interpretation of the Scriptures, already in use, which they managed in the most arbitrary way."

The present world, with its material elements jarring with each other, with its organized and animated orders, perishable, corruptible and inimical, and its intelligent races degenerate and wretched, was pronounced by the Gnostic philosophy, in direct contradiction of the Mosaic theology, to be altogether unworthy of the Supreme and Infinite power—that it was in fact the work of inferior and imperfect beings, and consequently, that Jehovah, the God of the Jews,

\* Ancient Christianity, p. 212.

† Giessler's Eccles. Hist., vol. i. p. 70.

was not the Supreme Deity. Accordingly, it rejected the expiatory sacrifice of Christ. It wanted no such Saviour as Jesus Christ, according to the literal and historical account of the New Testament. Sin and guilt were not, according to it, the immediate obstacles in the way of happiness, but the connection of the immortal mind with matter was. Let the human spirit break away from the material thralls of the Demiurge, the creator of this gross system, and it would instantly be happy. Matter being dropped, sin, its accident, would fall with it. The Gnostic philosophy admitted, that to effect this emancipation, Christ was sent, and that he, by his opposition to Demiurge, the imperfect Creator and God of the Jews, recalls the purer minds of the human family to their original place in the intellectual system.

Mosheim\* gives the following account. Under the appellation of Gnostics, are included all those in the first ages of the church, who modified the religion of Christ, by joining with it the Oriental philosophy, in regard to the source of evil, and the origin of this material universe. All those eastern philosophers—believing that rational souls become connected with matter, and the inhabitants of bodies, contrary to the will and pleasure of the Supreme God—were in expectation of a mighty legate from the Deity, possessed of consummate wisdom and power, who would imbue with a knowledge of the true God, the spirits now oppressed with the load of their bodies, and rescue them from their bondage to the lords of this material world. When, therefore, some of them perceived, that Jesus and his friends wrought miracles of a salutary character, they were ready to believe, that Jesus was that mighty legate of God,

\* See Mosheim's Ecc. History, vol. i. pp. 63, 64.



come to deliver men from the power of the Genii who governed this lower world, and to rescue souls from their unhappy connection with material bodies. This supposition being admitted into their minds, they interpreted, or rather perverted whatever Christ and his disciples taught, so as to make it harmonize with *other* opinions. Their belief, that matter is eternal and the source of all evil, prevented them from putting a due estimate upon the human body, and from favoring marriage, whereby bodies are produced, and also from admitting the doctrine of the future resurrection of the body. They could not admit Christ to be truly God, or truly man; and hence originated Arian speculations about his inferiority to the Supreme Deity, and superiority of the Demiurge, or God of the Jews. Their belief in the existence of Aons or Genii, prepared the way for a resort to magic, and all the arts of witchcraft, and the devices of superstition, for the intercession of saints, and prayers for the dead. The cause of Christ's coming among men, was, they held, simply to strip the evil Genii of their power over the virtuous and heaven-born souls of men, and to teach them how to withdraw their divine minds from their impure bodies, and fit them for a union with God. Hence originated the ascetic rites and the monastic institutions, and thus, in the progress of a few centuries, paganism triumphed over Christianity, and the way was prepared for the grand apostasies of Mahomedanism in the East, and Popery in the West.

It was the influence of such philosophy that led the way to celibacy, to the contempt of marriage, to the invocation of the dead saints, to fastings and penance, and to various ascetic rites to mortify the flesh—in a word, to the whole system of monkish religion, which began to spring up in the third and fourth centuries, by

means of which, the churches of the West became as truly paganised, as were the millions of the East by "its parent Sooffeism, and its grand parent, Bhudism." In the progress of this philosophy, in the struggle to become extricated from matter, the seat of sin, undue importance came to be attached to the sacraments of the church, to ablutions and penances, to disciplinary and various ascetic rites, by the observance of which the attainment of holiness was made the more certain. The very "first symptom of decay and decline in true evangelical holiness, has ever been, a revival of the ritual part of religion, which ere long becomes a mass of solemn formalism, and of impious mummeries:—the Ichabod of the church has ever borne this interpretation."\*

To such a degree and extent did this system prevail, in the fourth and fifth centuries, that the church was pronounced the ark of safety, and the sacraments were regarded as the conduits of grace. The beauty of holiness was to be seen in conformity to the ritual; and various advices and instructions were given, about baths and diets, and efforts to maintain celibacy, until at last, in the exaltation of the sacraments and their alleged potency to convey holiness, it was proclaimed, that "Although a man should be foul with every vice, the blackest that could be named, yet should he fall into the baptismal pool, he ascends from the divine waters purer than the beams of noon."† This, as we might show, with much more minute detail, was the genuine offspring of Origenism.

It is true that the churches did not pass into it suddenly, nor without a struggle; but the errors and system of Origen led to it; and although Origen himself was condemned and excommunicated, and did not

\* Ancient Christianity, p. 341. † Ancient Christianity, p. 325.

perhaps, dream of the results to which his system would be carried, yet, as Mosheim states "of all the religious controversies, those concerning Origen and Origenism, made the greatest noise. Although churches fought resolutely against them, yet did they triumph. The monks were enthusiastic admirers of Origen; and by the year 533, when the papacy was firmly established by Justinian, the system of Origen had triumphed, and swayed the western nations, almost undisturbed for one thousand years.

It does not comport with our design to trace out the horrible corruptions flowing from this system. It led directly to the predicted apostasy; and while its philosophy introduced radically different ideas of holiness, from those of Christ and his apostles, and reared an awful system of rites and ceremonies, and invocation of saints—in fact, a system of baptized paganism, its criticisms and expositions as to the import of the phrase, the kingdom of Heaven, and its views as to its nature, prepared the way for the Bishop of Rome—claiming to be the vicegerent of Christ, and the church to be His kingdom on earth—to grasp the sceptre of universal dominion, and to exercise a tyranny over the bodies and the souls of men, unlike anything the world had ever witnessed.

It is worthy of notice, remarks a modern author, who has carefully examined the writings of Origen on this very point, that the same remarkable man and accredited heretic, whose name is an abomination in both the Greek and Latin churches, throughout all their borders, and in all their generations, is the inventor of both the doctrine of the kingdom of Heaven come, and also of the keys of the kingdom of Heaven having been received by Peter for Peter's own personal use. But Origen had no more idea of the Pope's using Pe-

ter's keys, to open and shut Heaven upon poor souls, at the Pope's will, than the Pope himself has, that he is wholly indebted to that detested heretic of Egypt for the sole invention of the doctrine of Peter's keys and kingdom, with the power of which, the Roman sways whole nations, and shakes the wide earth.\*

We need not, therefore, be surprised that with the growth and spread of Origen's system of interpretation and philosophy, the plain doctrines of the gospel should have disappeared, and that we should find less and less trace of the ancient faith as to Christ's coming and kingdom, from the rise of Popery to the Reformation. Still, however, can we trace it down after the days of Origen. Even Origen himself could not wholly extricate himself from the influence of views, which were embraced by the decided majority of Christians in his day, and for some time afterward. Occasionally he betrays, in his writings, sentiments that must be referred to it. "If any man,"† says he, "shall preserve the washing of the Holy Spirit, he shall have his part in the first resurrection; but if any man be saved in the second resurrection only, it is the sinner that needeth the baptism by fire. Wherefore, seeing these things are so, let us lay the Scriptures to heart, and make them the rule of our lives, that so be-

\* Glad Tidings, p. 82.

† Si quis servaverit lavacrum Spiritus Sancti iste in resurrectionis primæ parte communicat. Si quis vero in secundâ resurrectione servatur, iste peccator est, qui ignis indiget baptismo. Quamobrem cum talia post mortem nobis residere videamus, Scripturas diligenter simul recitantes reponamus eas in cordibus nostris, et juxta earum vivere præcepta nitamur; ut ante excessionis diem, peccatorum sordibus emundati (he means human passions and appetites) cum sanctis valeamus assumi in Christo Jesu.—*Homil. 13, in Jerem.*

ing cleansed from the defilement of sin, before we depart, we may be raised up with his saints, and have our lot with Christ Jesus." Here he makes the distinction between the first and second resurrection, according to the millenarian view, but instantly perverts and applies it to his own system, as Mrs. Sherwood has done, employing it in support of his belief in universal salvation, or the final restoration of the wicked, which was one of the ultimate and legitimate results of his pagan philosophy.

In pursuing the chain of historical testimony down from the days of Origen, we notice first Cyprian,\* bishop of Carthage, whose character has been so

\* Mede, in his letter to Mr. Estwick, b. 4, p. 837, quotes the following from Cyprian, lib. de Exhortatione Martyrii, in the preface of which, he says :—

“Desiderasti, fortunate charissime, ut quoniam persecutionum et pressurarum pondus incumbit, et in fine atque consummatione mundi, Antichristi tempus infestum appropinquare nunc cæpit, ad præparandas et corroborandas fratrum mentes, de divinis Scripturis hortamenta componerem, quibus milites Christi ad cœleste et spirituale certamen animarum—paulo post—sex millia annorum jam pene complentur. Si imparatum invenerit Diabolus militem Christi,” &c.

On which he remarks, “He, you see, expected the coming of Antichrist should be at the end of the six thousandth year, which he supposed then near at hand, yet thought the world would last seven thousand, viz. a thousand years after the destruction of Antichrist, ut patet ex iis quæ disserit, cap. ii., in these words, Quid vero in Maccabeis septem fratres et natatum pariter, et virtutum sorte consimiles, Septenarium numerum perfectæ consummationis implentes? Sic septem fratres in martyrio cohærentes, ut primi in dispositione divina septem dies, annorum septem millia continentes—ut consummatio legitima compleatur, &c. This, to him that knows Chiliasm, is plain Chiliasm. Look, and compare your Austin, cap. vii. lib. 20, de Civit. Dei, those words, Qui propter hæc hujus libri verba primam resurrectionem, &c. Compare also what Cyprian hath in the end of that book, out of the gospel,

highly lauded by Milner, and who flourished about the middle of the third century. He exhorts Christians "ever in anxiety and cautiousness, to be awaiting the sudden advent of the Lord."\* For, "as those things which were foretold, are come to pass, so those will follow which are yet promised; the Lord himself giving assurance, and saying, When ye see all these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Dearest brethren, the kingdom of God has begun to be nigh at hand."†

Lactantius, who was contemporary with Constantine the Great, and tutor to his son, and was considered, as Mosheim says, the most eloquent of the Latin fathers, did not, with Origen, relinquish the ancient faith. He has, indeed, been reproached by Jerome with being sensual in his views of the kingdom of heaven, and accused by others with holding the sentiments of the Manichees. But Dr. Lardner ‡ has vindicated him from the latter charge; and as to the former, an examination of Lactantius's own words shows that Jerome, that great opposer and enemy of millenarian views, entirely misapprehended his meaning, and understood him, when speaking of the nations yet remaining in the flesh after the coming of Christ, to refer to the risen saints. § Speaking of the coming of

Mark, 10. 29, 30, and Apocalypse, 20, and you will acknowledge him to be (as he was wont to profess himself) *Tertulliani discipulum.*"

\* Oxford Tr. of Cyprian, p. 149.

† Idem, 217.

‡ Credibilia, vol. iii. pp. 316-319.

§ St. Hierom was a chief champion, says Mede, to cry down this opinion, and (according to his wont) a most unequal relator of the opinion of his adversaries. What credit he deserves in this, may appear by some fragments of those authors still remaining, whom he charged with an opinion directly contrary to that which they

God to judge the world, he says : But when he shall do that, and shall restore the just, that have been from the beginning, unto life, he shall converse among men, and rule them with a most righteous government.—— They that shall be raised from the dead, shall be over the living as judges. And the Gentiles shall not be utterly extinguished, but some shall be left for the victory of God, that they may be triumphed over by the just, and reduced to perpetual subjection. About the same time, the prince of devils, the forger of all evil, shall be bound with chains, and shall be in custody all the thousand years of the heavenly empire, under which righteousness shall reign over the world.\*

expressly affirmed. And yet when he had stated it so as it must needs be heresie and blasphemy, whosoever should hold it, he is forced to say, he durst not damn it, because, *multi virorum ecclesiasticorum et martyrum ista dixerunt.* (*Comment. in Jerem.* 19. 10.) Many ecclesiastical persons and martyrs affirmed the same.—*Mede's Works*, b. 3, p. 602.

The reader may see still further and deserved censure of Jerome, for his reproaches and charges of sensualizing against the ancient millenarian Christians, by the same author, in his Works, b. 5. c. 5. *De Hieronymi pronunciata dogmata Millenariorum.*

Also, b. 4, Ep. 51, pp. 811, 812, in his answer to Dr. Twisse's fifth letter.

Lardner remarks, "It is well known that Lactantius expected a terrestrial reign of Christ for a thousand years before the general judgment. Jerome has ridiculed his millenarian notions, which are chiefly enlarged upon in the seventh and last book of his *Divine Institutions*. Jerome took the same freedom with Irenæus, Tertullian, Victorinus, and other Christian writers, who had the like sentiment."—*Credibilia*, 3. 520.

\* *Sed et ipse dæmonum princeps, auctor, et machinator malorum, catenis igneis alligatus, custodiæ dabitur ut pacem mundus accipiat, et ut vexata tot seculis terra requiescat. Pace igitur parta compressoque omni malo, rex ille justus, et victor, judicium magnum de vivis et mortuis faciet super terram : viventibus quidem justis tradet in servitatem gentes universas; mortuos autem ad*

Methodius, bishop of Olympus, a martyr under Decius, A. D. 312, died in the same faith, having written a book against Origen on the subject of the resurrection, from which an extract has been preserved by Proclus in Epiphanius. "It is to be expected," says he, "that at the conflagration, the creation shall suffer a vehement commotion, as if it were about to die; whereby it shall be *renovated* and not *perish*, to the end that we, then also *renovated*, may dwell in the renewed world, free from sorrow. Thus it is said in Psalm 104, 'Thou wilt send forth thy Spirit, and they shall be created, and thou wilt *renew* the face of the earth.'"\*

Epiphanius,† a historian of the fourth century, speaks favorably of the millenarian doctrine, and says that it was held by many in his time.

The Council of Nice, which was called by Constantine the Great, for the purpose of deciding all controverted questions respecting the faith and discipline of the Christian church, and which consisted of 318 members, beside a vast concourse of clergymen and others attending from curiosity, is accounted by many to have been one of the most important assemblies ever convened; it was held A. D. 325, in the twentieth year of the reign of the first Christian emperor of Rome. This Council, which framed what is called the Nicene Creed, beside their definition of faith and ecclesiastical canons, set forth certain forms of ecclesiastical doctrines, which Gelasius Cyzicenus has given in his history of its Acts.

*æternam vitam suscitabit, et in terra cum his ipse regnabit; et condet sanctam civitatem et erit regnum justorum mille annis.*  
—*Lactantius de Divinis Instit. Epilome librorum* 7, 11, p. 517, *cont. ex offic. Jo. Hayes*, 1685.

\* Epiphanius, lib. 3. 2. *El. of Proph. Int.*, p. 45.

† *Idem*, p. 46, lib. 3. 2.



We quote from these Acts,—not because we recognize the Council of Nice as an authority, in any respect whatever, having been convened by the emperor, having conducted its deliberations in his presence, and deserving just as little respect for its authority over conscience, as all such councils and assemblies are, where the church and state are united;—but because it furnishes, incidentally, some valuable testimony as to what continued yet to be, at that period, the method of interpretation most prevalent. The following is among their acts, as reported by Gelasius:\* “We expect new heavens and a new earth,† according to the Holy Scriptures, at the appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ. And as Daniel says,‡ ‘The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom.’ And there shall be a pure and holy land, the living and not of the dead; which David, foreseeing with the eye of faith, exclaims, I believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living—the land of the meek and humble. ‘Blessed, saith Christ, ‘are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.’§ And the prophet saith, ‘The feet of the meek and humble shall tread upon it.’”||

\* In his *Historia Actorum Concilii Niceni*.—*Διὰ τοῦτο καινοὺς οὐρανοὺς καὶ καινὴν γῆν προσδοκῶμεν, κατὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα, φαινομένης ἡμῶν τῆς ἐπιφανείας καὶ βασιλείας τοῦ μεγάλου Θεοῦ καὶ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ παραληφύοντα τότε, καθ’ ἃ φησι Δανιηλ, τὴν βασιλείαν. Simile quid habet Irenæus, lib. v. c. 36, lin. 6.*

†“Judge by this,” says Mede, “(notwithstanding fifty years’ opposition) how powerful the chiliastical party yet was at the time of that council. By some of whom if this formula were not framed and composed, yet was it thus moderated, as you see, that both parties might accept it, *salvâ cuique interpretatione suâ*, as being delivered in the terms and language of Scripture.”—*Mede’s Works*, b. 4, Ep. 3, p. 813.

‡ Dan. 7. 18.

§ Matth. 5. 5.

|| Is. 26. 6.

It required a century and more to give currency to the principles of Pagan philosophy, and the style of interpretation which Origen sanctioned and introduced; and although the errors and corruptions of popery were not wrought completely into a system, till some time in the beginning of the sixth century, yet were all the elements at work, and the different capital forms of error existed in their embryo state, which afterwards characterized the apostate church of Rome. "That the Nicene divines," says Mr. I. Taylor, "were, most of them, sincere, devout, assiduous in their duties, and anxiously intent on the welfare of the churches under their care, is incontestibly proved by their remains. But does it appear, from the same documents, that their hearts were warmed by those truths, which are the glory of the Christian system, and which, when so entertained, impart an unction and an animation to Christian communion? I think the affirmative cannot be pretended in favor of these divines, by even their most devoted admirers."\* The dim traces of the simple faith of the primitive church, to be found among them, gradually disappeared, and left the world shrouded in the gloom of darkness, which brooded for ages over the nations of Europe, and blighted the human mind.

Yet, here and there, from the days of Origen till those of Jerome, we meet with the primitive faith. Gregory of Nyssa, and Paulinus, bishop of Antioch, also, as Jerome affirms, Victorinus, bishop of Pattaw, and Apollinaris, bishop of Bituria, and Sulpicius, too, a chaste and classic historian of the fourth century, had not entirely renounced the millenarian faith.

Augustine, too, admits that at one period of his life,

\* Ancient Christianity, p. 316.

he held the same views.\* Eusebius, the historian, bishop of Pamphylia, was prejudiced against this faith, and from him appears to have originally sprung the obloquy, which was afterwards cast on those who held it. He does not indeed attack them openly, but covertly,—by raising questions on the canonical authority of the book of Revelations,—by confounding the primitive faith on this subject with the views of heretics,—by attributing their origin to Cerinthus,—by insinuating that their early upholders were Ebionites, in which assertions he afterwards contradicts himself, attributing the origin of these views to Papias, and about whom his testimony is contradictory.

This Eusebius was tinged with Arianism,† which may have been the origin of his opposition to millenarianism. He is pronounced, by Bishop Jeremy Taylor,‡ not to be clear of a suspicion of having endeavored to corrupt and to falsify the Nicene creed. He is justly suspected of time-serving, having boasted of his conversations with the Emperor Constantine. Yet on the credit and judgment of such a man, cited by Dr. Whitby,§ as decisive authority, rests the whole weight of the objection at this day brought against the millenarian doctrine held in the primitive church.

Baronius has preserved a letter of Julian the apostate, emperor of Rome, and nephew of Constantine, in

\* St. Austin himself, Daubuz quotes, as approving millenarian views. *Interea dum mille annis ligatus est diabolus, sancti regnant cum Christo etiam ipsis mille annis eisdem sine dubio, et eodem modo intelligendis.* Augustin de Civit. Dei. Lib. 20. cap. 5.

† See Magdeburg Centuriators Hist. Eccles., ch. 10, sec. 3.

‡ Liberty of Prophesying, folio ed. p. 954.

§ Treatise on the Millenium.

which he sneers against the belief of those Christians of his day, who expected the kingdom of Heaven.

Jerome teems with abuse and ridicule in relation to it, and by his abuse and silencing of Vigilantius, a religious reformer, who opposed the corruptions and superstitions of popery, then widely spread, and his general character for fierceness, acrimony, and ribaldry, toward all who differed from him, has forfeited all claims upon our respect; yet Jerome, the vehement adversary of the doctrine, in his commentary on Jer. 19. 10, says, "that he durst not *condemn* the doctrine, because many ecclesiastical persons and martyrs affirmed the same," thus admitting that it had not in his day wholly disappeared.\*

Cyril, Basil, Chrysostom, Ambrose, Augustine, and other eminent fathers of the fifth and sixth centuries, can lay no claim to authority, nor can anything, derogatory to the primitive faith, be inferred from their silence or skepticism in relation to millenarian doctrine. Speaking of these very writers, and others, their cotemporaries, Mr. I. Taylor says, "Whether they belong to the eastern or to the western, to the north African, or to the Alexandrian churches, they hold the same language, and seem to emulate each other in their zeal to promote every one of those notions and practices which, when digested into canons, decrees, or ecclesiastical usages, make up what we mean by popery or Romanism, as the system adopted and enforced by the papacy."†

The truth is, the churches, from Origen to Jerome, were occupied with distracting controversies about the essence of the Godhead, the trinity of persons in

\* See Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, xx. 5.

† Ancient Christianity, p. 448.

the divine nature, and a thousand matters of philosophical abstraction; and about the religion of forms, and rites, and ceremonies. The hierarchy was making rapid and ambitious strides towards œcumenical sway. The true scriptural and elementary ideas of holiness and virtue, had undergone a radical change. Pretensions were set up, for the power and authority of the church, which had never before been thought of. The efficacy of sacraments and of forms was much insisted on, and the sadly misnamed holy Catholic church, took precedence of the kingdom of Heaven, and claimed to be the ark of safety. Men's thoughts were directed to it, as to their sanctuary rather than to Jesus Christ and to his heavenly kingdom. From the time of the conversion of Constantine, the Roman Emperor, to the Christian faith, a marvellous and rapid change took place in the interpretation of prophecy, for which the way had been prepared by the system and philosophy of Origen.

“Previous to this period,” says Mr. Brooks,\* “it was *the uniform and constant* opinion of the church, that *Rome would become the seat of ANTICHRIST*; that the empire would by a revolution first be divided into kingdoms; that then Antichrist would be revealed and prosper for a time; and that after the reigning power should have suffered a signal discomfiture, the dominion should be altogether taken from “the eternal city.”† Such a notion could not be palatable to the Roman Emperor, if known to him; and the less so, if it was further understood, that some, in times of pagan persecution, had already mused in their hearts, whether the Emperor himself, for the time being, were not

[ \* Elem. of Prophet. Int., pp. 48, 49.

† See Jerome's Commentary on Dan. 7. in which he declares the uniform testimony of the fathers on this head, and was persuaded of it himself.

personally *the Antichrist*. These things must have been very perplexing to those ecclesiastics, now mingling with the court, who were of a compliant and secular spirit, which may be judged of, when we find an honest and bold, and godly man, like Lactantius, now expressing himself with avowed *reluctance* on these topics. He says, "the Roman power which now governs the world, (my mind *dreads* to declare it, yet I *must* speak it, because it will surely come to pass!) the Roman power will be taken away from the earth, and the empire will return into Asia, and the East will again have the chief dominion, and the West be in subjection.\*"

"The convenient explication, however, was soon afterwards discovered, and adopted by many, that Antichrist was Pagan Rome, and that from the date of Constantine's conversion, the *Millenium* commenced." Able men were found to maintain such an interpretation, and the church was pronounced to be the kingdom of Heaven. The irruption of the barbarians divided the Western part of the empire into ten kingdoms. Constantinople became the metropolis. The sceptre departed from Rome, and the East had sway. But amidst the revolutions, convulsions, and desolations, of the city and empire, the Bishop of Rome gained a powerful influence, and was elevated to the highest rank. The conversion of the barbarian kings, and of the nations that deluged Europe, to the faith of the church, and the general anarchy and confusion consequent on the new order of things, gave ascendant influence to the church, which retained and preserved the only civilizing influence, and the only fit persons for the dispensation of justice and for the necessary re-

\* Lactantius de Div. Institut. ch. 15.

straints of government. The civil power of the empire did indeed, as Lactantius from prophecy had declared, depart to the East; but the Roman Bishop soon swayed his sceptre over the barbarian kings and their kingdoms, and obtained from Justinian, the Emperor, the full and formal recognition of his authority as Universal Bishop, and a code of laws which changed the entire character of the government, brought the church and state into close alliance, and laid the basis of the legislation of Europe, until Napoleon broke the spell, imprisoned the Bishop of Rome, and introduced a tide of revolution, the first waves of which only have passed over the dynasties of Europe.

“When the Bishop of Rome was elevated to the high rank he attained under the papacy, the inconvenience of explaining Rome to be the capital city of Antichrist, and ‘the Babylon,’ and ‘Harlot,’ and ‘Mother of Harlots,’ of the Apocalypse, was more sensibly felt than ever; because it could not be asserted, without giving occasion for the very obvious conclusion, that the Bishop of Rome would some day apostatize, together with the church in general over which he was the head. Accordingly, from the time of Justinian, efforts were, both openly and clandestinely, made to get rid of the doctrine altogether, by removing or corrupting the evidence in its favor, or by affixing to it the stigma of heresy. Pope Damasus endeavored peremptorily to put it down by a decree; and some works of the Fathers, which were in favor of it, (such as the works of Papias, the treatise of Nepos already adverted to, several of the more direct works of Irenæus on the subject, Tertullian’s Treatise on Paradise, and various others), were successfully suppressed; and in regard to those which could not be so well withdrawn, a system of interpolating or

otherwise altering the text commenced, which, in some instances, has affected only a portion of the manuscript copies that have come down to us, and in other instances the entire of them.”\*

The council of Rome, convened under Damasus A. D. 373, prepared the way for the general contempt and rejection of millenarian doctrine. “The heresy,” says Baronius, “however loquacious before, was silenced then, and since that time has hardly been heard of. Moreover,” he adds, “the figments of the Millenarians being now (16th century) rejected everywhere and derided by the learned with hisses and laughter, and being also put under the ban, were entirely extirpated.”†

Such is the history of millenarian doctrine till it is lost in the dark ages. Occasionally, however, the views of private Christians, in opposition to those of Rome, peep out through the darkness, and appear in the admission of their opposers; and although great pains had been taken to instil into the minds of the people, that Antichrist had already appeared, and was now engulfed in the lake of fire, it appears, nevertheless, even from Baronius, Sabellinus, and Platina, all Roman Catholic authors, that in the year 1106 a very general opinion prevailed that Antichrist was about to appear, being partly induced by the extraordinary natural phenomena and heavenly signs which then appeared.”‡

Bishop Newton says, distinctly, “Wherever the influence and authority of the church of Rome have extended, she hath endeavored by all means to discredit this doctrine; and indeed not without sufficient

\* El. of Proph. Int., p. 51.

† Baronius, A. D. 373. 14, and 411. 48.

‡ El. of Proph. Int., p. 60.



reason, this kingdom of Christ being founded on the ruins of the kingdom of Antichrist. No wonder, therefore, that this doctrine lay depressed for many ages; but it sprang up again at the Reformation, and will flourish together with the study of the Revelation.”\*

It does not, however, appear that the earlier reformers embraced very distinctly the idea of a Millennium, or of a thousand years' triumph of the church, either according to millenarian or anti-millenarian views. The tenet of one thousand years was carefully avoided, most probably because of the obloquy which for ages had been cast upon it; but it is a remarkable fact, that all the important truths connected with it, were, almost universally, entertained by the reformers and their early successors; such as the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to set up a glorious kingdom on the earth, in which all the saints should partake; the resurrection of the bodies of the dead saints; the quickening of the living; the national conversion and literal restoration of the Jews to Palestine; the earth be renewed and Jerusalem rebuilt; and the previous manifestation and destruction of Antichrist.† Hence it is, that you may find in the writings of some of them, as for example in Bishop Jeremy Taylor, that while Chiliasm or Millenarianism is deprecated in one page, sentiments are avowed in another, which, at this day, are recognized as decided millenarian doctrine.

Luther, in his answer to the book of Ambrosius Catharinus, having affirmed that the papacy is Antichrist, and having expressed his confidence in the dominion of Jesus Christ, puts forth his prayer that God

\* Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, ch. 25, p. 592, Lond. ed. of 1838.

† El. of Proph. Int., p. 62.

“ would reveal the day of the glorious advent of his Son, in which he shall destroy the man of sin.”\*

We deem it unnecessary to make many extracts from the writings of the reformers, preferring to quote the creeds and confessions of faith adopted in the earliest and purest periods of the Reformation, beginning with the Lutheran, called the Augsburg Confession, because adopted at Augsburg, when (A. D. 1530,) the reformers appeared there, before the Emperor Charles V., the princes of the empire, the Pope's legates, and the nobles and prelates of the Latin kingdom. In the 17th article of that confession, they say, “ In like manner they (i. e. our churches) condemn those who circulate the judaizing notion, that prior to the resurrection of the dead, the pious will engross the government of the world, and the wicked be everywhere oppressed.” This strikes directly against the modern notions of the Millenium, one essential item of which is, that the governments of earth will be administered by pious rulers in the flesh. No doubt this clause in the confession of faith was introduced in direct opposition to the Anabaptists of Germany, who, not satisfied with Luther's plan of reformation, undertook the visionary enterprise to found a new church, entirely spiritual and divine; and began their fanatical work under the guidance of Münzer, Stubner, Storick, and others, and declaring war against all laws, governments, and magistrates, of every kind. Simon Menno, the founder of the sect of Mennonites, recalled many of the German Anabaptists from their extravagances, and set before them the true principles of primitive Millenarianism. There was much piety in this sect

\* Ostendat illum diem adventus gloriæ Filii sui quo destruatur iniquus iste. L. Oppid. let. ii. p. 162.

during the greater part of two centuries. Mosheim\* says that they “maintained the ancient hypothesis of a visible and glorious church of Christ upon earth.”

J. Cocceius, professor of theology at Bremen, was the founder of a sect called *Cocceians*, who held, among other singular opinions, say the Encyclopædists,† that of a visible reign of Christ in this world, after a general conversion of the Jews and of all other people to the true Christian faith, as laid down in his voluminous works.

The *Pietists* of Germany, whose purer and stricter religion provoked reproach and gained for them this name, of like import with the *Puritans* of England and the *Methodists* of later day, were in general *Millenarians*.‡

The *Mystics*, both of England and the Continent, held millenarian views, as appears from the testimony of Rev. T. Hartley,§ Rector of Winnick, Northampton, himself a Mystic. Next, says Mr. Brooks, may be mentioned the sect of the *Jansenists*, existing in the bosom of the Roman Catholic church in France, but holding sentiments which approximate to evangelical Protestantism. Ben Ezra, a work by a catholic author, translated by Mr. Irving, contains millenarian views. John Wesley|| and Fletcher¶ of Madeley also held some parts of the doctrine.

The force of truth, the influence of the Spirit, and

\* Ecc. Hist., vol. v. p. 497.

† English Encyclopædia, art. Cocceius.

‡ See a work entitled Useful Information respecting Pietism, or a Statement of the real Faith and Doctrine of the so called Pietists, by J. P. Klettwich, who was deposed by the Consistory of Leipsic.

§ See his work entitled Paradise Restored, or a Testimony to the Doctrine of the Blessed Millenium, 1764.

|| See El. of Proph. Int., p. 77.

¶ See Fletcher's Works, vol. ix. p. 368.

the multiplication of moral means, are now relied upon, by spiritualists generally, to promote the prosperity and the dominion of the church. The sword and violence were preferred by the fanatical sects. Both alike contended for a dominion of the church, in the state and over the state, somehow or other, by the authority and influence of men in the flesh.

The Fifth-Monarchy men of England were a small political faction, who availed themselves of the belief of Christ's speedy personal coming, in order to attempt the subversion of the government, and with whom, very unjustly, it has been attempted to identify those who held millenarian doctrine. Having adopted and associated with the belief of Christ's personal and speedy manifestation, the spiritual idea of the Millennium, that *the pious Christians, while in the flesh*, are to govern the world, they inferred it to be their duty, previous to his coming, to possess themselves of the kingdoms of this world.

No such idea is embraced in the millenarian doctrine. It concedes the kingdom *only to the saints raised from the dead*. It has been the engrafting, on the belief of the speedy coming of Christ, the same notion of a temporal Millennium, viz. that Christians in the flesh are to govern the world, which has led, if we are correctly informed as to their opinions and practice, to the formation of a rapidly growing and wretchedly corrupt and deluded sect, and which has already been the occasion of much disturbance in our own country—we mean the Mormons or Latter Day Saints—deceived by the artful schemes and imposture of a corrupt and selfish leader.

The Augsburg Confession, in disowning altogether the idea of the saints yet in the flesh governing the world, and consequently a spiritual Millennium before

the coming of Christ, bears its testimony against all such fanaticism ; so that whatever may have been the views of the Lutherans as to the kingdom of heaven and the day of judgment, their early divines cannot be quoted in favor of the Millenium now expected by the great mass of professing Christians.

The churches of the reformation, it is worthy of remark, had their attention directed mainly to the corruptions of Popery in essential matters of faith. The doctrine of justification by faith without the deeds of the law, as the only means of acceptance with God and of a sanctified life, and its kindred truths, attracted their chief attention ; while they directed their opposition to the superstitions, and tyranny, and corruptions of the papacy. The idea of a separation of the church and state seems not to have entered their minds, and, of necessity, in their struggles against popery, they became involved in political contests, designed to secure the authority of the state in support of the reformation.

