

# MILLENNARIANISM.

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THERE have been recently published two small works against the doctrine of the pre-millennial coming and the personal reign of our Lord Jesus Christ—the one entitled, “*Millennarianism Unscriptural*,” and the other, “*Jefferson’s Millennium ; or, the Millennium a Spiritual State, not a Personal Reign.*” Upon the character of these two works we feel constrained to offer a few remarks.

Though we are entirely opposed to the views of these two writers, because they contradict the plain and simple testimony of the Word of God upon the subjects on which they treat, we would not on that account desire to tincture our remarks with the least degree of acrimony; being assured that the cause of truth, and the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, can, in no circumstances, be promoted by the bitterness of human passions, or by the strife of disputants contending only for the mastery.

But *because* the writer of “*Millennarianism Unscriptural*” has taken up the subject in the way of proposition and objection, (assuming certain hypotheses, and then reasoning from *the consequences* of his *own* theory,) without any appeal “to the law and to the testimony,” we shall speak of it simply as a matter of revealed truth; and content ourselves by following out, as far as our limits will allow, one single, but the only important, question—“What saith the Scripture?”

And we hope the author of the book in question will, as a Christian, see the propriety of our abstaining from following his own mode of treating this subject, when we remind him, and our readers, of the way in which the neologian biblical critics and the advocates of geological science are attempting, by their philosophical wisdom, to set aside the plain and simple record of the Word of God concerning the creation of the world, and also the inspired account of the destruction, in accordance with God’s prophetic Word,

by the waters of the flood ; to say nothing about the unbelief of the Jews, which caused them to reject the Messiah of their own prophecies ; or of the wretched objections of Socinians and infidels against the blessed person and work of the Son of God, which are drawn exactly from the same source as that from which the writer of "*Millennarianism Unscriptural*" has drawn the whole, or nearly the whole, matter of his book.

The whole argument of this book is based upon *consequences* resulting from the admission of certain doctrines and principles ; and it places its author in exactly this position : that if these doctrines *are* based upon the statements of the Word of God, then the statements must be held upon their own authority, whatever may become of consequences and objections ; or, if the consequences are to be maintained as valid, then there is nothing, of course, left but to give up the Bible as the Word of God.

It is so far well for the author that neither the doctrines of the millennium (as he has stated them) nor his distressing *consequences*, as flowing from them, have anything whatever to do with the testimony of the Scriptures upon the subject ; and, therefore, can be of no weight with the simplest and the weakest Christian, who is taking as his guide the Word of God instead of the writings of men.

The book is written in the form of a dialogue, and the author has made the person whom he is opposing say all manner of absurd and foolish things ; and then he gravely refutes them. A most easy way of triumphing in an argument, when an opponent is made to say nothing but what one knows beforehand he can contradict ! One cannot wonder, in such circumstances, at the ease with which the author writes, " At this our millennarian friend was silent ;" or, " At this our millennarian friend looked grave."

With regard to the work of Mr. Jefferson, we would say that *because* it makes the whole question of the pre-millennial advent, the first resurrection, and the personal reign of the Son of David, according to the flesh, to depend upon a single passage in the Revelations, we shall endeavour to shew not merely the entire wrongness of the interpretation of that passage, but also to present, at least, a brief outline of the testimony of Scripture on this glorious and momentous subject.

It is no cause of sorrow to us, but the contrary, that the coming of the Son of God in the clouds of heaven is daily becoming a subject of increasing interest and enquiry to the church of God; and that, at length, Christians amongst the Dissenters are beginning to enquire into the matter. But our spirits are grieved at the thought of men of piety being opposed to the truth of God, and through the blinding and warping influence of systems of divinity, and the power of traditionary comments, becoming the means of casting stumbling-blocks in the way of more simple and unsophistical enquirers after truth.

But the word of Jesus is faithful and true, "If any man is willing to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself."

We have not the least value for theories in connection with God's revealed truth; and we believe that any theory concerning the personal reign of Christ may be just as pernicious in its character and contrary to the mind of God, as the theory of "the Millennium being a spiritual state, and not a personal reign." \*

Our only value is for the testimony of God; as the only sure standing of faith is the position of the Apostle: "Let God be true and every man a liar."

If, therefore, in the statement of this question our ob-

\* We would not have Mr. Jefferson, or our readers, stumble at our calling this book a "theory," since the first man, probably, who ever composed a formal treatise designed to supersede the simple and plain testimony of Scripture—"the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth")—upon this blessed subject, (and in the wake of whose reasonings all subsequent writers on his side of the question appear pretty much to have followed,) plainly calls his work "A Discourse of the Millennium, framed according to this NEW HYPOTHESIS."

And just to shew the author's design in this work, and his estimate of the amount of his labour in it, we will transcribe his entire preface. "Scaliger was pleased to say, 'Calvinus sapuit quia non scripsit in Apocalypsin,'—'Calvin was wise because he did not write upon the Revelations.' I confess I do it not for want of wisdom; that is, because I neither have sufficient reading nor judgment to discern the true intendment of the prophecies contained in that work. But yet, conceiving that I have either found out the true sense of those words (Rev. xx. 4), which usually are alleged as the foundation of the supposed Millennium, or resurrection of the martyrs to reign with Christ a thousand years, or at least have said what is sufficient to shew it is not necessary to understand them in a PROPER sense, I have comprised my

servations should be more diffuse and elementary than comports with the knowledge and attainments of those who have made the prophetic Scriptures the subject of their prayerful study, they may not be too simple for the assistance of minds less instructed and searching after truth. And the works before us are quite a sufficient proof that, while zeal and argument may be employed in upholding or refuting the theories of men on questions that are purely matters of revelation, the words in which God has been pleased to convey His mind—which alone are of the least value—may be most grievously overlooked, and their import utterly neglected.

The question of the second coming of the Lord, and all its connected circumstances, so far as they are revealed, is to be determined upon exactly the same grounds as those on which our faith rests with regard to the “Word being made flesh, and dwelling amongst us.” There is no difference in the testimony on which we believe that “Jesus died and rose again,” after He had “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” and that on which we are called to look for His return, as “the Son of man, coming in the clouds of heaven.” The Scriptures testify, and testify with equal plainness, to these two great facts, that “Christ was *once* offered to bear the sins of many; and *unto them that look for him*, shall he appear a *second* time, without sin unto salvation.”

The certainty of the pre-millennial coming of our Lord, and of His personal reign on (or over) the earth, is to be established against every form of objection by the very same means which are alone employed with success in the defence of the doctrine of the Atonement; and the facts and miracles of both the Old and the New Testaments against the objections of Socinians and infidels.

And what are these means?

They are, in sum, simply these:—1. Either assuming or proving that the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God. 2. That the language of the Word of God is to be taken in its plain and simple, or grammatical import. And, 3. That the Scripture cannot be broken.

sentiments of that controversy in the ensuing treatise, which I submit to the judgment of the reader.”—*Dr. Whitby on the Millennium.*

The question of "the second coming" is just a question of Scriptural interpretation. It is not what men say about it (not even learned men) that is true or to be depended on; but what God says about it; and what men say on either side is to be judged by the Word of God.

