

A Recapitulation; or, Outline of Prophetic Truth.

Paper 19 of 20 'Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects'.

W. Trotter.

It has been our endeavour, throughout the preceding pages, to present the testimony of Scripture to positive truth, rather than to refute the objections by which it is sought to neutralize this testimony, or to prove it irrelevant to the subject in hand. Our reason for pursuing this method is, that on any subject it seems to us the upright, straightforward course, to consider in the first place what it is that is affirmed, and what the positive evidence alleged in its support; giving every consideration afterwards to such objections as maybe advanced. If there be indeed some prejudice so fully pre-occupying men's minds, as to indispose them for the impartial consideration of the subject, it may be needful to dissipate it at the very commencement: or if, in the prosecution of an enquiry, difficulties should arise and objections suggest themselves, which it would be unfair to postpone, it is well to examine such at once. Within these limits, we have not refused to meet objections and consider difficulties, as the subject of prophetic testimony has unfolded itself before us; but, in general, our aim has been to consider the *positive* rather than the *negative* side of every question — to establish *truth* rather than to combat *error*. And while this is the course which has commended itself to our own judgment, as the most proper to be pursued, so, we are persuaded, it must commend itself to the conscience of the christian reader. It yields to God's word its rightful supremacy over all the reasonings of man's mind, placing the student of prophecy in the becoming attitude of a learner, instead of investing him with the loftier pretensions of a judge.

Still, as the inquiry draws towards a close, it will become needful — may we not say indispensable? — to consider such objections to the truths with which we have been occupied, as may fairly be supposed to have weight with serious, godly minds. We could not undertake to notice every counter-argument which has been employed — every objection which has been advanced. There may be some with which we are not acquainted; and there are some occasionally brought forward which do not call for a serious reply. But as to such as are generally alleged, — as to all such as may be supposed to create a real difficulty with those who humbly read God's word, and desire to be acquainted with its import — we feel bound, as the Lord may enable us, to give them the fullest consideration our limits will allow. As, however, we have hitherto abstained from personal controversy, we shall still generally avoid citing authors, or mentioning names; contenting ourselves with stating and considering the objections of our brethren, in such forms as they are known actually to assume in the minds of those who are exercised thereby. Our object is not controversy, but instruction. Our aim is neither to challenge opposition, nor to take up such challenges as may have been thrown down, but, by the Lord's blessing, to meet the difficulties of sincere inquirers after truth - of those who equally shrink from receiving what Scripture does not teach, and from rejecting what it does.

Before turning thus to the examination of difficulties and objections, it is desirable to present, in a condensed form, the substance and general outline of what Scripture appears to us to teach on prophetic subjects. The details, and proofs from Scripture, have been already furnished, and need not, therefore, be repeated. Our desire is briefly to exhibit the outlines of all that has been taught in the present work. The bearing of the objections will thus be more easily perceived; while for positive proofs the reader is referred to the preceding pages themselves.

The apostle furnishes us, in 1 Cor. 10: 32, with a classification of mankind, which renders material aid in presenting a condensed view of those future dealings of God which form the subject of prophecy, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God." Mankind are divided thus into three classes. As it respects man's condition before God in reference to eternity, there are but two classes, the saved and the unsaved — the regenerate and those who have not been born again. But with regard to God's government of the world, which is the subject to which prophecy applies itself, there are three classes - Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God. As that with which we have most immediately to do, let us first consider "the Church of God."

"The Church of God" consists not, as is popularly supposed, of all saved persons from the beginning to the end of time. *The expression is never so used in Scripture.* It is its use in Scripture which is alone of any importance to our present inquiry; and *there* it denotes the assembly of true believers from the day of Pentecost, when that assembly was formed, to the descent of the Lord Jesus into the air, to receive it to Himself in heaven. Saints, gathered and baptized into the unity of Christ's body — unity with Christ, and with each other — by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, constitute "the Church of God." The saints who thus compose "the Church" have, of course, many things in common with Old Testament saints, with the disciples during our Lord's lifetime upon earth, with the Jewish remnant in the coming crisis, and with the saints who shall inhabit the millennial earth. All saints, of all times, are quickened by the Spirit, justified through the blood of Christ, preserved by almighty grace, and destined in resurrection to bear the image of the heavenly, even as in the present life they have borne the image of the earthly. But to "the Church" belongs, in addition to these things, the wondrous distinction of being Christ's body — His bride — inhabited by the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost descended not till Christ was glorified. Having descended, He baptized believers into one body, whether they were Jews or Gentiles — one body with each other — one body with Christ, their glorified Head. The Church, knowing Christ, and being united to Him, while He is rejected by the world and hid in God, is associated with Him in that headship over all things, both in heaven and in earth, with which Christ is rewarded, and for the open exercise and display of which He only waits the Father's good pleasure, and the arrival of that dispensation of the fulness of times, in which all things, both in heaven and in earth, are to be gathered together in one, even in Christ.. Meanwhile, the Church is even now quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him. It has its blessings, whether present or future, *in* Christ and *with* Christ, as one body and one spirit with Him, not like others, whose portion it is to be blest by Him and *under* Him, as the subjects of His reign. The Church has one life, one portion, one home, one glory, one inheritance, with Christ Himself; and, whether how or hereafter, is indwelt and actuated by the Holy Ghost, as the essence and power of this oneness with Christ.