We have evidence, during the early period of the reformation in Great Britain, of what was the voice of those opposed to the corruptions of popery. In the Catechism\* published in the reign of King Edward

\* *Secundo loco petimus, ut adveniat Regnum ejus. Adhuc enim non videmus omnes Christo esse subjectos ; non videmus ut lapis de monte abscissus sit sine opere humano, qui contrivit et in nihilum redegit statuam descriptam a Daniele : ut petra sola, qui est Christus, occupet et obtineat totius mundi imperium a patre concessum. Adhuc non est occisus Antichristus : quò fit ut nos desideremus et precemur, ut id tandem aliquando contingat et impleatur ; utque solus Christus regnet cum suis sanctis, secundum divinas promissiones ; utque vivat et dominetur in mundo, juxta Sancti Evangelii decreta, non autem juxta traditiones et leges hominum et voluntatem Tyrannorum mundi. M. faxit Deus, ut Regnum ejus adveniat quàm citissimè. Mede's Works, b. 4, ep. 53, p. 814.*

VI., which Burnet says\* Archbishop Cranmer owned to be from his pen, and which was sanctioned by certain high ecclesiastics of that day, we have the following on the subject of Christ's kingdom: "We ask that this kingdom may come, because, as yet, we see not all things subject to Christ: we see not yet how the stone is cut out of the mountain, without human help, which breaks in pieces and reduces to nothing the image described by Daniel; or how the only rock, which is Christ, doth possess and obtain the empire of the whole world, given him of the Father. As yet Antichrist is not slain; whence it is that we desire and pray that, at length, it may come to pass and be fulfilled; and that Christ alone *may reign with his saints*, according to the divine promises; and that He may live and have dominion in the world, according to the decrees of the holy gospel, and not according to the traditions and laws of men and the will of the tyrants of the world. God grant that his kingdom may come speedily."

This was the faith of the Episcopal church of England in the days of Edward VI., with which some things in her liturgy still exactly accord. It is true that in 1553, in the forty-two articles which then expressed her faith, the forty-first was pointed directly against the Millenarians of that day, just as we have seen the Augsburg Confession was. The Anabaptists, who had spread to England and engrafted their fanatical views on some features of millenarian doctrine, were most probably the cause of this; for nine years after, when there was nothing to fear from that fanatical sect, and millenarian views came to be better understood, it, together with two others, was with-

\* Hist. of his own Times, vol. iii. p. 4.

drawn, having been struck out by Archbishop Parker, leaving the present thirty-nine articles of the English church.

The sentiments of Bishop Latimer\* are very clearly expressed—"St. Paul saith, The Lord will not come till the swerving from the faith cometh,"† *which thing is already done and past.* Antichrist is already known throughout the world. *Wherefore the day is not far off.* Let us beware, for it will one day fall on our heads. Saint Peter saith, "the end of all things draweth very near." St. Peter said so at *his* time—how much more shall *we* say so? for it is a long time since Peter spake these words. The world was ordained to endure—as all learned men affirm and prove it with Scripture—6,000 years. Now of that number there be passed 5,552 years; so there is no more left but 448 years. And, furthermore, *those days shall be shortened: it shall not be full 6,000 years: the days shall be "shortened for the elect's sake."*

In his sermon for the second Sunday in Advent, speaking of the days being shortened, he says, "so that, peradventure, *it may come in my days*, old as I am, or in my children's days. There will be great alterations at that day: there will be hurly-burly, like as ye see when a man dieth, &c. There will be such alterations of the earth and the *elements*, they will lose their former nature, and be endued with another nature. And then shall they see the Son of Man come in a cloud with power and great glory." He speaks of the living saints being caught up into the air to meet Christ, and says, all those, I say, who be content to strive, and fight with sin, these shall in such wise be taken up into the air and meet with

\* His third Sermon on the Lord's Prayer.

† 2 Thess. 2. 3.

Christ, and *so shall come down with him again.* In all this there is not the most remote thought of such a period as the spiritualist's Millenium.

Bradford, the martyr, on Rom. 8, expresses the same expectation.\* Mr. Brooks says, "At the latter end of this century (the sixteenth) several individuals of eminence are known to us as having professed millenarian sentiments on prophecy; among whom may be named John Piscator, Alphonsus Conrade, Carolus Gallus, Tycho Brahe, Dr. F. Kett, Abraham Fleming, Hugh Broughton, and Anthony Marten!"†

It might be supposed that the reputation for piety and erudition deservedly held by many advocates of millenarian doctrine, both in England and on the continent, would have secured its greater prevalence. But prelacy was bitterly opposed to it, because it proclaimed the Pope to be Antichrist, and they that did so were contemned as *puritans*. In the preface of Eph. Huet's Commentary on Daniel, signed by Simeon Ash, Samuel Clarke, and W. Overton, eminent divines, it is stated, that such was the iniquity and imperiousness of the times that *few works of this nature were suffered to see the light.* The same spirit of persecution against millenarian doctrine exhibited itself on the continent in the suppression of numerous works, "among which may be instanced the Scriptural Exposition and Demonstration of the Millenarian Reign, &c., by Dr. J. W. Peterson, professor at Rostock, in 1677, and afterwards superintendant at Lunenberg; for which publication he was cited before the consistory of Zell and deposed, and his work withdrawn: and likewise a work of S. P. Klettwich, entitled, "The answer which has been demanded to two curious

\* Fathers of the English Church, vol. iv. p. 608.

† Elements of Proph. Int., p. 70.



questions ; viz. how long the present world will continue—i. e. whether it will continue for 6,000 years ? and if not, whether, before the end and total consummation of this world, a previous, different, better and more happy world and times are to be hoped for,” which work was suppressed by the consistory of Leipsic.\*

Nevertheless, the majority of the assembly of Westminster divines, when met in 1643, as it appears, both from their writings and from the testimony of Principal Baillie,† an Anti-millenarian, adopted millenarian doctrine. “THE MOST OF THE CHIEF DIVINES HERE,” says he, meaning the assembly, “not only independents, but others, such as Twisse, Marshall, Palmer, and MANY MORE, ARE EXPRESS CHILIASTS.”

To these may be added the names of Simeon Ash, of St. Brides, W. Bridge, A. M., Jeremiah Burroughs, A. M., J. Carlyl, A. M., T. Goodwin, D. D., W. Gouge, D. D., J. Langley, prebendary of Gloucester, and Peter Sterry of London, members of that assembly, whose writings speak for themselves. Nor is there anything in the Westminster confession of faith inconsistent with such views ; nothing of 1,000 years’ spiritual and religious prosperity before the coming of Christ. On the contrary, both in the Confession of Faith and the Directory of Worship for the church of Scotland, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms‡ there is language which expresses millenarian doctrines.

The same may be said of the article of the Reformed

\* Elements of Proph. Int., p. 24.

† Elements of Proph. Int., p. 72.

‡ Confession, c. 32, sec. 3. Larger Catechism, Q. and A., 191. Shorter Catechism, Q. and A., 102.

Dutch church, on the subject of the judgment. Millenarian doctrine is plainly and honestly avowed in the Confession of Faith, published by the Baptists in 1660,\* signed by 41 names, and said to be approved by more than 20,000.

The writings of Mede, who published his Key to the Revelations, in 1627, have done more to revive the study of the prophecies and to promote millenarian doctrine, than those perhaps of any other man. He was the first to open that sealed book; and, unfolding the millenarian doctrine, to pour in a light never seen before. He stands, in fact, the acknowledged father of interpreters of that wonderful book. Men, whose praise is in all the churches, corresponded with him, and acknowledged their obligations to him for the information he gave them. Among them were Dr. Twisse, prolocutor of the Westminster assembly of divines, Samuel Hartlib, Thomas Hayn, Dr. Meddus, Sir W. Boswell, Archbishop Usher, Goodwin, Charnock and Hussey, who all avowed their belief in the coming and kingdom of Christ.

We may close the account of this century, says Mr. Brooks, by giving, for the guidance of the student of prophecy, some other names of those who are known by their sentiments, published within this period, to have been millenarian; viz. Doctors W. Alabaster, W. Allen, T. Burnet, D. Cressener, W. Hakewell, G. Hicks, N. Homes, J. Mather, W. Potter, and the following divines abroad and of this country: T. Adams, W. Alleine, J. Archer, E. Bagshaw, T. Beverly, W. Burton, M. Cary, J. Cocceius, W. Deusbury, J. Durant, W. Erbery, G. Foster, T. Gale, G. Hammon, S. Hartlib, E. Huet, J. Hussey, P. De Lau-

\* See the Coming and Kingdom of Christ, by John Cox, p. 132.

ney, R. Maton, J. Mede, W. Medley, R. Mercer, C. S. Nuncius, A. Peganius, S. Petto, J. Ranew, W. Sherwin, and J. Tillinghast. Having ourselves access to but few of the writings of the above authors, we give, for the benefit of those who may feel curious on the subject, and have greater facilities, the list which has been furnished by Mr. Brooks.\*

Milton looked for no Millenium till the Saviour—

Last in the clouds from Heaven shall be revealed  
 In glory of the Father, to dissolve  
 Satan with his perverted world; then raise  
 From the conflagrnt mass, purg'd and refined,  
 New heavens, new earth, ages of endless date,  
 Founded in righteousness, and peace, and love,  
 To bring forth fruits, joy and eternal bliss.

Nor did Cowper expect that blessed and glorious  
 day until

The groans of nature in this nether world,  
 Which Heaven has heard for ages, have an end  
 Foretold by prophets, and by poets sung;  
 Whose fire was kindled at the prophets' lamp,  
 The time of rest, the promised Sabbath comes.  
 Six thousand years of sorrow have well nigh  
 Fulfilled their tardy and disastrous course  
 Over a sinful world; and what remains  
 Of this tempestuous state of human things,  
 Is merely as the working of a sea  
 Before a calm, that rocks itself to rest.  
 For He whose car the winds are, and the clouds  
 The dust that wait upon his sultry march,  
 When sin hath moved him, and his wrath is hot,  
 Shall visit earth in mercy; shall descend  
 Propitious in his chariot paved with love,  
 And what his storms have blasted and defaced  
 For man's revolt, shall with a smile repair.

\* Elements of Proph. Int., pp. 74, 75.

Heber and Watts, and other sweet poets, have sung in noblest strains of the same bright hope of a fallen ruined world.

The eighteenth century abounds in writers on the subject. Dr. John Gill was very decided in his views. The same\* author, from whom we quoted the list of names in the last century, gives the following additional list of later writers, whose views, often differing, and sometimes not confirmed by proof, were more or less millenarian. *Bishops* Clayton, Horseley, Newton and Newcome. *Doctors* P. Allix, G. Frank, S. Glass, J. E. Grabe, L. Hopkins of R. I., N. A., J. Knight, F. Lee, S. Rudd, and E. Wells. Among the divines of lesser degree, T. Adams, of Winteringham, R. Beere, J. A. Bengelius, C. Daubuz, R. Heming, J. Hallet, R. Hort, R. Ingram, P. Jurieu, J. B. Koppius, C. G. Koch, P. Lancaster, A. Pirie, R. Roach, J. D. Schæffer, A. Toplady, E. Winchester. Among the laity, Sir I. Newton, H. Dodwell and E. King, Esqs.

The name of Sir Isaac Newton is sufficient to shield the doctrine from the charge of weakness or fanaticism, or of being supported by insufficient evidence. He gave his powerful mind two whole years to the study of the prophecies, and has avowed his belief in the pre-millennial coming of Christ.†

The contests between prelacy and the puritan non-conformist divines, for a time, drove the millenarian doctrine out of the Episcopal church among the dissenters; but, during the last and present centuries, the tide has turned, and among the most zealous advocates of the present day are to be found some of the most pious and evangelical, learned and eloquent,

\* Elements of Proph. Int., p. 79.

† See his Commentary on Daniel, and his Observations on the Apocalypse.

divines in the church of England, such as Bickersteth, Burgh, Fry, Girdlestone, Hales, Hoare, Hooper, Hawtrey, Marsh, the Maitlands of Brighton and Gloucester, Madden, Mellville, M'Neil, Noel, Pym, Sirr, Sabin, Stuart and others, are to be found among the Dissenters, particularly Begg, Cox, Tyso, Baptists; and among the laity, Frere, Habershon, Viscount Mandeville, T. P. Platt, Granville Peen, Wood, of England, Cuninghame of Scotland, and the late Judge Boudinot, of Jersey, and others in our own country, men of distinction in their profession, though few, comparatively, there is reason to fear, have ever turned their attention to the subject. Robert Hall\* regretted, on his dying bed, he had not preached the millenarian views he entertained.

Some circumstances have contributed to throw odium, not only on millenarian views, but on the study of the prophecies—such as the fall of Mr. Irving, whose earlier works have thrown much light on the subject, the rise and extravagance of different fanatical sects, and the erratic conduct of some who have adopted part of the millenarian views. This, however, is no more valid objection against the doctrine of the pre-millennial coming of Christ, than is the same objection when urged by infidels and skeptics, with equal foundation, against Christianity.

Much more decided and influential, however, is the opposition which grows out of the common and current views of the Millenium, assumed so extensively, and used so frequently and laudably, for urging forward the missionary and other benevolent efforts of the present day, so immensely important and invaluable to the world.

Anti-millenarian views, as at present entertained in

\* El. Proph. Int., p. 82.

these United States, are but of recent date. Dr. Daniel Whitby, who died A. D. 1726, seems to have been the first to reduce them into order. He has written a commentary on the Apocalypse, to which he has appended a treatise on the Millenium, denying the distinctive features of the ancient millenarian faith, and spiritualizing the restoration of the Jews, the coming of Christ, and the first resurrection.

In that treatise, Dr. Whitby explains the manner in which his mind was led to the views he originated, of an allegorical Millenium. He confesses it to be, and calls it a "NEW HYPOTHESIS." It was excogitated by him, wholly by means of the allegorizing or spiritualizing interpretation. The treatise was written to support his "hypothesis," or, as he says, "framed according to it." He proposes in it—to state the true Millenium of the ancients—how far and by whom received and opposed in the first four centuries—to show the reasons of his own hypothesis—to answer the arguments in favor of a literal resurrection before the Millenium—and to offer some arguments against it.

We are not concerned to review this treatise. It has been most ingeniously arranged and written, but its arguments are exceedingly sophistical, and it abounds in bold assertions without proof.

We take notice of it, only in so far as it is brought forward to invalidate the testimony we have submitted. The only fathers whose writings Dr. Whitby quotes, in order to set forth the ancient view of the Millenium, are Irenæus and Justin Martyr. The admission of Justin Martyr, that many Christians of pure and pious judgment did *not* adopt the views he confessed to Trypho, Dr. Whitby fully claims to be proof that Justin's orthodoxy was of his own asserting. The criticism of Mede and Daillé, who very plausibly and

forcibly attempt to prove that the word *not*, before acknowledge, is an interpolation, he rejects, confirming, as he thinks, the reading by the admission of Irenæus. The reader will find an examination of this point in Brooks' Elements of Prophetic Interpretation, who refers to N. Homes, as having actually seen some copies of Justin's Dialogues, according to the amended reading of Mede and Daillé. It is entirely on this foundation that Dr. Whitby endeavors to prove that the orthodoxy of the Christian church on this subject, was different from the opinion of Justin.

It behoved him, however, before hastening to such a conclusion, to account for the fact, that all the writings of the early fathers, which are extant, contain the idea. Barnabas, Papias, Polycarp, Clement, Ignatius, have been referred to, and directly or indirectly quoted by us. Dr. Whitby has not noticed them, except that he extracts, as from Papias, out of the thirty-fifth chapter of Irenæus, certain extravagant attempts—surmised, with great plausibility, by Mr. Greswell,\* to have been incorrectly translated, and to be nothing but a general indefinite number, used hyperbolically—to illustrate the fertility of the new earth. This he has done, very unfairly and sneeringly, to shake our confidence both in the judgment and veracity of Papias.

The authorities that he quotes, in opposition to millenarian views, and by which, to prove that the orthodoxy of the early church was not coincident, on this subject, with the views of Justin Martyr and Irenæus, are Origen, a noted heretic, who taught the eternity of the world, and the universal restitution of the

\* Greswell on the Parables, vol. ii. p. 296.

wicked ; Dionysius of Alexandria, who, according to his own historical account of the efforts he made in Egypt to suppress millenarian views, labored, by the most winning and flattering arts, to shake the faith of the churches in Egypt on this subject ; Eusebius, suspected of Arianism, and who lived after the Platonic philosophers had begun to corrupt the church, and who was himself, by no means, a candid, impartial, and competent judge on this question ; and Epiphanius, who opposed the views of Apollinarius, of which we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

The arguments which Dr. Whitby has framed against millenarian doctrines, by attempting to trace them up to the Jews, and to the sybilline oracles, and by noticing the differences between certain of the ancient Millenaries, and Millenaries of a later date, of the Mede school, are by no means conclusive. He does not fairly state the ancient millenarian views. Beside, endless shades of difference may be traced, on other subjects, among those who, nevertheless, agree in the leading and substantial truth.

Equally inconclusive, too, are the objections founded on the sensual descriptions in which some indulged, who believed in the Millenium of the Chiliasts. Dr. Whitby himself has been surpassed by those of his own school, and we might just as well trace the difference between them, and found as good an argument against his spiritual Millenium, as he has done against the Millenaries. He believed and taught the conversion of the Jews, their ascendant influence in the church, and their probable return to Jerusalem. He differed, as he seems by way of apology to confess, from the ancient Millenaries, only in denying the personal reign of Christ on the earth, the re-establishment of the theocracy, and the literal resurrection of



the saints,—which, by the way, was a difference in three very essential points of their belief. We have no hesitation in saying that the Doctor's treatment of the testimony of the Fathers is uncandid, exceedingly partial, and would not have been attempted by him, but to support his *New Hypothesis*. His arguments and explanations of Scripture, in favor of his hypothesis, are based on assumptions which have not been proved; and his attempts to show the falsity of millenarian expositions are founded on the assumption of his own hypothesis.

Archdeacon Woodhouse, although he adopted the notion of an allegorical Millenium, or the universal prevalence of Christianity in the earth, nevertheless very justly observes, “It is remarkable that Dr. Whitby, who had declined to comment on the Apocalypse, assigning as his motive, that he felt himself unqualified for such a work, has ventured to explain this particular prediction of the Millenium; which being, as all agree, a prophecy yet unfulfilled, is, of all others, the most difficult.”\*

It is sufficient to condemn the whole treatise that his main reliance is on Eusebius, who assigns the origin of millenarian views to Papias, not so much as a matter of historical verity, as his opinion that Papias misconceived tradition because he did not adopt the mystical or allegorical interpretation;† and who has, without reason, questioned the genuineness of the Book of Revelation. Dr. Nolon‡ has revived the old reproach against millenarian views, and reiterated the

\* Woodhouse on the Apocalypse, p. 470.

† Ἄ και ἡγουμαι τας αποστολικας παρεδεξαμενον διηγησεις υπολαβειν, τα εν υποδειγμασι προς αυτων μυστικως ειρημενα μη συννωρακοτα.—*Euseb. Ecc. Hist.*, lib. iii. ch. 39.

‡ See “The Time and Nature of the Millenium investigated,” by Rev. Dr. Nolon. London. 1831.

fallacies of Dr. Whitby. He has remarked as historical fact, "that the opinion of the primitive church, respecting the nature of the Millenium, received more than a tinge of error from the peculiar notions of Papias." On such opinions, and hypotheses, and reasonings, we place but little reliance, when we have such decisive testimony as the following, from one\* who has carefully examined and collated, not a few prejudiced and doubtful writers, but the fathers generally. "*All primitive orthodox Christians* expected, according to the words of the apostles, and the promises of the prophets, a new heaven and a new earth, at the second coming of the Messiah to restore the happiness which flourished before the fall of Adam," &c.

The early divines of New England, the Cottons and Mathers, and their cotemporaries, knew nothing of such a Millenium as that invented and advocated by Dr. Whitby. The first who gave it their sanction in this country, appear to have been President Edwards, in the middle of the last century, and Dr. Bellamy. But the former looked for terrific judgments and overwhelming sorrows coming on the world before the Millenium, and destined to prepare the way by cutting off the wicked, and purifying the holy people before the latter day glory. The latter†

\* See Grabe's *Spicilegium Patrum*, lib. ii. p. 230.—"Omnes primævi Christiani orthodoxi, sęcundum dicta apostolorum et promissa prophetarum, novum cælum et novam terram exspectarunt in secundo Messię adventu, isti restituendum felicitati quę ante lapsum Adami florebat. Atque hanc felicitatem plurimi non in spiritualibus bonis, sed et temporalibus posuerunt, persuasi tunc solum terrę a maledictione ob peccatum Adami, et ei inflictam fore, ac abundantiam omnis boni sine humano labore prolaturum. Quę et priscorum Judęorum fuit sententia, ut ex Rabinorum dictis a Raymundo Martini in *Pugione fidei*—*Adductis* liquet."

† See Bellamy's *Works*, vol. i. pp. 495-516.

has carried out the views of Dr. Whitby in a plain and interesting description of the Millenium, assumed to be allegorical—a season of universal religious prosperity, induced and sustained by the instrumentality and influences now employed, but then more efficiently, for the sanctification of men. The general concert of prayer which President Edwards recommended in his works, originated with a memorial from certain ministers of Scotland in 1746, the object of which was distinctly stated, that Christ in his glory would *himself appear* and favor Zion. A recent letter from the churches in Scotland, addressed to the General Association of the Presbyterian church of the United States, expresses the hope of Christ's speedy personal coming in glory. The missionaries generally in the East are said to look for his coming. The midnight cry, "Behold, He cometh," has begun to be sounded, and it is only in this country, where the churches generally seem to be asleep on this subject, and fatal and dangerous sentiments, and the false, unreasonable, and unphilosophical hope extensively obtain, that the advance of civilisation, the progress of liberty, the improvement of the arts, the extension of commerce, the rapidly increasing facilities of intercourse among the nations, the multiplication of missionaries and missionary stations and schools, the increase of revivals, the spread of the gospel, the machinery of Bible, and Missionary, and Tract societies, and other benevolent operations, are going to meliorate the condition of the world, and peacefully and gradually introduce the Millennial Day. Alas! the condition of the world presents no reasonable prospect of such a consummation. Our hope of the world's redemption rests on a more solid basis—even the promise, oath, and covenant of our God, who stands pledged to Abraham to make him heir of the

world, and to exalt his Son, our blessed Saviour, King of kings and Lord of lords. We rejoice in the cause, success, spread, and multiplication of Missions, and feel that the church is deeply guilty in not causing the gospel to be "preached in all nations for a witness," "that God may take out of the Gentiles a people for the glory of his name," and "the end may come;" but we look not for the visions of philanthropists to be realized, nor for the conversion of the world, but for "the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." We rejoice in all the good that is done by Christian effort and missionary labors, and pray that it may be much greater; but, impenitent reader, we cannot flatter ourselves into the belief, that a day is coming when it will be any easier for you to repent and become reconciled to God than it is now. There is a day of wrath coming on the world. The nations will be "broken with a rod of iron, and dashed in pieces as a potter's vessel." Now the gospel is preached to you; it is "the good news of the coming kingdom." If you do not repent, you can have no part in the first resurrection—you must perish in the overthrow of the ungodly. How soon the heavens shall gather blackness, and the storm of wrath burst upon this guilty world, and the nations be dashed against each other, we know not; but that Lord Jesus Christ, who will shortly come to execute vengeance on his enemies, has declared, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."\* "Watch, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."†

\* Rev. 16. 15.

† Luke, 21. 36.

## CHAPTER X.

THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION APPLIED, AND THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST SHOWN TO BE PRE-MILLENIAL.

“HE shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you: whom the Heaven 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.”\* These words suggest the theme of this chapter. We quote them here because they state the subject in the plainest and most explicit terms, and because they furnish an invaluable guide for our researches into the predictions concerning the SECOND COMING OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

The subject is one of infinite moment. It addresses itself alike to our personal hopes and interests, and to those of the entire world. It involves the destiny of each individual, and that of all the nations of the earth. It has formed the object of hope and ardent expectation to the pious in all ages. It is the grand epoch for the consummation of the blessedness and glory of all the saints, both of those now with Christ, and of those still alive upon the earth. It is the hour of Heaven's triumph and of hell's discomfiture—of the emancipation of the righteous and of the destruction of the wicked,—of the rescue of this globe from the thralldom of the devil, and of the renovation of all things.

It is to be the commencement of an eternal era, during the first epochs of which the promises of God,

\* Acts 3. 20.

which have supported and comforted his believing people in all ages, shall be fully and gloriously redeemed in all their details, and the universal empire of Jehovah consolidated, and for ever protected from the invasion of evil, by the righteous adjudications and the terrible inflictions of vengeance by Jesus Christ, the delegated sovereign of all worlds, on all those of the two orders of God's intelligent creatures who have dared to dispute his sovereignty, and to unfurl, in his mighty empire, the standard of rebellion. Christian reader! it is the hour of your adoption! the season of your glorious manifestation! and of your participation in the rights, privileges, honors, rewards, renown, and inconceivable delights of "that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time."\* Impenitent reader! it is the day of your everlasting horror and damnation! "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and admired in all them that believe."†

No theme demands your more serious and devout attention; nor does any require more careful, discriminating, prayerful, and humble investigation. Your hopes, your character, your destiny for eternity, as well as your peace, consolation, and usefulness in this life, depend upon the manner in which it affects you, and the views you entertain relative to it. It is of

\* 1 Pet. 1. 4, 5.

† 2 Thess. 1. 7-10.

infinite moment, therefore, that the Scriptural account which God has given of it, by the mouth of his holy prophets, should be understood and believed, instead of the devices of your own imagination, or the explanations of human wisdom.

Peter, in the passage under consideration, asserts some facts, about which there can be no mistake, nor even doubt, viz. that there will be a real personal manifestation of Jesus Christ, in a mission to this world which is yet future;—that He is now concealed from the eyes of men by having been caught up into the heavens, and will remain so during his continuance there;—that while He must remain there in accordance with the plans of God, His advent should be heralded, and thus the world be kept advised, if they will hearken to the cry, that his present absence, the withdrawment of his corporal presence from the earth, is not final and for ever;—that just as certainly as the Heavens have received, and do now conceal him from the view of men, will they again deliver him up and disclose him to our eyes, and that this event will take place *when* “*the times of restitution of all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began,” shall arrive.

There can be no questioning these facts by any one who admits as truth supported by sufficient evidence, and receives in the simplicity of faith, the testimony of the apostle. The only point of doubt which can be raised, is AS TO THE TIME of his coming. The date assigned by the apostle is “the times of restitution of all things spoken by all the prophets.” We are referred, therefore, directly by the apostle to the prophets, from them to ascertain the time of his coming. That, he declares to be “the times of restitution of all things.”

If, therefore, we can ascertain what is meant by "THE RESTITUTION OF ALL THINGS," and WHEN it takes place, we shall not err as to the time of the second advent of Jesus Christ.

In the very threshold of this investigation, however, we are met by the criticisms and the views of those who adopt the spiritual or allegorical interpretation, and who deny the *pre-millennial\* advent of Christ*. The

\* The word pre-millennial is here used in order to prevent a periphrasis. In the use of it reference is had to the general opinion both of Millenarians and Anti-millenarians, that a period of a thousand years has been predicted, during which the earth shall enjoy peace and blessedness under the dominion of Jesus Christ and his saints, however they may differ from each other as to the nature and mode of that dominion, or as to the manner of its introduction and establishment. We enter not into the discussion relative to the question whether the Millenium of the Apocalypse, chap. 20. 1-6, has or has not already passed away, agreeably to the opinion of Professor Bush, that zealous and indefatigable Biblical student, who,—affirming the dragon of John, Rev. 12. 9, and Rev. 20. 2, to be the symbols of pagan Rome, and the expressions old serpent, the devil, Satan, to be but synonyms not alphabetical expositions, of that symbol, and that both the symbolical ejections of the dragon had their accomplishment in the overthrow of paganism by Christianity, from the days of Constantine and forward—looks not for a Millenium of triumph and glory according to the opinion of the ancient Millenarians, but for an eternal state of honor and happiness to commence with the introduction of a new dispensation, the kingdom come. The ancient Millenarians, and the modern also, question not the perpetuity of the kingdom of Heaven, although they admit that at the close of a thousand years a great epoch will occur, which shall be marked by the judgment of the wicked dead raised from their graves, the final imprisonment and punishment of Satan for ever, and the adjustment of the kingdom for eternity. Nor does Mr. Bush differ from them in respect of the grand substantial nature of the last and glorious dispensation, if we understand him, though denying the Millennial epoch, as understood either by Millenarians or Anti-millenarians. It is not essential to the argument here, to enter into this investigation.



author of a work entitled "Modern Fanaticism Unveiled," and Mr. Faber, both affirm, in common with the great body of spiritualists in our own day and country, that the second advent of Christ is not to occur till AFTER the Millenium. Of course it is of essential consequence, if possible, to enlist this text in favor of this view. This is attempted by a twofold method: FIRST, the import of the adverb (*αχρη*) *until*, is changed; and SECOND, that of the word *restitution*. As this is done by criticism, we must for a few moments refer to it.

The word UNTIL (*αχρη*), as commonly used, denotes the continuance of time, from the period just referred to or spoken of, up to a second, or some other designated period. Thus, when I say, I shall be from home to-morrow *until* four o'clock, the idea is, I will be absent the whole preceding portion of the day, but at four o'clock will be at home. This is the correct meaning of the original Greek adverb (*αχρη*). Its import in the text is obvious. Christ will be absent, and concealed from us in the Heavens, during the whole period elapsing from that in which the apostle spoke, to that "of the restitution of all things;" but then He will return, and no longer be hidden from our view. The criticism designed to obviate the force of this, adduced by the anti-fanatical author, is that the adverb (*αχρη*) UNTIL, denotes simply duration, and does not imply the idea of termination; and therefore, should have been translated *during*, thus making the text mean, "that Christ is to continue in Heaven *during*,\* and to the end of the time of the restitution of all things."

We quote a few passages to show the fallacy of

\* Modern Fanaticism Unveiled, p. 207.

this criticism. "The former history have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach; DURING (*αχρη*) the day in which he was taken up."\* The absurdity is apparent. According to this criticism the dumbness of Zechariah must have been confined to the day on which his son John was born; †—the wicked revelry of the antediluvians, must have been only *during* the day on which Noah entered the ark; ‡—David's sepulchre must have been with them only *during* that day of Pentecost on which Peter spoke; §—and the long time, *during* which Paul preached, the night that Eutychus fell from the window, must have been only *during* the break of day. || The truth is, this criticism renders the use of this adverb, in many places, ¶ perfectly absurd and not to be translated. It is true, the duration does sometimes comprehend the period referred to, in which case the proposition involves the idea of duration; but whether it stops at *the commencement*, or extends to *the close* of the period referred to, depends always on the manner in which it is used; as for example, when Paul says that they sailed from Philippi and came to Troas in (*αχρη*, until) five days,\*\* his meaning plainly is, that they did not arrive at Troas till the close of five days, i. e. their voyage lasted five days. If I should say I will not eat or drink, until I have pursued the thief, my meaning would be different from what it would be, were I to say, I will not eat or drink till I am pursuing the thief; the word until, in the first instance, expressing duration, till the pursuit was over, and in the second case only till it had commenced. But in the

\* Acts, 1. 1.

† Luke, 1. 20.

‡ Luke, 17. 27.

§ Acts, 2. 29.

|| Acts, 20. 11.

¶ Acts, 13. 6, ἄχρι Πάφου. Acts, 20. 4, ἄχρι της Ἀσίας.

\*\* Acts, 20. 6.

passage under consideration, the word until (*αχρι*) cannot be construed to imply duration, *throughout* the times of the restitution of all things.

Mr. Faber does not found his explanation, however, on this criticism; but on another which he adopts in common with the author referred to. The word restitution (*αποκαταστασεως*) he contends does not denote *the act* of resettling, or restoring all things, but the *completed result*, the actual settlement or restoration of all things. If this be the meaning of the word, the text furnishes a powerful argument against the pre-millennial advent of Christ. But this is not the meaning, and is disproved by the grammatical rules applicable to the case. Verbal nouns among the Greeks are derived from the first, second and third persons of the perfect passive. Those derived from the first person, denote the thing done, from the second the act of doing, and from the third the doer, as the purification, the act of purifying, and the purifier.\* Thus, in the text, the word restitution denotes the act of resettling, and the meaning is until the times of resettling, that is, when that great decisive act or series of acts is to be performed, which is to restore or resettle all things. The appearance of Christ therefore occurs at the commencement, and not the completion, of the act, or process, or series of restoring acts.

The common explanation of the spiritualists is, that Christ shall not reappear while, or as long as, the times of the New Testament continue, i. e. till Christianity, which they say, is the means of restoring and resettling all things, shall have completely secured

1	2	3
καθαριμα	καθαρισεις	καθαρινης
απειγια	απαξις	απεικτης
ποιημα	ποιησις	ποιητης

this result. This is the explanation of Schleusner.\* But this is in opposition to the established grammatical import of the words.† The act of resettling is not to take place till Christ appears; and he does not appear during the times of the New Testament. Beside, it assumes what is not asserted by the text, and cannot be proved, viz. that Christianity, or the New Testament dispensation, is the means of restoring all things. The New Testament dispensation is but “THE GOSPEL” of the kingdom of Heaven to come—the glad tidings of its approach. The restitution is to be effected by the reappearance of Christ, and the physical, providential and retributive agents, and glorious power he will employ. The world, and the church too, have been in an unsettled condition, from the very days of Christ’s ascension to this hour; and there is no more prospect now of Christianity’s going to settle all things, by its enlightening and suasive influence, than there was eighteen hundred years ago. Not a solitary kingdom of this world has been recovered as yet from the dominion of the god of this world.