If, therefore, there are Christians who are looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven, and who say they know not how soon He may be here, it is just what the Spirit of God says they ought to be doing; and it is just the position in which Jesus Himself desires His followers should be found. He says, "Take ye heed, watch and pray; for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work: and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning: lest, *coming suddenly*, he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you, *I say unto all—Watch*" (Mark xiii. 33—37). Again: "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men *who wait for their Lord*" (Luke xii. 35, 36).

And again, when the Spirit of God describes the position of the Thessalonian church, He says, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and *to wait for his Son from heaven*." They were *waiting* for God's Son from heaven.

It was the same also with Paul and the Philippian Christians; for, speaking by the Spirit of Christ, he says, "Our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven, *from whence* also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

And if any Christians are looking forward to the gathering together of the saints to Jesus, and to their reigning with Him, as the true hope of the Church, instead of dying and being with Him (however blessed), it is because the Word of God says, "It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, *we shall also reign with him*;" and because the definite promise of Jesus is, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in *my* throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in *his* throne." And who it is that shall thus reign, and where the sphere of their regal dignity will be,

we learn from the song which the saints were singing before the throne: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God, *kings and priests*, and we *shall reign on the earth.*"

And if there are Christians who believe that the world, instead of growing better, will reach its highest point of apostacy previous to its being judged in the day of the Lord, it is because the Word of God speaks of the mystery of iniquity already working in the days of His apostles, as that which would produce a falling away, and the revelation of the man of sin, who continues until destroyed by the brightness of the coming of the Son of man; and that, "as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, *until the day* that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot: they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded: but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. *Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed*" (Luke xvii. 26—30).

And if there are Christians who believe that, after the church "is caught up to meet the Lord in the air," and to find their home the heavenly Jerusalem, a remnant of the Jews, having been restored to their own land, will inherit in it "the sure mercies of David," and be the source of blessing to those nations which lie beyond the limits of Christendom, or "the vine of the earth," which is to be reaped and cast into the winepress of God's wrath, or at least beyond the limits of the prophetic earth, or the four great empires, within which it appears there will be utter destruction; it is because the testimony of the Lord upon this point is most clear, declaring "how God at the *first* did visit the Gentiles, to *take out of them* a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets: as it is written, *After this* [after He had visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name] I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up; that the residue of men might seek after the

Lord, and *all* the Gentiles upon whom my name is called; saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" (Acts xv. 14—17). And again, by the Prophet, "The remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, which tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men."

Now, if these things generally are believed by many enquiring Christians in the present day, they are believed on the true testimony of the Word of God: and if the children of God, generally, can be persuaded to take the Scriptures, and quietly, and prayerfully, and *patiently*, to examine into what God has certainly revealed concerning the future expectations of the church and the world, it will be found that they are called to yield their assent, not to vague, incoherent, and conflicting declarations; much less to rest upon a forced and fanciful interpretation of the Word of God, which none would ever *think* of but the imaginative or the learned; but to a simple, clear, comprehensive, and harmonious presentation of the truth, running through the prophecies of both the Old and the New Testaments, and confirmed by the peculiar character of the present dispensation.

The examination of unfulfilled prophecy has been much declined by Christians in the present day, on the ground of its being a speculative and profitless exercise. But this is manifestly an error; and it is practically declared to be an error every time a preacher or a writer speaks of the resurrection of the body, or of a judgment to come. Whatever may be his statements upon these subjects, they must have been drawn from the study of unfulfilled prophecy, or they must be the pictures of his own or of others' fancy. Whatever, therefore, our views may be with regard to the future prospects of the world, or whatever anticipations we may cherish concerning the Jews, or the Gentiles, or the church of God, they must rest upon our knowledge of unfulfilled prophecy, or they must be the offspring of *speculation*; there is no other source.

Whether, therefore, we are acting in the confident expectation of the gradual improvement of the world, by the diffusion of knowledge and the prevalence of the gospel; or whether we are looking for the speedy closing in of the present dispensation in hopeless apostacy, and the coming of the Lord

to judgment;\* we are doing so upon the testimony of unfulfilled prophecy, or we are acting under the guidance of mere imagination and speculation. We cannot look forward by a single day, nor find one ray of light practically to guide our hopes and anticipations of the future, but by an attention to "the more sure word of prophecy; whereunto we do well that we take heed, as unto a *light* that shineth in a dark place." Thus we see there is no alternative for the Christian, or for the church of God, but to regulate their hopes and expectations, and of course to direct their efforts, by the knowledge of unfulfilled prophecy, or to surrender themselves to the guidance of human speculation.

The record of the *past*—of what Christ *has* done—presents the sure foundation of individual salvation. The record of the *future*—of what Christ *will* do—is the only basis of Christian hope and expectation. But before Jesus Christ came in the flesh, even the grounds of salvation were contained in the testimony of unfulfilled prophecy. And because the Jews were ignorant of these prophecies, they fulfilled them in crucifying the Lord of glory.

It being then a simple truth, not at all to be disputed, that the only knowledge of the future, and consequently the only ground of expectation to the church of God, is derived from the testimony of unfulfilled prophecy, it becomes a most important question as to what principle is to be employed in its interpretation.

This question is most happily set at rest by the recorded fulfilment of the prophecies that are past. The Scriptures present but one unvarying mode in which the prophecies of the past have been fulfilled, and thus teach us the mode of fulfilment to be expected in future. For example:—*The Messiah was to be the seed of the woman* (Gen. iii. 15); "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." *The seed of Abraham* (Gen. xii. 3); "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." *Of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David* (2 Sam. vii. 13—16); "He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish

\* The judgment of the *quick*, or the living, which the church of God seems much to have forgotten. But the Word of God declares that Christ shall be the Judge of the living as well as the Judge of the dead; as there will also be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust: but not at the same time.



the throne of his kingdom for ever: I will be his father, and he shall be my son. . . . And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee; thy throne shall be established for ever" (compare Heb. i. 5). *And to be born of a virgin* (Isa. vii. 14); "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," &c. *There was also foretold His birth-place* (Micah v. 2); "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little amongst the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." *His flight into Egypt* (Hosea xi. 1); "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." *His mean appearance and poverty* (Isa. liii. 2, 3); "For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men." *The scene of his ministry* (Isa. ix. 1, 2); "Zabulon and the land of Naphtali. . . . beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (compare Matt. iv. 13—16). *His parabolic language* (Psalm lxxviii. 2); "I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old" (compare Matt. xiii. 3—13). *His miracles* (Isa. liii. 4); "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (compare Matt. viii. 17). *His quiet deportment* (Isa. xlii. 2); "He shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street" (compare Matt. xii. 17—19). *His entrance into Jerusalem on the ass's colt* (Zech. ix. 9); "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold thy king cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation, lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (compare Matt. xxi. 4). All these prophecies have been LITERALLY fulfilled. All these things, and many others, which God hath shewed by the mouths of His holy prophets, He hath so fulfilled—i. e. LITERALLY fulfilled (Acts iii. 18).

