

# Obadiah

Lectures on the Minor Prophets.

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The history of Edom throughout scripture is one of much interest, as exhibiting the ways of God with a people akin to Israel, but with fortunes more and more diverging from the chosen people of God. We find first fraternal consideration, even in Obadiah — tenderness and yearning over brother Edom. The inevitable crisis comes, the judgment of the early sin, which becomes more and more pronounced, until at last patience would be a sanction of wickedness. At the same time in the history of Edom we see thoroughly maintained the principle of moral responsibility which God never abandons, but holds inviolably true and sacred, as it is equally applicable to the enemies of God and to His friends. Nevertheless we find also what is necessary to bear in mind along with this — the sovereign wisdom of God, who from the first needed neither to learn anything of man on the one hand, or grounds to decide His will on the other. He exercised His own mind and purpose, even before the birth of the children of Isaac. It was so ordered that the character of the flesh should be manifest, not merely where there was wickedness in the family, but where there was faith. Isaac stands out remarkable for piety, doubtless of a domestic and equable character in the retired calm of a godly household, as decidedly as Abraham does for a stronger and more self-renouncing communion with God. Abraham's faith was exercised in a field more varied and conspicuous. There was more of a public testimony in the man whom God deigned to call His friend. As Isaac was more retiring, so also apt to yield overmuch when tried. Himself the chosen heir to the setting aside of the bondmaid's son Ishmael, it was in his family, among the twin sons not merely of Isaac but of Rebekah, of the same father and the same mother, that God afresh exercised His sovereignty. Impossible to find greater closeness in point of circumstance. This therefore made it all the more striking when we find God even before their birth pronouncing on the ultimate and distinct destiny of the two sons. As noticed in another place, if God had not been pleased to choose, it is evident that the two could not have exactly the same place. Was God then to abrogate His title? or to leave it to man with only Satan to influence? It was most fitting then that He should choose which was to have the superior place. Equality never abides; and they could not both be invested with first-born rights. One must be chosen for the better place. The order either of flesh or of God's choice must prevail. Which is most right? Assuredly God, whatever may be His grace, maintains always His own sovereignty. He chose therefore Jacob the younger, and not Esau, for this could only have given importance to man in the flesh — man as he is in his fallen condition without God. Impossible that He should make light of the fall or of its consequences: He therefore chooses and acts.

At the same time it is remarkable that, while the first book of the Bible points out the choice of God from the beginning, He does not pronounce morally on Esau in a full, complete, and absolute way until the last book of the Old Testament. It is only in Malachi that he says, "Esau have I hated." I could conceive nothing more dreadful than to say so in Genesis. Never does scripture represent God as saying before the child was born and had manifested his iniquity and proud malice, "Esau have I hated." There is where the mind of man is so false. It is not meant, however, that God's *choice* was determined by the character of the individuals. This were to make man the ruler rather than God. Not so: God's choice flows out of His own wisdom and nature. It suits and is worthy of Himself; but the reprobation of any man and of every unbeliever is never a question of the sovereignty of God. It is the choice of God to do good where and how He pleases; it is never the purpose of His will to hate any man. There is no such doctrine in the Bible. I hold therefore that, while election is a most clear and scriptural truth, the

consequence that men draw from election, namely, the reprobation of the non-elect, is a mere reproduction of fatalism, common to some heathen and all Mahommedans, the unfounded deduction of man's reasoning in divine things. But man's reasoning in the things of God, not being based on the divine revelations of His mind in His word, is good for nothing, but essentially and invariably false. It is impossible for man to reason justly in the abstract as to the will of God. The only safe or becoming ground is to adhere to the simple exposition of His own declarations; and this for the very simple reason that a man must reason from his own mind, and his own mind is far indeed from being God's mind. Reasoning means deduction according to the necessary laws of the human mind. Here, however, the groundwork being the will of God, faith to reason aright must reason from what God is according to what He Himself says. The danger is of inferring from what man is and from what man feels. Such is the essential difference between what is trustworthy and what is worthless in questions of the kind. Man must submit to be judged by God and His word, not to judge for Him. No man is competent to think or speak in His stead. But we may and ought to learn what He has told us of Himself and His ways in His word.