For a season, after the religion of Jesus Christ has been introduced among a people, there may have been proofs of the new influence; and in some countries, as in Scotland and Geneva, and for a while in some of the early colonies that settled on these shores, the fear of God and a love of righteousness prevailed to a very great extent. But still it could not be said that Christ and his saints reigned. The legislative, executive, and judiciary powers were not exercised under

\* “Quamdiu tempora N. T. durant, quibus per religionem Christianam omnia in meliorem statum sunt redigenda;” ad loc.

† Ἀποκαταστάσις—the restoration of anything to its former state: hence, a change from worse to better, melioration, introduction of a new and better era. Acts 3. 21; Polyb. 4. 23. 1; Diod. Sic. 20. 34; Robinson’s Wahl.

the direction and control of religion. The kingdom was not placed at the feet of Jesus Christ. And even where religion was established by law, and the church was superior to the state, the ecclesiastical became as corrupt as the civil government. The union of church and state has wrought infinite evil; and few events, perhaps, have contributed to greater corruption in the church and world, than the establishment of religion by law under Constantine, and among the nations of Europe. The history of the Reformation discloses melancholy facts on this subject. Our Missionaries in the Sandwich Islands have had to meet serious difficulties, incident to the relations between the civil and ecclesiastical powers. The thrones of earth have not been occupied by the righteous; and even where the monarch and rulers may have been Christians according to the judgment of charity, there has been much wanting to prove that the kingdom belonged to Jesus Christ.

Christianity has indeed been the means of saving multitudes of individuals, of meliorating often the condition of society, of restraining the corruptions of men, of checking the wicked legislation of rulers, and of promoting public morals, general virtue, social order, refinements in civilisation, advancement in science, and the general intercourse of nations. No sooner however has a nation changed its religion, and substituted Christianity for paganism, than some new forms of corruption or instruments of oppression, or efforts of persecution, have shown, that *the kingdom, THE GOVERNMENT*, had not yet been restored to God, and was not yet given to "the people of the saints of the most High," but was under the influence and control of the secular princes, the selfish politicians,

the men who sought their own honor and aggrandisement, and not the interests and glory of Jesus Christ. The subjugation of the governments of earth, under his control; the restoration of the kingdom to Israel; the moral and political renovation of earth; the establishment of the dominion of Heaven or the kingdom of God, over this world, have not yet even begun to be effected. Yet are these things predicted; and for the times of their occurrence we are referred, by Peter, to the prophets. They, he says, have spoken of them—not one or a few, but all of them, since the world began.

Our business, therefore, is to examine what the prophets have in common predicted, relative to the re-settlement or “restitution of all things.” They all, he says, look forward to one grand and signal period, which he calls “the times of restitution”—the times when all the things the prophets have declared, relative to the restoration, shall be fulfilled. Of this season, or these times, all the prophets, from the beginning of the world, have spoken. Every one has not predicted precisely the same circumstances and events—one referring to one or more, and another to different scenes, but all to something or other to be accomplished in that season, which Peter calls, “the times of restitution,” and which the prophets themselves have differently designated,\* Isaiah and others by the phrase, “in that day.” At the very commencement of this season of restoration, as the very first act in the series, which forms the date of its introduction, occurs the second advent of Jesus Christ.

It is not necessary, and is indeed foreign to our immediate design in this chapter, to show that Peter

\* Isaiah, 2. 2; 4. 2, 3; 10. 20; 11. 10, 11.

states the fact correctly, and that all the prophets, from the beginning of the world, have spoken of something or other which is to transpire in this season of restitution. We might, indeed, show that Enoch,\* the seventh from Adam, the first prophet of whom we read, prophesied of these, saying, "Behold the Lord cometh with 10,000 of his saints to execute judgment upon all," and also that Noah,† Abraham,‡ Jacob,§ Job,|| Moses,¶ Balaam,\*\* Hannah,†† David,‡‡ Joel,§§ Amos,||| Hosea,¶¶ Nahum,\*\*\* Isaiah,††† Jeremiah,†††† Ezekiel,§§§ Daniel,|||| Zechariah,¶¶¶ Habakkuk,\*\*\*\* Haggai,†††† Zephaniah,†††† Malachi,§§§§ all prophesied of the glorious advent of the Lord, and some events connected with his coming, to transpire in the last days, the times of restitution.

It will suffice to adduce those passages which predict the millennial coming of Jesus Christ, and which more appropriately belong to chronological prophecies.

The first we cite is from Daniel.||||| This vision of Daniel extends to the times of restitution, even till the kingdom is given to the people of the saints of the Most High, which is to be everlasting, and all domi-

\* Jude, 14.

† Gen. 9. 27.

‡ Gen. 17. 7, 8; John, 8. 56.

§ Gen. 49. 10.

|| Job, 19. 23-27. ¶ Exod. 15. 17, 18; Deut. 32. 34-43; 33. 3.

\*\* Numb. 24. 15-24.

†† 1 Sam. 2. 8-10.

‡‡ Psalm, 2. 8, 9; 50. 1-4.

§§ Joel, 2. 28-32; 3. 9-17.

||| Amos, 2. 4-16; 3. 1-15; 5. 27; 9. 11-15.

¶¶ Hosea, 1. 9; 10. 10-15; 2. 14-23.

\*\*\* Nahum, 1. 15.

††† Isaiah, 2. 10-21; 9. 5; 11. 4; 24. 1-23; 30. 25-33; 34. 1-10;

63. 1-6; 65. 13-15; 65 and 66, *passim*.

††† Jer. 30. 5-24; 31. 27-40; 33. 14-22.

§§§ Ezek. 34-39, &amp;c.

|||| Dan. 7. 13, 14.

¶¶¶ Zech. 14. 1-21.

\*\*\*\* Hab. 3. 3-16.

†††† Hag. 2. 21, 22; Heb. 12. 26-28.

†††† Zeph. 3. 8-20.

§§§§ Malachi, 3. 2-4; 4. 2, 3.

||||| Dan. 7. 7-27.

nions shall serve and obey their Lord and Redeemer. Of this there can be no doubt or dispute. The prophet describes the fourth universal monarchy or conquering kingdom, that should arise in the world, which is the empire of Rome, and which he describes as follows: "After this I saw in the night visions, and beheld a fourth beast, dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns; I considered the horns, and behold there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first plucked up by the roots: and behold, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things."\*

This is a symbolical description of the Roman power. Its conquests and ravages are graphically and accurately described. In almost every respect it differed from the three previous universal monarchies, the Babylonian, the Medo-Persian, and the Macedonian.

At a period in which this empire should be divided into ten kingdoms, Daniel saw an eleventh power rising in the midst, which eradicated three of them, and displayed prodigious sagacity, and made the most lofty pretensions and claims. That this was the meaning of the symbol there is no room for doubt, for it is interpreted to Daniel.

"Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast,— what it meant, which was diverse from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, whose teeth were iron, and his nails of brass, which devoured, brake in pieces, and

\* Dan. 7. 7, 8.



stamped the residue with his feet. And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell: even of that horn which had eyes, and a mouth that spake great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows." " Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom, are ten kings (or kingdoms, for the word is so used in this chapter,) that shall arise, and another shall rise after them, and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws, and they shall be given into his hands, until a time and times and a dividing of time."\*

The history of the Roman Empire exactly accords with this description. It subdued the world; but, in the course of the fifth century, the western Roman Empire, which was appropriately and peculiarly that of Rome, was divided into *ten* distinct kingdoms, by the irruptions of the northern barbarians. THE VANDALS led on by *Godesilius*, A. D. 406, into Gaul; by *Gunderic*, A. D. 409, into Spain; and by *Geiseric*, A. D. 427, into Africa. 2. THE SUEVI, whose kingdom was founded by *Ermeric*, A. D. 407, in Spanish Galicia and Lusitania. 3. THE ALANS, who invaded Gaul, A. D. 407, under their king, *Goar*, and were established, A. D. 412, near the Rhine. 4. THE BURGUNDIANS, who, led on by *Gundicar* into Gaul, A. D. 407, were established, A. D. 412, by the emperor's ceding to them a district

near the Rhine in Gallia Belgica. 5. THE FRANKS, led on by *Theudemir*, A. D. 407, and firmly established, A. D. 416 and 417, by *Pharamond*, in Gaul. 6. THE VISIGOTHS, who, A. D. 408, under the conduct of *Alaric*, made themselves masters of Italy, and finally, A. D. 585, after various conquests, and wars, and expulsion from Gaul, became lords of all Spain. 7. The ANGLO-SAXONS, who, A. D. 449, planted themselves in the isle of Thanet, and, in the course of a short time, founded the primary and original kingdom of Kent, in Britain. 8. The HERULO-TURINGI, who, A. D. 476 or 479, founded the first Gothic kingdom of Italy. 9. THE OSTROGOTHS, who, under their sovereign, *Theodoric*, undertook, A. D. 489, the conquest of Italy; and, A. D. 493, founded the Italian Ostrogothic monarchy. And 10. THE LOMBARDS, who conducted, A. D. 567 and 568, by *Alboin*, from Ponia, where they had been established, A. D. 526, by *Audoïn*, founded a kingdom in that part of Italy which has ever since borne the name of *Lombardy*.

This is the account Gibbon gives of the rise of the ten kingdoms which were founded within the western Roman empire, and adopted by Mr. Faber.\*

It was precisely during the period of the rise of these ten kingdoms, during the fifth and sixth centuries, that the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, acquired his mighty and extensive influence, just as the eleventh, or little horn, arose on the head of the beast. From the very conversion of Constantine to Christianity, the influence of this ambitious prelate began to be felt. The barbarian invasions in the west, and the removal of the seat of the secular empire to Constantinople, in the east, were peculiarly favorable to

\* See Faber's Sacred Calendar, vol ii.

the growth of his influence; and so successfully was it exerted, that by A. D. 533, when all the ten Gothico-Roman kingdoms had been developed, the Emperor Justinian published an edict, and at the same time addressed an epistle to the Pope, acknowledging and declaring him to be *the head of the churches*, thus conferring on him the incommunicable title of Jesus Christ, and putting himself as emperor, and his empire, by his supreme legislation, under the dominion of the Bishop of Rome.\*

This emperor also published a volume of civil law, which was adopted throughout the whole extent of the Roman empire, and became the basis of the legislation of Europe, down to the days of Napoleon. In that volume of civil law are to be found the edict and epistle of Justinian, creating the Pope supreme head of the churches, and the epistle of Pope John in reply, acceding to, and sanctioning the act of the emperor. These documents, by being published in that collection, obtained the stamp of public and legislative authority, as the laws of the empire. Subsequently, A. D. 606, the Emperor Phocas confirmed the grant made by Justinian, and by that time all the ten kingdoms had become, in fact, subject to the Bishop of Rome, Great Britain, or the Anglo-Saxon, being the last brought over by Augustine, A. D. 604. The decree of Justinian, and the code of laws which he published, based on the acknowledged supremacy of the Pope, or Bishop of Rome, and which became thereafter the basis of European legislation for centuries, did, in reality, change times and laws, and give the saints into the hands of the little or episcopal horn, i. e. the horn that had eyes, the overseer, the Bishop of Rome,

\* See Cuninghame on the Apocalypse, pp. 262-270, Ox. Ed.

by whom they should be, as they have been, worn out.

The mouth speaking great things belonging to this horn, fitly symbolizes the assumed and asserted authority of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, as the Vicar of Christ upon earth. "He has at various times anathematised all who dared to oppose him; has laid whole kingdoms under an interdict; has excommunicated kings and emperors; has absolved their subjects from their allegiance; has asserted greater authority, even in temporal matters, than sovereign princes; and has pronounced, that the dominion of the whole earth rightfully belongs to him."\* This little horn is reputed also, as speaking great words against,† i. e. *by the side* of the Most High, not opposing, but asserting an equality with God, which the Bishop of Rome has done, being not offended to be styled by his parasites, "OUR LORD GOD THE POPE, ANOTHER GOD ON EARTH, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS, OUR MOST HOLY LORD, THE VICTORIOUS GOD AND MAN IN HIS SEE OF ROME, GOD THE BEST AND GREATEST, VICE GOD, THE LAMB OF GOD THAT TAKETH AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD, THE MOST HOLY WHO CARRIETH THE MOST HOLY."

The last circumstance noticed of this little horn, in this prediction, is, that three of the ten horns or kingdoms, fell before him. It is historically true—that the Herulo-Turingic, the Ostrogothic and the Lombardic, having their seat in states, "were necessarily eradicated in the immediate presence of the papacy, before which they were geographically standing—and that the temporal principality which bears the name of

\* Faber's Sac. Cal., vol. ii. p. 93.

† 𐤆𐤃𐤁 Chald. 1.9. Heb. No. 1, latus.—𐤆𐤃 in latus vulg. contra 7. 25.—Gesenius.

St. Peter's patrimony, was carved out of the mass of their subjugated dominions."\* The Pope, as the little horn, which subdued the three others before it, wears to this day his appropriate triple crown, and answers, in every respect, to the description which is given of him to Daniel.

Having brought this colossal power into view, and fixed the term of its continuance, the vision of the fourth beast or Roman Empire does not terminate, but extends down to the day of judgment. This, the vision affirms, is to be at the same time with the destruction of the little horn's dominion. The coming of the Son of Man, the destruction of Popery, and the establishment of the dominion of the saints of the Most High, are, according to the vision, cotemporaneous. Thus runs the record : " I beheld, till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool : his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him ; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him : the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake ; I beheld, even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away ; yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I saw in the visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before them. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a king-

\* Faber's Sac. Cal., vol. ii. p. 102.

dom that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit, in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.”\*

After having noticed the fourth beast, or Roman empire, and the ten horns on its head, or kingdoms into which it was divided, he contemplated the horn that had eyes, or Popery, and relates, “I beheld, and the same horn *made war with the saints, and PREVAILED AGAINST THEM; UNTIL* the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and *the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.* Thus, he said, the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise, and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue these kings. And he shall speak words against (beside) the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time, and times, and a dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the

\* Dan. 7. 9-18.

end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”\*

Our object is not to give a minute interpretation or exposition of this prediction, but only, in so far as it is necessary, to bring into view the pre-millennial date which it assigns to the coming of Christ. The following facts then are not to be questioned,—that the judgment, as Daniel describes, the coming of the Son of Man, the destruction of the Roman Empire and of the papacy, and the establishment of the dominion of the people of the saints of the Most High, occur at the same season—at the time of the end, when the act of restitution begins. Daniel distinctly and unequivocally teaches, that the destruction of the beast, and of the little horn, and the setting up of the dominion of Jesus Christ, are to be secured by the coming of the Son of Man. These are events which are to occur when Christ comes, in the clouds of Heaven with a fiery flame, and which Daniel places before the Millennium or establishment and prosperity of the kingdom. The argument, therefore, in a few words, is this :

The fourth beast is the Roman empire. That beast is to continue in existence, till there should be ten horns seen on its head, i. e. ten kingdoms, into which the Roman empire should be divided. Among those horns, a little horn should spring up, which would eradicate three, and affect an equality with God ; all which has been already verified in the barbarian invasions, the universal supremacy and triple dominion of the Bishop of Rome. Both the beast and the little

\* Dan. 7. 19–27.

horn, are to continue, *till the Ancient of Days should sit, and the Son of Man come in judgment, and give the dominion to the people of the saints of the Most High.* The conclusion, therefore, is irresistible, that as Popery and the Roman Empire are both to be destroyed together, before the dominion is given to the saints ; and as they are both to continue till the judgment shall sit, and Christ shall come in the clouds of Heaven, so his coming must be before the Millenium.

There are but two methods, by which to avoid this conclusion. The one is, by saying, as Dr. Maclaurin has done, that the coming of the Son of Man with the clouds of Heaven, applies to the ascension of our Lord to Heaven, which, apart from the forced meaning that it gives to the whole passage, and the violation of all chronological order, is utterly in violation of the meaning of the original word here employed to express his coming. It is never understood to signify *ascent*.

The other is, to deny that Daniel's vision refers to the great day of judgment, or to any visible coming of Christ at all. This the spiritualist must do, or give up the passage as teaching a pre-millennial advent. If he does so, then he must never quote this passage at all, in proof of a day of final judgment and manifestation of Jesus Christ. Mr. Faber has taken this ground, and affirmed that Daniel's description is all symbolical, and that therefore the judgment is to be allegorically explained, as being merely the providential inflictions of Divine vengeance, on Popery and the anti-Christian nations ; and the coming of the Son of Man here spoken of, merely an invisible providential interposition of Divine power. Having affirmed the whole vision to be symbolical, he says that the symbols are taken from the day of judgment, and thus ingeniously claims to use it nevertheless, as descriptive of that day.



But this is altogether inadmissible ; for there is nothing in the fire or flame, or any other particulars in the description, which render it naturally or morally impossible to be understood in its plain, obvious, literal meaning, so as to require it, according to the law of interpretation applicable in such cases, to be regarded a smetaphysical or allegorical. Besides, the idea is absurd, that Daniel should *borrow symbols from the judgment*, a scene which he had never witnessed, and which, according to the spiritualists' own showing, had not been revealed to him. Such an idea is utterly inconsistent with the nature, origin, and character of symbolical language.

The passages in Revelations, such as the sixth chapter, and others which are quoted in proof of this position of Mr. Faber, are not conclusive. It is denied that the judgment scene is ever made a symbol.

It cannot be the case here ; for then must the *kingdom* of the saints of the Most High be symbolical too, and not real, which none will pretend ; and Mr. Faber particularly will not admit ; for he affirms, that the kingdom is a kingdom here upon earth—a literal affair, which the *saints* are to *secure*, i. e. occupy, or possess—a very different thing from the dominion of grace in men's hearts.

Besides, this is to violate an essential principle of interpretation, and utterly to confound every attempt at explaining symbols ; for it is to make the antitype a symbol of the type, just the reverse of what is usual, and what Mr. Faber has taught. What Daniel saw in vision we admit was all a scenical representation ; but the entire scenes of judgment, such as the casting down of the thrones, i. e. the pitching or setting them, the sitting of the Ancient of Days, his garments and his throne, the fiery stream before him, the ten thousand

times ten thousand saints, the opening of the books, and the coming of one like the Son of Man, with the clouds of Heaven, and all the other accompaniments of his presence, which were disclosed to him, were but the *pictorial representation* of the *real* and true judgment, the real and personal coming of the Son of Man, the real redeemed spirits of the just, and the real and terrible agents and instruments of vengeance, that shall attend upon him, when, at the time of the end, the heavens shall reveal him, and he shall come literally on the clouds of Heaven to restore all things.

As such they were understood and referred to by the apostles, and by Christ himself. Daniel does not predict a day of final judgment at all, if he does not here describe it; and all those who have come after him, and borrowed their descriptions of the judgment from him, have radically erred. We may also ask, if this be the case, where have we any proof at all, that there will ever be a day of judgment, in which Jesus Christ will be personally visible? or there be any other kind of judgment, than the signal retributions of Providence?

By the very same rule of interpretation on the spiritualists' own principles—which makes this passage in Daniel to symbolize the retributive dispensations of Providence, instead of its being a scenical representation of the great day of final judgment at the coming of Christ—we can get rid of all the evidence the spiritualist can adduce from the Bible, that there will ever be such a day. Let him produce any passage whatever, and by this same prophetic canon, which he adopts, we shall wrest it from him.

It is said that Christ speaks of Christ's literal coming, when he says, "then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall all the tribes of

earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.”\* There is certainly nothing in this language, which makes it more likely to be literal, and not allegorical, than that in Daniel. Part of it is the very language of Daniel; and the events referred to, can be shown to be the very same spoken of by Daniel; so that, if Daniel’s prediction in the seventh chapter of the coming of Christ, is allegorical, so is Christ’s prediction of the same in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew—and neither predict a day of judgment and visible coming.

The same may be said of Paul’s prediction,† and even Acts, iii. 21, may be explained away. It is the easiest thing imaginable, to put an allegorical interpretation on it and others.

If Daniel’s description of the judgment must be allegorically understood, there is just as much reason why any other should be. Thus, all the predictions of a judgment, may be resolved into mere shadowy displays of Divine power, in effecting great political or ecclesiastical changes, or great moral and spiritual reformations. By giving a figurative or allegorical meaning to Daniel’s prediction of the advent of Jesus Christ, therefore,—which every one must do who denies that it will occur before the Millenium,—we are cut off from one of the principal sources of proof that there ever will be a day of judgment, and a literal coming of Jesus Christ at all. Who does not see the fallacy of such principles of interpretation?

We must be consistent, and carry out our principles of interpretation. If Daniel’s judgment and coming of Christ be not literal, then are none literal

\* Matt., 24. 50.

† 1 Thess. 4. 15-17.

whose language is taken from him. But this is a conclusion from which the expectants of a Millenium before the coming of Christ will start. Nothing but the pre-conceived notion of such a Millenium, ever led any to imagine that Daniel's prediction *must be allegorized*.

The truth is, there is but the one fair, consistent, and intelligible interpretation to be put upon it ; and that is, that Daniel describes, as truly, a literal judgment, and a literal coming of Jesus Christ, as he does the literal destruction of the Pope, and of the Roman Empire : and these things he teaches shall both occur together,—both form events to be verified in “the times of restitution of all things,” spoken of by all the holy prophets since the world began. The coming of Christ is first in order. The very first epoch in the day of judgment, and the first terrible infliction of the vengeance of the Saviour returned to earth, will be the utter destruction of Popery, and of the Antichristian nations. The conclusion is, therefore, unavoidable, that **HIS SECOND ADVENT WILL BE BEFORE THE MILLENIUM.**

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE COMING OF CHRIST PRE-MILLENIAL, OR PRIOR TO THE DESTRUCTION OF POPERY.

THE coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is the grand epoch of the world's redemption. It is the glorious hope both of saints on earth and saints in Heaven. It will be the hour of joy and triumph to the whole body of the redeemed, whether they shall be found in the flesh or out of the flesh. No wonder, therefore, that it was looked for by the prophets, apostles, and martyrs who died in the faith of his coming, with the most intense interest and ardor of desire. In like manner should it be by us.

The circumstance, however, of there being a shade of uncertainty thrown upon the time of his coming, has led many to think, that it is not so suitable a theme for awaking the attention of the mind, for exciting its fears, and for inducing a preparation for eternity, as the approach of death,—an event regarded as certainly much nearer, and virtually possessing all the importance of the other. It is worthy of remark, that the apostles did not so regard it; nor did they so write and preach. Their allusions to the death of this mortal body, are by no means frequent; and seldom, if ever, do they take their motives from it, for the purpose of awaking and exciting the fears of the wicked. On the contrary, their references to the per-

sonal, visible coming of Jesus Christ are abundant ; and their most powerful motives to repentance, and to a life of holiness, are drawn from it. So vividly and constantly was this great event before their minds, that they spoke of it as one by no means very remote ; and they often made the impression on their hearers, that it might be witnessed by some of them, even before their death.

Such seems to have been the effect produced, upon the minds of some Christians at Thessalonica, by the language which Paul employed on this subject, in his first epistle to "the church of the Thessalonians." In that epistle, he wrote expressly of the coming of Jesus Christ,—of its wondrous and appalling accompaniments,—of the first resurrection,—of the rapture of the living saints,—of the sudden destruction which should overtake the wicked—of the importance and necessity of great seriousness and watchfulness, lest they should be surprised by the unexpected occurrence of these scenes:—

"If we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. 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 we shall ever be with the Lord ; but of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves, know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace, and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child ; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren,

are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of the light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.\*

In his second epistle, he again introduces the subject; but evidently to correct the unnecessary alarm and misapprehensions which had been produced in their minds. He tenderly cautions them, and endeavors to counteract the impression, that that great and dreadful day had already begun. "Now we beseech you," says he, "brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus, and by our gathering together unto him." The preposition † translated "by" does not refer to the motive he employed, but it means, after verbs of speaking, *of, concerning, respecting*. He refers to the subjects of his former epistle, which had excited their fears, viz. the coming of Christ, the first resurrection, the rapture of the saints, and their collection unto him in the air. On these points, he entreated them, "that (they) be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand." ‡

The word here translated *at hand*, is *not* the same which Christ and John used, when they preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand." § The word they used, || means *drawing nigh, approaching*;—how near in its approach, however, must always be determined by attending to the subject and times referred to by the speaker,—the distance being relative.

\* 1 Thess. 4. 14–17, and 5. 1–6.

† Robinson's Translation of Wahl's Clav. Phil., art. *ύπερ*.

‡ 2 Thess. 2. 1, 2.

§ Matth. 3. 2; 4. 17.

|| *Ηγγίκε*.

Thus, I may say, on the first day of the week, another Sabbath is approaching ; and may use, on Saturday evening, the very same phrase ; but the remoteness or nearness of the period would, of course, and most naturally, be determined by the point of time at which I spoke, viewed in relation to the time past. So when Christ and John preached, that the kingdom of Heaven was approaching, they had reference to the period already past, during which the church had been expecting that kingdom. Four thousand years had rolled over the world, while this hope had been cherished by one generation after another. It was therefore just so much nearer in the days of Christ, than when it was first announced. Supposing that the period of his coming to judgment shall be, according to the traditions current in his day, at the commencement of the seventh millenary, at two thousand years from the time of his personal ministry, or sooner, he might, with great truth and important meaning, preach the kingdom of Heaven was *approaching* ;—two-thirds of the time of expectation having passed away. The word *approaching*, as Christ and John used it, does not necessarily mean, what our English phrase *at hand* does, i. e. a very short space, absolutely considered. Its import must be relatively understood. Compared with the period passed, the kingdom of Heaven was then certainly drawing nigh.

The word, however, which the apostle uses \* in this place, and which is translated "*is at hand*," does not mean *approaching*—something near, but not yet present. Its import is not relative, like that which Christ and John used (*ηγγικε*), but absolute. It denotes actual interposition, establishment, collocation, or

\* 2 Thess. 2. 2, *εισοτηκεν*.



presence; \* and the idea is that they should not be alarmed, as though that day had begun, was present then, which some were led to fear might be the case, from the fearful prodigies and sights in the heavens, and the horrible fate at that time clustering round Jerusalem.

The apostle cautions them against being deceived, and proceeds to tell them that a fearful apostasy should first take place, and the man of sin be revealed, whom he describes, "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come except there come a falling away† first, and that Man of Sin be revealed, the Son of Perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he, as God,‡ (as a god,) sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is (a) God.§

This description directs us at once to the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, the little horn which Daniel saw spring up among the ten horns on the head of the beast—the fourth universal or Roman Empire. It concerns us only to state the fact, that the Pope, we mean not any one individual, but the whole series of these ambitious and arrogant prelates, is the man of sin, the son of perdition, titles which the apostle has taken from the 7th, 9th and 10th Psalms, where "the wicked one," "the enemy," "the man of the earth" that oppresseth, and his horrible fate, are clearly described and set forth.

Popery is a fearful apostasy. It is, in fact and form, a system of idolatry which has grown up in the church

\* See Rom. 8. 32. οὐτε ἐνσταντα—"and neither things present." See also 1 Cor. 3. 22; 7. 26; Gal. 1. 4.—See Robinson's Tr. of Wahl, art. ἐπίσημι.

† Ἡ ἀποστασία—the apostasy.

‡ Ὡς Θεὸς.

§ Ὅτι ἐστὶ Θεός.—2 Thess. 2. 3, 4.

of God, and having entirely transformed the gospel of Jesus Christ, from its being the glad tidings of salvation, into the most oppressive form of despotism—from its being a pure and purifying religion, into a wretched, corrupt, debasing paganism, has baptized it with the name of Christianity.

The following brief account of this apostasy is taken from Gibbon. “The Christians of the seventh century had insensibly relapsed into a SEMBLANCE OF PAGANISM. Their public and private vows were addressed to the relics and images that disgraced the temples of the East. The throne of the Almighty was darkened by a cloud of martyrs and saints and angels, the objects of popular veneration: and the collydrian heretics, who flourished in the fruitful soil of Arabia, invested the virgin Mary with the name and honors of a goddess. The devout Christian prayed before the image of a saint; and the pagan rites of genuflexion, luminaries, and incense, again stole into the Catholic church. The scruples of reason or piety were silenced by the strong evidence of visions and miracles: and the pictures, which speak and move and bleed, must be endowed with a divine energy, and may be considered as the proper object of religious adoration. The use and even the worship of images was firmly established before the end of the sixth century: they were fondly cherished by the warm imagination of the Greeks and Asiatics: and the Pantheon and the Vatican were adorned with the emblems of a NEW SUPERSTITION. The worship of images had stolen into the church by insensible degrees: and each petty step was pleasing to the superstitious mind, as productive of comfort and innocent of sin. But in the beginning of the eighth century, in the full magnitude of the abuse, the more timorous Greeks were awakened

by an apprehension, that *under the mask of Christianity they had restored the religion of their fathers.*\*

One essential branch of paganism was *demonology*, or the worship of canonised dead men and women, called demons, a sort of subsidiary, subordinate and intercessory deities. The Roman Catholic adoration of saints, who are just the same,—mere canonised dead men and women,—is therefore paganism revived. Jupiter or Juno, Osiris or Adonis, Cronos, Astarte or Venus, are not indeed the names of their canonised saints and heroes; but the adoration of Peter, of the Virgin Mary, and of the hosts of later canonised saints, whose names and days are noted in their calendar, as worthy of homage by all Roman Catholics, is in principle and essence the ancient paganism—the predicted apostasy.

Another feature of the Man of sin, is his supremacy to the civil magistrate, and in matters of religion. What Paul says is literally true; the Bishop of Rome opposes and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped. The word God denotes, not only the true object of adoration in Heaven, the Supreme Being, but also civil rulers,† those in authority who are justly deserving of respect. Now, that the Pope opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God *in Heaven*, is evident from the fact, that he has published his bulls, and undertaken to suppress the divine *Word* which God has given to men to make them wise unto salvation. He has set up his own decrees in opposition to the truths of God's revealed will, and insists upon obedience to his counsels and will and traditions, in preference to the revealed will of God. He has denounced Bible Societies, and those who undertake to circulate the Sacred Scriptures;

\* Gibbon.

† Psalm 97. 7.

and in every way shown, that he accounts his will and canons, as of far more authority and importance to be known and observed, than the Bible which is the will and word of God.

Moreover he has exalted himself above all kings and governors, and those that are called gods *on earth* ; for he has asserted that they derive their power from him, and claimed it as his prerogative to pull them down or set them up,—has excommunicated kings and emperors, and absolved their subjects from allegiance to them. And as to his sitting in the temple of God, and showing himself that he is a God, no clearer proof of this can be desired, than his arrogating to himself the titles of Supreme Pontiff or High Priest, Sanctissimus Dominus, or Most Holy Lord,—which belong only to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ,—and the language he has held in many of his bulls. In that against Elizabeth, Queen of England, Pius V., speaking of his lordly and godlike power in the church and world, says, “ This one he hath constituted prince over all nations, and all kingdoms, that he might pluck up, destroy, dissipate, ruate, plant and build.” The bull against Henry of Navarre and the prince of Condé begins as follows : “ The authority given to St. Peter and his successors, by the immense power of the eternal king, *excels all the powers of earthly kings and princes*. It passes uncontrollable sentence on them all. And if it find any of them resisting God’s ordinance, it takes more severe vengeance on them, casting them down from their thrones, though never so puissant, and tumbling them down to the lowest parts of the earth, as the ministers of aspiring Lucifer.”\*

\* Barrow’s Treatise on the Pope’s Supremacy, p. 5.

It is not our design to enter into a minute examination of the full prophetic description of Popery, given in the Scriptures. Our object is to exhibit and render intelligible the proof of the personal visible coming of Jesus Christ before the great day of the church's prosperity. In order to this, it becomes necessary to show, that the Man of sin and the son of perdition, of whom Paul speaks, is the Pope. Thus far the description suits.

In the following verses\* the apostle alludes to the oral instruction he had given the Thessalonians, in reference to this subject, and gives a general chronological date, by which to ascertain the period of the rise and manifestation of the Man of sin. "Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you, I told you these things. And now you know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work, only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way, and then shall that wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

It is admitted, on all hands, both by Millenarians and Anti-millenarians, that *the withholding power* is the Roman Empire. The fathers did not expect the revelation of Antichrist, whom they identified with the Man of sin, during the continuance of the undivided Roman Empire; but they did expect that the disruption of the empire would be immediately followed by the manifestation of this terrible tyrannical power. Tertullian said, "There is also another and greater necessity for our praying for the emperors, even for every state of the empire and Roman affairs, because

\* 2 Thess. 2. 5-7.

we know that the greatest power impending over the whole world, threatening the most horrid calamities, and the very end of the world, are delayed by the preservation of the empire.”\*

Lactantius† and Jerome express themselves strongly to the same purpose; the latter affirming, that when the empire of the Romans is to be destroyed, there shall arise ten kings, who shall share the Roman world among themselves, and that an eleventh diminutive king shall come, who shall subdue three of those ten kings, and in him Satan shall dwell entirely and bodily.‡ The reference is obviously to the prophecy of Daniel. The papacy arose among the ten kingdoms,—and is as distinctly identified by Paul as by Daniel,—being the anti-Christian power which should continue till, but be destroyed by, the coming of Jesus Christ.