But let us for a moment imagine these prophecies to be presented to us as unfulfilled, is it not plain that in attempting to interpret them, on what is called the spiritual principle, we should utterly set aside the greater part of them by figurative explanations? Should we not say

that His being born of a virgin indicated the purity of His descent; that Egypt meant the Egypt of sin; and that Zechariah's prophecy respecting the ass was a beautiful figurative description of the lowliness of Messiah's character? yet the fulfilment, in every instance, was minutely *literal*; and the same may be said of every recorded instance. The prophecy may have been symbolical, as in the former part of Daniel vii.; or figurative, as in Isaiah liii. 2; or simple, as in Isaiah liii. 6: still the event predicted has been always *literally* fulfilled.

Now, if there has been one, and *but* one, unvarying mode in which accomplished prophecy has been fulfilled, and that mode has been the exact and minute accordance of events with the terms of the prediction in which they were foretold, who is to assure us that beyond this point all prophecy is to be viewed as having a *mystical* character, and that in its interpretation an entirely new and opposite principle is to be introduced? We have no instance in the Scriptures of *such* a fulfilment of prophecy. Upon whose authority, then, let us enquire, are we to adopt this novel principle? Upon what ground is the infidel challenged as to the truth of the prophecies of the Word of God regarding Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Jerusalem, and the like? Is it not on the ground of their *literal* and *exact* fulfilment? On what ground is the Jew held to be inexcusable in his refusal to recognize Jesus Christ as the true Messiah? Is it not because the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the humiliation, and sufferings, and death, and resurrection of the Messiah were all *literally* accomplished in His person?

There is not a recorded instance of accomplished prophecy that does not present a literal fulfilment; and there is not an instance that can be appealed to as the accomplishment of a prophecy, since the Scriptures were written, that is not also literal in its character. No other kind of fulfilment can ever carry conviction to the mind. Nothing but the literal and exact accordance of the event with the prediction can ever be received as a certain fulfilment at all.\*

\* It is on this principle that every interpretation of the Book of Revelation, which has professed to find the fulfilment of its predictions in any *past events*, has entirely failed. And in this universal failure, and contradiction, and confusion of interpreters, the conviction is strengthened that, as to its prophetic parts, it is a *Book of Judgments*, to be brought out in the closing scenes of the present dispensation. "And the time is at hand."

Therefore, the only way in which unaccomplished prophecy can be read with certainty, is to read it as God's anticipated *history*. Thus, and thus only, can the truth of the Spirit's declaration concerning it, by the Apostle Peter, be experienced:—"We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your heart."\*

But evidently, this "more sure word of prophecy" becomes the reverse of "a light shining in a dark place," when subjected to the doubtful and subtilizing process of a mystical interpretation. We use the term "*mystical*," because it is the proper antithesis to "*literal*;" and because *carnal* is the true antithesis to *spiritual*. The not observing this distinction has often proved a stumbling-block to enquiring minds. But surely it is not enough to object that the reign of Christ will be *spiritual*, to disprove the fact of that reign being *personal*. It *will* be a spiritual reign—most spiritual:—just as His walk on earth, when sojourning amongst men in His humiliation, was spiritual. And just, also, as the literal facts of our Lord's history, His sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension, were all spiritual: having not the least stain or spot upon them of that which is carnal. And, beyond this, Jesus is *now*, in His *human nature*, in His glorified body, personally, in "the presence of God [blessed thought!] for us"—seated upon His Father's throne, and amidst all the spiritualities of heaven.

When we read such prophecies as these:—"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give 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" (Luke i. 32); and when we connect this with Daniel vii., where it is said: "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of man came in 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

\* "A more sure word of prophecy." A more abiding testimony, and a more full expression of the mind of God, concerning the coming kingdom of His Son, and of "the glory that is to be revealed," than was contained in that bright, but miniature, exhibition of "His glory and Majesty" which had been granted to the Apostle when he was with Jesus "in the Holy Mount."

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 ;" and when we *still further connect with this the declaration* of our Lord in the presence of the High Priest (Matt. xxvi. 64), "*Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven,*" we are at no loss to understand, taking the language simply, what events are here foretold.

They are briefly these : That though Jesus was rejected by the Jews, God will certainly give Him on earth a kingdom ; that His throne shall be in Jerusalem ; and that all the nations of the earth shall serve Him. We know certainly that David had a throne ; and we know as certainly that his throne was in Jerusalem, and that he reigned there over the house of Jacob. But we know, also, that Jesus, when on earth, was crucified for claiming to be the Son of God and the King of the Jews ; and that now He is *not* sitting on the throne of David, but on the throne of His Father ; and that He is not *now* ruling over the house of Jacob, because the house of Jacob is at this moment in a state of rejection and dispersion, on account of its sin in crucifying Him who came to be its Saviour. So that we see distinctly these events are yet future ; for " the Scriptures cannot be broken."

Simeon declared that Jesus should be " a light to *lighten* the Gentiles, and the *glory* of his people Israel." And the Apostle Peter tells us that the purposes of God have not been defeated by the rejection and crucifixion of His Son. For though the Jews had said, " This is the heir ; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours ;" yet God, who had raised Him from the dead, would not fail to perform His oath to David, to give unto Jesus, so raised as the Son of David, the throne which He had promised. The words of the Apostle are, " Men and brethren, let me freely speak to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of *the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh*, he would raise up Christ to sit upon HIS throne ; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ" (Acts ii. 29, 30).

Here we see it very plainly stated that God having foreseen the rejection of Christ by the Jews, when the kingdom was first offered to them in the person of His Son, had beforehand declared by David that it was His purpose to raise Him from the dead, and after that to give Him the promised throne. The quotation from Daniel also determines both the place and character of that kingdom which Jesus is to receive. It is said, "all people, nations, and languages, shall serve Him." These are the distinctions of earth; and they are the distinctions existing at the period when Christ receives His kingdom. This kingdom cannot be Christ's spiritual reign in the church now, because it does not begin until the Son of Man "comes in the clouds of heaven." And His coming in the clouds of heaven cannot be to the final judgment (or the judgment of the dead), because it is expressly said, He comes to receive "a kingdom; and all people, nations, and languages shall serve him."

When also we read the declarations of prophecy concerning the hopes of believers, all is exceedingly definite, if the language is taken in its natural import, as we take it in other parts of the Word of God. For example: it is a very definite expression concerning the Thessalonians, "that they were converted by the gospel to wait for God's Son from heaven;" of the Apostle Paul in the Philippians, "Our citizenship is in heaven, *from whence* also we look for the Lord Jesus;" and in the Epistle to Timothy, "If we be dead with him, we shall also live with him; if we suffer, we shall also *reign with him*." Here the place of our reigning is not expressed; but it is merely declared that "we shall reign *with him*." The fifth of Revelation, however, tells us "we shall reign on the *earth*;" and the twentieth of Revelation declares "that the saints who attain to the first resurrection, lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

But we may enquire, in passing, what becomes of all this definiteness of hope and expectation in these and many other passages of the Word of God which we may have to notice, when brought under the power of an unauthorized mystical interpretation? The throne of David is no longer the throne of David; but is, according to the imagination of the interpreter, either the ascendancy of Christ in the human heart (as if David ever had a throne there), or it is our

Lord's present exaltation to heaven, where He Himself expressly declares He is seated on the throne of His Father, and not on the throne of David.\* The Lord Jesus is not

\* Upon the ordinary spiritualizing interpretation of the glorious prophecy contained in Isaiah ix. 6, 7—"Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth and for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this"—a Jewish writer, Orobio, has the following pungent but just remarks:—

"The divines say that Jesus was not a temporal prince—that He only occupied the throne of David in a spiritual sense; that, in establishing the Christian Church, He has perpetuated the kingdom of David; that He has given His followers the peace of the soul; that His reign will be eternal; and that we should attach a mystical and spiritual sense to the prophecies, and not regard them literally. No reason can be found to uphold such a chimerical explanation, save the absolute determination that such is the true one, because they can bring forward nothing more solid; just in the same manner as any one, who, having explained an enigma according to his own idea, sturdily maintains that his explanation is right, notwithstanding all that the real author of the riddle can urge to convince him of his error.