The existence, calling, and glory of the Church of God is "the mystery" "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men," but "from the beginning of the world was hid in God." It was to the Church alone that "the mystery" of its own calling and glory could be revealed. Accordingly, it was not till Christ had died and risen and ascended, and the Holy Ghost had come down and incorporated the, till then, scattered disciples into one body: — nay, more, it was not till the utter rejection of the gospel by Jerusalem and the Jews had cut off all hope of their being *at that time* pardoned and restored, that the Holy Ghost revealed to Christ's holy apostles and prophets "the mystery," till then unknown, of Christ having died "to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both (Jews and Gentiles who believe) unto God in one body by the cross." It was no mystery that the Jews were to be blest under their Messiah's reign, or that the Gentiles were in a subordinate way to partake of their blessedness. All this had been fully revealed in the Old Testament. when the rejection of Jesus by the Jews had closed for the time all prospect of blessing for them, as well as for the Gentiles and the earth by their means, that God should then by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven form a new assembly, in which all difference between Jew and Gentile should be swallowed up by the pre-eminent grace which made both, and both alike, members of Christ's body, of His flesh, and of His bones — this was a mystery indeed!

Such is the Church. During the period in which it exists on earth, whenever a Jew through grace receives the Gospel, he ceases to be, properly speaking, a Jew; whenever a Gentile is converted, he in like manner ceases to be, properly speaking, a Gentile: each one is taken out of his natural position, whether as Jew or Gentile; and both are brought into the new wondrous position of being one with Christ, and thus members one of another.

The terminus of the existence of the Church *on earth* is the descent of the Lord Jesus to receive it to Himself *in heaven*. This descent of the Lord Jesus into the air is the Church's hope. The testimony of the New Testament to this fact is uniform and overwhelming. Whether the Christian be regarded as an individual, or the Church be considered in its corporate character and relationship, the hope of the Christian, the hope of the Church, is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to receive His saints to Himself in heavenly resurrection-glory. From our Lord's closing discourse with His disciples, when He assured them that if He went away, He would come again and receive them to Himself, that where He was they might be also, to the closing words of Scripture, "Surely, I come quickly: Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus," the one unbroken voice of inspiration proclaims the coming of Jesus to be the hope of "his body, the church." How should it be otherwise? For whom should the bride be waiting but the Bridegroom? To whose return should the faithful servant be looking forward, but to that of his absent Lord and Master? Heirs of incorruption, and already possessing the earnest of the Spirit, saints do nevertheless yet groan in mortal tabernacles, being burdened. For what can they be supposed to groan, but for the coming of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, and at whose coming mortality is to be swallowed up of life? Nor shall the Church wait thus for her Lord in vain. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." His long-suffering is salvation. The calling of those who are to form the Church must be completed. The last stone must be hewn out of nature's quarry, and fitted to its place in that "holy temple in the Lord," into which the whole building is growing up. The gifts and ministries in the Church continue until then; but then they cease. That which is perfect will have come, and that which is in part will be done away. "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with