Nor is there any serious difficulty, still less opposition to what is here said, in the scriptural fact which is often brought up in discussing points like this — the hardening of Pharaoh. It can be readily shown that such a judicial dealing on God's part is unquestionably righteous. Scripture lets us see the proud, cruel, and blaspheming character of Pharaoh before the hardening; nor does it speak of the Lord hardening his heart till he had fully committed himself to self-will and contempt of God. But as to the thing thus expressed, I believe that it is a real infliction from God because of a rebellious opposition to His demands and authority. There may be such a dealing now with a man, but He never hardens him in the first instance that he should not believe; but after he has heard and refused to believe, God seals him up in an obdurate state. In no instance, however, is this the first act of God, but rather the last, judicial and retributive, when he has slighted an adequate and faithfully rendered testimony. Every one's heart when simple bows instinctively to the truth of God. If unsophisticated (I do not say converted), we feel how righteous, wholesome, and good it all is. Anything that distorts or even ignores the revealed character and mind of God is false, and will always be found to issue in wrong deductions. But in general the fault does not so much consist in mistaken deductions from scripture, as in human preconceptions and mere theorizing. There are Calvinistic speculations just as much as Arminian. It seems to me that both schemes are beyond question partial and do violence to the truth. The practical lesson is to cherish confidence only in God's word. We may safely rest, as we are bound to rest, in His revelation. The best of men, those who help most in ministry, are liable to err; and we must beware lest merely changing names we fall into the old snare of tradition or confidence in man. Our own day presents no better security than another. May we trust to God and the word of His grace, which is able to build us up! Nothing else in the long run can preserve souls from illusion or falsehood. On the contrary, when men begin to presume, they go and lead wrong, no matter what their position may be. Need I say to you who are here that, if this should be a just feeling in itself, it should be felt quite as strongly respecting ourselves as about others? Our only safety is in simple and implicit subjection to the word of God. For this we need the guidance of the Spirit. But we are never sure of having the directing power of the Spirit with us, except the eye be single to Christ. Thus these three safeguards are always together where we are right; and unless they are all verified in us, there is no real deliverance from self nor assurance of the mind and will of God. The attempt to use the word of God without the teaching of the Spirit lands one in rationalism. The presumption to have the Spirit of God without the word leads into fanaticism. But we need, in addition to both the word and the Spirit, a bond (if I may so say) between them, in order to keep us firm and steady yet dependent and humble; and this bond of attractive power which binds together both the word and the Spirit of God is having our eye

fixed upon Christ. Thus, instead of self (the real root of all mistake), Christ becomes our object — the Second man and not the first.

Such then, omitting the notice of the hardening of Pharaoh, is the early revelation as to Esau, himself the progenitor of the Edomites; but we have also the history pursued through scripture. They early emerged into considerable strength and importance. Gen. 36 gives us the rise and progress of their national greatness, the line first of their dukes, as they are called, which would answer probably in modern language to the sheiks of their tribes; and then later of the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the sons of Israel. These kings we should, I presume, call emirs, that is, not in the absolute sense of a king perhaps, but rather of a chief for common purposes; for among these sons of Edom there was a great deal of independence, considering that they were Orientals. Indeed it is so still in the kindred children of the desert. Although the emir may have considerable rights and privileges, the under-chiefs reserve not a little independence for themselves. These various stages of polity were both developed in the early history of Edom. They had dukes and even kings flourishing in their midst when the children of Israel as a whole were obscure and unsettled. They had even their regular line of kings — as we know with certainty from a verse of great interest which furnishes rationalism a fresh occasion for exposing its ignorant and self-sufficient unbelief — long before the children of Israel called Saul to the throne; nay, I should judge, before they emerged from the wilderness. I suspect, without being positive respecting the matter, that it was the sojourning of Israel in the wilderness, which was about the epoch of change from their having simply dukes, as they are called in scripture, to their having kings. My reason is this, that while in Exodus 15 we hear of the dukes of Edom being amazed, in Numbers 21 we read of the king of Edom who would not permit the children of Israel to pass through his land. Although they promised not to drink of their waters, or touch their fruit without paying for it, he refused absolutely and churlishly this favour, of no cost to himself, but of moment to the people of God. It would appear, therefore, that at the entrance of Israel upon the wilderness there was still the old condition of a number of independent chiefs, but before they left the wilderness kings in rapid succession reigned, as might well be at such a time and state of things.