"It is a despotic will which proves that which it advances. It is surprising that they will not perceive that their exposition is contradictory and cannot be sustained; because, if the Messiah, according to the text, will sit on the throne of David, it must necessarily signify a temporal throne. David's throne and reign were not spiritual, but a reign like that of his predecessor Saul, and other kings his successors."

And again (on the principle of interpretation), we may quote his remarks, as showing what additional stumbling-blocks are cast in the way of the conversion of the Jews, by Christians entirely forsaking that principle by which the humiliation and sufferings of Jesus are shown to have been foretold by the prophets, when they come to treat on the subject of His predicted glory. For the spirit of Christ, which was in the prophet, testified beforehand, not only the sufferings of Christ, but the glories which should follow (1 Pet. i. 11). He says:—"That which cannot apply to the terrestrial Jerusalem is instantly adapted to Jerusalem militant. It signifies little that the holy writings speak in express terms of the houses of Judah and Jacob; they are determined that faith, in default of reason, should confirm what they opine: and the same persuasions are used to convince the credulous or ignorant that the sacred text speaks of the triumphant Jerusalem when they cannot prove that it is the militant. If it be Israel mentioned in the passages they quote, it is the spiritual; that is, the nations who have embraced the Christian religion, and not the temporal, or, in other words, the Jewish seed of Abraham. If the text affirms that Israel and Judah shall return to the land of their fathers, to possess it for ever, they uphold that this land is heaven, and

to reign personally, although He personally suffered on the tree; the reigning of the saints is not *their* reigning, but the triumphs of the Gospel; the first resurrection is not the resurrection of the martyrs, or of the saints who sleep in Jesus; their living and reigning is not *their* living and reigning, but it is the revival and ascendancy of the spirit and the principles of the martyrs.

those who have acknowledged the Messiah are Israel and Judah. The wars and desolations of which the prophet speaks are also taken in a metaphorical sense. We must believe, according to them, that it is the struggle of vice with virtue—impiety with justice. Thus, to annihilate the proofs which we expect will mark the fulfilment of the Almighty's promise, they confound heaven with earth, this world with Paradise, the holy city with the assemblage of Christians; Israel, Jacob, and Judah, with the Gentiles; the disorders of war with the spiritual opposition of vice to virtue; the temple, evidently temporal as it is, with the salvation of souls, the religion they profess, &c.

“The prophet Ezekiel completely destroys all these chimerical opinions; the true Israelites, he says, will be redeemed—the real seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and not the Gentiles. He does not say that the land which they will repossess will be the church or heaven, but that same land which they had inhabited before they were scattered, and wherein they will dwell for ever. The Lord commands him to take two sticks; on the one to write the name of Judah and his companions, Levi and Benjamin; and on the other the name of Ephraim, son of Joseph, and all the house of Israel; that is to say, the remnant of the tribes which were divided into two kingdoms after the death of Solomon; and to say to the children of Israel, that at the time of the redemption, the kingdoms shall be united, never to be divided again. He was then to show these two sticks to the people, and say to them, ‘Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the nations whither they be gone, and will gather them from every side, and bring them unto their own land: and I will make them but *one* nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob, my servant, wherein their fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children’s children for ever. And the nations shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.’

“Can the Gentiles who have embraced the Christian faith believe that they are the Israelites to whom the prophet alludes? Are the nations ever termed Judah and Ephraim? or have they been divided into two kingdoms? Neither reason nor plain sense is the foundation of the persuasion that the land of which the prophet speaks is spiritual: that it is the Church signified, when he assures the people Israel of their return to their own land—to that happy country which they had before possessed in the land of Canaan, that which the Lord had given to their ancestors. Can the mountains where the people were to assemble be spiritual? Fiction never went so far in metamorphosis.”

In all the simplicity of Scriptural statement, concerning the saints "living and reigning with Christ," "the first resurrection," "the rest of the dead not living" until after the thousand years, in which those who partake in the first resurrection are reigning with Christ on the renewed earth, there is nothing to be found but a life of *principles*, and a death of *principles*, a resurrection of *principles*, and a reign of *principles*; "kings and priests" are turned into *principles*; the blessed simplicity of the Word of God is exchanged for a subtle Platonism: and in order to establish an hypothesis, men—Christian men—are found dealing with the Word of God in a manner in which they would be perfectly ashamed to deal with any other book.

But, in truth, our gracious God has, throughout His blessed Word, taught His children far more by *facts* than by *principles*. The Old and the New Testaments are a record of God's actings on the earth, in connection with the children of men, rather than a philosophic exhibition of principles—useless, because incomprehensible, to the poor and the ignorant—for the entertainment and investigation of metaphysical divines.

We are far from asserting that the Bible does not teach principles, or that the language of Scripture is not often figurative, but we do say the principles of God's character and government are learned chiefly from His acts; from what He *has done*, and from what He has promised and threatened *to do*; which are expressed in language too definite, to allow of any but a willing mistake: i.e., when there is a mistake, there exists more reason for it than that which the obscurity of the language presents. To notice especially the passage in Rev. xx. 4, where the Apostle says:—

"I saw thrones, and certain sat on them, and judgment was given unto them; and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and they who (*καὶ οἱ τίνες*) had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands: and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years;" how natural it is to understand that there are three classes of *persons* that were indeed living and reigning with Christ "a thousand years!" And when it is said "the rest of the dead lived not again until



the thousand years were ended," how natural is it to understand it as meaning "the rest of the *dead* did not live again, until the thousand years were ended!" But when the Spirit of God explains the vision, by telling us, "*This* is the first resurrection;" and goes on to say, "Blessed and holy is *he that hath part* in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years;" it is possible to say with some, "The resurrection is passed already;" or to say, "The book of revelation is not worthy of credit;" but it is not possible to *mistake* the Spirit's explanation of the vision.

Much has indeed been said about the difficulty and obscurity of this passage: it is not, however, its *difficulty*, but its *plainness*, that perplexes divines.

The matter presented is just this: in the close of the 19th chapter, the Apostle sees in vision the Lord Jesus seated on a white horse (the symbol of imperial power) in righteousness judging and making war. He sees also the armies in heaven following upon white horses, sharers with their Lord in His kingly power,\* "clothed in fine linen, clean and white;"† "the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints." He sees also the confederated armies of the beast and the kings of the earth gathered together ("round about Jerusalem") to make war against "him that sat on the horse and against his army" (thus it is in the mind of God, though the kings, &c., are deceived by Satan, as if it were mere

\* "If we suffer, we shall also *reign* with him."