the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Happy would it be, if this were all the notice that the subject of the Church of God required! But, alas! in close connection with that Church during its existence on earth there is a "mystery of iniquity," which had begun to work in apostolic times, and which has never yet ceased to work; the full results of which will not be developed till the true Church has been translated into heaven. The Church itself has not been faithful; and though its ultimate and eternal blessedness is, according to God's eternal counsels, scoured by its oneness with Christ, and the changeless efficacy of His precious blood, its history on earth affords sad and sorrowful proof that whatever is entrusted to man's responsibility fails. The remissness of true saints gave opportunity to the enemy to introduce the germ whence proceeds the mystery of iniquity, with all its dire results. When men slept an enemy sowed tares. Evil men crept in unawares. The fatal leaven, thus introduced, has wrought with silent and steady force. Even now, vast communities, bearing the name of Christ, exist, the very best of which includes many of whom it can scarcely be hoped that they are Christians in anything but name, while in others the openly profane form the great majority. Some there are, more loud than any besides in their pretensions to be "the Church," who deny or neutralize the very foundations on which the Church is built; and not content with this, they persecute the true Church, and corrupt the nations of the earth. What men call Christendom is really "*the world*," under the guise of a christian profession; a profession which, while it fearfully enhances the responsibility of those who assume it, changes not the enmity of their hearts towards God and towards Christ, but affords the opportunity of indulging that enmity under fairer pretexts and in a more refined and seductive way. Judas was nearer to Christ outwardly than any one besides, except his eleven fellow apostles; but this outward nearness to Christ did but add malignity to his sin, and make it the more awfully conspicuous. Sad type of what Christendom in the end will be!

This vast scene of corruption and false profession will remain, when the true Church has been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Freed from the restraints which the presence of the true Church imposed upon it, and judicially blinded for its abuse of the unspeakable privileges it has so long enjoyed, Christendom will reach a climax of iniquity so fearful as to draw down the righteous judgments of God. These judgments will both precede and accompany the coming of Christ with all His saints. The Church, having been previously translated and glorified, will follow in the train of Christ's glory, when He is "revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel." But Christendom will not be the only object of the solemn judgments of that day. "Jews" and "Gentiles" will both be involved therein; and the bearing of prophetic testimony on the latter class, is what next demands our attention.

"The Gentiles," in the widest sense of the term, are all the nations of mankind, except God's chosen, favoured nation — Israel. Given up, for their idolatry, to follow their own ways, while Israel was made the theatre of God's manifested government, we only read of the Gentiles, through a great part of the Old Testament, as being in one way or another connected with Israel. When God's people were obedient, the Gentiles were either friendly to them or subjected to their yoke; when God's people were rebellious, the Gentiles were used to chasten them for their sins.

Things continued thus till the time of Nebuchadnezzar. Ephraim, or the ten tribes, having been previously carried away captive by Assyria; and Judah having by their sins become insupportable in God's sight, they too are now given into the hands, not of Assyria, but of the king of Babylon; and God's throne being removed from Jerusalem, a solemn grant of universal dominion is made of God to Nebuchadnezzar. The times of the Gentiles commenced with him. In his days began that rejection of "the Jews," and supremacy of the Gentiles, by which the times of the Gentiles are characterized throughout. "Jerusalem," says our Lord Himself, "shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."

These times are prophetically described as divided into four periods, distinguished from each other by the supremacy of four great empires, which were successively to bear rule in the earth. From Scripture itself it is demonstrable, that these four Gentile kingdoms are Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. It is to Rome, as the last of the four, and subsisting to the end, that prophecy most particularly directs attention. All the four are represented as ungodly, rebellious, cruel, rapacious, and self-willed; but it is in the fourth, and that, moreover, in a form in which it has not yet existed, that human wickedness reaches its height. Covert evil may be borne with in patience, and left to be judged hereafter; open revolt leaves no alternative but present overwhelming judgment. The fourth Gentile empire, in a yet future form of its existence, will be found in open revolt against God, and will, along with apostate Christendom, be the object of those utter, destroying judgments which attend the coming of the Lord with ten thousands of His saints.

It was in the days of this fourth Gentile monarchy, that the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in humiliation on the earth. Judea was then a Roman province, as was evinced by Caesar's image and superscription appearing on the coins. The power to inflict capital punishment seems to have resided in the Roman governor alone. Hence, the Jews were unable, except by his consent, to compass the death of the Holy and the Just One, who delivered Himself, and was delivered of God into their hands. The Roman empire thus partook with the Jewish people in the awful guilt of rejecting and crucifying the Prince of life. And should it be urged by any, that Pontius Pilate was but a subordinate agent and representative of the imperial power; the mournful answer is at hand, that the imperial power itself did afterwards ratify most fully the deed of its representative, by shedding torrents of christian blood.

It is true that, after centuries of persecution, the empire became nominally Christian: but this outward adoption of Christianity by the imperial power of the world, did but bring the latter into intimate combination with that "mystery of iniquity," which had even then been long working in the bosom of Christianity itself: and from this combination resulted that masterpiece of Satanic deception, which is presented to us in the Apocalyptic vision — Babylon the Great, the corruptress of the nations. From this vast system of worldly Christianity, of a Christian profession adorned with the world's magnificence, enriched with its wealth, and supported by its power, the saints of God are called to withdraw. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." The Lord grant to us both to understand and to heed the warning!