But however this may be judged, the approach of the sons of Israel brought the feelings of the Edomites to a head. It is always so. Nobody knows himself till he comes into contact with what is of God. It is the true and crucial test for the soul. Hence Christ is the perfect criterion as well as standard, because He only is the perfect manifestation of God. He is God, but then He is God in man; and therefore, coming down to us, living, speaking, acting, suffering in our midst, He becomes the most complete, and indeed absolute, test of human nature. As the true light He made manifest every soul He came across. And so it is to this day, although He be not here below. Assuredly He is in heaven; but the proclamation of His name and truth has the same substantial effect as His presence when here below, if not even greater, because now there is proclaimed in the gospel the weightiest conceivable addition to the power of His person in the efficacy of His work. Alas! human nature is stumbled by both. It is an offence to man to find somebody who a man, and the lowliest of men, yet infinitely greater than Adam and all his other sons — some one that man never can match or even approach, who, at the same time, condescends in grace to the vilest and the worst to pity and save them by faith. Now there is nothing more trying to man's mind than such condescension, especially from one he has wronged, because it just tells him how worthless, guilty, and ruined he himself is. Consequently the saving grace of God is incomparably more offensive in Christ than if He had been a lawgiver like Moses, because this at any rate would have left some scope for man's ability, for his reason, and for his merits; but to be treated as nothing save a sinner is the greatest possible offence; which consequently the cross of Christ does not fail to entail without disguise before man, because it is the fullest manifestation of human worthlessness on one side, and of God's grace on the other.

So it was in measure, though certainly ill-represented, in Israel as the object of God's choice before Edom and his children. These might have been ever so decent individually — probably, as a rule, far from being as dark and depraved as their Canaanitish neighbours; but when the destiny of Israel began to dawn, the enmity of their hearts came out fully. Although nothing could be more respectful and upright than the overtures of Moses and the children of Israel, the hatred of the Edomites became quite unmistakable. They would listen to nothing but the malignant and proud suggestions of their own hearts. God shows His character in the most admirable manner. According to His will the people turn back, called though they were by His decree to be the first of nations in this world. They take the unprovoked insult of their brother Edom with quietness, and this at the express command of God who would teach His people patience. It is always good for those who may ere long wield power to learn the exercise of patience. But did not God in this tell out, as far as it went, what He is in so directing and training His people? They turn back, meekly accepting the insolence of their relatives, and quietly abide by the guidance of Jehovah who was slighted in their slight. But even more than that, they are admonished to cherish the most friendly feelings towards these Edomites, a command incorporated into the substance of the law. Whatever might be the exclusion of others, from the book of Deuteronomy we find it expressly laid down that an Edomite was to enter the congregation of Jehovah after the third generation. An unusual license this, if one may so call it, and a peculiar privilege in itself; but how striking that it should be extended of all others to those who had taken such decided ground in contempt of their kinsmanship with Israel as these sons of Edom.\* All this seems the more instructive, because in the case of an Ammonite or Moabite entrance was refused until the tenth generation. Such is the true God: none but He would have thought of such a course; only Himself would have enjoined it on His people; for it was what became such as love His name to feel and act on.

{\*There was similarly a command not to abhor an Egyptian, which natural feeling would be prompt to do through a proud remembrance of Israel's former abasement and suffering in the land of their old bondage: — God would have them cultivate generous, not vindictive, recollections.}

But there is another principle. The greater the patience of God, the worse man behaves in presence of His goodness and patience, so much the more tremendous must be the judgment when it comes. This we may read in the ultimate history of Edom. Doubtless there are many in these days of unbelief who fancy that Edom is done with; and assuredly it would be difficult for any ethnologist to trace out satisfactorily where and who the Edomites are just now, and for many centuries before our day. But when we talk of difficulties, we must remember whose they really are. Beyond controversy, if it be a question of man, enormous obstacles are in the way; but it is outside our measure and belongs simply to God and His word. I therefore stand to it in the most deliberate and distinct way that the Edomite is not extinct — that he remains under other names impossible for man to trace now. But there is another and connected fact, equally wonderful but more commonly acknowledged. The ancient people of God, the twelve tribes of Israel, are yet to emerge as a whole.

Thus therefore it is according to the analogy of the divine dealings with His people that He should also summon their enemies to come forth. Hence at the same critical moment when God causes the chosen nation to emerge from the dust of ages, wherein they had lain buried and for the greater part unknown, He will also remove the vail which as yet conceals among others that kindred Edomite race with their undying hatred against the sons of Israel. The great and final conflict of the age will then ensue without farther delay. Such, beyond a doubt, is the representation of the prophets; and them I believe, not present appearances or the hopes and fears of men.