† In the order of the vision, we see the Church of God, i.e., "those who sleep in Jesus," and those who are alive and remain, "caught up to meet the Lord in the air," *before* the Lord comes to the earth in judgment upon the beast and kings of the earth, and their armies, &c., confederated against Him; and before the binding of Satan. See chap. xix. 7, 8. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." And Zeeh. xiv. 5: "The Lord my God shall come, and *all the saints with thee*." The saints, as the armies of heaven, seated upon white horses, are thus joined with Jesus in His coming to take possession of His kingdom—His "ruling in the midst of his enemies:" their being seated upon thrones, in the 20th chapter, is their association in the calm and dignified rule of Jesus, when He appears no longer upon "the white horse," but as the Son of Man, "sitting upon the throne of his glory." "The saints shall judge [or rule] the world."

mortal conflict with the Jews) ; and destroyed by the sword of Him that sat on the horse ; and the beast and the false prophet cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. The 20th chapter presents another vision of the binding of Satan, by the angel who had the key of the bottomless pit, and his imprisonment for a thousand years. Concerning which we would simply ask, Is Satan a real existence or not ? Are there any angels of God who are mighty in power ? Are there no chains ; and is there no dungeon by which God can restrain the power of the devil ? Is it a truth or a fable that the Scripture declares when it says, " The angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in *everlasting chains*, under darkness, *until the judgment of the great day* " (Jude 6) ? Do the Scriptures, in speaking of days, or weeks, or years, ever speak of proper time ? Or can it be shewn that a *day* is ever to be understood as a *year*, or that a year means anything but a year, except where it is so declared in the Scriptures themselves ?

After the binding of Satan, as coincident with the commencement of the Millennium (and in beautiful harmony), the Apostle sees a vision " of thrones, and those sitting upon them," and which is explained by the Spirit to be " the first resurrection." We have explained that there are here presented three classes of persons, as possessed of this dignity: 1. " I saw thrones, and they [or certain] sat upon them." 2. " I saw the souls [or persons] \* of them that

\* " I saw the souls," &c. Mr. Jefferson appears to doubt whether it is allowable to put *souls* for *persons* at all. Of course this will be the best determined by a reference to the Greek and Hebrew terms in their occurrence in the Old and New Testaments. We think Mr. Jefferson can hardly be ignorant of their use ; but we present just the following passages :—Gen. xii. 5, " Abraham took . . all the *souls* they had gotten in Haran : and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan." Which were these, *souls*, bodies, or spirits ? Gen. lvi. 15, " All the *souls* of his sons and his daughters were thirty and three." See verses 18, 22, 25, 26. Exodus xii. 16, " No manner of work shall be done, save that which every *man* [soul] must eat." Here is a *soul* eating ! Leviticus v. 2, " If a *soul* touch any unclean thing : " verse 4, " or if a *soul* swear." In Numbers ix. 6, we have it signifying a *dead body* : " There were certain men who were defiled by the *dead body* of a man." The same thing occurs also in Num. ix. 10 ; and again in Num. vi. 6. Such is the latitude in which the term is employed in the Scriptures ! A *soul touching*, and a *soul swearing* ! We need not present any more instances

were beheaded for the witness of Jesus and for the Word of God" [the martyrs]. 3. "And they who [*καὶ οἵτινες*] had not worshipped the beast, neither his image" [the faithful in apostacy in its incipient character, and its open development]; then the history runs on to the loosing of Satan, and his deceiving the nations; and the gathering together of Gog and Magog (ver. 8, 9) against the saints and the beloved city,\* and their overthrow by fire from heaven, and

of the use of the Hebrew word. We present the following from the Greek:—Acts ii. 41, "The same day were added to them about three thousand *souls*." Were they *spirits* or *persons*? Acts iii. 23, "Every *soul* which will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." Acts xxvii. 37, "And we were in all, *in the ship*, two hundred threescore and sixteen *souls*." 1 Peter iii. 20, "The ark .. wherein few, that is eight, *souls* were saved by water." Were these the persons of Noah and his family? Acts vii. 14, "Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen *souls*." Rom. xiii. 1, "Let every *soul* be subject to the higher powers." We need not quote any more, but refer to the Greek Concordance: and we can only wonder at there being any doubt upon the subject. The proper meaning of the term is *person*, beyond any dispute; still Mr. Jefferson says, "The language cannot be so taken; for it is not said that he saw 'the souls' [meaning thereby persons] that had been beheaded, but 'the souls of them that had been beheaded;' *distinguishing them from their persons*." This, however, is quite wrong, even if the matter turned upon this verbal nicety. In Gen. xvi. 15, we have, "All the *souls* of his sons and daughters were thirty and three." We are sure Mr. Jefferson would not say, this phrase was intended to distinguish the *souls* from the *persons* of Jacob's sons and daughters.

But all this is aside from the testimony of God's Word. What the apostle saw, was in vision; the vision of things which were to come to pass hereafter. He had presented before him, *in heaven*, the symbols of innumerable things which were to take place *on earth*. And in this vision he saw *thrones*, the symbols of rule. These thrones were to be occupied; and therefore he saw persons (without saying anything about them) sitting on them; he saw also the souls [or persons] of the martyrs; and also those who had not worshipped the beast, &c. In one sense, it is not of the smallest moment, whether the apostle saw the *bodies*, *souls*, or *spirits* of the martyrs (except as there is always a beautiful propriety in the figures and symbols of the Word of God), because we have God's own explanation of the vision to guide us as to its true meaning. And that explanation is, "*This is the first resurrection*. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a *thousand years*." The *vision* may be what it will, this is the Spirit's explanation of it.

\* These are the earthly saints, and the earthly Jerusalem. And it is important to mark the distinction (ver. 11) between the heavenly and

the casting of Satan (*now*) "*into the lake of fire and brimstone.*" Then follows the vision (ver. 11) of "the great white throne," and the judgment of the dead; which takes place at the end of the thousand years of earthly and heavenly blessedness; interrupted by the "*little season.*" In this judgment of the dead there is no *coming* of Christ; He had come a thousand years before, and it was only for the great white throne to be disclosed, and the issues of judgment to proceed. The vision of the 21st and 22nd chapters are the presentation of the glories of the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem, during the period of the thousand years, and also after the period in which "He that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new."

So plain is the testimony of this passage to a resurrection and reign with Christ of a thousand years "*on [or over] the earth*" (as seen in Rev. v. 10), while the rest of the dead live not, as being the blessed hope and privilege of the saints, that there is no alternative but either to admit its truth or to reject the authority of the book in which the testimony is presented. There is no middle course. But, as we have said, the weight of this question rests not on this passage alone. There are other testimonies, in entire harmony with its truth, harmony which it is proper here to notice.

It is not a matter for controversy, so far as we know, with any *Christians*, whether there will be a thousand years of blessedness on this earth or not. All are looking in some way or other for the accomplishment of the prediction, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The only question is as to the means by which this state of universal blessedness is to be brought about.

We may here quote the words of an author, who, whatever his sentiments on some other points of truth may be, has written upon this subject with great force, and with a happy subjection to the Word of God.

the earthly Jerusalem. The latter shall indeed shine with glory, as being the earthly "city of the great King;" but all the characteristics of an earthly state will belong to it; "there shall be boys and girls playing in its streets" (Zech. viii. 5). "Men shall buy fields for money and subscribe evidences and seal them" (Jer. xxxii. 44). But in the heavenly Jerusalem, "they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like the angels in heaven;" all things being no longer natural but spiritual, and adapted to their spiritual bodies.