When the true Church has reached the end of its exile and pilgrimage on earth, by being translated to its home and dwelling place in heaven, the false professing body will still be found

in unhallowed alliance with the wealth and greatness of this world -nay, more — claiming the place of undoubted supremacy over the world. "I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow," will even then be her haughty and scornful boast. But "therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." The earthly instruments of her downfall will be the imperial power itself, and the ten subordinate, confederate kingdoms, which will own fealty to the resuscitated Roman empire. "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." The fourth Gentile empire, which, in its unity as a consolidated whole, has, according to prophetic intimations, ceased to exist, is to reappear. To that empire, thus revived, Satan, who will have been, with his angels, cast out of heaven, is to give big power and throne and great authority. Gentile power, originally of God, will thus, in its last state, be energized by Satan, and identical with his usurped dominion, as "the god" or "prince of this world." The eighth head of the fourth empire, when it reappears, will be sustained in his place by the dragon himself; Satanic miracles wrought by one who exercises all the power of "the beast" in his presence, will be part of the means by which men will be induced to worship the beast and receive his mark; death will be the penalty of refusal; and judicial delusion from God having fallen on the nations where the light of Christianity has shone, Satan's triumph will appear to be all but complete. "The beast" and the ten kings, having overthrown Babylon, will forthwith make war with the Lamb. Corruption, of which Babylon is the seat and centre, will be exchanged for open, undisguised revolt, on the part of the beast or imperial power of the earth. "Spirits of devils, working miracles, will go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." "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." Of the issue of such a contest, who can entertain a doubt? Christ and His saints will come forth from heaven. The leaders of the confederacy against Christ, "the beast and the false prophet" — more infatuated than Pharaoh, when he rushed after the Israelites into the bed of the Red Sea - will be taken, and cast alive into the lake of fire; their armies will be slain with the sword of Him that sits upon the horse; and the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God will be trodden by the heavenly Conqueror, the King of kings and Lord of lords. This awful judgment will be quickly followed by others, upon one host of adversaries and another, until "all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," shall have been gathered out of the kingdom of the Son of man; and, Satan being bound, the reign of Christ with His risen saints will continue for a thousand years. But in these closing scenes, Israel, or "the Jews," have an important and conspicuous part, as well as in the millennial kingdom which succeeds. To that branch of the subject also must our attention now be turned.

There is this important difference between the four Gentile monarchies, and the nation of Israel, that while to the former there may have been a grant of universal empire, they have never, like the latter, been the subjects of God's choice and calling. Israel is an elect nation, and "the gifts and calling of God," are, as we know, "without repentance." As to God's government of the earth, Israel, or a great part of it, may be cut off because of sin and unbelief; and Lo-ammi, "not my people," may for centuries be written thereon. But as to the unalterable affections and ultimate purpose of God, Israel can never cease to be the nation of His choice. It is of that nation, in its present state of unbelief and rejection, that the apostle says, "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers'

sakes." Nothing can be more important than that we should bear in mind this truth in all our inquiries into what Scripture testifies concerning Israel.

Israel's captivity and dispersion having taken place at two different times, and on two distinct grounds, there will be corresponding differences in the order and mode of their restoration. The ten tribes, who were, for their idolatry, carried away by the Assyrians, will be restored in one way. The Jews who, having first been carried captive to Babylon and restored to their land at the end of seventy years, were a second time dispersed by the Romans, for the awful sin of rejecting and crucifying their Messiah, will be restored in a different way. Scripture clearly evinces that a considerable number of the Jews will return to their own land in unbelief. There they will be associated with the imperial power of the earth, when in its last, Satanic form. Prophecy testifies of "a covenant with death," an "agreement with hell," to be made by the rulers of the Jewish people at Jerusalem. They will seek the shelter of the great head of Gentile power; and between him (or more probably his representative, the "second beast" of Rev. 13 or "false prophet" of Rev. 19) and the Jews, an alliance, or covenant, will be formed. This covenant, permitting to the Jews the exercise of their national worship, will be treacherously broken by "the prince" in whom they will have trusted, instead of trusting in their God and in the true Messiah, their prince. Their worship will be interdicted, and "the idols of the desolator" - "the abomination of desolation, standing where it ought not," will be set up in the holy place. Too many, alas! of the returned Jews will submit to this last degradation practised upon them by Satan; having refused the Blessed One who came in His Father's name, they will receive this apostate usurper of divine rights and honours, who comes in his own. Such as do so, whether Jews or Gentiles, will be involved in the destruction by which this head of pride will be smitten, when the lowly and long-rejected Jesus shall come forth from heaven.