Mr. Faber remarks on this point as follows: “What St. Paul then told the Thessalonians was this: that a tyrannical and irreligious power, which he denominates the Man of sin and the lawless one, should assuredly be revealed in its own appointed time, AFTER

\* Est et alia major necessitas nobis orandi pro Imperatoribus, etiam pro omni statu Imperii rebusque Romanis, quod vim maximam universo orbi imminentem, ipsam clausuram seculo acerbitatisque horrendas comminantem, Romani Imperii comiteu novimus retardari.—*Tertul. Apol. adv. Gent. Oper.* p. 869.

† Non imperii dignitas conservabitur, non militiæ disciplina; sed more latrocinii depredatio et vastatio fiet, regnum multiplicabitur; et decem viri occupabunt orbem, et partientur, et vorabunt, et existet longe potentior, ac nequior, qui tritris deletis Asiam possidebit; cæteris in potestati suâ redactis et abscissis, vorabit omnem terram, leges novas statuet, veteres abrogabit; rempublicam suam faciet, nomen imperii, sedemque mutabit. Tunc erit tempus infandum et execrabile, quo nemini libeat vivere.—*Div. Instit.* p. 516.

‡ Quoted by Mede, lib. iii. p. 811. 5th Ed. 1664.

there had been a great apostasy from the primitive faith, but BEFORE the arrival of the day of Christ, which they erroneously deemed close at hand: that THE COERCING POWER OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE,\* effectually

\* Gr. Μόνον ὁ κατέχων ἴσται ἑαυτὸν ἐκ μέσου γένηται. Καὶ τότε ἀποκαλυφθήσεται ὁ ἄνομος.

There is here an ellipsis which is common in popular language. This has been differently supplied, and the meaning of ὁ κατέχων thus determined, as Bloomfield says, “according to the hypothesis of the interpreter.” Mede and others, following the old tradition, supplied the Roman Empire, and understood it to apply strictly and properly to the Western Roman Empire, and were led to date the rise of the Man of sin therefore in the year A. D. 476 or 479, in one or other of which years Augustus the Roman emperor was deposed, a supposition disproved by events. Mr. Faber conjectures with apparently very good reasons, that the reference is not to the Western Roman Empire, but to the coercing law or power of the Roman Empire, which, although it existed in the Eastern empire, and nominally extended over the Western, became inefficient in the latter, and left the way prepared for the Bishop of Rome to usurp dominion. He supplies the ellipsis as follows—ὁ κατέχων νόμος τῆς Ἀρχῆς Ρωμαίων. “The full import and nicety of the expression,” he remarks, “were probably not understood by the Thessalonians: or at least it is easy to see, how that, which in reality is *not* the substance of the expression, might hastily be mistaken *for* its substance. St. Paul had said, that THE COERCING POWER OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE *must be removed*, ERE THE MAN OF SIN IS REVEALED. THE COERCING POWER OF THIS ROMAN EMPIRE was incautiously, though naturally enough, deemed synonymous with THE ROMAN EMPIRE. Hence arose the universally prevalent belief in the primitive church, that THE ROMAN EMPIRE was the impediment which prevented the revelation of the Man of sin, and therefore that *previous* to his revelation, THE ROMAN EMPIRE must be removed. Yet St. Paul had made no such assertion: and so far was this from being the *substance* of what he had really said, that it conveyed to the mind a totally *different* idea; at the same time, the mistake was so natural and easy, that had the apostle committed to writing his *entire* expression, there can be little doubt that it would have excited the ferocious jealousy of the imperial government. A prediction that THE COERCING LAW OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE *was destined* to be

prevented the revelation of this oppressive tyranny ; but that when THE COERCING LAW OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE should be removed from the midst, then the Man of sin, no longer restrained by the strong arm of law, but acquiring his predicted character of *the lawless one*, by setting himself up above all law, and by having the laws and times given into his hands, should be openly revealed.”\*

The Papists endeavor to evade the force of these things in different ways—one affirming pagan Rome to have been Antichrist, another that he has not yet been revealed, but is some mighty power hereafter to arise in the world ; and others still that he has long since come. The apostle’s meaning, however, is too plain and explicit to be mistaken.

Other descriptions are given of Popery, which bring into view the prohibition of marriage to the clergy, the worship of saints and images, the system of demonolatry, the ascetic monastic rites, and the ordinances in relation to meats and drinks and holy days and new moons, which form so important a part in the canons and ritual of the Roman Catholic church. Were it necessary, the identity of the Pope and of the Man of sin might be further shown, by a reference to these things : but as they are not brought into view in the context now under consideration, nor are necessary for our argument, we deem it unimportant to dwell any longer on this point. It is part and

*removed*, would have been deemed by an imperial procurator fully tantamount to a prediction, that THE ROMAN EMPIRE itself was destined to be removed : and little regard would have been paid to any explanation given by a hated Christian, who was charged with circulating treasonable, or at least disaffected, expressions.”—*Faber’s Sac. Cal.*, vol. i. pp. 101, 102.

\* *Faber’s Sacred Calendar*, vol. i. pp. 100, 101.



parcel of the testimony of the saints, the witnesses of Christ in every age, from the first rise of popery down to the present day, that the Pope or Bishop of Rome is the Man of sin and son of perdition.

Now this apostate power, this corrupt system, which the apostle told the Thessalonian Christians was to arise in the world, he further declares "the Lord," that is Jesus Christ (for this is his especial title in the New Testament\*) "shall consume† with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." Of course this system of abominations is to continue till the coming or appearance of Jesus Christ; and consequently, that coming must be before the Millenium: for the account of the millennial glory and blessedness, and of the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole Heaven, which shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, is utterly inconsistent with the presence of such a power in the earth.

The introduction of the kingdom of the saints made by Daniel is cotemporaneous with the utter destruction of Popery. The little horn's dominion shall, he says, be taken away, and the judgment shall sit expressly to consume and to destroy it unto the end.‡

\* See Biblical Repository, vol. i. pp. 744-776.

† The first clause ἀναλώσει—αὐτοῦ is formed upon Is. 11. 4, and Psalm, 33. 6. And ἀναλώσει is used for the ἀνελεῖ of the Septuagint, as being a *stronger* term, denoting total destruction. The next clause designates the ease and spread of this destruction, here represented by the equivalent term καταργήσει, to utterly destroy any force. See 1 Cor. 15. 24; 2 Cor. 3. 7.—See Bloomfield's *Greek Testament*, vol. ii. p. 34.

‡ נבדע from נבדע (Syr. et Chald. id. perire fecit, exterminavit.) Gesenius. נבדע Chald. id. finem habuit, i. e. completum est vaticinium. Dan. 4. 30. Aph. finem fecit rei. Dan. 2. 44—Dan. 6. 27. *for ever.*

The phrases consume and destroy unto the end, mean utter and final, complete and eternal destruction. It does not respect so much the time during which the destroying process is to be carried on, as the absolute perfect nature of the destruction. But this destruction of Popery, Daniel says, is to take place when the judgment sits—when the Son of Man comes, in the clouds of Heaven, with the fiery stream issuing and coming forth from before him, riding in a tempest of fire. Thus Daniel and Paul agree exactly in their description and date, and also in the means by which Popery is to be destroyed, and the kingdom of Heaven introduced. Both make the coming of Christ the occasion, and for the purpose of exterminating Popery.

In confirmation of this conclusion we remark, that every other description of Christ's coming in the clouds of Heaven to judgment, is connected with some event or circumstance referred to by the prophets as antecedent to the establishment of the kingdom of Heaven, which prove the date of that coming to be prior to the great day of the church's prosperity, popularly called the Millenium. Thus, the description of his advent given by John, is precisely to this effect.

“And I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse, and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True: and in righteousness he doth JUDGE and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself. And he was *clothed with a vesture* DIPPED IN BLOOD, and his name is called, The Word of God. And the armies which were in Heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should *smite* the nations: and he shall rule men with a rod of

iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of Heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God: that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of those that sit on them, and the flesh of all men both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. Then both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth, and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”\*

This description agrees with that of Isaiah† where he describes the Saviour’s coming for the destruction of the anti-Christian nations, which we shall have occasion hereafter to notice.

This coming of Christ is described as occurring coterminously with the overthrow and slaughter of the last grand conspiracy, of the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, against Christ and his saints, called “the supper of the great God” made for the fowls of Heaven, and so minutely described by Ezekiel,‡ and referred to by the apostle John,§ in his

\* Rev. 19. 11–21.

† Is. 63. 1–6.

‡ Ezek. ch. 38, 39.

§ Rev. 16. 14–16.

prediction of the great battle of that great day of God Almighty, when the kings of the earth and of the whole world shall be gathered into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

It is not necessary here to enter into a minute explanation of the prophecies relating to this frightful scene. The use we design at present to make of the reference is, to confirm the argument for the coming of Christ, before the Millenium. This we do by directing your attention to the following facts, that the beast, i. e. the secular Roman empire, and the false prophet, i. e. Popery, or the man of sin—both the secular and spiritual powers of the Roman empire—are to be destroyed together; that to this destruction immediately succeeds the church's glory and blessedness,—and that this destruction takes place in the great day of the battle of Armageddon, which John describes to be at the coming of Christ.

The apostle John in another place\* describes the coming of Christ, and makes it to occur at the period when the harvest of the earth is ripe, and the clusters of the vine of the earth are gathered into the great wine-press of the wrath of God.

“ And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another

\* Rev. 14. 14–20.

angel came out from the altar which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs."

This scene the apostle makes identical with the great battle of the day of God Almighty\* above referred to, as occurring at the coming of Jesus Christ. The symbols by which he describes this scene are taken from Isaiah† and Joel.‡

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that 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 wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press 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 my 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.—ISAIAH.

For behold, in those days, and in that time, WHEN I SHALL BRING AGAIN THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH AND JERUSALEM, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations and parted my land. Put ye in the sickle: for the harvest is ripe; come, get you down: for the press is full, the fats 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, &c.—JOEL.

\* Rev. 19. 15.

† Isaiah, 63. 1-6.

‡ Joel, 3. 1, 2; 13, 14.

The date of the coming of Christ being thus connected with the national redemption of Israel, is therefore again fixed *before the Millenium*.

In like manner, where the same apostle\* again speaks of the coming of Christ, his language is so strikingly coincident with that of Zechariah,† as to prove that he had his eye on the very same event referred to by that prophet.

Behold he cometh with clouds ; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him : and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.—REVELATIONS.

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 first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart ; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart ; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart.—ZECHARIAH.

The prophecy of Zechariah relates to the destruction of the nations that shall conspire against the Jews, and to the conversion and restoration of the Jewish people ; events which, while they occur cotemporaneously, confessedly take place before the Millenium, so that we are still further confirmed in the conclusion that the coming of Christ is to be pre-millennial.

In the same way it can be shown, that the coming of the Lord with the clouds of Heaven, spoken of by the evangelists in Matthew,‡ Mark,§ and Luke,|| must be pre-millennial. For it is connected in time by Luke with the completion of the times of the Gentiles, and the re-establishment of the Jewish nation—events

\* Rev. 1. 7. † Zech. 12. 9–12. ‡ Matt. 24. 30.

§ Mark, 13. 26. || Luke, 21. 27.

admitted by commentators generally to be cotemporaneous with the destruction of the anti-Christian nations, and the commencement of the Millenium.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven : and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.—MATTHEW.

And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.—LUKE.

And then they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and great glory.—MARK.

Luke says, “And they (the Jews) shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations ; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring ; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth ; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.”\*

Beside these passages which give us chronological dates as to the period or season of Christ’s coming, there are other passages† which refer in general to the event, without any chronological marks.

“Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said : nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.—And Jesus said, — ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.”

As the language is obviously taken from Daniel, or so nearly like that of his description of Christ’s coming,

\* Luke, 21. 24–26. † Mat. 26. 64 ; Mark, 14. 62.

at and for the destruction of the fourth or Roman beast, we cannot consistently do other than the Spirit himself has done, viz. refer to the scene of Daniel's judgment, both for the language and meaning. Wherefore Daniel, Isaiah, Zechariah, Ezekiel, Christ, Peter, Paul, and John, all agree in the circumstantial and chronological descriptions which they have given of the coming and kingdom of the Lord, and all of them chronologically determine the period of that coming to be before the Millenium.

The only possible method of evading the force of this conclusion,—which we think to be demonstration incontrovertible,—is to deny the plain literal import of the expressions, and to affirm that the phrases, “the spirit of his mouth,” “the brightness of his appearing,” and other kindred forms of speech, such as “THE COMING OF CHRIST,” his PRESENCE OR APPEARING, his REVELATION OR MANIFESTATION, his “GLORIOUS APPEARING,”—are to be understood metaphorically or analogically. To this the spiritualist is forced. It is impossible for him to maintain the idea of a Millenium, or 1,000 years' prosperity and triumph of religion, as he understands, before Christ's coming to judgment, in any other way. It behoves us, therefore, before we dismiss our argument, to settle the question whether such expressions are to be literally, or metaphorically, or analogically understood.

And here, IN THE VERY FIRST PLACE, *we utterly deny that the language in the text, and similar expressions in the Scriptures, are metaphorical.* It behoves those who say they are, to prove it. It is begging the question for them to assume it. We must not take their assertion, nor suffer them to pronounce the expressions metaphorical, because *they* cannot understand or interpret them literally, consistent with *their* views of the



nature of the Millenium, and of the meaning or the time of Christ's coming. These views are not self-evident,—are actually disputed,—must previously be established,—and have never yet been proved.

When we come to the Bible, it must be as children, to learn. We must not interpret its language by our conceptions, or preconceived notions of the nature of the things spoken of. Nor should we allow any commentator to tell us, he cannot understand or conceive how this thing or the other can be, or that it is utterly inconsistent with all his notions of propriety, expediency, or possibility. His notions are no standard. His reason is not the umpire. The question is, What has God said?—and to determine that, we must apply the ordinary rules of grammar and rhetoric applicable to the style of language in which God, by the prophet, speaks. If he uses metaphors, of course the meaning must be interpreted accordingly. If he does not, we have no right to change his meaning by giving it a metaphorical interpretation—an expedient too often adopted to cloak men's ignorance, to excuse their indolence, to display their ingenuity, and to wrest the Scriptures to their own ends.

That such language, and similar expressions, employed in relation to the coming of Christ to judgment, or for the establishment of his kingdom, are metaphorical, we not only deny, but declare to be incapable of proof. And, therefore, although we may undertake a task confessedly and always difficult, viz. to prove a negative, yet we shall,—

IN THE SECOND PLACE, undertake to show, *that the expressions, "the spirit of his mouth," "the brightness of his appearing," cannot possibly be construed into metaphor, and are, in common with other phrases employed on this subject, always used in the strict literal sense, when they occur in the New Testament.*

1. We remark, then, in the first place, that *there is no reason* IN THE NATURE OF THINGS, *which renders it necessary that the phrases, "spirit of his mouth," "brightness of his appearing," should be understood metaphorically.* There is nothing absurd, or monstrous, or contrary to any intuitive or demonstrated truth in the idea of a terrible tempest, or of a visible splendid dazzling appearance of Jesus Christ, when coming to judgment. Christ's person was actually near by Peter and others, when his face shone in splendor like the brilliancy of the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.\*

Even the spiritualists, too, admit, that when he will come to judgment, it will be literally in tempests of fire, and with great glory, just as Daniel and Paul, and others have described ; so that the expressions being not incongruous nor contradictory, in the nature of things, do not necessarily require a figurative or metaphorical import.

Besides, when this same Lord Jesus Christ, long before he appeared as the babe of Bethlehem, did come to this world as Jehovah, the angel of the covenant to introduce the Sinaitic dispensation, to propose his theocracy to Israel, and to pronounce his law in the thunders of Sinai, it was precisely in this way, and with these terrible physical agents attendant on his presence. There were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the Mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud, so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.† Mount Sinai was altogether in a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire, and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole Mount quaked greatly. And all the people saw the thunderings and lightnings,

\* Mat. 17. 2.

† Compare Ps. 68. 17, 18, and Eph. 4. 7-10.

and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking.\*

— The only reason that can be urged, why they should be understood figuratively, is, that they describe an appearance of Christ BEFORE, and FOR, the destruction of Popery or the Man of Sin, which the spiritualist thinks to be inconsistent with all his ideas of the Millenium, and of the efficacy of truth. Before he can be allowed, however, thus to assign a metaphorical or allegorical meaning to the expressions, he must prove that his ideas of the Millenium are correct,—that just such a Millenium as he expects has been promised and described by the prophets,—and that the destruction of Popery is to be gradual, by the influence of the Spirit and the Scriptures, or the light of evangelical truth, and not violently. He must also settle definitely the import of the figures as he understands them, and prove that the phrases, “spirit of his mouth,” and “brightness of his appearing,” are actually used in other places, to denote what he says they do. Their alleged metaphorical or analogical import, in the text, has been declared to be the influences of the Spirit, and the light and power of a preached gospel. That they are sound, they must show, and also, that God has said, Popery shall be destroyed by these means. We deny that there is anything to this effect in the whole Bible. Whatever revivals, or divine influences, and a preached gospel may do—and we rejoice in all that they have done, and pray earnestly for their greater extent and power—we challenge any one to prove, from the Scriptures, that these are the things which God, by his prophets, has said, will exterminate and destroy the Man of Sin. —

\* Exodus, 19. 15, 18, 20; 20. 18.

The Bible, and a preached gospel, and revivals, have thus far failed to do it: and we must be shown where God has said they are ever going to do it. So far from this being the case, the apostle\* states distinctly, that the delusions, superstitions, lying wonders, and deceitful sophistical reasonings, in support of unrighteousness, or various forms of immorality, which characterize the Papacy, shall continue to prevent the reception of the truth, that they might be saved. For the proof that these things, especially false reasonings to justify crime, are part and parcel of the Popish system, we refer to Pascal's provincial letters, who was himself a Catholic, and has exposed the horrible corrupting doctrines of the Jesuits—of all Catholics the most devoted to the See of Rome. Moreover, the apostle says, that so far from the Scriptures, the influence of the Spirit, and revivals of religion, going to destroy Popery, God, because of their opposition to these things, shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. The system reaches a dreadful crisis of damnation, its adherents giving themselves over to horrible, fatal, damning delusion, because of the imposition and lying wonders which they have practised in the world, such as the pretended conversion of the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper into the literal body and blood of Christ, the spurious miracles wrought by saints, the innumerable legends of their superstition, the invention of purgatorial flames for the purpose of alarm, oppression and extorting of money from the ignorant, and hosts of other things which need not be mentioned. There

\* 2 Thess. 2. 9-12.

is not a ray of hope that the delusions of Popery will *gradually* be dispelled.

Individuals may escape, who may be brought to repentance, and to the renunciation of its abominable idolatries; but the great mass of its adherents will cling to it to the very last. At this day there is a stronger, blinder, and more devoted attachment to its mummeries, and a greater expenditure of money and of effort, to sustain and extend its influence and idolatries, than there has been for centuries, if indeed ever before.

Since the flight of the angel in the midst of Heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth,\*—another angel has followed, and the cry has been heard already, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, foretelling her doom, while a third angel begins to lift his solemn and admonitory voice, threatening the vengeance of Heaven “to be poured out without mixture” for the torment of those that shall worship the Beast and his image. God is indeed giving warning, abundant and solemn, and has been since the French Revolution, in the events connected with the degradation of the Pope by Napoleon, and the political disaffection of some of the principal states of Europe; yet is the religious influence of Rome, at present, exceedingly active and extensive, and the zeal and devotion of her worshippers increasing in their intensity. The cause of missions, which began some fifty years ago to excite the zeal and direct the efforts of a large portion of the Protestant churches, has provoked and inflamed the ardor of the Roman Catholics, whose missionary contributions and labors are furnished with the design and

\* Rev. 14. 6.

expectation of inundating the world. Whatever success has attended the evangelical missions of the churches, and however great have been the moral and civil revolutions wrought by their means in some countries, till recently pagan—for which we cordially render thanks to Almighty God—still does the question of civil government involve a variety of difficulties; and the legislation and execution of law, and dispensation of justice, afford abundant proof even there, that the kingdoms of this world have not yet become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Christianity has not established the dominion of Heaven over the nations and governments of the earth, any more of late years, on our own continent or elsewhere, than when Constantine, the Emperor, professed to bow submissive to its authority.

The position which alone can justify a figurative import being given to these expressions, is wholly without foundation, viz. that Popery is to be destroyed by the progressive influence of light and truth. Individuals may and will be saved, but the system comes to its death by violence. It will not do, therefore, to assume a position which cannot be proved, which the colossal and ancient systems of Islamism, Popery, Buddhism, and other forms of error,—that have for centuries prevailed in the world,—proclaim to be unsupported by fact; and in the light of that assumption, and by its means, pronounce, as do the spiritualists, the expressions, “the coming of Christ,” “the brightness of his appearing,” “the spirit of his mouth,” mere metaphorical or analogical expressions.

2. In the next place, we remark *that the reference of the apostle to his former epistle, shows plainly that he did not intend his readers to understand him as speaking metaphorically.* In his first epistle to the Thessalo-

nians,\* he wrote very explicitly about the personal visible coming of Jesus Christ from Heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, for raising the bodies of the dead saints, for the transformation and rapture of the living saints, and for their being congregated to meet him in the air, and ever to be with him. He had told them† that the day of Christ's coming would be sudden and unexpected, like the coming of a thief in the night; and that at the very moment the wicked would be crying peace and safety, sudden destruction should come upon them. No one does or will deny that his reference, in his first epistle, is to the personal coming of Christ. It seems that some of the Thessalonians were alarmed by the thought, and apprehended that that dreadful day was actually impending or had commenced. To correct this impression, he wrote the context now under consideration.

—The day of which he speaks, in his second epistle, is the same with that in the first: the great and notable day of Christ's coming. He sets them right as to the time—tells them it had not yet begun, and would not, till a fearful apostasy should prepare the way for the development of the Man of sin, *the lawless one*, who would be bound on earth at his coming, and be destroyed “by the spirit of his mouth and the brightness of his coming.” Now if the apostle spoke metaphorically, and did not by these expressions mean the actual personal coming of Christ, how was it possible for him more effectually to have misled and deceived his readers? He was writing expressly, avowedly, with special design, on the subject of Christ's personal coming, as the first verse of the second chapter shows.

\* 1 Thess. 4. 15, 17.

† 1 Thess. 5. 2, 3.

He proceeds to give certain great chronological dates, to correct the alarm produced by his former epistle on the subject. These dates were the apostasy that should develop the lawless one. This lawless one must *first* make his appearance; *after* that, and *during* his appearance and deceptions practised on the earth, this "son of perdition" should be destroyed "by the spirit of his (Christ's) mouth and the brightness of his appearing." He takes his name, "the son of perdition," from the signal, marked, and horrible destruction to be visited on him by the brightness of Christ's appearing.

This title would by no means be appropriate, on the supposition that the suasive power and progressive influence and increase of light and truth are going to accomplish the overthrow of Popery. We disparage not the value or the power of truth. None can prize it more highly than we do. Nor would we discourage the employment of it for the salvation of the poor deluded victims of this base, degrading, and enslaving idolatry, as well as to counteract the influence and effects of the numerous other forms of error and delusion, by which men encourage and support each other in their hypocrisy, self-flattery, and oppression of their fellows. We rejoice in every attempt to enlighten the public mind, to reform the church, and to promote the sanctification of Christians, the melioration of human condition, the extension of liberty, and the diffusion of happiness, by means of truthful appeals and the circulation of light and knowledge. Would that they were a thousand fold multiplied! But other instruments are destined of God for the destruction of Popery—that rank and corrupt system, which has filled the earth with the stench of its abominations. It is a blow of punitive vengeance that is



to bring it to the ground—truth taught and enforced by such means! Such has been God's method from the beginning. The antediluvian world, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the corrupt cities of antiquity, Nineveh, Thebes, Petra, Babylon, Jerusalem, &c., none of them were reformed and ultimately saved by the power of truth, pressed on the intellects and consciences of men by oral or written exhibitions merely. The stroke of vengeance was necessary. Nor will Rome form an exception. She is indeed in her dotage, and her doom is nigh; but that very dotage requires something else to correct it than the mere light and power of truth. The glorious Reformation, it is true, has proved the importance and efficacy of the truth as applied by the Spirit of God for the salvation of individuals—for saving out of her a numerous people; and it may therefore be inferred, as it has been, that no other instrumentality is needed. Let us but have revivals and spread the truth, it is said, and the world will escape from the delusions and dominion of the Man of sin. But the Spirit of God has not thus seen it fitting to destroy any corrupt system. Providential violence and severe inflictions of judgment, sometimes miraculously, wrought deliverance for the church in Egypt, extirpated the corrupt nations of idolators in Canaan, overthrew Judaism, and have been and are now wasting Islamism. The very Reformation itself, while it has illustrated the value and power of truth, has nevertheless demonstrated that other means are needed to demolish Popery—this master-piece of Satanic delusion!

We are thus reduced to the necessity of believing, that the apostle meant the literal personal coming of Christ, as he comes to inflict vengeance on his enemies; and did not speak figuratively.

The nature of the subject on which he spoke, which was the personal coming,—the character of the style in which he writes of the apostasy and the Man of sin, which is neither metaphorical nor symbolical, but alphabetical,—and the special design he had in view, which was to fix a great chronological date or period yet future, when Christ should come,—all forbid the thought that he suddenly shifts his subject, and metaphorically describes a signal interposition of Providence, a special revival of religion, or anything else than the personal coming of Christ.

If the spiritualist, however, will not be satisfied with this, and he still insists that it is an allegorical coming of which Paul speaks, then must the coming spoken of in the first verse be allegorical, and so must our gathering to Christ be allegorical, and that great day of Christ be allegorical; and of course, as he refers to the day and coming of Christ spoken of in his first epistle, *it* too must also be allegorical; and, consequently, that Christ's descending from Heaven with a shout, and the voice of an archangel, and the trump of God, and the resurrection of the dead saints, and the rapture of the living, and the whole of that description, must be altogether allegorical—the great day of judgment itself being nothing, after all, but a figure! Verily, if this be the case, the apostle deserves our execration. For he professedly, in the first epistle, attempts to comfort us in view of the loss of our Christian friends, by the prospect of their glorious resurrection and return to earth with Jesus Christ; which, if he speaks figuratively, has not a word of truth in it. Such is the utterly untenable and absurd result to which the figurative interpretation brings us.

3. But we advance still a step further, and remark, *that the words which Paul employs here to express the*

coming of Christ, are never used in any other than the plain literal sense in the New Testament. The expression "spirit of his mouth" is literally the breath or wind of his mouth.\* There is nothing here which necessarily determines it to mean the Holy Spirit. The "spirit of his mouth" is not a title of the Holy Spirit, nor is the phrase ever used to denote an influence of the Holy Spirit. It is indeed in one place† said that the heavens and all their hosts "were made by the breath of his mouth;" but the idea is, very obviously, that God created them by his word—the words we utter being formed, literally, by our breathing forth articulate sounds.

There are two ideas which the phrase *breath* or *spirit* of his mouth, here, may literally express: either a mighty tempest or a mighty voice. The Hebrews, in order to express the superlative degree, employed the name of God: thus, "the garden of the Lord" meant a very fruitful garden, "the cedars of the Lord," very lofty cedars, &c. Sometimes the hand, or the arm, or the mouth of the Lord, as the instruments of divine power, were used in the same sense. To unfold an idiom of speech is not to spiritualize, but to adhere to grammatical construction or interpretation. Thus, the breath of his nostrils,‡—the blast of his mouth,—denoted at one time a mighty wind or tempest, and at another a mighty and terrible voice. In both cases they are Hebraistic modes of speech, to denote something superlative.

The expression "SPIRIT OF HIS MOUTH," as used by the apostle here, may literally mean a *mighty tempest*, or a *mighty voice*, or both. The apostle, in his first epistle, had said the Lord should descend with a *shout*; and literally this will be the blast or spirit of his

\* τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ.

† Ps. 33. 6.

‡ Job, 4. 9.

mouth. David\* describes Christ's coming to judgment, so as to show that the Hebraistic mode of speech adopted by the apostle most beautifully and graphically expresses, in a few words, the superlative conception he had of the fiery tempest, lighted up by the spirit or breath of the Almighty, and the thundering in the Heavens when the Highest gives his voice. Still more forcible is Isaiah's† language, where he describes the coming of the Lord: "His lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire, and his breath as an overflowing stream." "The breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it."‡ With both these descriptions the apostle was familiar, and his expression, *spirit* or *breath of his mouth*, needs no allegorical interpretation, but literally, according to the Hebrew idiom of speech, most happily and forcibly expresses the general idea of Christ's coming in the midst of a terrible tempest, in which commingle Jehovah's thundering voice and the fierce lightnings, as they blaze from pole to pole.

As to the other expression, "BRIGHTNESS OF HIS APPEARING," (*ἐπιφάνεια τῆς παρουσίας*), we defy the ingenuity of the best Greek scholar to select, from the whole compass of that rich and expressive language, words that can convey, more distinctly, definitely, and fully, the idea of a personal visible manifestation of the presence of Jesus Christ. The words are, as closely as they can be rendered into English, the APPEARING OF HIS PRESENCE—just such an appearing as the shining of the sun or moon in the heavens—THE EPIPHANY OF HIS PRESENCE. Each word of itself is sufficient to express the idea of PERSONAL MANIFESTATION. But here the two words are put together, to make the idea more explicit. —

\* 1 Ps. 18. 7-13.

† Is. 30. 27, 28.

‡ Is. 30. 33.

There are three words commonly used in the Greek, to denote the personal appearing of Jesus Christ. One is ἀποκάλυψις, REVELATION, MANIFESTATION, of Jesus Christ. Another is ἐπιφάνεια, APPEARANCE, and the third παρουσία, PRESENCE OR COMING. The word "REVELATION," as applied to Christ, (ἀποκάλυψις,) occurs seven times, viz.: in 1 Cor. 1. 7; 2 Cor. 12. 1; Gal. 1. 12; 2 Thess. 1. 7; 1 Pet. 1. 7 & 13, and 4. 13. In all, it denotes his literal manifestation. In Rev. 1. 1, it is used as the title of the book of Revelations—the APOCALYPSE of Christ,—and that for a very obvious reason: because that book specially treats of his personal coming.

The second (ἐπιφάνεια) EPIPHANY OR APPEARANCE occurs six times in the New Testament. 1 Tim. 6. 14: "The charge to Timothy to keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until THE APPEARING (ἐπιφάνειας) of our Lord Jesus Christ." Again, in 2 Tim. 1. 10: "Now made manifest by THE APPEARING (ἐπιφάνειας) of our Saviour Jesus Christ," referring to his first personal appearing in this world. Again, in 2 Tim. 4. 1 & 8, where it refers literally to the second personal appearing. Also in Titus, 2. 13: "Looking for the blessed hope and glorious APPEARING (ἐπιφάνειαν) of the great God." In none of these places is it figurative. Its import is literal in all, and therefore in the passage under consideration\* there is no reason why it should be made figurative.

The third word is Παρουσία, "COMING" OR "PRESENCE." In every instance, too, where it occurs, which is twenty-four times, it is used literally, and not metaphorically or analogically.†

\* 2 Thess. 2. 8.

† Thus it occurs in 1 Cor. 16. 17; 2 Cor. 7. 6, 7; 10. 10; Phil. 1. 26; 2. 12; and is used to denote the visible coming

There is another word translated coming,\* which is sometimes used metaphorically, but not this word; and English readers and commentators have often been led astray by not attending to the original Greek expressions and discriminating between them. Yet this word has been shown† in all the places where it is used, in the seven epistles to the seven churches of Asia, to denote the literal coming of Christ. The word that is used in reference to the coming or presence of Christ to destroy Popery, is literal, never metaphorical. Invariably, in every instance, in the New Testament, it denotes the actual presence of that of which it is predicted, whether it be the person of Christ, the day of God, or the Man of sin. The argument, therefore, we think is irresistible. It may be now summed up in a few words. The apostle in the text is speaking of the personal coming of Jesus Christ, for he uses two words, neither of which is ever used in a figurative or metaphorical sense in the New

or personal presence of Stephanas, Fortunatus, Achaicus and Paul, to the churches. It is used in Matt. 24. 3, 27, 37, 39. It occurs also in 1 Cor. 15. 23; 1 Thess. 2. 19; 3. 13; 4. 15; 5. 23; James, 5. 7, 8; 2 Peter, 1. 16; 3. 4; 3. 12; and 1 John, 2. 28; and in every instance can only be literally understood. Besides these it occurs only in the 2d epistle of Thess., in the 2d ch. 9th v., where it refers to the literal personal coming or presence of Antichrist; and in 2. 1, where it has been shown it can denote only the personal coming or presence of Christ—and lastly, in the passage under review, which, therefore, must not have an allegorical or different meaning affixed to it from what it has in every other place. Vol. ii. pp. 67-71.

\* ερχομενος.

† Rev. 2. 5; 22. 25; 3. 3; 10. 11, 20. Also, James, 5. 7, 9. These places are commonly quoted in proof of Christ's *figurative* coming. But they all relate to one coming yet future. See J. D'A. Hist. of the First Resurrection, vol. ii. pp. 67-71.