“In a certain sense, almost all Christians in the present day may be said to be Millennarians; and I am not sure that the title might not even be more extensively applied. We might almost say that the expectation of a period of greater felicity to be hereafter enjoyed by mankind on earth, is now the general expectation of educated mankind. At all events, we may say that such a period is expected by most of those whose minds are exercised in anticipations of the future. So far the infidel and the Christian agree, however widely they may differ as to the nature and circumstances of the happiness which they expect, and as to the means by which it is to be attained.

“An opinion so general, and held by such very different classes on totally distinct grounds, may be expected to take many modifications, and to show itself in various forms and degrees; but I believe that without pretending to strict definition, we may say that those who are looking forward with anything like settled and considerate belief to a future period of happiness on earth, may be divided into three classes.

“I. There are those who expect the perfection, or the definite improvement of man, through the cultivation of his moral, intellectual, and physical capacities. A new era, characterized by a new form of society, is anticipated. Old forms and follies are to be abolished, and old superstitions forgotten. It is hoped that enlightened reason will rid mankind of moral evil; and that the natural evils which he has hitherto suffered may be mitigated, perhaps annihilated, by science. The chief means of promoting this state of happiness is supposed to be education, directed to the development of the faculties of man. ‘The schoolmaster is abroad;’ cheap science is provided for the multitude; institutions for mechanics, universities for shopkeepers, and schools for infants, are supposed to be preparing a golden age, in which man will shew himself in a state of moral, intellectual, and physical maturity, such as he has never yet attained.

“I do not mean to say that some such opinion as this, or some modification of it, is not held by persons avowing, and actually possessing, various degrees of religious belief; but, as far as I have observed, those by whom it has been most zealously maintained are avowed infidels. As to the

scheme itself, its most striking feature is, that it is altogether irrespective of man's relation to God, and of the connection between this world and another. It was the Devil who first pointed out the tree of knowledge to mankind, as the means by which they might become as gods; and I shall take leave to call this expected period, in which man is to be brought by the progress of science and the march of intellect to a happy independence of God, the Devil's Millennium.

"II. The second form in which this expectation is manifested, is that which, recognizing the Scriptures as a Divine revelation, and believing that the happiness of man must depend on his knowledge of God, looks forward to the conversion of the world to the faith of Christ, by means of schools, missions, and other institutions for the promulgation of Christianity. It is expected that these means, by the grace of God, will gradually convert mankind, and bring them from unbelief and ignorance to a state of vital Christianity.

"In this, there is nothing, that I can see, contrary to reason. The schools, the missions, and the Bibles and religious books circulated by societies, are good and scriptural means of grace; and even supposing any of them to be mixed with human infirmity, they are yet such means as God has been pleased to appoint for the formation and edification of His Church, and such as He has in fact blessed to the promotion of Christianity. And why may we not expect that, more zealously used, and more blessed in proportion to the zeal of those who use them, they may convert the whole world? And if all shall be brought to the knowledge of Christ, and to worthy conduct as His disciples, is it not certain that a period of bliss, such as has been hitherto unknown, must ensue? All this seems to me entirely consonant to human reason: and to the scheme itself, as an hypothesis, I have nothing to object: but as it seems to me to be founded wholly on man's wisdom, and to receive no countenance from any higher quarter, I must take leave to call it Man's Millennium.

"III. The third form in which this expectation is manifested, is that which is now, I think, very often emphatically termed *Millennarianism*, or *Chiliasm*: and it differs from the preceding view principally in the following particulars:—

“ First, In expecting that the period of blessedness will be preceded, not by an extraordinary extension of religious belief, but by a general *apostacy* from Christianity, and consequent judgments.

“ Secondly, In expecting that it will consist in the presence and government of Christ on earth, or what is termed the *Personal Reign*.

“ Thirdly, In supposing that the enjoyment of this period of blessedness will not be limited to such of the human race as shall be living on earth when it begins, or shall be born during its continuance, but that some, or all, of the dead in Christ shall be raised to partake of it: in other words, in the doctrine of the *First Resurrection*.

“ Fourthly, In expecting, not the annihilation, but the restoration and renovation, of the material world, or ‘ the *Restitution* of all things.’ ”

Our appeal must be to the Word of God. In like manner, it is not a question with Christians, who believe in a “ judgment to come,” whether Christ will indeed return to this earth again. All acknowledge, as the Scriptures declare it, that He will come again:—that He will *personally* come. But the question is, whether it is right to look for His speedy coming to introduce the thousand years of blessedness, by judgments upon the wicked, and by the binding of Satan; or whether it is certain that He will not come until the final judgment, when the thousand years are finished. The practical results connected with the one or the other of these views, it is obvious, will be immensely different, but the truth of the matter must be decided by the Word of God.

There are three places in Scripture in which there is a direct prediction of the universal spread of the knowledge of the Lord:—in Num. xiv. 21; Isa. xi. 9; and in Hab. ii. 14. Now these predictions, and the blessed accompaniments and results of their fulfilment, which form the glowing theme of many a prophecy, must receive their accomplishment: “ for the Scripture cannot be broken.” But is it true that they will receive their accomplishment in the present dispensation, and by means of the preaching of the gospel? This is the persuasion of many Christians; but there is not one word in the New Testament to support it. The irreversible principle of the present dispensation is

declared by the Lord in the words, "*Many* are called, but *few* are chosen." And to the end the exhortation will remain in unabated force and application, "Enter ye in at the straight gate : for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and *many* there be which go in thereat. Because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life : and *few* there be which find it" (Matt. vii. 13, 14). There is a close moral connection between this declaration of the Lord and the caution which immediately follows. He adds, "Beware of false prophets." He knew that it would be the work of false prophets, by their worldliness and fleshly doctrines, to persuade men that the narrow way has become broad ; and the broad way narrow. The Lord preserve His children from falling into their snare ; and deliver those who are entangled in it !

The present is not a dispensation of universality, but of election. "God is visiting the Gentiles, to take *out of them* a people for His name" (Acts xv. 14). This is what is doing by the gospel now. The testimony of our Lord is, that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world *for a witness* unto *all nations*, and then shall *the end come*," i.e. the end of the age (*αιωνος*, ver. 3). How constantly is this passage read, as if it were, "and then shall the Millennium come;" or, "then shall the conversion of all nations come!"

In Matt. xiii. our Lord has expressly unfolded the characteristics of the present dispensation in a series of parables, introduced by the form of comparison,—“the kingdom of heaven is like.” In the first of these parables, commencing with this formula—the parable of the tares and wheat—He tells us there will be no period of universal blessing up to the end, or before the harvest: “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field : but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field ? from whence, then, hath it tares ? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up ? But he said, Nay :



lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn" (Matt. xiii. 24—30).

In our Lord's own explanation of this parable to His disciples, we learn what is meant by the field, the good seed, the tares, the time of harvest, the reapers, the binding the tares in bundles, and the gathering of the wheat into His barn. He says, "the field is the *world* (*κοσμος*); 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 age* (*αιωνος*); 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 Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear let him hear" (Matt. xiii. 38—43). Here is no millennium up to the end of the age. The tares and the wheat both grow *together* until the *harvest*.