Among the Jews who return to their own land in unbelief there will be some, however, whose hearts God will have touched; and these, amid the horrors of that time of tribulation such as never was before, and never will be afterwards, will seek the Lord God of their fathers, and be preserved by His grace from the iniquity that will abound. This Jewish remnant, distinguished from the nation by their penitence, obedience, faithfulness, and expectation of the coming of their Messiah - distinguished also from "the Church of God," which will, prior to that period, have been completed and taken up to heaven — occupy a very prominent place in the prophetic Scriptures. Their repentance, trials, consolations, hopes, and fears, are largely recounted in the Psalms and by the prophets; and in the difference between them and "the Church of God," is found the true and only solution of what nearly all Christians find to be such a difficulty — the imprecations and prayers for vengeance on the adversaries, with which the Psalms and some portions of the prophets abound. The Church stands in Christ and has the knowledge of accomplished redemption: the remnant do not. The Church suffers for Christ's sake and rejoices to do so; the remnant suffer for their own sins and those of the nation, and groan under the sense of God's wrath. The deliverance of the Church is not by the execution of judgment on its enemies, but by being caught up to meet the Lord in the air: the deliverance of the remnant is by the coming of Christ in judgment to the earth. That for which the Church looks as the result of Christ's descent into the air, is its own translation to be with Christ in heaven. The remnant look for their Messiah to deliver them, set up His own kingdom, and bring in fulness of blessing on the earth. As matter of fact the Church does ascend to heaven and dwell there with her Lord; the

remnant — such of them as survive the desolations of the last awful crisis — do become the nucleus of the pardoned, restored, and happy nation, under Christ's millennial reign.

A different destiny awaits a portion of those who, in the first instance, form the Jewish remnant. Having primarily the same standing, character, hopes, and testimony as their brethren, the murderous oppressions of the enemy cut short their lives, and they are prevented thus from sharing with their brethren the fulfilment of their national hopes in Israel's deliverance, and subsequent triumph and blessedness under Messiah's reign. Scripture does not leave us in the dark as to what becomes of these martyred ones. Special mention is made of them, as partaking with "the Church" of heavenly glory, and of their reigning as risen ones with Christ.

The order of the events which ensue on the appearing of Christ in judgment, it may be somewhat more difficult to trace. The first blow falls on "the beast," "the false prophet," and the great confederacy against God of which they are the head. Satan also being bound, the sovereignty of the whole earth is transferred to the hands of Christ; and more than this, "all things both in heaven and on earth are gathered together in one, even in Christ." Judgments are executed on all who refuse submission; but these are not judgments executed by Christ *as coming from heaven*, but as having made Zion the earthly centre of His kingdom. "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies." The surviving Jewish remnant, pardoned and owned of the Lord as His people, will have their numbers and prosperity augmented by the unexpected return of the ten tribes, so long lost sight of but now brought back by the Lord's own hand. While the Jews are undergoing their terrible sifting *in the land*, the ten tribes will be passing through discipline of another kind *on their way thither*. They will be all then reunited in the land, and form one nation, under the peaceful rule of their long-rejected King. With the nation, thus re-established, "the new covenant" will be made; and thus all the blessings promised to them of old in case of their obedience, but which they have forfeited by their sin and unbelief, will become their portion on the ground of absolute grace, and of the redemption-rights of the Lord Jesus Christ. All things which offend, and all doers of iniquity, having been gathered out of His kingdom, and the Spirit being poured out upon all flesh, the authority of Christ will be owned by all the nations of the earth. "He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." The throne of the Lord, now established at Jerusalem, shall be the gathering point for all nations. His house shall then be indeed "a house of prayer for all people." Mankind will still be divided into nations, each having its separate government; but all Gentile rulers will then be subject to the King of kings and Lord of lords. "The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him." Happy nations! Pre-eminently happy, that nation of Jehovah's choice to which will then be fulfilled all that God has promised, far surpassing man's fondest dreams of prosperity and blessedness on earth! Jerusalem, so long a proverb and a byword for the depth of desolation to which it had been reduced, shall then be known as "the city of the Great King." "And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and all the prosperity, that I procure unto it." Happy and glorious beyond the power of human language to express, or of human heart to conceive, that "Church of God" which will then with Christ be reigning over the earth. Heaven, not earth, is the place where the Church is glorified with Christ; but heaven and earth will not be disunited then, as at present, and ever since the fall. The vision of its glory