Testament. If neither, when separately used, can be metaphorically understood to denote a spiritual advent, much less can both when united. If the words *the shining forth, or appearance of His presence*, do not mean the personal visible revelation or manifestation of Himself, it is impossible to employ terms that can express it. Human language is utterly incapable of being interpreted on any fixed and definite principles whatever, if it be not a literal personal manifestation and coming. But this glorious personal manifestation or coming, takes place *at the time*, and *for the express purpose*, of the destruction of Popery or Antichrist, which it is conceded must take place before the millennial day of prosperity. It follows, therefore, THAT JESUS CHRIST COMES IN GLORY TO JUDGE THE WORLD BEFORE THE MILLENIUM.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE NATURE OF THE DAY OF JUDGMENT SUPPOSED TO AFFORD AN OBJECTION AGAINST THE PRE-MILLENNIAL COMING OF CHRIST.

OUR object in this chapter, is to meet an objection commonly urged against the doctrine of Christ's coming to judgment before the Millenium, as well as to correct the practical mistake or error in relation to the great day of final retribution, out of which it grows.

It is a very prevalent opinion, that the day of judgment, if not a day of twenty-four hours' length, is nevertheless a very short period, during which a strictly judicial process is to be conducted; and that for this purpose, all mankind, both the righteous and the wicked, are to be simultaneously congregated before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ, to hear the sentence of approbation or condemnation, to be then pronounced by the great Judge of quick and dead. Such is the general account given of it in discourses by those who have undertaken to describe the appalling scenes of the last great day.

This general notion of the day of judgment, is sustained by references to various passages of Scripture, which, it is thought, imply evidently the universal promiscuous congregation of the living and of the dead at the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ. Of course, it is objected, if such be the process of judgment, it is altogether inconsistent with the idea of Christ's coming



to raise the dead, and to change the living bodies of his saints, to destroy Popery and the anti-Christian nations, and to extend the government of Heaven over any remnants of the nations that may yet be left in the flesh.

It is admitted that while the general result of a judgment to come, may be the same according to these differing views, yet are they entirely inconsistent with each other, when regarded as a description of the process of that judgment. It becomes us then to make our appeal directly to the word of God; and to examine candidly, carefully, and solemnly, what He has said on this subject. His testimony is our sole guide and umpire here.

In making this appeal to the scriptural account of the day of judgment, we remark as preliminary—

*That it must be borne in mind, and will unquestionably be at once admitted, by every intelligent reader of the Sacred Scriptures, that all the different accounts of the day of judgment, given in the Sacred Scriptures, must harmonize with each other.*

These accounts are very numerous and various,—some of them incidental and some extended,—some delivered by one inspired writer and some by another, involving, as a whole, abundant allusions, but not in every minute particular identically the same. This should not be accounted strange. It is in fact the most natural thing imaginable. It is impossible for different persons, who have witnessed the same complicated series of events, to give a description of them, in every minute particular, precisely the same. One will give prominence to this class of events, another to that:—some will omit incidents deemed unimportant, while others will detail them:—some will be more graphic and comprehensive than others,

and yet all will agree as to the general outline and results. It is just so in the prophetic descriptions given us of the day of judgment. It is therefore manifestly improper for us, to single out the description, as given by any one writer, and assume it to be the grand and leading view, according to which we must judge of all the rest. All are but parts of one great whole, and it behoves us so to ponder and place the different facts, that they shall all harmonize with each other. This requires labor and study ; and especially to have our minds divested of any preconceived notions. The facts must be admitted, just as stated by the writer, so far as his testimony goes ; and must also be viewed in connection with the specific design which he had in communicating them.

It is the easiest thing imaginable to excite suspicions, and to make false impressions, in relation to the testimony of a witness, by taking it out of the immediate connection, and viewing it, either entirely apart from the circumstances to which it refers, or in the light of others never contemplated by him. These things are well enough understood, by those accustomed to examine and weigh the import of testimony. We claim, on this subject, the application of the same general principles and rules, admitted to be appropriate and deserving of attention in matters of ordinary interest.

Following these principles we find that the sacred writers crowd together an immense variety of incidents and events ; denominate and designate the period during which they occur, by different titles, as "*that day*," "the day of the Lord," "the day of judgment," "the great day of God," and the like. Hence we remark :—

2. *That neither the usage of speech common among*

*the prophets, nor the specific character of their descriptions of the day of judgment, requires us to believe, that the phrase designates a day of twenty-four hours or even a very short space.* Sometimes the word day is used prophetically, to designate a year, as by Daniel, Ezekiel, and others. At other times it is used to denote an indefinite period of time, a dispensation—a long series of years possessing the same general characteristics.

Christ called the period of his personal ministry, “a day” lamenting that the Jews had not known in that their day the things which make for their peace.\* The whole period of the children of Israel’s forty years’ journey in the wilderness, was called a day—the day of temptation,† and the apostles called the Gospel dispensation a day, saying, “now is the accepted time, and to-day is the day of salvation.”‡

Isaiah and others of the prophets, but especially the former, use the emphatic phrase, “In that day,” to denote the period of the judgment, though not according to the popular idea; but, on the contrary, in such way as to show that it was regarded as a season or dispensation during which many wonderful events were to transpire in the world.

With these preliminary remarks, we are prepared to appeal to the laws and to testimony, on the subject of the great day of judgment.

One of the most common and striking portions of the Sacred Scriptures referred to, which, it is objected, conflicts with the idea of Christ’s pre-millennial coming to judgment, is the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, the parable of the sheep and goats. In this context, it is contended, there is manifestly a descrip-

\* Luke, 19. 42.

† Heb. 3. 13, 15.

‡ 2 Cor. 6. 2.

tion of the great day of final retribution, the post-millennial judgment, for the Judge, the Son of Man, is viewed as seated on his throne of glory, all nations, and all the holy angels with him, as gathered before him, the sheep and the goats as separated, and sentence pronounced on each according to their deeds.

In reply to this objection, we admit and feel the obligation to adhere strictly and fully to the words of Christ, and in doing so we remark—

1. That *the Saviour evidently does not so immediately intend to give a description of judicial processes in the judgment scenes, as of certain circumstances connected with his coming.*

In Matthew he asserts the general fact of his coming with his holy angels and the gathering of his elect.

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other.”\*

These events, he states, shall occur after the appearance of certain signs which he details.

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of the Heavens shall be shaken.”†

The appearance of these signs should as certainly foretoken his coming, as the budding of the fig-tree does the approach of summer. This idea he illustrates in the parable of the fig-tree.

\* Matt. 24. 30-31.

† Matt. 24. 29.

“ Now learn a parable of the fig-tree: when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors—verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”\*

Having stated the certainty of his coming, he refuses to give information as to its precise time—“ But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of Heaven, but my Father only;”† but remarks, that the world would be found in the same careless, sensual, unbelieving, and supposed secure condition, it was in the days of Noah before the deluge.

“ But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For, as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. There shall two be in the field, the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken and the other left.”‡

The obligation to watchfulness, he enforces by comparing his coming to the approach of a thief.

“ Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord shall come. But know this, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief should come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.

\* Matt. 24. 32-35. † Matt. 24. 36. ‡ Matt. 24. 37-41.

Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as you think not the Son of Man cometh.”\*

The importance and obligations, to be faithful in the discharge of trusts and duties, he urges, by the parable of the servant, that during his lord's absence was inattentive and oppressive.

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;—the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”†

In all this context, therefore, he is pressing the fact of his coming, for practical uses, instead of describing the process of judgment. He continues the same in the next chapter, with the evident design of guarding against the incredulity and indifference, on the subject of his coming, which he foresaw would affect even the church at the time of his coming. In the parable of the ten virgins he sets forth the slumbering condition in which half the church would be at that time; and how an immense body, one half of the professors of religion, would be confounded, ashamed, rejected, dismayed, overwhelmed, at his coming, when a portion

\* Matt. 24. 42-44.

† Matt. 24. 45-51.

of his church should enter into the marriage supper of the Lamb, and they be shut out.

“ Then shall the kingdom of Heaven be likened unto the virgins which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them ; but the wise took oil in the vessel with the lamps. While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made ; behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, not so, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage ; and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch, therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.”\*

Then, for once, poor formal professors, whose hearts have not been given to Christ, whose minds are not on him, whose confidence is not placed in him, but who are drowned in the cares and pleasures of the world, sunk in stupid carelessness and ease, shall awake to realize their awful condition, and begin earnestly to seek and pray. Terror, confusion, dismay, will overwhelm them. They will then knock at the door of mercy, and seek to enter in, but it will

\* Matt. 25. 1-13.

be too late for them. Their carelessness and folly, their guilty slumber, and being content with the form of godliness, while denying its power, will prove their ruin. All will be shut out from his marriage feast, that have not been truly converted and sanctified in heart.

In the parable of the talents the Saviour sets forth the rule of judgment that shall be adopted in reference to his church.

“For the kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability, and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents, went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one, went and digged in the earth, and hid his Lord’s money. After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents, behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His Lord said unto him, well done, thou good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things ; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. He also that had received two talents, came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents, behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His Lord said unto him, well done, good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Then he which had



received the one talent came, and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou wert an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed ; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth : lo ! there thou hast that is thine. His Lord answered and said unto him, thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents ; for unto every one that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into utter darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”\*

All his professed followers, who style themselves his servants, shall be rewarded or punished for their improvement or neglect of the talents, the abilities, opportunities and privileges allotted to them. The three servants represent different classes of professors of religion. All who do not live to some profitable account, who do not exert a wholesome and saving influence in the world, shall be rejected ; but those who were awake and active, and lived to the honor and glory of Jesus Christ, shall be rewarded accordingly. The idea evidently is, that the honors and distinctions which Christ, at his coming, will put upon his followers, will be according to their devotion to his honor and interests. This is the process of judgment, which begins at the house of God. It is not the judgment of his enemies but his professed friends.

\* Matt. 25. 14-30.

Neither the parable of the ten virgins, nor of the talents, therefore, describes the judgment of *the world*, or the judicial process instituted against the openly wicked, but the judgment of the church of God.

In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the Saviour brings into view another and very important circumstance connected with his coming—the separation which should be made between the sheep and the goats, and the gathering in of the elect.

“ When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say unto them on his right hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee? or thirsty and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick or in prison and came unto thee? And the king shall answer and say unto them, verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand—depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungered and ye gave me no

meat ; I was thirsty and ye gave me no drink ; I was a stranger and ye took me not in ; naked and ye clothed me not ; sick and in prison and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee ? Then shall he answer them, saying, verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment ; but the righteous into life eternal.”\*

This passage is the main reliance of those who deny the pre-millennial coming of Christ, and maintain a universal, promiscuous resurrection, and simultaneous judgment of the race. It behoves us, therefore, to give it very strict and close attention.

The hearers of Christ, when he delivered his discourse, were his disciples, who came privately to him as he sat on the Mount of Olives, saying, tell me when shall these things be ? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world ? †

The passage now under consideration is part of the discourse he delivered to his disciples in answer to these questions, and embraced in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew. In the twenty-fourth chapter, he had said, that after certain events predicted to occur previously, they should see the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, when all the tribes of the earth shall mourn, and they should see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory, with his angels, and a great sound of a trumpet, and they should gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the

\* Matt. 25. 31-46.

† Matt. 24. 3.

other. It is to this same event he alludes in the context, Matthew, 25. 31, &c. For he evidently resumes the subject, and gives a more particular account of this gathering together of the elect. “*When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations,*” out of which the separation of the righteous from the wicked should be made, just as a shepherd divides the sheep and goats, mixed up in the same flock. The special events alluded to in these places, are,—the gathering of all nations before him,—the separation of the sheep from the goats,—and the gathering of the elect together from the four winds, from one end of Heaven the another. These events, he says, shall occur *when* the Son of Man cometh. The coming of the Son of Man itself, as has been already hinted, is alluded to as something admitted and well understood by his disciples; which their question proves, since they evinced no doubt about the fact, or the nature of that coming, but asked only as to the sign of it, and of the end of the world.

The allusion, therefore, is, without doubt, to Daniel’s prediction, relative to the coming of the Son of Man.

“I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came, with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”\*

In this prediction it is distinctly stated that, **when he**

\* Dan. 7. 13, 14.

should come, there would be given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that *all people, nations and languages* should serve him. The idea is, very plainly and explicitly, that he shall have the universal sovereignty in the earth, which the empires of the beasts should continue to exercise till his coming. This sovereignty is to be exercised by the Son of Man over nations in the flesh,—for the phrase, “peoples, nations, and languages,” is the very phrase which Nebuchadnezzar and Darius used when they addressed their subjects and inscribed to them their decrees, and is indeed the phrase which Daniel uniformly employs to denote the inhabitants of earth subject to the imperial sway.

“Then a herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages.”\* “Then King Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; peace be multiplied unto you.”†

The prediction, then, of the transfer of the nations of the earth, from the sway of Imperial rulers to the dominion of Jesus Christ, is exactly what is elsewhere predicted, that he shall be “king over all the earth.” The event, therefore, referred to by the Saviour, both in Matt. 24 and 25, being the same with that of which Daniel speaks, must be the separation or division between the righteous and the wicked.

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.” “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of Heaven to the other.”‡

\* Dan. 3. 4. † Dan. 6. 25. ‡ Matt. 24. 30, 31.

“ When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory : and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.”\*

This separation shall take place, when he comes to set up his kingdom in this world. But this, as Daniel shows, and as has been already fully proved, is to occur, not at the close, but at the commencement of the Millenium ; and consequently the judgment, of which the Saviour speaks in the twenty-fifth chapter, is, like that of the twenty-fourth, pre-millennial, and altogether unlike, in its attendant circumstances, to the final judgment spoken of in Rev. 20. In that last concluding scene of the great day of judgment, the dead, small and great, stand before God and are judged ; the seas give up their dead, and death and hell deliver up the dead in them, and they are individually judged, *every man* according to his works. This is unquestionably an universal resurrection and congregation of the dead, which is to occur at the close of the Millenium. But in the discourse of Christ under consideration, he does not say a word about the resurrection of the dead. Whatever allusion there may be to any resurrection is implied in the nature of the events to which he refers.

The events here particularly referred to, are to characterize the well understood epoch of his coming of which he had spoken. Those events are the gathering of the nations in the flesh before him, the separating between the righteous and the wicked found in them, and the gathering of the elect. Not a word is said about a resurrection.

\* Mat. 25. 31, 32.

2. We remark, in the second place, *that the language of the Saviour necessarily confines his meaning to mankind existing on the earth at the time of his coming.*

The phrase NATIONS\* is never applied to the dead, but always to masses of men and women, living on the earth together, under some form or other of organized government. This being the most common meaning and use of the word, we cannot extend its import according to the objection we are considering, so as to embrace the innumerable hosts that have gone down to the grave in all ages, and from all nations. They exist, not *as nations* in the regions of the dead, and therefore cannot come forth to judgment as nations, but shall come as the throng of "the dead," just as John, who more especially speaks of their judgment, describes, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hell delivered up the dead which were in them, and they were judged *every man* according to his works."†

Such being the fact, we are not at liberty to assume that the Saviour, when speaking of all *nations* being gathered before him, out of which the goats shall be

\* See Scapula. Also Robinson's Tr. of Wahl's Clav. Phil. In Rev. 21. 24, it does not denote a swarm, a multitude; for the parallelism in the text shows that they were regarded as having "kings." Of course the proper idea of the word "nation" is involved. Τὰ ἔθνη is indeed used as a noun of multitude, to denote the Gentiles or nations of the earth, in contradistinction from the people of God, or Jewish nation, but not so as to exclude the idea of organization. So also is the Hebrew word יָו.—Gesenius says, LXX. satis constanter οἱ reddunt λαός, ἡ ἔθνος, Vulg. gens, unde etiam in N. T. Τὰ ἔθνη opponuntur τῷ λαῷ θεοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, Luc. 2. 32.

† Rev. 20. 12, 13.

separated from the sheep, is describing the process of final judgment to be passed upon the dead. Wherefore, the account he gives, of the gathering of the nations before him, and separating the sheep and the goats, must be understood as applying solely to *the nations in the flesh*, at the time of his coming, and not to the hosts of the righteous and the wicked, as though they were simultaneously raised from the dead at a final judgment. And this conclusion, so inevitable from these premises, is further confirmed by the fact that, in the account of the judgment given by John,\* there is no mention made of rewards, but only of the judgment and *punishment* of those *men* whose names were not found written in the Book of Life.

3. We remark, in the third place, *that there are two or three circumstances of such essential difference, between the account of Christ in this parable, and the apostle John's account of the final act of judgment, that they cannot at all be made to refer to the same events.* The first is, that the everlasting fire, into which the goats are sent, is said to be "prepared for the devil and his angels," and is identically the same with "the lake of fire"† into which Satan is to be cast, and tormented day and night for ever and ever. Now the phrase, *prepared for*, implies plainly that the devil and his angels had not yet been cast into it, when the goats are ordered to depart into it. Satan is bound for a thousand years at the coming of Christ, and the goats are cast into the fire long before him. But in John's account the wicked dead, at the last act of judgment, are cast into the lake of fire, after Satan had been cast there.‡ The nations and the dead, therefore, cannot be the same.

\* Rev. 20. 11-15.

† Matt. 25. 41.

‡ Συναχθήσεται ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.—Matt. 25. 32.



A second circumstance of essential difference is, that John's account, "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever,"\* does not cast the devil and his angels into "the lake of fire" until the end of the thousand years, a long time after the beast and the false prophet had been cast in. But the beast and the false prophet, which we have seen are the secular Roman Empire and the Pope, the Man of sin—the system of Papacy with its blinded adherents—are cast into the lake of fire before the Millenium, as is manifest from this passage: "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These last were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone,"† as we showed in the last chapter—*destroyed at the coming of Christ*, "by the spirit of his mouth and the brightness of his appearing." The nations, therefore, spoken of by Christ, cannot be the promiscuous dead of whom John speaks. This leads us to remark—

4. In the fourth place, *that the gathering of all nations before him, of which he speaks here, is not and cannot be understood to refer to, or to be effected by the promiscuous resurrection of the dead.* This is proved by the fact just above noticed, that they are *the nations*, i. e. those living on the earth, and not the dead, that are to be gathered before the Son of Man. The word translated "gathered" in Matthew, where Christ says, "and before him shall be gathered all nations," (*συναχθησεται*), does not always denote the actual as-

\* Rev. 20. 10.

† Rev. 19. 20.

sembling into one place. It is used to denote the idea of conjunction, alliance, or formation of one society : “ And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad,”\*—the organization of different parts or members, before separate, under one head or government.†

This idea of the word at once directs us to what Daniel predicted, when the different peoples, nations, and languages, on the face of the whole earth, should be gathered into one kingdom, i. e. all dominions be consolidated and bound together under Christ, their head, who is to rule them in conjunction with his saints. “ I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him; and there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”‡ This was by no means a new idea, as delivered either by Christ or Daniel. It was distinctly brought into view in the Abrahamic covenant, in which God engaged that Abraham should be “ the father of many nations,” yea, that “ in him should all the families of the earth be blessed ;” which promise Paul interprets as having constituted Abraham “ *the heir of the world,*” and which promise will be redeemed when Jesus Christ, the son or seed of Abraham, and all Abraham’s faithful seed together with him, shall inherit the kingdom to be given at the coming of

\* John, 11. 52.

† Kypke Obs. Sac. T. Ip. 392. Wettstenius’ N. T. Ts. 920.

‡ Dan. 7. 13, 14.

Christ—"the kingdom prepared from before the foundation of the world." "And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."\* "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham, for a father of many nations have I made thee."† "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."‡

Jacob had his eye on the same, when uttering his prediction that the Messiah should come out of Judah, and to him should be "*the gathering of the people.*" "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."§

David sang of the same glorious event, when he exclaimed, "Sing praises to our King, sing praises; for God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the heathen (the nations): God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of Abraham; for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted." "When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord."||

Isaiah, too, had descried this same glorious event; for, having said, "Behold, the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebukes with flames of fire," he adds, in the very language of the Lord, "it shall

\* Gen. 12. 3.

† Gen. 17. 5.

‡ Rom. 4. 13.

§ Gen. 49. 10—the קהל יהוה, congregatio, ecclesia Domini.

|| Psalm 102. 22.

come, that I will gather all nations and tongues, and they shall come and see my glory.”\*

Paul, also, in the most explicit manner, speaks of this marvellous procedure in the strongest terms, when he refers to the mystery of the Divine will in Jesus Christ, “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.”†

There is, then, to be a gathering of the nations before Christ, which has been the subject of prophecy from the earliest period, and which is to take place at his coming; but which is not to be consummated by a universal resurrection from the dead. Attention to the harmony of the prophets, therefore, requires us to believe, that the gathering of the nations spoken of by Christ, which is to take place at his coming, must be the organization of his universal dominion over the nations in the flesh; during which, it is declared by several prophets, especially by Isaiah, that they shall not only be incorporated together as one great universal dominion, but, doubtless by their princes and representatives, assemble themselves before him, and behold his glory. In confirmation of this view we further remark, that the word translated “gathered,” in Matt. 25. 31, as applied to the nations, and which does not necessarily always mean collection, or assembly *at the same place*, is not the same with the word in Matt. 24. 31, *ἐπισυναξουσιν*, where it is said the angels shall “gather his elect.” This latter word does denote the collecting together in the same place. It is obvious, however, that there is no contradiction between the two accounts; for the elect spoken of in Matt. 24. 31, and

\* Isaiah, 66. 15, 18.

† Eph. 1. 10.

congregated in one place from under the whole heavens, are not the "all nations" that are gathered together before Christ at his coming, spoken of in Matt. 25. 32.

There is yet another idea which here deserves attention, and to which the harmony of the predictions requires it to be given, viz. that at the coming of Christ the nations of the earth will be actually assembled together, by their armies and rulers, in the last fearful conflict or war of Gog and Magog, as described by Ezekiel,\* and spoken of by John. "The spirits of devils," the latter says previously, "go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty, —and he gathered them together into a place called Armageddon;"† which event occurs in immediate connection with the coming of Christ. Thus it appears, that, by the immense armies and alliances of nations with their crowned heads and rulers, they will be actually, at his coming, gathered before him; so that whether we understand the expression, "gathered before," &c., to denote the ultimate consolidation of his dominion, or a local assemblage of the nations in their last grand and bloody campaign on the field of Armageddon, or perhaps both; the gathering of all nations before Christ, spoken of in Matt. 25. 32, *cannot mean the universal resurrection of the dead.*

We incline to the belief, that the gathering of the nations, referred to by Christ, denotes both the ideas just stated; for it is by the assembling of the nations at the great battle of Armageddon, under their kings, and captains, and rulers, and by the destruction of their great armies, that the then existing governments of the earth will be utterly broken up, their national

\* Ezekiel, ch. 38.

† Rev. 16. 14–16.

organizations destroyed, and the way prepared for the erection of the new sovereignty, Heaven's dominion, which shall, under the new dispensation, re-organize the remnants of the destroyed nations, and the heathen nations that shall be left, and concentrate them in one blessed and glorious kingdom.

There are some facts set forth by the prophets, on this subject, of great moment. The first is, that while the anti-Christian nations are to be destroyed, the heathen, or the Gentile nations, i. e. those nations which had not been anti-Christian, "shall be given to Christ, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession."\* The gospel is to be preached for a witness among all nations, i. e. among the Gentiles, and then the end should come. Still farther, Jerusalem, we are told, should be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled; blindness was to happen to Israel till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, i. e. till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled: but at that period, when the anti-Christian powers should be broken down, and the sovereignty on earth be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, a wonderful and marvellous change should take place. The remnants of the nations would repent and give glory to God. Nations should be born in a day; and the glory of the Gentiles, like a flowing stream, should pour into Jerusalem, as the great centre and capital of the new dominion to be established on the earth. "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the

\* Psalm 2. 8.

King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord shall smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem, and in Judah, shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and see the therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts."\*

"Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord: shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? saith thy God. Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the Lord, behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your

\* Zech. 14. 16-21.

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. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the Lord. 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 carcasses 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.”\*

5. I remark farther, *that since* “THE GATHERING OF ALL NATIONS BEFORE CHRIST,† *which takes place at his coming, must be understood to refer to something which shall occur among* THE NATIONS IN THE FLESH, so “THE GATHERING TOGETHER OF THE ELECT” *from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other,‡ must also refer to something of the same nature.* This gathering of the elect together, cannot mean the resurrection of the dead bodies of the saints, for *they* are already assembled with the Lord, and come with him, as associate judges, to sit with him in judgment, and rule the nations. It is among the first acts, indeed, in the process of judgment, to enrobe their disembodied and invisible spirits with their risen bodies; but this is a very different thing from gathering them together. They have been gathered together with Christ by the death of their bodies, and shall come with him in triumph. The saints, the redeemed from among men, are the holy ones of whom Enoch prophesied, when he said, “behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints,” &c. ;§ they, too, are the holy angels with whom Christ says he shall come in the glory of his Father; the spirits of the dead saints that Paul says he shall “bring with him.” “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.”|| The word “ANGELS” means messengers, and does not always of necessity mean the pure unembodied spirits that have never sinned, whom God has employed in past ages, and employs still, as his messengers or minister-

\* Isaiah, 66. 8-24.

† Matt. 25. 32.

‡ Matt. 24. 31.

§ Jude, 14.

|| 1 Thess. 4. 14.

ing spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation.

Besides, *the saints*, in their raised bodies, are to be *the messengers of Jesus Christ*,\* at his coming, for gathering together his elect, and by this very process they take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom even for ever and ever, according as Daniel has declared. They come as joint heirs with Jesus Christ; are sent forth as his own messengers; and, having gathered together his elect, sit down with Christ on *his* throne, as he sat down on the Father's throne, and reign with him, as kings and priests of the most high God. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."† "To him that over-

\* The words are, *τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ*,—*αὐτοῦ* here has the same force as *ἑαυτοῦ*, and means, "his own." It can mean nothing else, as in Rev. 2. 18, *οἱ ποδες αὐτοῦ*, *his own*, and not another's. The angels, or messengers, will accompany the Saviour at his coming. They are called *his* mighty angels, the messengers of his power—his powerful, miraculous messengers, *μετ' ἀγγέλων δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ*. These his angels or messengers accompany him at his coming. But, from 1 Thess. 4. 14, it appears that the saints which now sleep in Jesus, are to be his attendants when he comes. Also, from Zech. 14. 5, the same is evident: "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." "The reapers are the angels," Matt. 13. 39,—*οἱ δὲ θερισαὶ ἄγγελοι εἰσιν*,—the reapers are messengers, definitely described in Matt. 24. 31, as *his own*, the attendant messengers or accompanying saints. To Nathaniel, Christ said, "hereafter ye shall see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." John, 1. 51. This will be signally true, when the saints of the Most High, who are to take possession of the kingdom, and will be Christ's own messengers, shall descend "from the New Jerusalem to their camp contiguous to the terrestrial city, (Rev. 21. 9,) before the heavenly city descends actually to the earth, (Rev. 21. 10, 24, 27,) when earth shall become a fit site for its abiding place."\*

† Romans, 8. 17.

\* Sirr's Letters on the First Resurrection, p. 47.

cometh will I give to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."\* "And hast made us, unto our God, kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth."†

This is in exact accordance with the parable of the tares and the wheat, as interpreted by Christ. "He answereth and saith unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world."‡ "The harvest is the end of the world," or, as it is in the original, *συρτελεια τω αιωρος*, the end or close of the dispensation; the very same phrase that is used in the very same period referred to in Matt. 24. 30, 31, and 25. 31, 32, in answer to the disciples' question, Matt. 24. 3, when should be "the end of the world," *αιωρος*, dispensation. "The reapers are the angels. As, therefore, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels (or messengers), and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father."§

The very same idea is distinctly held forth in the parable of the net cast into the sea, and gathering of every kind, which, when it was full, they drew to the

\* Rev. 3. 21.

† Matt. 13. 37-40.

‡ Rev. 5. 10.

§ Matt. 13. 41-43.

shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. "So shall it be," says Christ, "in the end of the world,"—at the close of the dispensation: "the angels (his own messengers) shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just." "Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just."\*

Thus, both these parables refer to those that shall be alive on the earth at the time of Christ's coming, and not to the dead; just as we have seen that the nations gathered before Christ, are living masses of men, in their various civil organizations.

The elect being gathered out from among the wicked, just as the wheat is separated from the tares in the harvest, or as the good fishes are separated from the bad in the net where all were mingled together, is plainly the idea which the Saviour has illustrated and enforced in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, by the shepherd's separating the goats from the sheep. Whatever the one means, so must the other. But the elect cannot mean the dead saints; because, having themselves been previously gathered, and coming with Christ to be clothed with their bodies, they become his messengers, to conduct the gathering process. The elect, therefore, must mean some portion of the human race that shall be found alive on the earth, mixed up with the wicked among the nations, at the time of Christ's coming,—called at one time the elect,

\* Matt. 13. 47-49.

at another time the wheat, at another, the good fish, and at another, the sheep. Who, then, are they, if they be not the righteous raised from the dead ?

Perhaps it will be alleged, that they are all the saints alive on the earth, at the time of Christ's coming, who are to be transformed and translated so that they shall not see death, according to what Paul has said. But this cannot be, for—

First, the saints alive on the earth at the coming of Christ are suddenly changed, and instantly and simultaneously caught up with Christ into the air ;\* whereas the gathering process is one which occupies some time, and is, in fact, according to the three parables of the net of fishes, of the wheat and tares, and of the sheep and goats, a process of judicial investigation and retribution. The rapture of the living saints is no more a judicial process than is the coming of myriads of the saints with Christ.

Secondly, this gathering of the elect is evidently the process of taking possession of the kingdom, and of establishing the dominion of Christ and of his saints over all the earth, which kingdom, as we have seen from Daniel and others, is the reign of Christ and his saints over all peoples, nations and languages, under the whole heavens—nations in the flesh.

But here it will be asked, who then can the elect be, if not the dead saints called and chosen of God, or the living saints on the earth, at the time of his coming, elect according to the foreknowledge of God ? In reply we remark, that we must be careful how we assume, that the word elect, as used by Christ, means exactly what theologians have used it to denote, according to their schemes of systematic theology. We must confine ourselves to the meaning in which Christ used the term, if that can be ascertained.

\* 1 Thess. 4. 17.

At the time he illustrated the kingdom of Heaven to his disciples by the parables of the wheat and the tares, and of the net of fishes, he asked them if they understood these things, and they affirmed they did.\* He therefore evidently spoke of, and referred them to, things of which they had other means of information than his parables. The idea of gathering, or of culling out and collecting, was a prominent one in these parables. Was there then, we ask, anything held forth as a prominent event taught by the prophets as destined to occur at the coming of Jesus Christ, which answers to this gathering of the elect, and separating between the sheep and the goats? In reply we remark, that the prophetic descriptions of the conversion and restoration of the dispersed of Israel answer exactly to this account of the Saviour. They are called THE ELECT OF GOD from the beginning, as the people whom God had chosen "to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God, the Lord thy God hath CHOSEN thee to be a *special* people unto himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you nor choose you because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people."† "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God, and the Lord hath CHOSEN thee to be a *peculiar* people unto himself above all the nations that are upon the earth."‡ "And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name and in honor; and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God as he hath spoken."|| "For Jacob my servant's sake and Israel mine ELECT, I have even called thee (Cyrus) by thy name."§

\* Matt. 13. 51.

† Deut. 7. 6, 7.

‡ Deut. 14. 2.

§ Deut. 23. 19.

|| Is. 45. 4.

They were called by Isaiah "the elect of God," for whose redemption and deliverance the Lord raised up Cyrus; but they are particularly so called by this prophet, when he predicts that God would not destroy them all, but would bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of his mountains; and his elect should inherit it, and his servants dwell there. "And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains; and mine *elect* shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there."\*

His prediction refers expressly to the condition of the restored of Israel during the millennial kingdom and glory, when "as the days of a tree should be the days of his people, and his *elect* should long enjoy the work of their hands."†

The apostle Paul also predicts the conversion and restoration of the remnant of Israel at the time of the coming of Jesus Christ, and designates them as "the elect of God."‡ "For I would not," says he, "brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits), that blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles § be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from

\* Isa. 65. 9.

† Isa. 65. 22.

‡ Rom. 11. 25-28.

§ Rom. 11. 25. "The fulness of the Gentiles" does not denote the conversion of the world, but the completion of the times of the Gentiles. See Luke, 21. 24, ἀχρη πληρωθῶσι καιροὶ ἐθνῶν—till the times of the Gentiles, the nations, be fulfilled. This is a sufficient guide and warrant for supplying the ellipsis in Rom. 11. 25, not as Mr. Bloomfield has done, assuming the πλήρωμα there to mean the fulness of the Gentile world, whereas Paul evidently refers to time—the time of Israel's blindness, which should last *till* the fulness of the Gentiles be come in—Ἰχρὺς οὖ

Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them when I take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes ; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sake." It appears, then, from these predictions, that the converted among the Jews are "THE ELECT" to whom the Saviour refers. That conversion, however, it appears from Zechariah, does not take place till after the coming of Christ, and consequently till after the resurrection of the bodies of the saints and the rapture of the living. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplication ; 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 first-born."\*

The prophets who speak of this event, particularly Daniel,† describe it as occurring in the midst of most terrible calamities, such as never before befell that guilty people, which, although they commenced at the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and have been prolonged ever since, reach their consummation, at the awful and terrible juncture, when the time of trouble and distress among the nations begins to be experienced in its full power. The retributions of God upon the anti-Christian nations ; the destruction of Popery and of Rome, the seat of the beast, and of the great body of the Roman Empire, by the fiery vengeance of Heaven ; the deliverance of the remnant of the Jews, and their separation from the nations, together with

(ταῖς χρονοῖς) τὸ πλήρωμα (scil. τῶν καιρῶν) τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσεέλθῃ. The conversion of the Jews is to be the occasion of the conversion of the Gentile nations, and not the reverse.