Again: also in the *last* of these parables He says, "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* [it did not gather *all* the fishes in the sea], they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the *bad* away. *So shall it be* in the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Here is no universal prevalence of holiness, but a mixture of evil and good up to the end. The most that the gospel net gathers, even up to the end, is only some of every kind (the net full—a given quantity—not even *NOMINALLY all*); and those which it gathers are "both good and bad." And the good and the bad continue together, just as the tares and the wheat grow together, until the *end*.

This is our Lord's own testimony; and it is in substance repeated in the parable of the poor widow and the unjust

judge (Luke xviii. 8); and especially in the emphatic question, "When the *Son of man cometh*, shall he find faith on the earth?"

It is repeated with still more particularity in the circumstantial description which Jesus gives of the state of the world at the time of His coming:—"For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day. But first must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation. And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke xvii. 24—30).

This testimony is entirely confirmed by the declarations of Christ and His apostles, concerning the condition of believers, or the Church, as long as the Church is in the world. Our Lord says, "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake; . . . and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold, but he that shall *endure unto the end* shall be saved." Again, "Marvel not if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and let him *follow me*." The exhortation of the Apostle to the followers of Jesus is, "to continue in the faith, and that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God." And, again, he declares that "whosoever *will* live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution."

In fact, neither the gospels nor the epistles contain a single direction for the guidance of a *dominant* Church; nor one principle of action suited to a state in which the Church ceases to be in contrast and opposition to the world. The children of God are contemplated in the New Testament, as in a state of trial and sorrow; and that, especially, on

account of the evil that is in the world. So that, upon the supposition of a gradual advancement of the Gospel, until, ultimately, it became universally received, every portion of the epistles would gradually become inappropriate to the Church of God!

The Spirit of God saw no millennium before the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when by the Apostle He testified that "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (Tim iii. 1—5).

And, again, the Thessalonians are taught to look not for a millennium as intervening between them and the day of the Lord; but they are told expressly that, "that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, . . . whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming." The Spirit of the Lord who saw, in the Apostle's days, "the mystery of iniquity already working," saw no millennium before the coming of the day of the Lord, but only "the apostacy" (Gr.), and "the revelation of the man of Sin."

One great stumbling-block in the way of many Christians, receiving the truth concerning the second coming of our Lord is, their not seeing what may be termed the parenthetical character of the dispensation, and the "heavenly calling" of the Church.

It is not seen that the kingdom was presented unto Israel in the person of Messiah; and that, viewed in connection with their recognized position and privileges as the chosen people of God, it was not until after their rejection of Christ that the kingdom was taken from them, and their house was left unto them desolate, until they should say at length, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The rejection of Jesus in humiliation, by the Jews, did not set aside the *purpose* of God (for we learn in connection with this subject, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"); it only for a season suspended its fulfilment,

causing a break in the dispensation of earthly blessing, by the rejection of the earthly family; which break is filled up by the gathering of the Church, not upon the basis of earthly blessing, or position, at all; but as an entirely heavenly thing. It is striking to see how the title of our Lord to the throne of His father David, in Luke i. 32, 33, which seemed to have failed, by the rejection of Jesus, as Messiah and Son of David, is taken up again in the Acts (the continuation of Luke), and is shewn by Peter (Acts ii. 30) to be still waiting for Christ, to assume, as raised from the dead. And this royal dignity He will take, when the mystery of Israel's blindness shall have reached its limit, and when His Church is fully gathered, to be associated with Him in His reign.

This parenthetical character of the dispensation is presented fully in Acts xv. 14—17: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets, as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."

It must be remembered that Israel was set *manifestly* in the position of "lo ammi" (*not my people*), after the martyrdom of Stephen; and especially after Paul was raised up to be the *Apostle of the Gentiles*. This is fully brought out in chap. xiii. 46, 47: "Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles; for so the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." But it must not be concluded that Israel's was a final rejection, or that the Church was now set in the place of the Jews. It was indeed set in a much higher position as to heavenly blessings; but in its connection with the earth, it was "God visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name." But *after* this is done, we see the Jew coming in again; and Jesus returning and building up again the tabernacle of

David, &c., and then the *residue* of men, and *all* the Gentiles, partaking of the blessing through Israel's restoration; as it is written, "*Rejoice ye Gentiles with his people.*"

Rom. xi. also presents the fall of the Jews as the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them as the riches of the Gentiles; and it brings out also the apostacy and cutting off of the professing Gentile Church; as also the coming in of the Jews again. Verses 26, 27: "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 Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins." And the whole matter of their rejection, the gathering of the Church, and their restoration again, is presented in the four following verses: verses 28—31: "As concerning the *gospel*, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the *election*, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye [Gentiles] in times past have not believed God, yet have *now* obtained mercy through their unbelief: even so have these now not believed [or obeyed] your mercy, that they also might come in on the terms of mercy."\*

The same thing is also very strikingly presented by our Lord in the synagogue at Nazareth, as recorded in Luke iv. 16—21: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the Prophet Esaias; and, when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."

It will be seen by a reference to Isaiah lxi. that our Lord stopped at the comma which divides between "the acceptable year of the Lord," and "the day of vengeance of our God."

\* See Tyndale's translation of this passage.

And it is at this *break* the Church comes in; and to it especially is it "the acceptable year of the Lord." It would have been so to Israel had they known "the day of their merciful visitation." This break has continued during 1800 years; but whenever it closes, it becomes "the day of vengeance of our God." And we have only to turn to Isaiah lxiii. 4, which presents the Lord in His second coming, and taking up the comma, i. e. resuming that part of the sentence at which He stopped, when He said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears;" and as He then comes for the deliverance of the remnant of His people, we read, "The day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come." He *begins* then with the day of vengeance; and "the year of his redeemed" follows.

There is also another beautiful exhibition of the same truth in Acts i., where we read, after Christ's forty days' converse with His disciples concerning the "*things pertaining to the kingdom of God*," "they asked of him, Wilt thou at this *time* restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times, or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power." Here is no rebuke of His disciples as to the matter of their enquiry; much less is it turning the question (as some have supposed), because it savoured of the Jewish expectation of a temporal kingdom. It was merely a declaration that it was improper for them to enquire after the *time*; for the full answer to their question (with no limitation) is presented in what Jesus adds, and in what the two men in white apparel afterwards supply. Our Lord adds, "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be *witnesses* unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." In this our Lord sets His disciples in the position of His Church (a witness for the risen Jesus on earth), and so far raised above the relationships of the earthly family. But the answer concerning the kingdom is not withheld; but the order of time is beautiful, for the Church must be set in witness *first*. It is added, "while they looked steadfastly towards heaven, as He went up, behold two men stood by them, in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come

in like manner as ye have seen him go up into heaven." Here the answer is given concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. For it is when His feet shall stand upon Mount Olivet, as described in Zech. xiv., that He comes in the time of Jacob's trouble to deliver him out of it. Then, indeed, is the kingdom restored unto Israel !