which the prophet of Patmos was favoured to receive exhibits it in connection with the millennial earth. He sees "that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Its glory fades not, nor does its blessedness pass away, when the thousand years expire: still it is in connection with the earth during those thousand years that the apostle beholds its glory. A vision indeed it is; but a vision of glory which could not otherwise have been made known, to the faith and hope of those whose happiness it will be to constitute the heavenly city. Its jasper walls, its streets of gold, and gates of pearl, are but the images of that which the heart well knows must surpass in glory all that the symbol conveys. God Almighty and the Lamb are its light and its temple; while the river of life, and the tree of life, and the throne of God and of the Lamb, whence the living waters issue — all bear witness to the exceeding riches of God's grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. But the all-pervading light which fills that city of our God shines through it on the nations of the millennial earth. The river of the water of life, which flows from the central throne of God and of the Lamb, through the street of the city, refreshes in its onward and downward course the earthly subjects of Christ's glorious reign. Of Jerusalem on the earth it can be said, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." Of "the tree of life," which on either side of the river bears its twelve manner of fruits, it is expressly said, the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." How blessed that for the Church, which even on earth is called to enter into the sympathies of Christ, the place should be reserved of being, when glorified, the vessel of those sympathies, in their actual outflow to all that then remains of darkness to be dispelled, of sorrow to be assuaged, or of sickness to be healed! What a period must that coming dispensation be! Christ and the Church, with all the glorified saints who form no part of "the bride, the Lamb's wife," occupying the heavens — earth, relieved from the curse, freed from Satan's oppression and deceit, happy under the reign of Christ and His saints — Israel, restored and blest, the chief among the nations, and the seat of Christ's earthly rule — the nations, walking in the light of the heavenly city, and healed by the leaves of its life-giving tree, gathered to the throne of the Lord, to Jerusalem — while creation itself, delivered from the bondage of corruption, rejoices in the liberty of the glory of the children of God! The true Melchizedec, the Centre and Dispenser of the blessings of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, and the One through whom the praises of all in heaven and all on earth ascend continually to Him!

It is, however, important to remember that, as to the earthly department of this glorious kingdom, it bears the character of a dispensation in which man is put to the test. Man has been already tried in various and wondrous ways. He was tried in innocence in the garden. From Adam to Noah he was tried without the restraints either of a divine law or of human government. From Noah to Moses he was tested by the latter, but without the former. In Israel, full trial of man was made, as under law. When the law was broken, the Levitical sacrifices and priesthood were introduced. With these shadows of grace super-added to the law, Israel was introduced to the land. Failing there, judges were raised up. When priesthood itself had failed, the kingdom was established. When the house of David began to depart from the Lord, prophecy, *in its full character and bearing, commenced*. When for a long time no prophet's voice had been heard in Israel, the silence was broken by the Baptist's cry, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Christ Himself, the Heir, the King, the Prince of life, the Lord of glory, appeared among men. Him they crucified. The Jews, God's only earthly people, and the Gentiles, to whom the sword of government had been entrusted, united in this awful deed. Then came the Church. Man's sin and incurableness being demonstrated beyond question, sovereign grace began to