\* Zech. 12. 10.

† Dan. 12. 1.



the infliction of vengeance on the great mass of the wicked nations that opposed and persecuted the people of God, are among the events which introduce the dispensation, and form the first great epoch of the day of judgment. The preservation and gathering together of the remnant of converted Jews, in the midst of these frightful scenes, is, therefore, the gathering of the elect, of which the Saviour speaks. Mr. Faber himself is constrained to admit that this is the event referred to, although he pronounces the coming of Christ, and the sending forth of his messengers, to be altogether spiritual or allegorical. This being so, we are now prepared to submit our last remark.

6. *That the parable of the dividing between the sheep and the goats, does not and cannot refer to the universal resurrection of the dead, and the last epoch of the day of judgment.* It does indeed refer to a procedure of judgment; but evidently to the introductory scene just noticed. For, there are several circumstances, which prove conclusively that it cannot be the universal judgment of the race for the deeds which they have individually done in the body.

(1.) The first we notice is, that so far from the dead saints being embraced in the judgment, and the wicked dead being raised, on the occasion referred to, there is not a word intimated in the parable about a resurrection from the dead. The idea of a general resurrection of the dead is assumed and brought to interpret the parable. It is not certainly expressed; and whatever resurrection is implied, it is that of the holy angels or messengers, which we have shown, are the myriads of the saints that come with Christ, and are sent forth to *gather the elect*, i. e. the remnant of Israel, according to the election of grace. This gathering of the elect is the process of separating the sheep and the goats,—a very different

thing from the resurrection of the promiscuous dead, the separation of the righteous and the wicked, and the punishment of the latter; and consequently, the separating of the sheep and the goats cannot be the final act of judgment described by John.

(2.) The second circumstance we notice is, that the judgment and separation here referred to, is a judgment and separation of *nations*. They are *the nations*, that are gathered before Christ, and are divided one from another.\* For we have shown that the word "nations" is never used to denote the promiscuous mass of the dead, assembled at the final resurrection.

(3.) A third circumstance deserving of notice is, that the rule of judgment which shall be adopted at that time, is one which applies universally to *the nations*. But that rule of judgment is to be the treatment which was rendered to the sheep, whom Christ calls *his brethren*. This is a very different rule of judgment from that which will be adopted at the final resurrection. *Then*, each individual is to be judged *according to the deeds which he hath done in the body*, i. e. the heathen, who never heard of Christ, *by the law of nature*, and those enlightened by Christianity, *according to the gospel*. But the judgment here spoken of, is a judgment of *nations*, for their treatment of Christ's brethren, allegorically spoken of as the sheep. The sheep, who are the brethren of Christ, we have seen are the remnant of Israel, according to the election of grace, whom he regards as his brethren, because his kinsmen according to the flesh, as well as by virtue of their submission to God, in a filial spirit, by their conversion. These are not, indeed, exclusively the brethren of Christ, for he recognizes all to be such,

\* Matt. 25. 32.

whether Jew or Gentile, who do truly possess like precious faith with Abraham; and the believing Gentiles, being included in the covenant which God made with him, the nations will be punished for their treatment of them, but they, at this time, are all gathered—the dead having come with Christ, and living Christians having been changed at his coming. The *judgment* on the nations then, it appears, is to be for their treatment of the Jews—Christ's brethren according to the flesh; and for their treatment of true Christians—his brethren according to the Spirit. Those nations which have persecuted the Jews who have been scattered all over the earth, and those which have persecuted the church of God, are the goats, which God will give to destruction.

This agrees exactly with the accounts given by Jeremiah, in his twenty-fifth chapter, at large, and in other places, and by Zechariah. "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."\* "Fear thou not, O Jacob, my servant, saith the Lord, for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee; but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure, yet I will not leave thee wholly unpunished."† "And 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."‡ He will make a full end of all nations, whither he has driven his people, the Jews, who have trodden

\* Jer. 30. 11.

† Jer. 46. 28.

‡ Zech. 12. 3.

them down, but he will not of them. They shall be gathered as the scattered sheep, as the flock of God, and made the centre of renovating influences among the remnant population of the nations that shall have been destroyed, with their kings, and armies and institutions. Thus, the whole earth shall be brought under the dominion of the people of the saints of the Most High, and this elect people, rescued, gathered, and saved by the risen saints, shall be the honored and chosen nation through whom, in the re-establishment of the theocracy, the risen saints, along with Christ, shall reign over all the nations yet remaining in the flesh.

(4.) The last circumstance we notice is, that the retributions and other procedures referred to in the two cases, do not correspond. In the judgment described by Matthew, the saints come with Christ; receive the kingdom as their reward; and, as the heavenly rulers, take the empire out of the grasp of the beast, and gather in the elect, at the time when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and the glory of his Father, with his holy messengers. They enter on their glorious work and reward, to live and reign with Christ. The sheep, as has been shown, are the remnant of the Jewish *nation*, according to election—converted and restored—who, together with the whole body of the believing seed of Abraham, by whom they are collected and marshalled, receive, at the right hand of Jesus Christ, the place of favor and honor, the reward of the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world. The raised and quickened saints become the kings and priests of God, the associate and subordinate rulers under Christ, through whom the sway of Heaven is to be extended over the earth; each one receiving according as he has been

faithful; being commissioned to rule over five or ten cities, as the case may be. The restored Jewish nation, under the dynasty of Heaven, receive the chief imperial authority,\* and while under the immediate dominion of Christ and his saints, extend their sway, according to all the blessed institutions of the theocracy, over the nations of the earth that shall arise after the scenes and shocks of that eventful day. The goats are the nations that persecuted the Jews and the people of God—the brethren of Christ. They are punished, utterly and for ever,—destroyed with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Fearful and terrible will be the fate of the wicked rulers and others, who have conducted, aided and abetted, or approved and countenanced the persecution of Christ's brethren. The treatment of Christ, in his members, is the rule of procedure in this judgment. But in the judgment referred to by John, there is express mention made of very different scenes, and a very different rule of procedure. The heaven and earth shall flee away from before the face of him that shall sit on the great white throne; the dead, small and great, shall stand before God, and each one shall be judged out of his book containing the things recorded against him,—judged according to *his* works. No mention is made of rewards,—nothing said about inheriting a kingdom,—nothing about nations. It seems to be the last stroke of divine vengeance inflicted on the congregated dead, which prepares the way, and ushers in the full and final triumph of Heaven, and the eternal state of glory.

The parable of Christ, therefore, in the twenty-fifth

\* Micah, 4. 6-8.

chapter of Matthew, is but a condensed view of what Ezekiel gives us, in his thirty-fourth chapter, where the prophet describes the judgment of God upon the Gentile nations, for having scattered his people abroad, which people embrace, according to the Abrahamic covenant, the natural descendants of Abraham, and the Gentile believers, or churches, which have like precious faith with Abraham. It is not necessary, here, minutely to trace the resemblance between Christ's and Ezekiel's account of this judgment. But the following facts may be stated:—The sheep are the people of Christ. They comprehensively include the Jews first, and afterwards the church of God, who take their place. The retributions of Heaven will be awarded to the nations for their treatment of his people. Those that have persecuted the Jews and the church of God, will be regarded as having persecuted the Saviour himself, and shall partake in the destruction and overthrow, by his avenging fire, which shall destroy Popery and the anti-Christian nations. Those that have nourished and cherished them, shall be admitted as constituent members and parts of that great kingdom which shall be established, “in that day when, saith the Lord, I will assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted. And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast off a strong nation, and Jehovah shall reign over them in Mount Zion, from henceforth even for ever. And thou, 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 kingdom that shall be awarded

\* Micah, 4. 6–8.

to the sheep—the remnant of Israel, according to the election of grace, saved and gathered out of the nations,—and into which those tribes and nations of the earth shall be admitted as constituent parts, who shall be found not to have persecuted, but nourished and cherished the people of God; but from which, by their utter and everlasting overthrow, they shall be excluded, who shall be consumed “by the spirit of his mouth, and the brightness of his coming,” along with the beast and the false prophet—the secular and spiritual Rome—for having persecuted the people of God, and shed the blood of the saints. Thus, then, it appears that the judgment of Christ, set forth in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, is the same with that of Daniel and Paul, already examined, and different in every essential particular from the general floating notion, founded on it, of a universal, simultaneous, and promiscuous resurrection of the righteous and the wicked, at some very remote day after one thousand years’ prosperity of the church of God: and essentially different, too, from that described by John.

To sum up, then, what has been brought into view: The twenty-fifth chapter is in perfect consonance with the fact of Christ’s pre-millennial coming; and interpreted, in connection with the twenty-fourth, and the predictions of the prophets referring to the same events, the following are the grand and wonderful results we obtain. We speak with diffidence, and presume not to say that we may not have made some mistakes. The scenes are too wonderful, and complicated, and extended, to harmonize fully before the events occur. We wait, with ardent expectation, for the wondrous scenes, and pray, that we may be accounted worthy to escape the desolations of that day, and to stand before the Son of Man, nor be ashamed at his coming.

The general result of a pre-millennial coming of Christ to judgment, is enough to excite our intensest interest, even if we err in some of the minute details of that wonderful procedure.

That this day of judgment is not strictly and exclusively a short season of judicial investigations or trial ; but itself a dispensation, running through centuries, and embracing the whole millennial reign of Christ and his saints ;—that this dispensation is to be introduced by the visible, personal coming of Jesus Christ ;—that at his coming he will bring with him the myriads of his saints who had died in faith, and who will then receive their bodies, raised from the dead in the likeness of Christ's glorious body ;—that the saints then living on the earth will also be changed, and caught up together with Christ in the air ;—that this coming of Christ will occur most suddenly, and, as it were, by stealth, like a thief in the night ;—that the one half, at least, of professing Christians being profoundly asleep, and totally unprepared, will never awake to the sense of their duty to look and watch for his coming, till the wonderful scenes of the coming of Christ, the first resurrection, and the rapture of the living saints, shall overwhelm them with horror and dismay ;—that then the church will be judged, and while honors will be awarded to the raised and rapt saints, according to their works, the unprofitable, formal professors shall be utterly and eternally rejected, and perish in the overthrow of the Man of sin and of his adherents, and in the destruction of the anti-Christian nations ;—that an end shall be made of all the nations that persecuted the Jews, and shed the blood of the saints ;—that in the midst of these scenes of destruction, as they shall be going on within the territorial limits of the four great empires that swayed the world, the raised saints will be sent to



collect the scattered Jews who shall have repented and believed, at that time, that Jesus is their Messiah;—that the conversion of the Jews will be the occasion of the conversion of whole nations among the Gentiles—the remote heathen nations and others, among whom the Jews were scattered, and the gospel was preached for a witness, and that neither persecuted the Jews nor shed the blood of the saints, but had not, nevertheless, been Christianized;—that the Jews will be re-established in their own land, the theocracy restored, Christ and his saints reign over them, and through them, over all the nations of the earth;—that Satan will be cast into prison for one thousand years;—that thus the dominion of Heaven shall be established on the earth, and the millennial bliss and glory succeed;—and that the final judgment of Satan, and the promiscuous throng of the wicked dead, who shall be raised at the end of the thousand years, shall prepare the way to usher in the glorious and eternal state when the kingdom shall be delivered up into the hands of the Father, and God shall be all in all.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE SEASON AND SIGNS OF CHRIST'S COMING.

“THEY asked him saying, Master, but when shall these things be? And what SIGN shall there be, when these things shall come to pass.”\* The question seems to have been suggested by the remarks, which the Saviour had made relative to the destruction of the temple and city of Jerusalem. It is obvious, from the terms in which Matthew proposes it,† that it had an ulterior reference. The disciples inquired, not only with regard to the fate of their city, but also with regard to the period of the Saviour's second coming, and of the end of the dispensation. In this extended sense we understand the inquiry, and propose to collate, from the prophetical Scriptures, some of the more important and striking signs of the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We shall thus be furnished with an additional argument in proof of that coming being pre-millennial.

The theme is one of vast moment. The event itself involves our eternal interests, and the destiny of the world. If it be the fact that the once despised Nazarene, the persecuted Galilean, who was crucified between two thieves, but, having risen from the dead, ascended to heaven, and received all power and authority in heaven and on earth, is there waiting till the

\* Luke, 21. 7.

† Matt. 24. 3.

appointed season of God's forbearance shall have been ended before he returns to earth to execute almighty and everlasting vengeance on his enemies, it behoves us to be on the watch, and to inquire diligently whether there shall be any, and if so, what will be the signs of his coming. Inattention and neglect here may prove fatal, as it has done, and will do yet, to multitudes.

It is but a poor excuse, though often made and extensively entertained, that the whole subject is involved in impenetrable mystery, and nothing definite or certain can be determined in relation to it. Enough is revealed to make us watchful, and to enable us to see when it is near at hand, although we may not be able to tell the hour or the year. Both the SEASON and the SIGNS of Christ's coming are accurately described.

I. THE SEASON OF HIS COMING.—It appears from the prophetic Scriptures that this is dated BEFORE THE MILLENIUM. The prediction of Daniel\* with regard to the destruction of the fourth beast, or Roman empire, under the ascendant, despotic, and arrogant sway of the little horn, or the Man of sin, furnishes an irrefragable argument in proof of this. Let any man carefully read this prophecy, and compare it with the eleventh, nineteenth, and twentieth chapters of Revelations, and he will see that they all refer to the same season and to the same scenes. The coming of Christ takes place at the destruction of the fourth, or Roman despotism, before the Millenium. The only way to evade the force of this argument is to make the coming not a literal but symbolical coming. This, however, cannot be done without assuming things which have not been and cannot be proved, and without violat-

\* Daniel, 7. 9-27.

ing the fundamental principles of that only true and legitimate system of exegesis to be applied to the Sacred Scriptures.

To the same effect is the prediction of the apostle Paul,\* which determines the chronology of the Saviour's coming, and declares it to be at the time of the destruction of the Man of sin, "that lawless one," whom Jesus Christ shall "consume by the spirit of his mouth, and destroy by the brightness of his coming."

In like manner, the predictions concerning the conversion and restoration of the Jews, which, it is admitted, are to be fulfilled before the Millenium, are set forth as receiving their accomplishment in the same season, and by means of the coming of Jesus Christ. If the reader will compare Luke, 21. 24-27, with Matt. 24. 29, 30, and Mark, 13. 24-27, he will find that they all relate to the same coming, and describe the same scenes. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles (or nations), until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,"†—at which period the Son of Man shall be seen coming in the clouds of heaven. But it appears from Romans, 11. 25, &c., that the conversion and restoration of the Jews do not take place "till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in," i. e. the completion of the times of the Gentiles.‡

\* 2 Thess. 2. 3-12.

† Luke, 21. 24.

‡ The period during which the nations, in the exercise of their political sovereignty, should oppose a barrier to the kingdom of God,—the time of the continuance of the great systems of political dominion which Daniel saw in vision, and described as the four empires successively to arise in the world, during which the kingdom of God would be delayed, and the saints be subjected to the control and tyranny of the man of the earth. The words are, ἄχρις οὗ τὸ πλῆρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσέλθῃ. Bloomfield says πλῆρωμα is best explained as equivalent to πλῆθος τῶν ἐθνῶν (as opposed to

We add yet further, that the destruction of the nations, which occurs in the war of Armageddon, predicted by John,\* is evidently the same with that in the valley of Jehoshaphat, predicted by Joel.† According to John,‡ the beast and false prophet, the secular and spiritual powers of the Roman Empire, are to be destroyed. And in Joel's war in the valley of Jehoshaphat, Judah and Jerusalem are to be restored, and according to Zechariah,§ they are to be converted, as was Paul, by the coming of Christ. The restoration and conversion of the Jews, therefore, occurring at the destruction of the anti-Christian nations, and both being pre-millennial, and contemporaneous with the coming of Christ, the season of his coming must be dated before the Millennium.

The fact is, that all the other great events, which, it is admitted, must occur before, or at the introduction

the ἡττηματι at v. 12) and signifying the *great bulk* of the heathens—in a manner, all. At εἰσέλθῃ must be supplied εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, or εἰς τὴν πίστιν. The ἡττησε, or diminishing, referred to in the twelfth verse, however, is not that of the Gentiles, but of the Jews. The apostle there is not referring to time, but in the twenty-fifth verse he is. He does not use the word πλήρωμα in reference to the Gentiles, or their universal accession to the cause of Christ, or entrance into his kingdom. The expression he applies to this is πλοῦτος ἐθνῶν—the riches of the Gentiles—as opposed to the diminution of the Jews. The πλήρωμα αὐτῶν—“their fulness,” of the twelfth verse, is that of the Jews, and not of the Gentiles, as the context plainly shows. During the oppression, and diminishing, and scattering of the Jews, the Gentile nations are enriched by the gospel. If this great result has flowed, says Paul, from the diminution of the Jews, how much more enriched will the nations of the earth be by their fulness,—the completion of God's designs of mercy towards them, in the full complement of their redeemed nation? If their depressed condition has enriched the world, how much more their prosperous condition?

\* Rev. 16. 16.

† Joel, 3. 2–12.

‡ Rev. 19. 19, 20.

§ Zech. 12. 10–12.

of the Millenium, such as the harvest and vintage of God's wrath,—the marriage supper of the Lamb,—the supper of the great God made for the fowls of heaven to eat the flesh of kings and captains, &c., and the like, are spoken of in prophecy as cotemporaneous with the coming of Jesus Christ; and the only possible method of evading the force of the argument founded on them, in favor of his pre-millennial coming, is to assume and to maintain, that the coming, contemplated in all these cases, is merely figurative. This, we have shown, cannot be done consistently with correct principles of interpretation. We cannot, therefore, be at a loss with regard to the general season of Christ's appearing. This season is designated by—

II. VARIOUS SIGNS, premonitory or symptomatic of its arrival.—These signs are of a twofold character—1. Those in general descriptive of the season by which it may be known when it arrives; and, 2. Those which mark, by definite events, how near we may be to it. The distinction here stated may be illustrated by what occurs to the traveller. He has had a description given him of a certain country, whither he is wending his way. The country may be known from its climate and soil, the character of its inhabitants, and other general characteristic traits. With this general description he is satisfied, till he enters the country, and begins to inquire the way to the place in it which he seeks—the end of his journey. He wants then something more definite, and would feel greatly pleased to find himself on the public highway, with its milestones regularly planted, apprising him, from stage to stage, how near or distant it may be.

It is thus with us, as time bears us forward to the great epoch of the Saviour's coming. The season, or

general period in the dispensations of God's providence, in which the Saviour is to appear, is described very accurately; and certain events which form, as it were, the milestones planted on the way, are predicted to occur, as we draw nearer and nearer to the day of his coming. It is true, they are not planted at regular intervals, nor do they come up precisely to the very date. They are rather like index boards, planted here and there, which cease to give us definite information, when we approach very near the event.

This distinction between the season and time, is recognized in Scripture.\*

THE SEASON in which Christ will appear is described as—

1. *A season of great increase of knowledge.* Daniel was told by the angel to shut up the words, and seal the book to the time of the end, but at the same time, that many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.† This most probably has reference to the obscurity which should hang around the page of prophecy, like that of a sealed or unopened book. It should not be removed till the time of the end—the season of its accomplishment, but that then many would investigate the truth, and knowledge be increased. The word translated *run to and fro*,‡ is metaphorically used to denote investigation, close, diligent, accurate observation—just as the eyes of the Lord are said to run to and fro. The reference is not to Missionary exertions in particular, but to the study of the Scriptures, especially the *sealed book of prophecy*.

The season during which the great and dreadful

\* 1 Thess. 5. 2. † Dan. 12. 4.

‡ משוטטים בכל-הארץ *in universa terra discurrentes.* 2. Chron. 16. 9. Metaph. *percurrere librum, i. e. perscrutari.* Dan. 12. 4.—*Gesenius.*

day of the Lord shall come, will be a season of great light and religious knowledge, and far beyond anything ever known in the world before. Isaiah\* says, "In that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and darkness."

This illumination or increase of Divine knowledge, it is predicted, shall occur after a period of great inattention and indifference to the sealed book of God—the prophetical Scriptures. "Stay yourselves and wonder, cry ye out and cry: they are drunken, but not with wine: they stagger, but not with strong drink. For the Lord hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. 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."† This is an apt description of the state of things which has existed, and to a great extent yet exists in the church and world, especially in reference to the subject of the prophecies.

If Daniel's prediction of increased knowledge applies mainly, though not exclusively, as is most probable, to the investigation and knowledge of the more sure word of prophecy, it is at this day remarkably fulfilled. The learned theologians and teachers since the days of the Reformation—the men who have done much to rescue the Scriptures from obscurity, to throw light upon its pages, and through the study of

\* Isaiah, 29. 18.

† Isaiah, 29. 9-12.



the Bible to liberate the human mind from the ignorance, darkness, and superstition, in which for ages it was held, have nevertheless, with few exceptions, neglected the study of the prophecies, and not a few of them have assigned as a reason of the fact, that they are a sealed book; and while this was the case the unlearned, both of the clergy and the laity, have plead their want of learning as a sufficient excuse for their neglect of it. But within the last half century the attention of many has been turned in this direction, and the discussions and publications which have followed, have thrown great light on the whole subject.

The remark is true, not only in reference to the great revival of theological and biblical literature and studies; the greatly advanced knowledge of the original languages, Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek, in which the Scriptures are written, and of the cognate dialects; of the general principles and value of philology, of the oriental manners and customs, and of the geography and history of ancient nations and places referred to in the word of God; but also to every branch of literature and science. This is pre-eminently a day of invention and improvement. Bible Societies, Tract Societies, Sabbath Schools, Theological and Missionary institutions, Temperance Societies, Lyceums, and innumerable different moral, literary, scientific, and religious associations, have given a powerful impulse to the human mind. Never was there a day so marked with advancement in science, improvement in the arts, and the diffusion of general intelligence, by the pulpit, the press, and the public lecturer, as the present. It is obvious, however, to the most superficial observer, that the great mass of this knowledge is unsanctified. The improvements in the arts and sciences, and the general literature of the day, instead of promoting

general virtue and religion, are leading men away from God. A vast proportion of these things bears the stamp of infidelity. Science has, in fact, been made subservient to crime, and proves that however valuable is knowledge, and however infinitely important when sanctified and rightly directed, it furnishes no barrier in itself, against immorality and vice, and all the corruptions that sap the very life-blood of the social state.

2. *A second great feature of the predicted season of Christ's coming is that of great luxury growing out of increased wealth.* James evidently had his eye on this when he said, "Go to, now, ye rich men, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you: your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten: your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. *Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days.*"\*

Seldom, if ever, has there been a period when there has been manifested a greater ardor in the pursuit and accumulation of wealth, than in these last days. In former periods of the world, the kings and nobility possessed the wealth, and held the people as their vassals. But of late years the race has been thrown open to all. Individual exertion has not been deemed sufficient. Men have not been satisfied with personal industry, but corporate and other associations have been formed to increase the facilities for rapidly accumulating wealth. Companies and combinations have been entered into for the purpose of heaping up treasures. Monopolies have been attempted, and banking institutions been formed, which have afforded the

\* James, 5. 1-3.

means of doing so. What immense amounts of insurance capital have been heaped together—how endless have been the joint-stock operations—how infatuated have men been with all kinds of stocks—how jealous and oppressive have different nations been in laying on their duties and imposts—how close and calculating, and extensive have been the large manufacturer's plans for the multiplication of his fabrics, and the power of machinery, as far as possible, been substituted for manual or personal labor and attention! How have the various productions of domestic industry, so healthful and productive in any community—the system of labor, which made every farm-house and hamlet a happy and virtuous manufactory of all necessary and essential fabrics—been broken down and supplanted, by the large and wholesale manufactories, where human beings, not only in the manufacture of necessary articles from staple commodities, but in the multiplication of luxuries, are used as mere parts of a vast system of machinery, and the *per diem* allowance for the support of life, made a matter of close calculation; and where by some sudden and unexpected change in the trade or in the legislation of the country, hundreds and thousands have been thrown out of employment, and been left without the means of subsistence and opportunities to obtain them! Monopolies have been the order of the day; and although the Lord, in his providence, has thrown perplexity and confusion among men, has brought a heavy pressure on the commercial world, and has deranged the working of their systems, yet the public mind has not been cured. To grind down the poor, and heap treasure together for the last days, is as much the object with the great mass as it ever was.

The spirit of luxury, too, which always rises and

falls with large and rapid accumulations of wealth, has seldom been greater than of late years. The affluent and pampered nobility of England, who luxuriate at the expense of the suffering, and in the midst of the slow and gradual starvation of the squalid poor around them, are made extensively in these republican states the objects of envy, and the patterns of luxury. The extravagance and luxury of our large cities, a few years since, were but the index of what was going on in the world at large; and although the derangement of our currency, the fluctuations of commerce, the depreciation of stocks, and the destruction of confidence and credit, have administered a severe but righteous punishment, yet is there no proof that the public mind is cured, and that the people have repented and begun to fear God. The great god of England, of France, of Turkey, of the United States, indeed, throughout the civilized world, seems to be, *political reform*; but it is sought and adored only to afford means for the more certain and rapid and successful prosecution of men's covetous and avaricious designs to heap up treasures for the last days.

3. *A third feature of the predicted season of Christ's coming, is a season of perplexity and trouble.* The angel told Daniel that it should occur when "there shall be a time of trouble, such as there never was since there was a nation, even to that same time."\* Luke also reports the Saviour to have declared, that, in that season, "Men's hearts shall be failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth."† It would seem that the season of Christ's coming occurs before the actual development of those troubles. Confusion and perplexity of mind, uneasiness and anxiety, in view of the bearing of present on

\* Dan. 12. 1.

† Luke, 21. 26.

future events, while yet the world is generally in peace, is one of the most striking and distinctly marked features of that eventful season. The fears and perplexity precede those troubles to some extent, but the great and terrible distress comes after it.

4. *This agrees with a fourth characteristic feature of the predicted season of Christ's coming, viz. the world will be, to a very great extent, in a state of peace.* The Saviour has said, that as it was in the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be. They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,\* totally unaware of the approaching calamity. So also was it in Sodom and Gomorrah, and the first thing that brought them to realize the truth of what had been foretold, was the torrents of judgment, that burst forth upon them from the hand of God. The world at this day appears to possess all these characteristics. Was there ever a time when in the midst of peace, and the most plentiful supply of the fruits of the earth, there was so much perplexity and trouble? We see men living in luxurious perplexity, in splendid misery—in opulent poverty. The paradox is fully realized, and the legislation of our own country and of others, has received indelibly the stamp and impress of this feature of the times.

Twelve years ago the prying statesmen and astute politicians of this world, descried that its peace was portentous. "It is impossible," said a writer in the *Edinburgh Review*,† "to look to the state of the old world without seeing, or rather feeling, that there is a greater and more momentous contest impending than ever before agitated human society. In Germany, in Spain, in France, in Italy, the principles of Reform

\* Mat. 24. 38.

† May, 1830.

and Liberty are visibly arraying themselves for a final struggle with the principles of established abuse, legitimacy, or tyranny, or whatever else it is called by its friends or enemies. Even in England, the more modified elements of the same principles, are stirring and heaving around, above, and beneath us, with unprecedented agitation and terror; and everything betokens an approaching crisis in the great European commonwealth, by the result of which the future character of its government, and the structure and condition of its society, will, in all probability, be determined." The terror since expressed, is much greater among those statesmen to whom

"The aspiring heads of future things appear."

There are times, as it has been said, when man stands nearer than usual to the mysterious fountain of his destiny. Such a time is ours.

5. *The last characteristic feature of the predicted season of Christ's coming which we notice, is great, deep, and profound slumber, in reference to it, on the part of the church of God, though not universal.* The parable of the ten virgins refers directly to this subject. All are described to be in deep sleep till the midnight cry was heard, and one half to have lost their oil, and to have been totally unprepared to meet the Lord at his coming—while the other half, quickly awake, and having their lights trimmed and burning, await, in momentary expectation, his appearance. How deep and extensive, at present, is the lethargy of the Christian church on this subject. Our popular and most widely circulating periodicals ridicule the very idea. It is almost impossible to persuade them to publish anything calculated to excite attention. Multitudes of ministers cannot be induced to investigate or even read upon

the subject. The few that do are accounted weak-minded and erratic,—and the cry of peace and safety extends far and wide,—no evil shall come upon us is the flattering unction which the multitude lay to their own souls. In very many pulpits, and by various denominations, the idea of future punishment is ridiculed or denounced. Skepticism in various forms insinuates itself even into the church of God. Peace, peace, is the cry. There is no avenging God whose wrath need alarm you. Never were the doctrines of universal salvation carried to such an extent, or so multiplied and varied in their forms, as at the present day. Never did men boast more loudly of the advance of civilisation, and contend more pertinaciously that the regular action of established secondary causes is abundantly competent for the government of the world. God's agency is excluded and lost sight of; and the cry is heard, with ribaldrous triumph, "since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation—where is the promise of His coming?"\*

While infidelity scoffs, a large portion of the Christian world never dream of the personal coming of Jesus Christ; but are praying, and laboring, with confident expectation, for the speedy conversion of the world by means of the efforts and influences now employed—so valuable and important in their place—for the multiplication of Missionaries and the spread of the Gospel; while this and the other zealot and bigot is hoping to see his church assume ascendant influence and lead the way to the Millennium. Verily, should the Saviour now return, the event would just as fully surprise the world as did the waters of the Deluge in the days of Noah.

\* 2 Peter, 3. 4.

We mean not to insinuate that Missionary efforts, and other labors of benevolence, should be relaxed. The groans of a world perishing in its corruptions call for quickened, multiplied effort, and for zeal irrepressible and inextinguishable. The Gospel of the kingdom must be preached, in all the world, for a witness unto all nations: and then shall the end come!\* It is our business to consecrate ourselves to the service of God wholly and devotedly, and to the utmost extent of our opportunities and abilities, endeavor to spread that Gospel and hasten the day of his coming. As "God has visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name,"† and is sealing his people by the influence of his blessed Spirit, it is our privilege and honor to be his instruments, and to co-operate with our glorious Redeemer for the salvation of souls and the glory of his name. Every sinner saved becomes an heir of the kingdom, and is destined to live and reign with Christ. Our motives to action are as powerful, as they are plain and intelligible; while we deceive not ourselves or others by vain-glorious expectations, and stimulate to zeal and Christian enterprise by appeals to their imaginations, and by exciting hopes, however flattering, which God has not authorized. We should rejoice to think that there is no storm gathering round this world. But Zion is to be redeemed with judgment. Jesus Christ will break the nations with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Who will not be actively engaged to rescue as many as possible of our guilty race before the storm bursts?

Besides the general description of the season, the prophets have given us a variety of SIGNS designed to mark more particularly the time of Christ's coming. The

\* Matt. 24. 14.

† Acts, 15. 14.



precise day and hour are not indeed defined, but a variety of events are detailed, which, occurring consecutively, enable us to judge, from time to time, of our approach to that great and wonderful event. In general the whole intervening period between the first and second coming of the Saviour is described with sufficient accuracy. Not one word was ever said by Christ or his apostles about a great and universal change in the world, to be produced by the preaching of the Gospel, which would take away the shame and reproach of the cross, or render it easy and fashionable, and generally characteristic of men, to be active, zealous, and consistent Christians. They have not dropped one word about such a state of things as the spiritualist expects in his Millenium. On the contrary, the whole intervening period is described as one of trouble and commotion. The Saviour has distinctly forewarned us, that the world would never be long at peace—but wars and rumors of wars, from generation to generation, and age to age, should prevail—that there should be continually false Christs and false prophets arising, and various predictions and explanations of Christ's being and coming here and there—that opposition, tribulation, and persecution in some shape or degree would be the common lot of all his followers—that the governments of earth, yea, and those of the church, the synagogues, would persecute and afflict his people—that revolutions and confusion would often and extensively prevail—and that the world shall never settle down in the enjoyment of true and permanent peace and felicity till he comes. He came not to send peace on earth but a sword. All these things, therefore, as they have occurred from age to age, are standing signs of his coming. They are the great monuments which he causes to be raised in this fallen

world, on which are engraven, and men may read, the proclamation of his coming.

III. But there are other and more particular SIGNS OF HIS COMING.

1. It was predicted that an *extensive and powerful apostasy should take place*. That day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed the son of perdition.\* The Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils.† In both places the apostle draws the image of Popery, and describes it so exactly that there can be no doubt in any candid mind that he regarded it as the apostasy. Peter‡ declares that it is in the church it is to be looked for, and that it would be brought about by the influence of false teachers, denying the Lord that bought them; actuated by covetous and avaricious designs, and prevailing by hypocritical and imposing pretences to make merchandise of the saints. Jude's description is to the same effect. All the attributes of the great apostasy predicted to occur before the coming of Christ, are to be found in the Papacy—such as demonolatry, or the worship of dead men and women, the prohibition of marriage, a superstitious abstinence from meats, commerce in the souls of men, or making merchandise of them, as is done by the sale of indulgences and the purchase of masses for the dead.

2. Another sign given to the church was, *that this apostasy should not occur till the Roman Empire or fourth beast, whose appropriate territory is in the south and west of Europe and north of Africa, should be*

\* 2 Thess. 2. 3.