The connection also of the quotation of Isa. xxv. 8 with 1 Cor. xv., very plainly shews that at the point where the blessing of the Church is completed, in the resurrection of the saints, and of course at Christ's second coming, the blessing of the Jews, or God's earthly family, begins. The Apostle says (ver. 54), "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory*;" which shews that the resurrection of the saints, as described in 1 Cor. xv. will be FOLLOWED by the introduction of a new EARTHLY dispensation towards God's people Israel, "whose rebuke he shall then take away from off all the earth."

It is this connection of the resurrection of the saints with Israel's blessing in the land of their inheritance, which supplies the link in our Lord's reply to the foolish question of the Sadducees about the woman who had had seven husbands (Luke xx. 27—39). In the first place, Jesus sets aside all carnal ideas connected with the resurrection, "answering them, The children of this world marry and are given in marriage; but they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world [age] and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more; for they are equal to the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." In the next place, our Lord proves the resurrection from the dead from the testimony of Moses (verses 3, 38), "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead but of the living: for all live unto him."

The question is not whether there is a state of separate souls, but whether there is *a resurrection of the dead*; which the answer does not meet, unless the peculiar circumstances connected with God's declaring Himself the God of

Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob are seen. The reference is to Genesis xvii. 7, 8, where Jehovah says to Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto THEE, and to thy seed after thee, THE LAND wherein thou art a stranger, *all the land of Canaan*, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." The simple position, therefore, is this: the Sadducees, who acknowledged the books of Moses, knew that the promise of the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was connected with Jehovah being their God: and they knew also, that neither of them ever had any portion of the land in possession, *except a burying-place*: so that there is no alternative but either to say, Jehovah had failed in His truth (a thing from which even a Sadducee and Jew would shrink), or that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *must rise from the dead*, in order that the promise of God to give them the land might be fulfilled.

It is thus in the *connections* of Scripture that the harmony of Divine truth is alone perceived. "For no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation [or of self-solution]. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Therefore it is necessary, with reverence and meekness to wait on the mind of the Spirit; desiring simply to be led by Him who inspired the prophecies, into the knowledge of their scope and meaning. The Lord in His grace, enable all His children, in the study of His will, more *practically* to acknowledge the office of the Spirit, as "a guide into all truth!"

We have said that it is not by the preaching of the Gospel, or by the gradual extension of Christianity, until it becomes universal, that this period of earthly and heavenly blessedness is to be brought in. But it is by far different means; as the change to be effected comprehends the deliverance of the creation from its groaning, and the bodies as well as the spirits of the saints from the power of Satan and the grave.

This period is spoken of as "the times of the *restitution* of all things" (and not as some would fain have it, "*the*



*fulfilment of all things*"). And it is declared that all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after, "as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of those days." They have been the theme of every prophet that has spoken, in a greater or less degree; and they are the times to which all creation is looking forward: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit, the redemption of our body.*" And "the earnest expectation of the creation [also] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." This "redemption of the body," this "manifestation of the sons of God," will take place when Jesus comes in the clouds of heaven. For "when he who is our life shall appear [shall be manifested] we also shall appear with him in glory." The testimony of the Spirit concerning those who believe in Christ, is presented in these blessed words, "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be. But we know that when he shall appear *we shall be like him*, for we shall see him as he is."

In the 11th of Isaiah, which describes this blissful period, we have a link of connection, which tells us that the revelation of the man of sin, and his destruction by the coming of the Lord (as presented, 2 Thess. ii.) are coincident, in point of time, with the fulfilment of the prophecy of that chapter. It is said in Isaiah, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath [or spirit] of his lips shall he slay the wicked one;" and in 2 Thessalonians, "Then shall that wicked one [both are singular] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." By this we know that Christ will come, and that he will destroy him whose coming is after the working of Satan, before "the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;" and before the accomplishment of the prediction in the ninth verse, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

Another passage which proves there is no millennium

until after Christ comes, is the second chapter of the prophecies of Daniel, where we have Nebuchadnezzar's colossal image, symbolical of the four great monarchies which have risen in succession, and which continue, as to territory, until the present day. We have also the destruction of this image by the falling of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands; after which the stone becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth.

"The stone undoubtedly is the Lord Jesus Christ, as appears by a reference to Matthew xxi. 44, where the Saviour (evidently in allusion to this falling of the stone) says, 'Whosoever shall fall *on* this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever *it* shall fall, it will grind him to powder.' Mark the distinction here between persons falling on the stone, and the stone falling on them. It is first lying on the ground, and, while remaining in that state, was the cause of stumbling to many. By this we understand the humiliation of Jesus, which we know was a stone of stumbling to the Jews, who were broken in consequence—not destroyed. But observe, this stone is afterwards elevated, as is clearly implied in the phrase, 'on whomsoever it shall fall.' Now the elevation of the stone is the exaltation of Jesus, and the falling of the stone can be none other than the second coming of Jesus in utterly destroying judgment on his enemies; and it is after the stone falls that it becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth, or the kingdom of the God of heaven is set up, which breaks in pieces and consumes all these kingdoms, and shall stand for ever. See also Daniel vii. 13, 14, where the prophet has a vision of the Son of man coming *in the clouds of heaven*, which, if you compare with Matt. xxiv. 30, you will find to be the second coming; and what is the object of His coming? Not merely to pass sentence on the human race; but to receive '*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.' And this kingdom is only *nigh at hand* when the signs indicative of the Saviour's coming are observable" (See Luke xxi. 31). \*

As a proof of the practical power of the pre-millennial

\* Tract on "The Second Appearing and Personal Reign of the Lord Jesus Christ." London: W. H. Broom.

advent, as well as a testimony to its truth, we refer to the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, in Matt. xxv. As the evil servant, in the close of chap. xxiv., began to smite his fellow-servants [to assume undue authority] and to eat and drink with the drunken [to be immersed in pleasure and sensual enjoyment], the natural consequence of his saying in his heart, "*My Lord delayeth His coming*;" so in chap. xxv. we are told that the testimony that awakes, and arouses to an attitude of watchfulness and waiting, the whole slumbering Church, is the cry at midnight, "Behold the bridegroom cometh! go ye out to meet him." At *first* all the virgins took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom; but "while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept;" and it was not the sudden *coming* of the bridegroom that awoke them; then they would all have been found asleep, and "ashamed before him at his coming." But it was *the cry at midnight* that awoke both the wise and foolish virgins, for they were equally asleep. And they all arose and trimmed their lamps; and that which proved the ground of separation, eternal separation! was the possession of oil in their vessels by the wise, and the destitution of this by the foolish. Those alone who had the Spirit of God in their souls could maintain their position of waiting and watching in the darkness of night, during the interval that elapsed between the cry that aroused the Church and the actual coming of the bridegroom—that which is of God would alone endure. They who were aroused by the cry, but had nothing besides profession, or the energies of nature to rest on, could not maintain their position. Their lamps were gone out, and they could not remain out in the dark night waiting for the bridegroom. And while they were busy repairing their resources, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut!

The Lord grant that this cry at midnight, which has begun to be heard in feebleness, may increase until the whole Church is roused to the position of "men who wait for their Lord." The promise of Jesus is, Behold I come *quickly*. May our hearts, gracious Saviour, respond to Thy declaration, "Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."