gather the Church for heavenly association with Christ. But while grace secures everlastingly those who are its true subjects, the present results of that grace are again confided to human responsibility. The result is well known. The Church itself proves unfaithful to Christ. The mystery of iniquity begins to work. The world becomes christian in name, only to betray the Church into still deeper unfaithfulness, and connect the name of Christ with all the unchanged evil of that world which once crucified and still despises the Son of God. The present dispensation, one of perfect, unmingled grace, ends in complete apostacy. The true Church being translated to heaven, this apostacy is manifested in every sphere of God's previous actings among men. Christendom, the Holy Land, and the revived Roman empire — the fourth great Gentile monarchy — all become the theatre of Satan's operations; and human wickedness, unchecked by the solemn judgments which will even then be falling on the earth, will come to its full head. Christ and His saints appear. Judgment clears the scene, and Satan himself is bound. Then follows the last dispensation under which man will ever be placed. Christ and the saints manifested in heavenly glory — Israel redeemed, and happy, and pre-eminent *on the earth* — the nations reposing under the peaceful sceptre of Jesus — for a thousand years shall His righteous rule maintain the blessedness of this coming kingdom. But we must carefully distinguish the earthly scene of Christ's varied glories, with the earthly occupants of that earthly scene, from Christ Himself, and the heavenly saints, who are the sharers of His glory. Men on earth during the Millennium will need to be born again, as surely as men in all ages need this. They who are really regenerate during that period will be as infallibly preserved for everlasting blessedness as are all true believers now. But that is very different from being actually in heavenly glory; while, as to any of the earth's millennial inhabitants, who may not have been really "born again," they will be liable, as soon as Satan is loosed, to be drawn away by his delusions. Such a defection will actually take place. As long as Satan is bound, the righteous rule of Christ will restrain even those whose souls have not been quickened and renewed. but as soon as Satan is again at large, man will give the last, solemn, awful proof that where God has not in His grace imparted a new and divine life, all the glory and happiness of the manifested reign of Christ and His heavenly, glorified people is not, when the tempter is again at liberty, sufficient to restrain men from falling into his snares, and following him to *his and their own* everlasting overthrow! May the serious lesson have its due weight on our souls! May we learn utterly to distrust ourselves, and confide altogether in the strength of that grace which alone keeps us from evil, and which has already triumphed in our deliverance from the power of darkness, and translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son!

From the epoch of Christ's return, the blessedness of the Church is complete. This will be equally true of the Old Testament saints, and of the martyrs of the coming crisis, from the time that they are raised to heavenly glory. There may be various modes in which the glory of Christ and the saints is afterwards *revealed*, but the *blessedness* of the saints must be complete, when once they are in resurrection with their Lord. The loosing of Satan and the rebellion of Gog and Magog can make no difference to them. And even as to the earth, the revolt is not universal. The number of the rebels is stated to be "as the sand of the sea;" but this is a comparison often applied to the single nation of Israel, and cannot therefore imply of necessity that all are deceived. From numerous scriptures we know that at least the nation of Israel will be preserved from apostacy; and the very passage which informs us of the post-millennial falling away makes mention of "the camp of the saints"-earthly saints, no doubt — and "the beloved city," that is, the

earthly Jerusalem, "the city of the great King," against which the deceived and rebellious nations gather together.

Nor is this last defection of so large a portion of mankind suffered, as in the ages previous to the Millennium, to continue. "Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them." The devil who deceived them is then cast, not into the bottomless pit, where he had been previously confined, but into "the lake of fire and brimstone." The judgment of the dead, before the great white throne ensues—a judgment issuing in the final disposing of all things for eternity. All, of all ages, who are not found written in the book of life, are cast into the lake of fire. Death is cast there. Hades is cast there. The heaven and the earth, having fled from before the face of Him who sits on the great white throne, and the kingdom having been delivered up by Christ to the Father, new heavens and a new earth are created, in which righteousness will eternally dwell. The Millennium is *the reign* of righteousness. In the new heavens and the new earth of the everlasting state, righteousness *dwelleth*. There being no longer so much as any innate evil to restrain — all evil and evil doers having found their place in the lake of fire, which is the second death — the whole company of the redeemed from among Adam's ruined race, will find their home of blessedness in a creation where evil exists not, and is unknown. God will, throughout eternity, be all in all. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Such is the outline of what seems to us the prophetic testimony of God's word,—the testimony which we have sought in the preceding pages to develop to our readers. Our attention was first directed to the hope of the Christian, the hope of the Church. This we found to be not death, or the disembodied state, happy as that is for the Christian, but the coming of the Lord. Not His coming to the earth, but his descent into the air, to receive His saints to Himself in heaven. The hope of the Christian is thus in the strictest sense *a heavenly hope*. The hope of the Church, too, in its corporate character, we found to be, not the conversion of all mankind to its ranks, but its own translation to heaven, when the Lord, the Bridegroom, appears. This hope was shown to be associated in the New Testament with every element of Christian character, and linked with every detail of the Christian's life and walk. The prospects of the world were next considered. We found the concurrent testimony of all parts of Scripture to be, that what awaits the world is judgment, — solemn, overwhelming, universal judgment. The characteristic features of this judgment were then examined: the marks by which it is distinguished from all judgments previously executed on the wicked. The yet future, but rapidly approaching judgment, we found to be connected with Christ's coming, and introductory to the Millennium. Ample proof of both these points was produced from Scripture. We saw, moreover, that there are three distinct spheres on which the judgments are to fall: Christendom, the Gentiles, and the nation of Israel. The doom of Christendom became thus the subject of a distinct inquiry. Its responsibility as set in God's goodness — its non-continuance therein — and the irrevocable sentence, "otherwise thou shalt be cut off" — were all considered. The true Church being translated to heaven prior to the cutting off of Christendom, Christ and the Church became the next subject of our meditations. The distinction of the Church from all that preceded it, and from all that is to succeed it on the earth: its unity, its holiness, its completeness in Christ, its bridal relation to Him, its heavenly place and portion, its identification with Christ by the present indwelling of the