† 1 Tim. 4. 1.

‡ 2 Pet. 2. 1.

*divided into ten kingdoms.* This is what both Daniel and John meant by the ten horns on the head of the beast, as has already been shown. This event took place by the invasion of the northern barbarians during the fifth and sixth centuries, and in the establishment of the ten kingdoms:—1. of the Visigoths in Gaul and Spain. 2. The Suevi in Spain. 3. The Heruli in Italy. 4. The Franks in Belgium. 5. The Burgundians in Burgundy. 6. The Saxons in Britain. 7. The Alans in Gaul and Spain. 8. The Ostrogoths in Pannonia. 9. The Lombards in Pannonia. 10. The Vandals in Africa.

3. A third sign was to be *the rise of a diminutive power, which should subvert three of these kingdoms, introduce radical changes in times and laws, and be the very apostasy embodied and personified.* This power, whom we have identified with the Pope of Rome, it was predicted should make war with the saints of the Most High, and prevail against them until the Ancient of Days should come; judgment should be given to the saints of the Most High, and the time come when they should possess the kingdom. This sign points us near to the great and signal day. For—

4. *The time of the continuance of this lawless and persecuting power is predicted.* Several prophecies bring this into view and all limit that time to 1,260 years. If, then, we can ascertain the date of its rise, we may be able to determine pretty nearly that of its destruction, which event is to be secured by the coming of Christ. Two sources of difficulty, however, occur—one is the fact that there are various marked epochs or dates in the rise of the papal power, as 533, 538, 606, and 756. Which is the one meant in prophecy we shall, probably, never know till the event occurs, so that darkness hangs around the close of this pe-

riod of 1,260 years. Another source of difficulty is, the doubt whether the years are to be computed as so many years of 360 or of 365 days,—if the former, making a difference of some seventeen years and three months. Still, having the time of the continuance of this great persecuting and apostate power, we can come so near the wonderful crisis, as to be awake and eagerly expecting the great and glorious things predicted relative to the coming of Christ.

5. *This chronological sign is further set forth by various separate and independent periods, the duration of which is given, and all converging to one point in the last and terrible consummation of God's wrath upon his enemies.* Thus, the whole period of his church's trials and tribulation, and of the times of the Gentile domination, is said to be seven times,\* or according to prophetic calculation seven years of years, that is, 2,520 years, of which 1,260 is the one half. Also the time of Daniel's vision, said to be 2,300 years,† and the periods of 1,290 and 1,335,‡ one thirty, and the other seventy-five years beyond the close of the 1,260 years of papal domination, and forming great epochs in the development of God's plan. We enter not into the discussions on the subject of chronological prophecy, that being foreign from the design of these dissertations. Hereafter the subject may receive attention, and the views and reasonings of those be examined, who affirm the prophetic numbers to be indeterminate. Yet it may be proper to remark, that the church, in seasons of affliction and oppression, has generally had some chronological prediction, directing her hope forward to events which should have

\* Lev. 26. 14–39; especially verses 18, 21, 24, 28.

† Daniel, 8. 14.

‡ Daniel, 12. 11, 12.

a bearing on her interests and prosperity ; and even the world, too, have had great dates assigned for future signal and punitive events.

When Noah began to preach to the antediluvian world, and to forewarn them of the coming flood, one hundred and twenty years\* was stated to be the term of God's forbearance till its occurrence. When Israel were oppressed in Egypt, they had the prediction, made to Abraham, of the four hundred years† of their affliction, which dated at the mocking of Isaac by Ishmael, and terminated in their deliverance. Isaiah predicted the period when the kingdom of Israel‡ should be overthrown ; Jeremiah the seventy years of Judah's captivity ;§ and Daniel the period of seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, when the Messiah would have appeared.|| We are not therefore to be told that there is no such thing as chronological prophecy.

It pleased God, however, in every instance to leave the *precise date* for the commencement of the period somewhat obscure ; but the events fulfilling the prediction demonstrated, not only when that date occurred, but the precision with which the prophecy had been accomplished. Daniel was not a poetical prophet, but a plain, matter-of-fact man ; or, as we would say, in our modern parlance, a business man, acquainted with the nature and importance of statistical matters. Events have proved that one of his chronological predictions was not indeterminate. It is therefore assuming too much to affirm, that his other periods are of a different character, and John's also, who takes his principal chronological prophecy from him.

\* Gen. 6. 3.

† Gen. 15. 13.

‡ Isaiah, 7. 1-9.

§ Jer. 25. 12; 29. 10.

|| Daniel, 9. 1, 4, 20-27.

Our object is not to adjust dates, but merely to show that we have certain chronological signs or series of dates, by which to compute the period of Christ's coming. It is true, that the period of their commencement cannot positively be determined, inasmuch as there are several series of events, occurring at different periods, from any one of which they may be severally commenced, and calculating forward, we shall be pointed to as many different dates for their termination. Thus the period of 2,520, for the chastening of the Jews, may be dated from 731 B. C., when Shalmanezar invaded the ten tribes, and made Samaria tributary to him; or 727 B. C., when he carried Israel captive; or 724 B. C., when he laid siege to Samaria; or 722 B. C., when he took it the second time; or 714 B. C., when Sennacherib invaded Judea; or 708 B. C., when his army was destroyed; or 677 B. C., when Esarhaddon extinguished the kingdom of Israel. Counting 2,520 years, the period of Israel's trial, from each of these dates, we are brought to important dates in the world's history from 1780 to 1843-4, in all of which, as far as they have transpired, some remarkable movements have taken place in God's providence, evidently preparing the way for a great and final catastrophe in the affairs of the nations.\* In like manner, the period of 2,300 years in the vision of Daniel, may be dated from the edict of Cyrus, 536 B. C.; or of Darius Hystaspes, 518 B. C.; or of the seventh year of Artaxerxes, 457 or 456 B. C.; or of the twentieth of the same monarch, 444, or 434, or 432 B. C., not to mention others, which will bring us to A. D. 1764, 1782, 1843, 1856, 1866, 1868.

Mr. Miller has assumed the third date, and confi-

\* See Habershon's Dissertations on the Prophetic Scriptures.

dently preaches that the coming of Christ will be in 1843. He has not proved his assumption to be correct; but, on the contrary, neglecting the harmony of prophecy, and spiritualizing all that is said about the conversion and restoration of the Jews, the war of Gog and Magog, the battle of Armageddon, and other important predictions, he relieves himself from much trouble and embarrassment as an interpreter of prophecy, and, as we think, with unauthorized confidence announces the year and day of Christ's appearance.

God, we think, has purposely left these dates in doubt, so that we may not be able to know precisely the day of Christ's coming. We regret, therefore, that so much confidence and boldness of assertion, not sustained by sufficient proof, should have been indulged in on this subject. We believe it is impossible, for the reasons already stated, and others which might be added, to demonstrate the precise day and hour. Nevertheless, we can descry with sufficient distinctness the general period or season during which the grand event will take place, so that we cannot be more remote from it, at the furthest assignable date, than one hundred and seventy-five years. We may be, and most probably are, much nearer, and although we cannot but condemn the confidence with which it is asserted that next year will be the period, as do Mr. Miller and many others, yet we believe that somewhere from 1843 to 1847, will be marked by very clear and decided movements in God's providence, tending to shape the character of approaching political commotions, and to affect the interests of the Jewish nation, and of the church and the world, which shall render it a marked epoch, and prove that we are advanced one stage nearer to the time of the end.

6. *Another sign anterior to the coming of Christ is*

*the wasting of the Ottoman Empire.* This is the symbolical drying up of the river Euphrates, spoken of by John as occurring under the pouring out of the sixth vial, during which the note of warning is sounded by the Saviour, "Behold, I come as a thief in the night."\* None can be ignorant of the rapid progress of dissolution which is now going on in the Turkish empire. That sagacious traveller, Mr. Elliot, several years ago remarked, "The empire is hurried to destruction by the pressure from without. Circumstances have forced her into painful contact with the insatiable ambition of the czars, the timid cautiousness of England, the vacillating system of France, and the cold calculating policy of Austria. All these have exercised, and still exercise, a baneful influence on the Divan, which is driven to and fro by fears and menaces, distracted by contentions, and harassed by intrigues. Torn by so many conflicting interests, Turkey would long since have fallen into the hands of one or other of the European powers, had not their reciprocal jealousies rendered it impossible for any one to take possession of her without encountering the canons of its rivals. The present is an interval of strife with expectation, in which all are watching each, and one is baffling all."†

We may add that the present peace of Europe is preserved by the very antagonism of the interests of the allied powers. The partition of Turkey would be the signal of general war. While the united effort of the despotic sovereigns is to uphold it in its integrity, the plague is depopulating its principal cities;

\* Rev. 16. 15.

† See also the communication of Rev. Mr. Goodell, Missionary of A. B. C. F. M., at Constantinople, in *Missionary Herald* for April, 1841.



earthquakes and fires and other calamities are hastening its ruin ; province after province has fallen away, and insurrections are continually occurring. By the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi the crescent was struck from the Moslem's brow, and the Russian bear became the protector of Turkey. Greece has declared herself independent. Moldavia and Wallachia have revolted, and been permanently occupied by Russia. The French have wrested away Algiers, and are attempting to found an empire on the northern coast of Africa. Albania and Bosnia are torn by internal discords and dissensions. Ibrahim Pacha's victorious march nearly to the gates of Constantinople, proved the weakness of the empire. Egypt has been recognized as an independent sovereignty. Syria is wasted by insurrectionary wars, and must soon too be erected into an independent nation. Servia, too, is wasted by insurrectionary movements. Everything bears the stamp of wasting and decay. The die is cast. The Ottoman is reduced to the rank of a puppet among the sovereigns of Europe, and Turkey now survives only through their forbearance and mutual jealousies.

7. *A further sign of Christ's coming is the resuscitation of the ancient oriental kingdoms.* These we understand to be "the kings of the East,"\* for whose appearance the way is prepared by the drying up of the waters of the mystic Euphrates. The king of the north and the king of the south, spoken of by Daniel,† which are the powers that respectively make Syria and Egypt their dominion, are to be revived, and to act their part in the last scenes of the great tragedy. Already have Persia, Greece, and Egypt taken a conspicuous place among the nations of the earth. Syria

\* Rev. 16. 12.

† Daniel, 11. 40-45.

and Palestine yet lie waste, but indications are very clear and decisive that on the ruins of the Turkish Empire, or in its future decline, they too are destined to revive, and the questions of establishing a new political sovereignty in Syria, and of the return and re-establishment of the Jews in their own land, have already engaged the attention of the cabinets of Europe.

8. *A further sign to precede the coming of Christ, is the rise of some great military power, emphatically the Antichrist, whose temporary triumph shall be marked with violent persecution, and by the slaughter of the two witnesses.* We cannot see that either of these events has as yet occurred.

Various opinions have been entertained on these subjects, some believing the Pope to be Antichrist,—some the secular Roman Empire under its last head—some a politico-ecclesiastical power to be brought into existence through the influence of the Pope, and to receive the temporary support of the ten kings or anti-Christian nations of Europe, who will make Syria and Palestine the centre of his dominion, and probably Jerusalem his capital; and there, for a season, terribly persecute the people of God, symbolized by the two witnesses, or, in other words, suppress the profession of Christianity.

Mr. Faber\* supposes the two witnesses to have been the two churches of the Vallenses and the Albigenses,—which he thinks alone answer to the description,—their death to have been the dissolution in their corporate capacity, by the edict of the Duke of Savoy at the instigation of the French king—which edict bore date the 31st of January, 1686,—and their resurrec-

\* See Faber's Sac. Cal., v. 3. pp. 8–106.

tion to have been the successful invasions of Savoy, by the exiles, who, on the 16th day of August, 1689, crossed the lake of Geneva, and by April of 1690, had firmly established themselves in their ancient seats.

Mr. Cuninghame\* thinks that the two witnesses are the true spiritual church—that their death was accomplished in the promulgation in 1548 of the new system of doctrine prepared by the command of the Emperor Charles V., afterwards styled the Interim, which secured the suppression of the Protestant doctrine and worship, and the persecution of Protestant ministers, throughout the states of Germany,—and that their resurrection was the successful commencement, about three years and a half afterward, towards the end of 1551, by Maurice of Saxony, of those operations, which reinstated the magistrates, whom the Emperor had deposed, and gave possession of the churches to the Protestant ministers he had ejected.

Mr. Frere supposes the two witnesses to be the Old and New Testaments, their death the suppression and contempt of the Scriptures in infidel France, and their resurrection the cessation of the reign of terror, the rise of a Missionary spirit and the spread of the Gospel.

This also is substantially the opinion of Mr. Miller, which, however, fails to commend itself to us, because it corresponds not so accurately and fully with the prediction, or the description, as we have a right to expect the events will when fulfilled.

It is not designed, in these dissertations, to enter into any expository examinations of the different

\* Cuninghame on the Apocalypse, pp. 141–147.

branches of the prophecies. It is to the leading theme, the key note of prophecy we direct attention. The detailed statements or filling up of the outline, should the present volume find favor with the Christian public, may, if the Lord permit, be given hereafter. Our object at present, in the remarks we make upon the several signs of Christ's coming, is simply to group together the more important and striking, and to show their bearing towards that great event: but, as we differ from most commentators on the subject of the witnesses, we think it proper to exhibit their views.

Daubuz\* supposes, that the two witnesses are the Christians, or rather the public asserters of the true religion, whose dead bodies, during three years and a half, that is, during the whole period of 1,260 years, should "lie in the great place of the city,"—that is, that the worship of God shall be banished from the capitol of corrupted CHRISTENDOM, as well as from its whole jurisdiction, and by these more particularly scorned and profaned."

Mede† is of the same opinion, differing, however, from Daubuz in his understanding of the words *ὅταν τελεσωσι*, translated, according to our version, "when they shall have finished their testimony,"—the former rendering them, "when they are about to finish their testimony," looking forward to a future and final persecution at the close of the 1,260 years;—the latter, "whilst they shall perform their testimony," referring to the whole period. Others‡ suppose the witnesses to be the Jewish and Christian church;

\* See his Perpetual Comment on Rev., pp. 502-520, &c.

† Mede's *Clavis Apocalyptica*, ad loc.

‡ See Cooper's Translation of Mede's *Clavis Apocalyptica*, ad loc.

especially the law of the one, and the Gospel of the other—substantially the same with that of Mr. Frere, &c.

Professor Stuart\* will have us understand the two witnesses, to be the Christians in Jerusalem, during its siege; and the period of their lying dead in the streets of Jerusalem, the period of invasion and conflict prior to the capture and destruction of the city by Titus;—assuming certain positions which have not been proved, as his guide to the meaning of the whole book of Revelations; and asserting things to be so very obvious as not well to be denied,—which, however, we respectfully remark, he cannot but have learned from his researches, have actually been denied;—which have also been supported with much appearance of argument, at least among English commentators, whatever may be the fact among the Germans,—and which, it does not appear that any one ever dreamed, at the time of their occurrence, or for centuries afterward,—a thing reserved for modern hermeneutical discoveries,—were the fulfilment of the prediction—a circumstance, by the way, rather in opposition to the great plainness of its import.

Amid the multitude of different opinions,—a fact affording in itself a strong presumption, that the prediction has not yet been fulfilled,—we find ourselves totally at a loss; and therefore believe, that the events referred to, have not yet transpired. With regard to prophecy unfulfilled, we would speak modestly. What shall be the last form of Antichrist,—when the death of the witnesses shall occur,—or how soon the providence of God may throw further light on these subjects, we will not now venture to say: nor, whether

\* See Stuart's Hints on the Inter. of the Prophecies, ad loc.

there may not yet be some embodiment of all that is corrupt in Popery, Islamism and Judaism, &c.—to be developed in some new anti-Christian opposition to the cause of Christ, to be made in the resuscitated nations of Syria and Palestine, among the Jews. Certain it is, that the eye of Napoleon was turned to that part of the world, and that he entertained the design, which it is said Louis XIV. had projected, to establish there an independent and maritime power, whose alliance might be useful to France in her movements in the Mediterranean, and in her jealousy of British commerce. France thirsts for glory, and whether this project may not soon be realized, by some schemes of military enterprise, which she may excogitate, affecting Syria, Palestine and Egypt: or whether Russia shall take possession of Constantinople, and the Greek church ultimately be involved in the great scenes and movements, to be acted in that part of the world, we will not now hazard a conjecture.

Prophecy teaches us, that Egypt, Palestine and Syria, embracing the ancient Assyria, are to become intimately united in interest, and it seems to intimate, that they will be the theatre where the last form of Antichrist will develop his blasphemies, idolatry, and persecutions; and the cause and glory of Jesus Christ, and the kingdom of Heaven, have their most illustrious honors.\*

Mr. Fraser,† a very close student of prophecy, who does not believe in the personal pre-millennial coming of Christ, nevertheless finds himself constrained to think, that the papal power will be transferred from Rome, be erected in Judea—consequent on the confa-

\* Isa. 19. 23–25.

† Fraser's Key to the Prophecies, p. 236, &c.

gration of Rome—extend its influence in the benighted regions of Asia, and flourish on the ruins of Islamism.

We venture not to indulge in conjectures. Our object is simply to show, that there are, both from prophecy, and from present providential indications, reasons to believe, that the rise of the last form of Antichrist, and the slaughter of the two witnesses, are events to which we are approaching, and which ere long will announce to the student of the Bible, that he has passed another stage nearer to the great eventful day.

9. *The general preaching of the Gospel throughout the world is announced, by the Saviour himself, to be an event which shall give notice of the end of this present dispensation.* “AND THIS GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM SHALL BE PREACHED IN ALL THE WORLD, FOR A WITNESS TO ALL NATIONS, AND THEN SHALL THE END COME.”\* The end of which he speaks, is *the end of the dispensation*, the *συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος*, about which the disciples had inquired.† This remark of the Saviour is made, at the close of his general cautions and observations, intended to apply to the whole period prior to his second coming. The world, of which he speaks, is the habitable world, *οἰκουμένη*, which some commentators, as Rosenmueller and others, suppose to be the Roman world or empire—a sense in which the word is sometimes used: but Mr. Bloomfield, following Whitby and Doddridge, very justly extends its signification, yet inconsistently enough understands it to mean, “by a slight hyperbole, *the greater part of the then known world.*”‡ Such an explanation would not have been admitted, or even imagined, but for the as-

\* Matt. 24. 14.

† Matt. 24. 3.

‡ See his Gr. Test. ad loc.

sumption, that Christ meant the end of the Jewish nation and destruction of Jerusalem.

Whether, by preaching the Gospel of the kingdom be meant, the general preaching of evangelical truth, or the more specific idea of the good news of the kingdom of Heaven approaching, we shall not here attempt to decide, although some incline to the latter opinion. The statement of the Saviour is, that his Gospel of the kingdom, whatever that may mean, shall be preached throughout the habitable world. This does not imply that the world will be converted, any more, than that the preaching of the Gospel in any place, does, that all its inhabitants will be converted. It is for *a witness* or testimony to all nations that it is to be preached; which implies, that it would not be universally received. God is loath to destroy men. He forbears for a long time with guilty nations. He offers by his Gospel the grace, protection and dominion of Heaven; not only for the salvation of individuals, but for the security, happiness, and perpetuity of nations. Once he offered to the Jewish nation, and established among them the benefits of his theocracy;—proposed to make them his people, to establish his kingdom among them, and to reign over them in glory and prosperity. But they rejected him. They despised the benefits of the theocracy;—they asked a king;—and they violated the laws of Jehovah, that dwelt between the cherubims, Israel's God. When he came afterwards, in person, as Jesus of Nazareth, their promised Messiah, "to his own," and offered to bless them, and to redeem his promises, they crucified him! He had brought the kingdom nigh unto them. For he stood among them within, or in their midst, *εἰς τοὺς οὐρανούς*, as their promised Lord and King. But they disowned him, and imprecated the vengeance



of his blood to be upon them. He took the kingdom from them;—and gave it in its offer, to a nation or people bringing forth the fruits thereof;—and broke up their nation and scattered them to the four winds of Heaven.

The good news of his kingdom, however, were not to be announced to any, till Israel had fully and finally settled the question, whether they would receive him. This done, and being rejected by them, he sent it to the Gentiles. God from that day began to visit the Gentiles “to take out of them a people for his name.”\* He has been ever since affording to them an opportunity to obtain the benefits of his sway, and to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Individuals embrace his offer; and God is making up his elect church, out of every nation, kindred, tribe, and tongue and people, who shall live and reign with Christ. Not a nation as such receives him, and hails his dominion. The political governments of earth are corrupt; and the authority of Jesus Christ is set at naught. He is giving them ample time, as he did the Jews, to say whether he should reign over them. In the mean time he will have the Gospel preached for a witness through the whole world. Every nation shall have an opportunity to say whether they will come under the sway of Heaven. When that Gospel shall have accomplished its circuit round the globe, the time of forbearance will cease.

For near two thousand years, God forbore with the Jews; and gave *them* the offer of his kingdom. For near two thousand years, he has done the same with the *Gentile nations*. And now, that Gospel has nearly delivered its testimony throughout the globe. It has

\* Acts, 15. 14.

found its way among the rude tribes of Laplanders and Esquimaux ; and penetrated through the northern snows almost to the very pole. It has travelled through the valleys, and over the mountains, and on the table land, and the wide plains of central and eastern Asia. Through the whole extent of our continent also, stretching almost from the northern to the southern pole, it has sounded its gladdening notes. There is scarce a nation of Europe, Asia, or America, in which it has not been preached. It has visited the numerous isles of the sea. It has sailed round the continent of Africa, and established its Missions from the Cape of Good Hope along both its eastern and western coasts. Long since did it find its way into Egypt, and Nubia and Abyssinia. And last of all, but not the least wonderful, it has restored to their native land some Mendi captives thrown on our shores, and presents the marvellous and interesting prospect that ere long, even the unexplored regions of Central Africa, shall hear the glad tidings of salvation. Verily, we have in these things a spirit-stirring and portentous sign of the coming of the great day of God, when, if the nations will not embrace his Gospel, and submit to his sway, He shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces, as a potter's vessel.

10. *A further sign we notice of the coming of Christ, is the spread and prevalence of the spirit of despotism, of Popery, and of infidelity, among the nations of the earth ; thus preparing the way for the last convulsive scenes of revolution, and of the conspiracies, among kings and their armies, against the peace and happiness of the world, and the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. These are the symbolical frogs, the unclean spirits of demons, which John saw " come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of*

the mouth of the false prophet,"\* prepare the way for great commotions, and lead on and gather "the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to the battle of that great day of God Almighty."

Who that witnessed the effects produced on the mind of Europe by the American Revolution, and afterwards by the glory of the French Republic, and had seen the anti-Christian nations shaken like a reed before the wind, at the blast of the mighty hero of that stormy day, during his short and eventful career, like a devastating hurricane among them, would have ever dreamed, that the despotism of the old Roman Empire would have recovered its power, placed back the fallen sovereigns of Europe on their tottering thrones, and restored the world to its former state? Yet have we seen these things. The spirit of absolute despotic power is rife among the crowned heads, and they have combined to support each other, in defence against, and defiance of, the spirit of liberty among their subjects. The privileged and pampered few oppress and crush the mass.

When the Pope, too, was made the captive of Napoleon, and Rome became an appendage of the French emperor; when the Catholic religion was expelled from France, and atheism established in its stead; when the Jesuits were expelled from different nations, and the kings of the earth, in the language of Scripture, seemed to have been filled with such hatred of the whore as to eat up her flesh; who would have ever thought that Popery should recover from the shock? Yet has it regained a powerful influence in France; possessed itself of advantages in Great Britain; and is at present in a state of more ardent activity,

\* Rev. 16. 13.

and buoyed up with more sanguine hopes of ultimately and universally inundating the earth, than almost at any previous period of its history. We need not detain the reader by presenting statistical details, or referring to authorities on these matters ; but refer him to the weekly periodicals and popular journals of the day. The increase of Popery cannot fail to arrest the attention of the most careless observer of the signs of the times.

The atheistical and infidel spirit of France, likewise, which has prevailed to a great extent for half a century, is yet diffusing itself. This demon, proceeding out of the mouth of "the dragon," appeared first, and acted a most conspicuous part, in that prime intellectual juggler Voltaire, who, with his confederates, roused the world into the phrenzy of atheism ; not by the accuracy of his reasoning, the depth of his philosophy, or the extent of his information ; but by the audacity of his false statements, the artfulness of his insinuations, the wilfulness of his misrepresentation of facts, the impudence of his mendacity, the profaneness of his wit, and the corruption of French literature, which invested him with prodigious power in debauching the human mind. Like the spawn of that salacious animal the frog, his malignant spirit multiplied its offspring with amazing rapidity. Having filled France with its blasphemies and impiety, it fecundated, and brought to life, the horrors of the French Revolution—that tremendous political earthquake, which made the kingdoms of Europe totter to their foundations, and which has left France the stagnant marsh, the putrid pool, that ever since has been generating and diffusing its pestilential miasma. We may trace it in the profane mirth and levity, the scientific sensuality, the contempt of Christian institu-

tions and of the obligations of the marriage compact, the multiplication of crimes, the socialism, the wild, restless, reckless spirit of insubordination, and the thirst for glory, which mark that mighty and chivalrous nation.

Other nations have not escaped from the influence of infidelity. It has shown itself in different forms; in the neology of Germany; in the ridiculous boastings and publications which some fifteen or twenty years since poured forth from the British press; in the practical contempt of spiritual Christianity by the priesthood and higher classes of Catholic countries, mingled with a blind, zealous, superstitious observance of the dead and putrid forms of the Catholic church; and in the modern Unitarianism of Great Britain and the United States. Our own country has by no means escaped from its baneful effects. While there has been an advance in the standard of piety in the churches, there has been an equal advance in the boldness, impudence, and ignorant, arrogant pretensions of infidelity, of which the press, especially in many of our penny papers, and in some of our higher literary periodicals, is but the exponent. We ought not to flatter ourselves that the world has fallen in love with peace and Christianity. The spirits of demons are at work, and panting for opportunities to slake the thirst for blood, which frequent scenes of violence and cupidity betray.

11. *The time of the end, or the end of the times, that is, the season during which the great periods of chronological prophecy run out, and the great things so long predicted will transpire, is described to us as characterized by very strong and marked signs, and particularly by signs in the heavens.\** The sun shall be darkened, the

\* Matt. 24.

moon shall not give her light, the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. There shall also be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. It is supposed by some, and we think with some plausibility, that while these physical events are to be regarded as symbolical of the revolutions and commotions of empires, and of the prevalence of all the evils of earthquakes and famines wont to attend them, they nevertheless will, to some extent, literally occur. Striking atmospheric and celestial phenomena shall be observed, which, being beyond the reach of man's philosophy, may be regarded as the *visible symbols* which God himself hangs out in the heavens to predict the consummation coming. It is remarkable that, for the last hundred, and especially the last fifty or sixty years, the atmospheric and celestial phenomena have been more marked, frequent, and varied, than in any previous age of the world. There are not many definite accounts of the Aurora Borealis\* to be traced further back than about one hundred and fifty years. We have had a series of very marked total eclipses of the sun, that will not occur again for many

\* The following lines of Lucretius are as near to an accurate description of this phenomenon, as anything we meet in remote antiquity.

Nocturnasque faces cœli, sublimi volantes,  
 Nonne vides longos flammæ ducere tractus,  
 In quascunque dedit partes natura meatum ?  
 Non cadere in terram stellas et sidera cernis ?

Lucr. ii. 206, &c.

See also Tac. Hist. v. 13.

The description by Josephus of the extraordinary sights in the Heavens, at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, cannot, without assuming too great liberties, as Archbishop Newcome has done, be made coincident with auroral coruscations. See Newcome's Observations, &c., pp. 263, 264.

years ; and we have had meteoric showers that filled the minds of beholders with wonder.

Some astronomers have told us, that they rejoiced to live in these days, for the abundant and extraordinary celestial phenomena transpiring. It is said, that no less than fifteen hundred stars have recently faded from the vault of heaven, and some of them were observed in a state of conflagration. Frightful earthquakes have occurred in different parts of the world. Famines have extensively prevailed, and of the most fatal character, in several nations of the East. A large portion of the population of Great Britain, through oppressive legislation, are actually at this time in a starving condition. France is but a slumbering volcano, and other nations are in a restless and uneasy condition.

Ever since the French Revolution, the peculiar signs, both moral and political, which it is predicted shall mark the time of the end, have been developing. In a few words, the nations of the earth are rearing the standard of infidelity ; Popery is propagating its abominations ; the Ottoman Empire is wasting away ; the Gospel is extensively propagated, and has been preached in nearly every nation on earth ; the Bible has been translated into more than one hundred and fifty languages ; an extraordinary movement has been made in favor of the Jews ; the world is sunk in fatal security and indifference, and laughs at the thought of danger ; a large portion of the church, like the foolish virgins, has fallen asleep ; the spirit of despotism has forged fresh chains to enslave the minds of men, and to oppress the nations of the earth ; the preparation is making for a great and fearful crisis ; the kings and rulers of the earth are leaguings and conspiring together, and becoming involved more and more in their

ambitious schemes and enterprises ; and the Lord is sealing his people, pouring out his Spirit, and gathering in his elect. Verily we must be blind indeed, if we cannot discern the signs of the times.

The judgment of the Ancient of Days, for aught we can tell, may have already begun to sit in Heaven, and the signs in the sun, moon and stars, distress of nations, &c., may soon be transferred to earth. Already we hear the roaring of the sea and waves ; the breaking forth of popular commotions ; men's hearts begin to fail them through fear, in looking after those things to come upon the earth ; and the powers of the political heavens, or constitutions of governments, begin to shake. All these things have been transpiring, in greater or less activity, ever since A. D. 1792, when, very probably, the twelve hundred and sixty years ended, and the seventy-five years, for the time of the end, commenced ; and if so, then lift up your heads, ye saints, for your redemption draweth nigh. The Lord's coming in the clouds of heaven is fore-signified by all these things, and is even at the doors.

Fellow Christian ! it is your privilege to rejoice. You shall enter into the joy of your Lord. But, impenitent reader, the report of the coming of the Lord should strike you with terror. Prepare to meet your God ! "Be wise now, therefore, oh ye kings : be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."\*

\* Ps. 10-12.



## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE SKEPTIC'S OBJECTION.

“THERE shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.”\* The phrase, “last days,” is used in the Sacred Scriptures; sometimes, indefinitely, to denote futurity; sometimes the general period of the dispensation that should succeed the Mosaic—the gospel days, as we say; and sometimes the period of that dispensation when it is drawing to a close. In whatever sense we understand it here, it is a prediction,—that the idea of the second visible and glorious coming of Jesus Christ would be rejected with ridicule and contempt,—and that men would justify their infidelity on this subject, by their appeals to an alleged uniformity and perpetuity in the laws of nature.

The prediction receives, at this day, a remarkable accomplishment. During the entire period of the present dispensation, there has been more of incredulity in the world, and of a disposition to scoff at the idea of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Messiah of God, than there was before its introduction. Previous to his first coming, not only were the Jews, but

\* 2 Peter, 3. 3.

the whole world, in expectation of the appearance of some great and illustrious personage, who should impart knowledge and diffuse happiness among men. Whatever men thought of their several systems of religion, and however multiform was their idolatry, this was a favorite idea, entertained and inculcated alike by poets and philosophers, priests and people. Since that day, the spirit of scoffing infidelity has presumed much on the ground of the Saviour's outward carriage, and humble spirit, and ignominious death. Perhaps at no period has there been more indifference and practical infidelity on the subject of the second coming of Christ than of late years. The spirit of infidelity has fortified itself by means both of mental and physical science. The event, with its immediate and necessary attendants, as set forth in the Sacred Scriptures, seems to be so entirely miraculous, so contrary to all the known and established laws of nature, so unlike anything that has ever occurred within the experience of any now alive on the earth, or who have lived for centuries, that they cannot believe it ever will be.

We will not say, that infidelity on this subject exists precisely in this form in the church ; but, it most unquestionably has exerted its influence on the explanations of the Bible, adopted by many learned theologians, taught in the schools, and preached in the pulpits at the present day. The neological writers in Germany, and those in this country, and others who adopt their psychological principles, find it by no means difficult to explain away everything like miracles recorded in the Bible, believing that in so doing they commend it to rational minds ; and prophecy itself, after it has been sufficiently generalized, and rendered perfectly vague by the application of false

principles of biblical exegesis, by the misapplication of the true,—has been resolved into the sagacious prescience and remarks of wise men;—or rendered so utterly unlike the fulfilment, as to make it difficult to say, whether it is not even more ridiculous than it is vague and fanciful.\* Even where neological principles are condemned, and miracles admitted and taught, still a style of exegesis extensively obtains, which throws this grand and prominent event of prophecy in the shade,—which destroys the harmony of predictions,—which refers the promise of his coming to mere providential movements, secured by the regular action of existing moral, political, and physical causes,—and which gives undue prominence and importance to the efforts of man for the conversion of the world, and makes this event, and not the coming of Christ, the grand object of expectation.

Our design in this chapter is, to give due consideration to the objection, against the second personal coming of Jesus Christ, which is founded on the uniform and established action of secondary causes, and its utter inconsistency with the laws of nature, and the experience of the world.