Holy Ghost, and its future association with Christ in His headship over all things both in heaven and earth, were all inquired into, and the present responsibility of the Church to keep itself for Christ was considered. Israel, in its past history and present state, became then the topic of inquiry; and this as introductory to the great body of Scripture testimony to its future restoration. The proofs of this given from Scripture were, we trust, such as not to be gainsayed. Israel's restoration, moreover, was found to be invariably linked in God's word with the prospect of those times of refreshing for the earth, on which the prophets so largely dwell. This connection formed the subject of another distinct meditation. We then paused to give full consideration to the inquiry, Whether the Millennium or Christ's second Advent is to be expected first? On this topic, we noticed the absence of any positive proof that the Millennium precedes the Advent: the only texts ever produced as such were examined, and found to be either silent on the subject, or to bear testimony on the other side; while abundant proofs were found, of the most direct and positive character, that the coming of Christ precedes the Millennium. This was naturally followed by another inquiry — Whether Scripture interposes any event, as of inevitable occurrence, between the believer and the coming of Christ? Several passages which are supposed to do so were examined, and found to have no such meaning; while the whole body of New Testament passages represent the posture of the Church to be that of the continual expectation of Christ. Certain events are indeed predicted as inevitably to occur before the day of Christ" arrives; but Scripture was seen most clearly to distinguish between *the coming* of Christ for His saints, and *the day* of Christ which brings judgment on the world. All that *must* occur prior to the day, may transpire between the descent into the air and the return of Christ *with all His saints* to execute judgment on the earth: and this latter event it is that brings "the day of Christ The progress of evil in the professing body, which bears Christ's name on the earth, was next traced: the last days of Gentile supremacy were also considered; and Israel's place in the approaching crisis, developed from the word of God. The light shed by Scripture on the respective experiences and destinies of the *spared* and *martyred* Jewish remnants came next in order; and the application of chapters 4-19 of the Apocalypse, to the transitional period between the translation of the Church and the coming of Christ in judgment on the wicked, was suggested as the key to the true interpretation of this wonderful book. The pre-millennial resurrection of the saints (apart from the wicked) to reign with Christ for a thousand years, was largely shown to be the doctrine of God's word; and, finally, the Millennium itself came to be considered. Such is the order in which we have presented to the reader the subjects, of which our present number is a digest.

In presenting these subjects to the consideration of the Church of God, we desire, on the one hand, to be kept from unduly magnifying their importance; while, on the other, we have no wish to disguise our conviction, that, *in many respects*, their importance is such as could not be easily overrated. When compared with the fundamental truths of Christianity—the Gospel of the grace of God — it is to the latter that the primary place must freely and joyfully be conceded. But the moment that any man, by the believing reception of the Gospel, has become a Christian, prophetic truth has a most solemn claim on his attention. Conversion itself, in fact, is but half accomplished until the great central truth unfolded in prophecy has its place in the soul. In describing the conversion of the Thessalonian believers, the apostle not only tells us what they were converted *from*, but what they were converted *to*: they "were turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, *and to wait for his Son from heaven.*" And even as to the details of prophecy, which furnish beforehand to faith the testimony of God's judgments on the whole

scene around us, and in the midst of which we are called to "serve the true and living God," how can we intelligently serve Him if this instruction be overlooked or despised? While, then, we cheerfully concede the first and foremost place to the Gospel, by which souls are "turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God," we maintain that without prophetic truth, the Gospel itself is but partially understood. We may know what we are delivered *from*; but without prophecy, we are ignorant of that *to* which we are called: while, as to all that concerns the development of divine life, the formation of christian character, and the maintenance by the Holy Ghost of intelligent communion with God, the instruction vouchsafed to us in prophecy, is beyond all price. It is indeed a "light that shineth in a dark place."

To answer objections to the outline of prophetic truth which has been under review, and to meet the difficulties of inquirers, is all that remains of the present work. God grant us to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good; and in all our inquiries, may we have no object but His glory; no motive, but His love; no trust, but in the teaching of His Spirit; and no rule, but His own blessed word!