There is a class of objections, commonly urged on this subject, which deserve no answer—such as the following:—This and the other man of learning and piety think differently;—the weight of public opinion

\* We regret to say, that Professor Stuart's "Hints on the Interpretation of the Prophecies,"—especially his remarks about the two witnesses, their death and resurrection, and about the septimo-octavo head of the beast having found its antitype in Nero, and the superstitious fears and belief of many that he had not died, but would re-appear upon the throne,—afford a striking specimen of this latter description of exegesis. The literal system of interpretation, looks for *precision*, as well as the literality of events, in the fulfilment of prophecy.

is against the doctrine, and has been for centuries ;—the great mass of commentators for more than a thousand years have explained the Bible declarations on the subject in another way ;—hundreds of fanatics have been made, and led away with the wildest extravagances, by such a belief ;—it is a doctrine that strikes at the very root of all industrial occupations, and dispirits from the enterprise essential to great and permanent improvements ;—it is inconsistent with the commonly received notions of the day of judgment, a general conflagration, and the dissolution of the globe ;—it is altogether ridiculous and absurd ;—it will create excitement and trouble in the church ;—it will destroy the spirituality of its advocates ;—it sanctions the old judaizing spirit ;—it will interfere with our benevolent machinery for the conversion of the world ;—it will destroy the spirit of Missions ;—it will paralyze Christian effort for the conversion of the world ;—it will deprive us of the most powerful and efficacious motives, drawn from the prospect of the speedy and universal conversion of the world, by which to induce and stimulate the Christian community to liberal contributions and to active, prayerful effort ;—it will derange all our fondly cherished notions, hopes, and expectations about the march of improvement, the progress of civilisation, and the melioration of the world ;—it will subject us to the necessity of severer study and closer investigations of the word of God, and to the renunciation of favorite dogmas or positions, which we have assumed and taught, and never for a moment allowed ourselves to doubt ;—it will place the Christian church in a very different attitude and relation towards the world, shut us out from active participation in the political contests of human governments, and irritate the wicked ;—it will

throw a deep and sombre hue upon the religion of Jesus Christ, and, instead of attracting by its loveliness, repel by its horribleness ; and it has, in fact, been used for various purposes injurious to personal holiness, to social prosperity, and to political tranquillity—not to mention other objections of kindred character.

It may suffice to remark, that some of these objections are just as valid against the popular view of the gospel, of the Millenium, and of the day of judgment, as they are against the pre-millennial coming of Christ ;—that others are totally without foundation ;—and that many, if not most, originate in perfect ignorance, or in the misapprehension, of the Scriptural doctrine of Christ's coming, being suggested, either by assumed and fallacious notions about the nature of the day of judgment and the design of that coming, or possessing importance and force entirely from a want of due attention to the harmony of events and circumstances precedent, connected with, and subsequent to it, as revealed by different prophets. The existence and influence of such a multitude of objections current in the church, is proof that the skepticism of the world has invaded the church, which latter, by the way, is the more immediate field or range within which the apostle contemplated the objection to be current. Much of the prevalent skepticism on the whole subject of Christ's coming, is called forth by the pre-millennial date assigned to it. The spiritualist is just as much exposed to the force of the objection, founded on the miraculous character of the procedure as we are, and may it not be, that it is somewhat of the same skepticism of the world, to be found in the church, which is specially offended by the proximity of the event ?

It is, however, a simple question with us, who believe in the Divine authority of the Scriptures—whether it be, or be not the fact, that Jesus Christ and his prophets and apostles, infallibly inspired of God, have testified that he will come and destroy the guilty nations of the earth, raise the dead bodies of his saints, transform his living saints, and establish his kingdom over the remnant of mankind in the flesh, who shall escape the general destruction of the anti-Christian nations. In determining the import of their testimony, we have already seen that the language of the Sacred Scriptures must be explained by the same general principles of interpretation which are approved and sanctioned by the common sense of mankind, and which the human mind, left unembarrassed by sophistry and prejudices of any sort, naturally adopts and applies to determine the import of speech, as used among men on ordinary topics. These principles have been asserted, defended, and applied; and they bring out, as we have shown by various arguments, the results above stated as the true and only legitimate meaning of the predictions.

The objection we at present contemplate, relates to the credibility of the things themselves as set forth in prophecy, inasmuch as the testimony of Jesus Christ and his prophets, thus interpreted, requires us to believe that events will occur which are contrary to our own experience, and to that of the world. Nothing like them, it is said, has ever been seen. The uniformity of the causes which have been in action from the beginning of the creation, renders it impossible to believe in the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The objection is of a mixed character, partly metaphysical and partly historical. Of course our reply must be of like character.

I. THE OBJECTION IS FOUNDED ON A FALSE ASSUMPTION. It assumes, that the evidence of testimony is of no force or conclusiveness beyond the limits of experience. Thus, it is said, we see the fire burns, lead sinks in water, a stone let fall tends to the earth, the rising sun diffuses light, and the withdrawal of his beams leaves the world in darkness. These and similar events, which we find uniformly related, the human mind, naturally and instinctively, refers to some established law of nature, and judges them to be related to each other as cause and effect, so that uniformly, invariably, where one occurs we expect the other will follow. We are determined, it is said, by the very constitution of our nature, thus to infer a permanent, uniform, and established sequence of events, and to believe that fire will always burn, iron will always sink in water, and stone let fall will always tend to the earth, and the rising and setting of the sun will always continue to secure an alternation of light and darkness. God has so made the human mind, and he, it is said, is responsible for the results which it thus instinctively and intuitively embraces.

Now, should a man tell us that he has seen the axe of a woodman fly from its helve and float on the water, the rock leap from its place and fly into the air, the fire lose its power to consume, and the sun to dispel darkness, his testimony, so contrary to our experience, could not be believed. How, it is asked, can we have any evidence of that which, before it can be believed, we must set aside the experience of the world, yea, and set at naught or violate a fundamental law of our mental constitution. It is denied by some, that we can have any evidence at all of events which contradict or contravene the regular and established law of sequence, because the mind, by a sort of physical neces-

sity, is determined to believe that they occur by some necessary or invariable connection between cause and effect. Hence it has been maintained, that should we even see such things ourselves, and others equally miraculous, we must rather doubt the evidence of our own senses, since they may possibly deceive us. The rational evidence, by which the mind is determined, in the belief of the uniform infallible sequence of events, is claimed to be paramount to all others.

This kind of specious sophistry has bewildered some, who have not taken a sufficiently extended range, in their analysis of the human mind, or in their observation of the sequence of events.

This objection, by asserting the paramount claims of this alleged intuitive evidence, does, in fact, demand the rejection of almost every other species of evidence; such as the evidence of testimony, the evidence of sense, the evidence of moral reasoning, yea, and the evidence of our very consciousness, which cannot well be separated from that of sense. When these are contradictory of the evidence by which we infer uniform effects from uniform causes, the objection declares, that they are only valid and conclusive, in so far as they defer to this the paramount species of evidence. But it is notorious, and it becomes the skeptic to account for it, how it is possible that this tendency of the human mind to yield to these several species of evidence, is not as much a part of its constitution as the other. The objector is bound to prove, that the uniformity of causation, which forms the basis of one species of evidence only, is to be the umpire. This he cannot do. The mind is conscious of a power to reason and judge, by weighing and balancing these different sorts of evidence. It is true that certain causes uniformly produce certain results, or



that, under a given set of circumstances, certain events are always found related in the order of sequences. But it is also just as true, and the evidence in proof of it is the very same with the former, that various causes are antagonistical, and that often, a variety of causes are so combined, that the results, which flow from these opposing or combined causes, are very different from those which any one of them would produce, when left singly to operate.

The great fallacy of the objection lies here. It takes it for granted, that, in requiring us to believe a miracle, or that which contravenes some law of nature, we are required to reject the evidence flowing from the relation of *cause* and *effect*. Not so. A miracle requires from us the admission of other causes in action than those which our observation and experience are acquainted with.

Thus, fire will burn, and a stone let fall will tend to the earth; such we naturally and instinctively believe will always be the case, if nothing intervenes to prevent it. Other causes, however, may be brought into action, to prevent the fire from burning and the stone from falling. These causes become known to some, but not to all. Chemical combinations, too, of a most surprising nature, can be produced by those acquainted with the more recondite laws of nature, which perfectly overwhelm the ignorant, such as visible solids being produced out of invisible gases—violent and brilliant inflammation by the action of water and the like. The objection, if adhered to consistently, would shut us out from the knowledge of the more recondite laws of nature, since it claims to make single, more obvious, and generally known laws of nature the basis or standard of all evidence. This mankind will never consent to. The skeptic may

talk, and speculate, and reason, as he pleases, but mankind do not, and will not, pay that sort and degree of deference he claims for the uniformity of causation. This should not, and could not, be the fact if his objection were true. He is therefore bound to show how it so happens, that if, as he says, the human mind cannot believe a thing which contradicts the known laws of causation, there should be such an immense amount of credulity in the world. The fact of credulity, so extensively existing, is a proof that the mind is not invariably, infallibly, and by a sort of physical necessity of its own, determined in the rejection of all that is inconsistent with the uniformity of causation. The phenomenon is easily explained by us, but utterly inexplicable on the skeptic's assumptions. We are conscious of ignorance, with regard to the manner and extent to which causes may be combined, and of the results which will follow from such combination. The grand business of the mind, in the acquisition of knowledge, is to become acquainted with more and more of the endless forms and varieties of combined causes and their results. Our conscious ignorance daily admonishes us to be modest, and not to presume to square all our own observations, and the testimony of others, by any particular cause entirely uncombined with others. We are continually ourselves correcting the inferences, which, according to the law of human thought referred to, we have erroneously drawn from too partial an observance and knowledge of causes in action. This consciousness of ignorance, and of continually extending and correcting our own knowledge, predisposes us to receive the testimony of others, as being itself a sufficient evidence, where there is no reason to doubt the veracity of the witness, or his capacity of observation,

when he reports to us facts which he has seen and knows, but we do not. By far the largest portion of our knowledge of physical science rests precisely on this basis. To indulge skepticism, because the things testified are beyond and contradictory to our experience and observation, is to consign our minds to incurable ignorance on a thousand themes.

In fact, the thing is impracticable; for however strong may be the tendency of the mind to rest in the uniformity of causation, that is, in the uniform and established sequence of the events it has observed, where there has been but a partial observance of them, its consciousness of ignorance, till it has been inflated by vanity, predisposes it to receive, and to rely upon the testimony of others, whose veracity is not doubted. Nowhere, and at no period of life, is this tendency to place implicit reliance on testimony, so strong—even where our own experience and observation are contradicted—as in infancy and early youth. This is just as much a law of our mental constitution as the other. It is just as instinctive as the other, but much stronger; for it requires a long series of observation and experience—establishing the fact that men are not all veracious, but many among them disposed to deceive—before the mind even feels the obligation of balancing evidence. A tendency to rely on testimony, and to rest in the uniformity of causation, are both the constitution of God; and if, at any time, as they often do, they should conflict with each other, our consciousness of ignorance, as to the endless varieties of combined causes and their results, predisposes and prepares us to receive the testimony of a veracious witness, even where it contradicts our limited observation or experience, in preference to our reasonings and philosophizings. It is true, that some minds,

whose professional interest and occupations lead them to sift and to impeach testimony, or whose own self-approbation and vanity may be sustained by a more extended acquaintance with the numerous and common liabilities to error, may become skeptical, and arrogating superior wisdom and discernment to themselves, begin to doubt the reality of all that lies not within the range of their own perceptions; but it is not so with the vast mass of human beings. Self-adulation, with the former, destroys the influence of conscious ignorance, and they must pay, in their skepticism, and consequently circumscribed knowledge, the just penalty which their wise and holy Creator awards to presumptuous vanity. Such men are ever learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth.

The only question, then, that it concerns us to settle, so far as it relates to the metaphysics of the objection, is, were Jesus Christ and his prophets and apostles possessed of sufficient veracity, wisdom, and discernment, to be entitled to confidence?—in other words, is there reason to believe that they had such a superior knowledge of the various causes now in action, and of those which may hereafter be brought into action—and of the manner and extent of their combination by our great Creator, as to meet us, in our own conscious ignorance, and to forewarn us truthfully, of what we could not possibly conjecture or foreknow?

Admitting, as we who believe the Scriptures do, that God,—the great first cause,—who is perfectly acquainted with all possible causes, and all possible combinations of them, and who is ordering, arranging, and combining them unceasingly in his Providence,—has disclosed to them his plans and purposes, and the results which he has intended to secure, we find no

difficulty whatever in believing and realizing the appropriate influence of those great and wonderful things which are predicted concerning the visible appearance of Jesus Christ for the triumph and glorification of his saints, the infliction of vengeance, the destruction of his enemies, and the establishment of his kingdom on the earth. Our minds apprehend just the very thing which cures their skepticism, and gives them rest and contentment. We see in the agency of God to be exerted in certain new combinations of natural causes, just the power adequate to the result predicted. The physical causes now in action are but the uniform and established agency of God, and therefore, just in proportion to our reliance on the uniformity of the causation we witness, is our confidence in the result predicted, when we have the indisputable testimony of him who orders,—combines, and gives energy to all causes,—that thus it shall be.

No metaphysical subtleties or skepticism can, under such circumstances, impair our faith. The two elements of our rational nature,—the tendency of the mind to rely on the uniformity of causation, and on the testimony of a veracious witness,—are not found here conflicting, as in many cases, where mere *human* testimony is concerned; but are in perfect harmony, as we rest in the great First Cause, which knows and controls all others, and has made known to us the result he designs to secure, by a future combination of secondary causes—or, in other words, to bring about a predicted crisis in the history of our globe. In all this there is nothing unphilosophical. Nothing to justify but everything to condemn, on rational and metaphysical principles merely, the ribaldry and scoffings of the skeptical, the superficial mockers of the last days, who say, “Since the fathers have fallen

asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." And this leads me to remark in reply to the objection, that

II. BOTH THE PAST HISTORY OF THE WORLD, AND AN EXTENDED OBSERVATION OF THE VARIOUS PHYSICAL, MORAL, AND POLITICAL CAUSES NOW IN ACTION, LEAD US TO THE CONCLUSION, THAT JUST SUCH A CRISIS, AS THAT PREDICTED TO BE BROUGHT ABOUT THROUGH THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST, MAY BE EXPECTED.

There are monuments existing, on which are engraven the memorials of fearful catastrophes which have already occurred in the history of this globe. The geologist finds, in the different rocky strata, which form the crust of this globe, innumerable traces of mighty revolutions, by which whole genera of animals have been involved in utter ruin. It is clear to his mind, that there have been convulsions which have rocked the very globe;—upheaving at one time, and submerging at another, its loftiest mountains;—driving the ocean on the land, and lifting up and making bare the channels of the mighty deep. It is true he finds, as he thinks, secondary causes now in action, which are adequate to explain these phenomena. But grant him all he asks on this subject, he must admit that these causes, by various combinations, become more potent and active, and develop themselves, at times, with surprising rapidity and suddenness, in some crisis which has proved fatal to animal life, and involved in the very rock itself its imperishable memorials.

While gazing on the wreck of a former world, and studying the character of whole orders of its inhabitants which have perished, he is constrained to admit, that what has once, or as he thinks, oftener occurred,

may occur again. Although he has seen nothing like it, nor ever met with one whose experience and observation can throw any light on such astounding phenomena, and must date these great epochs of the earth's convulsion beyond the history of man; yet does he not, on that account, deny the evidence of his senses, and skeptically reject the inference which his mind draws from the facts everywhere meeting his eye, that there have been terrible crises in the history of our globe, when new and powerful and marvellously active combinations of causes have been at work, rending and rocking, ruining and re-modelling the superficial framework of the globe.

It is indeed a gloomy prospect which the mere philosophical geologist has, in looking down the vista of coming ages. Some have even thought they had detected the mechanical forces in action, and calculated the periods at which the different powers, now held dormant by their antagonism, shall accumulate sufficient momentum to upset the axis of the globe, and alternately to cause the waters of its oceans to rush from north to south and from south to north, and to bury its inhabitants in promiscuous ruin.

Prophecy bids all our fears upon this subject to be at rest; and while the Book which contains the predictions for the future, tells us of a past destruction of the world, by the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, and by the deluge, which submerged the loftiest peaks of the highest mountain ridges, it also apprises us, that such a catastrophe shall never again occur. Nevertheless, it as distinctly declares, that all things shall not for ever continue the same; for another fearful crisis, even of the existing order of the globe, is approaching, and other elements than that of water are reserved and destined for its accomplishment.

The men who scoff and laugh at the idea of Christ's second coming to destroy the anti-Christian nations of the earth, and who found their confidence on the uniformity of causation, might learn the folly of their vain boastings, both from the phenomena of physical science, and from the monuments and records of history.

The facts which geological science, at this day, considers to be fully established, respecting the internal structure of our globe, are truly alarming; and, although the superficial student of nature may be disposed to think that its promptings are in opposition to the word of God, it is but contributing to illustrate and to confirm some of the most wonderful and appalling truths of revelation. The rocky strata of the globe are but a thin crust, compared with its entire mass,—like the peel of an orange, or the shell of an egg, compared with the whole. The centre is a mass of liquid fire, which, coming in contact with the waters that percolate and circulate beneath the channels of the ocean and the foundations of the mountains, generates the mighty chemical and mechanical agent of steam, so capable of producing results the most astounding. It storms and thunders through these subterraneous regions, now driving and lashing the angry surges of abyssmal fires against the columns and arches which support the mountains' base, making whole regions of the earth to shake and tremble with its terrible internal tempests,—now lifting whole continents or vast segments of the globe, cracking, and rending, and dislocating old formations, and throwing up new mountains and islands from the very depths of ocean,—and now forcing, through volcanic craters, immense torrents of burning lava, or mud and ashes, or rocks and stones, commingling with the steam escaping through these safety-valves, so necessary, and



so wisely and widely scattered round the globe, to prevent a general explosion, and the universal conflagration of the planet on which we dwell.

Milton's description of Hell is not altogether fiction, when he speaks of Jehovah's

“Dungeon horrible, on all sides round  
As one great furnace flamed.”

His

“fiery deluge, fed  
With ever burning sulphur unconsumed.”

His

“sulphurous hail  
Shot forth in storm, o'erblown.”

His

“thunder,  
Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage,  
Bellowing through the vast and boundless deep.”

“The tossing of his fiery waves,”

And

“the force  
Of subterranean wind, transporting hill  
Torn from Pelorus, or the shatter'd side  
Of thundering Etna, whose combustible  
And fuel'd entrails thence conceiving fire,  
Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,  
And leave a singed bottom, all involved  
With stench and smoke.”

They have their reality not many miles beneath our feet. We need not think it strange and contrary to the laws of nature—a thing incredible and impossible to be believed—that these central fires should one day rage with wilder fury, and these mighty agents, in some new and more effective combinations, should accomplish the prediction of the prophets, who said, when they saw, in vision, the coming of the Lord, that the mountains quake at him, the hills melt, and the

earth is burnt up at his presence,\*—the mountains flowed down at his presence. It is only necessary for God to give a greater degree of activity to causes now in action, or to combine them more extensively than at present, in order to secure this result.

But geology is not the only science that lifts the veil and lets us see the preparation God is making, by physical agents, for the catastrophe he has predicted. The chemist adds his testimony of terror, and tells us, that there are elements in our atmosphere, and minerals within our soils and rocks, abundantly adequate to the conflagration and destruction of the world. All that is needed on the part of God, so far as physical agents are concerned, is to increase the amount of oxygen in the atmosphere, and the fiery elements of dissolution and destruction will leap from the rocks and stones, the earth and trees, and every object in nature, and realize, most fully, the descriptions of the prophets. "His throne was like the fiery flame, his wheels as burning fire ; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before him."† "A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him."‡ "Behold, Jehovah will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire."§ "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power : when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."||

\* Nahum, 1. 5.

† Dan. 7. 9.

‡ Ps. 50. 3.

§ Is. 66. 15.

|| 2 Thess. 1. 7-10.

Nor do we want other corroborating evidence. History informs us of two great and wondrous classes of facts in direct opposition to what the scoffing infidel may style the uniformity of causation;—FIRST, that sudden, terrible, and devastating convulsions have at least once destroyed the entire world, and occasionally thereafter various parts of it; and, SECOND, that numerous, frequent, and visible appearances and manifestations of God have been made,—yea, that at no stage in the progress of the world's history, has he long withheld from it the visible miraculous tokens of his immediate and personal presence.

The apostle Peter refers to the destruction of the world by the Mosaic deluge, as to an event in its history, of which none can be ignorant but those who are so willingly. "For this," says he, "they willingly are ignorant of, that, by the word of God, the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished."\* The evidence in proof of the fact is abundant and full.† Ancient coins and medals, inscriptions on marble monuments, the names of ancient cities, the customs and traditions of ancient nations, not even extinct in our own day, together with abundant diluvial deposits and remains, to be found in all countries, beside other geological phenomena, unite their testimony in confirmation of Moses' account of the submergence, and the entire dissolution of the earth as it existed in the days of Noah.

Many geologists think they have discovered monumental proof, in the very rocks, of much more fearful and wonderful convulsions of the globe, than that of

\* 2 Peter, 3. 5, 6.

† See Wiseman's Lectures.

the Mosaic deluge, and which must be dated far back in the history of this planet before the deluge, and before the period at which the Mosaic account takes up the process of creation, and gives the details of God's work, when, from the successive ruins of former worlds, he fitted up, in six days, the antediluvian for the abode of man. We are not concerned to settle questions of this sort, with our yet very limited knowledge of the earth's structure, and consequent liability to err, in our deductions and attempts at generalization. Suffice it to say, that we see nothing in the Mosaic account of creation which, when fairly interpreted, would conflict with the position that, anterior to the period at which Moses starts, when he says, "the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep,"\*—not indeed a chaos, but devoid of arrangement and inhabitants, and involved, as it were, in ruin,—there may have been phases of earth, and orders of creatures inhabiting it, as unlike the antediluvian as that was unlike this present world, or as this is unlike to the new modification and organization which shall take place at the coming of Jesus Christ, and the consummation of his kingdom. Admitting the fact, we only have increased proof that as there have been former and various crises and catastrophes in the history of our globe, so may there be again, just as Christ and his prophets have predicted.

It is certain that different sections of the globe—different countries, and regions, and cities—have been suddenly involved in fearful and fatal ruin. We look to the cities of the plain which once stood in the garden of the Lord, and behold, at present, a sluggish sea rolls its heavy waters over their site. Volcanic

\* Genesis, 1. 2.

agents have accomplished the destruction of many others. But three hundred years since, and Monte Nuovo, not far from Naples, now luxuriant with vegetation, was upheaved some three thousand feet above the level of the sea, in the space of thirty-six hours. Within two years past a river burst forth from a mountain in Armenia, and bore away with it over the surrounding country a deluge of mud and water. Islands and mountains, within our own day, have been thrown up from the depths of ocean and again submerged. The causes in action are enough to inspire us with dismay, in looking down the vista of future ages. And when we look out from our globe, and range beyond our system, the causes for alarm become yet more portentous.

Astronomy teaches us that there are cometary bodies which may come across the earth's path, in her orbit round the sun, and excite our fears for the result. Mathematical science does indeed calculate *the chances* that no concussion will take place, yet it can never demonstrate the impossibility of such a thing. We point to the asteroids, and to the meteors which sometimes explode in our own atmosphere, as to the wrecks of a former planetary body, which once revolved between the planets of Mars and Jupiter, to learn the danger of a similar explosion in our own. Recent observations among the fixed stars have apprised us of the disappearance of many, and some in a state of conflagration. Verily, science furnishes infinitely more reason for the infidel to be terrified than to scoff.

The doctrine of chances, and the formulas of the mathematical calculus, are but poor consolation for us, when we look down the ages of futurity, and ask the question, what will become of this globe? It is to the word, the promise, and covenant of our God,

that we look for the certainty of its safety. He has declared, that Jesus Christ, the Lord from Heaven, the everlasting God, who has all power and authority in Heaven and on earth, will, ere long, visit it; and though he shall accomplish prodigious revolutions and desolation in it, and extensive destruction of the nations, and of its guilty inhabitants, and will pour from above and from beneath, the floods of fiery vengeance, yet that it shall never be annihilated, but shall come forth from the conflagration,—shall rise from its ashes, a new and beautiful and glorious world, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and the will of God be done on earth, by the remnant of our race that shall be saved, as it is done in Heaven. For, Peter says, “the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word, (which once drowned the world), are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Nor should we be startled at the thought of the visible appearance of the invisible God. He has often assumed an external form, and placed himself before the eyes of men. The world is full of historical proofs of this fact. They may be found in the words and traditions, the customs and superstitions of nations unblessed by revelation. But we have the volume of the Sacred Scriptures—proved to be an infallible word, by arguments, innumerable and irrefragable,—which gives us abundant proof that God has often visited the world in visible manifestations of his personal presence; yea, and has never very long withheld them.

No sooner had man fallen, than God in mercy approached him in visible form, conversing with him, and reproofing him for his guilt, yet promising him a

deliverer. When he expelled our first parents from the garden of Eden, he placed the cherubim, the visible tokens of the divine presence, on the edge of the garden, with a flaming fiery sword turning every way to keep man off from adventuring to the tree of life.\* There, before that God, "who dwelleth between the cherubims," in the shechinah of his glory, the ancestors of our race approached and offered their sacrifices. From him the visible tokens of acceptance and approbation were vouchsafed to Abel and withheld from Cain, which roused the envy of the latter to such a degree, that he murdered his brother, and fled into the land of Nod from the presence of the Lord.† To Enoch he appeared and caught him away miraculously soul and body from earth.‡ To Noah he appeared, and gave warning of the Flood; and,—after he had instructed him to build his ark, had brought the creatures into it, shut the door, poured out his torrents of rain, broken up the fountains of the deep, and borne the ark over the billows of the mighty deep,—he preserved the remnant of the race, reappeared to him in the new world, establishing his covenant, making known his divine constitution, and introducing a new dispensation.§

Divine appearances thereafter were frequent; so much so, and so extensively, among the sons and children of Noah, the founders of the nations, that there is not a nation of antiquity which did not only not believe in the visible manifestation of God, but had abundant records and legends of his apparition. To Abraham and Jacob, Isaac and Joseph, Moses and Aaron, the visible tokens of his presence were given. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities of

\* Gen. 3. 24. † Gen. 4. 3-16. ‡ Gen. 5. 24; Heb. 11. 5.

§ Gen. ch. 7. 8. 9.

the plain, was showed beforehand to Abraham. He appeared to Lot also, and having led him forth from the midst, the terrible ministers of justice, the fiery agents of destruction, executed his vengeance on the wicked. He sent his servants, Moses and Aaron, into the court of Pharaoh, the proudest and loftiest monarch of earth, at that day, and vindicated his glory by a series of marvellous miracles,—turning the rod into a serpent,—the waters of the Nile into blood,—discomfitting the magicians,—and inflicting stroke after stroke,—filling the land with frogs,—turning the dust into lice,—sending swarms of flies,—inflicting murrain on the cattle,—and the plague of boils and blains on man and beast,—causing it to rain a very grievous hail throughout a land in which it is not wont to rain,—bringing vast armies of locusts to consume every green thing in the land,—overspreading it with impenetrable darkness,—smiting with death the first-born in every house,—making a passage through the channel of the Red Sea for the whole nation of Israel to pass through dry-shod—and drowning Pharaoh and his hosts who followed after them in its depths.

His visible miraculous presence among the camp of Israel was permanently lodged in the pillar and cloud by day, and of fire by night, which guided them for forty years in their march. The bitter waters he healed; the rock in the desert he cleft asunder, and from it made the living water to gush forth. The earth he caused to open up, and devour the wicked conspirators of Korah and his company. He rained down manna from heaven, by the space of forty years to nourish an entire nation. He sent quails by millions, and piled them up in heaps, that they might have flesh to eat to their fill; and by a series of miracles, conducted them on their march from Egypt,



through the wilderness to the promised land. He came in terrible pomp and majesty, with cloud and smoke, with thunder and lightning and tempest, and the voice of a trumpet sounding louder and louder, and took his station on Mount Sinai, on the rock of Horeb, which overlooked the vast plain below, and there, in all the glory and terror of his majesty, pronounced his law within the sight and hearing of the people. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place."\*

"Jehovah," as Moses sung, "came from Sinai.

His uprising was from Seir :

He displayed his glory from Mount Paran ;

And from the midst of the myriads came forth the Holy One,

On his right hand streams of fire."†

He called Moses up to him in the Mount, and conversed with him face to face. He gave him his laws and ordinances, and publicly covenanted with the nation of Israel to be their lawgiver and king, and to rule and govern them as His peculiar people. His glory filled the tabernacle. He led his hosts victorious into Canaan, and, by a series of miracles, drove out the heathen from before them, and established them in the land that he had sworn to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them for an inheritance for ever. He descended, in the days of Solomon, in the cloud of glory, and filled the temple which he had built in honor of his excellent majesty. There, too, he caused the mechinah to dwell, and lodged in the inmost chamber of the temple the token of his visible presence, and by Urim and Thummim pronounced his oracles from off the mercy seat.

\* Psalm, 68. 17.

† Deut. 33. 2.

He sent his prophets often to the nation, and, by miracle after miracle, proved to them that he was not slack concerning his promise, until, at last, he came down, from Heaven again,—in the person of his Son was born of a woman,—laid in a manger,—nursed as an infant,—and reared as a child,—until having attained the age of thirty years, he came forth to the people as the prophet, long promised and expected, and wrought miracles upon miracles,—healing the sick,—giving sight to the blind,—hearing to the deaf,—and speech to the dumb,—cleansing the leper,—loosing the bonds of the paralytic,—causing the lame to walk,—the dead to live,—and raising the putrid corpse from the tomb. He was owned of Heaven,—a voice at his baptism proclaiming “this is my beloved Son, hear ye him,”—the Spirit descending in luminous form as a dove, and hovering over him,—and the winds and waves, and very devils, submitting to his command. When expiring on his cross, the heavens were clothed in blackness—the sun withdrew his beams, and for the space of three hours hid his face from the crimes of men. The rocks were rent asunder, the earth shook and trembled, and his scarred and broken body, which had been laid in the tomb, rose to life, and came forth with many of his attendant saints, who quitted their tombs to attend his presence.

Angels were seen and conversed with, round the tomb. He spent forty days with his disciples after his resurrection, conversing with them about his kingdom, to be established on the earth. In the presence of a vast multitude of his disciples, he suddenly ascended into Heaven, and left them wondering and gazing, till a cloud received him out of their sight, and attendant angels awoke them to reflection, asking, “Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into the heavens? This same Jesus which is taken up from

you into Heaven, shall so return in like manner as ye have seen him go into Heaven.”\* And this expectation authorized of Heaven, has been cherished ever since. The miraculous descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost,—the wonderful miracles performed by the apostles and others, during the first age after the Christian era, as well attested as it is possible for any historical events to be,—the miraculous events connected with the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem and frustration of the attempts to rebuild the temple,—together with the continual evolutions of his plan, in the fulfilment of predictions, which mark out prospectively, the great events to occur in the world before his second coming—all disprove the skeptic’s objection, and furnish growing pledges of his return again to this world, according to his promise, to execute fury on his adversaries, vengeance on his enemies.

We wrest your objection from you, oh ye that are slow of heart to believe all the great things which God has promised. It is not true, that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” God has never been long absent from the world by the direct interpositions of his miraculous power. The last 1,800 years have been the longest period in which the world has not seen the visible tokens of his presence. He has but retired till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. He is gathering his elect, taking out of the world a people for his glory. The work will soon be done. The day of “the restitution of all things,” spoken of by the holy prophets, draws near. More suddenly shall it come than the rush of the tempest in the heavens. The lightning’s flash shall not be more rapid or vivid than the coming of the Son of Man. Where, then, ye scoffers, will ye find a place to hide your guilty heads?—how then shall you be able to meet the indig-

\* Acts, 1. 11.

nant flashes of his eye? In vain will ye call on the rocks and hills to shelter you, and hide you from the wrath of God and of the Lamb. A power you cannot resist shall seize your guilty spirits, and drag them to his bar. Terrible, beyond conception, will be the agony of your soul, there, in the full sight of his glory, to see him whom you have so cruelly rejected, and malignantly insulted, and awake to the full horror of your doom.

But happy, unspeakably happy will be the soul prepared for that glorious revelation of the Lord from Heaven :

Behold! Heaven opens! glory bursts at once  
 Upon the sight! Messiah; King of kings  
 And Lord of lords! Hosanna! sing aloud,  
 Hosanna, hallelujah! *See the Lamb*  
 Comes in his wedding garments! *Hark, the Church,*  
 The new Jerusalem, his favored bride,  
 Arrayed in white, attending him through Heaven,  
 Tunes her unnumbered voices to the song,  
 Hosanna, hallelujah! *Angels join*  
 The glorious anthem in melodious tones,  
 And through the skies re-echo far and wide,  
 Hosanna, hallelujah!—*Saints on earth*  
 Catch the glad sound of joy; and, as they rise  
 To meet their Lord in airy regions, shout  
 Hosanna, hallelujah! *Earth, redeemed*  
 From thine oppressors, highly favored world,  
 Thou birth-place and thou dwelling-place of God.  
 Join every voice to swell the mighty choir,  
 Hosanna, hallelujah! *Ocean, tune*  
 Thy never ceasing music to the theme,  
 Hosanna, hallelujah! Mountains, hills,  
 Groves, forests, valleys, lakes and flowing streams,  
 Speak your delight in one united strain,  
 Hosanna, hallelujah! And let all  
 The full creation, the glad chorus join,  
 Till the vast echo fills the realms of space—  
 Hosanna, hallelujah! Praise the Lord.