Let me here refer to a familiar chapter in Isaiah in proof of what has been just now remarked — Isaiah 11. The time spoken of is when Messiah shall establish His kingdom here below, of which

indeed the chapter undeniably treats, when that blessed picture of peace and joy shall be realised, when Messiah shall judge with righteousness the poor and reprove with equity, after He shall have smitten the earth with the rod of His mouth and with the breath of His lips slain the wicked. This we know is the very passage which the apostle Paul applies to the appearing of the Lord Jesus in glory, when He destroys the man of sin. No intelligent believer but knows that this judgment has not yet been accomplished; that it awaits Christ's coming again. Further, the very features of the earth and its inhabitants, rational and irrational, render any proof needless in order to certainty that the change is future; for at what time since sin entered the world did the wolf dwell with the lamb, or the leopard lie down with the kid? There is a day, but it has never yet shone, when there shall be seen the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. Then, not before, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." Is it too strong to call it as absurd as a fairy tale for any to say that there is or ever has been the smallest approach to such enjoyment in the world? I own deeper joys of the Holy Ghost in the midst of hearts separate to Christ from the world; but here the earth, the race, the creatures of God in general are in the scene. It is the beautiful future of God when His Anointed shall reign in Zion, when it will not be as now heavenly glory opened to us by grace to faith, but when the earth and all creation shall know the blessedness of Him who shall come to be the King, who, being its Maker, none the less died in order that He might reconcile not only the believer but all things unto Himself. The Lord will do it in His own time.

In the midst then of Isaiah's fascinating description we read, "It shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea." And lest there should be the slightest doubt, he says, "He shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah." What can be conceived plainer than this? "The envy also of Ephraim shall depart." It will not be merely the restoration of the ancient people, but their spiritual renovation. Hence it is that "the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." Now for the revival of the manifest existence of their old enemies. "But they shall be upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west." The Philistines will be burden-bearers. As they treated the Israelites with the greatest indignity in early days, they will be obliged to be their servants now. A very good thing then that they are even allowed to be servants. God in strict righteousness might have cut them off; but He is good, and so it is said, "They shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them out of the east together; they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab."

Does not this intimate what I want to prove — that Edom is one of those districts and races which will be the object of the dealings of God in the future restoration of Israel? We must remember that the millennial work of God will not be all wrought in a day — undoubtedly in *the* day, but not in a day. The day of Jehovah is a considerable time. In my opinion it embraces the whole millennium, and a little more. It embraces a space before the millennium begins, and a space after, when the millennium properly so-called is over. It embraces the preparatory dealings of Jehovah, in which He will lay the ground for His reign of peace and glory over the earth; and it will also contain a margin after the millennium is over, when Satan, let loose from the abyss will make his last effort by Gog and Magog to his own destruction as well as that of his- followers. All these events, and indeed the great white throne — that is, the eternal judgment of the wicked dead from the beginning — are part of the day of Jehovah. It is evident, therefore, that the day of Jehovah is an expression which embraces, as we have seen, for its central part the thousand years' reign of Christ, but includes also events of an important kind which both precede and follow that reign. It is all the day of Jehovah. So scripture speaks, and

scripture cannot be broken.

This then may serve to show that Edom is not done with, as is commonly assumed, to no inconsiderable straining of the prophetic word. The Edomite is not extinct, though for the present unseen as such as he has long been — certainly unknown by us westerns. But that race surely exists for God, just as the ten tribes do; and when the day comes for His retributive dealings with the nations of the world, all these different parties must reappear for good or ill. Such is the voice of scripture. All this, it is obvious, attests the living value of the word of God, even in what might seem external and remote. Instead of merely speaking of nations dead and gone, whose dead bones are with painful uncertainty drawn by historians out of their tombs to be looked at as objects of curiosity, we find set out distinctly in the scriptures the unquestionable characteristics not only of God and His people, but also of the nations who opposed them; for with these God will yet surely deal.

Accordingly it will be found, as it struck my mind many years ago, that as men have certain moral traits which constitute a character, so nations may be said to have. Thus the prominent trait of Edom was envious dislike of the people of God. We do not find it so pronounced in any other nation. Take another people associated with Edom as we shall find in this very prophecy of Obadiah. Could it be said that enmity against Israel was the specific and unfailing line of Babylon? Undoubtedly Babylon was the greatest scourge but one that Israel ever had: "but one," I say, because the Romans laid a more terrific chastisement on the Jew than even Babylon, as the prophet Isaiah expressly intimated. For all that, neither in the case of Babylon nor even of Rome, was there such personal persevering spite as seemed to be concentrated in Edom. There can be no question that the character of Edom answers to what the Lord lets us know through Isaac. "Behold, thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above; and by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion, that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." It would be hard to conceive a prediction of this nature where every word was more truly verified in the whole history of man than in the life and changes of Edom and Israel respectively. Nevertheless there is no intimation in this of their spite and vengeful hate. Living by the sword does not necessarily mean enmity; because ambitious activity often leads to a career of conquest and determination to have their own way where there is no particular enmity at work.

Many a race, again, would far rather not take up the sword; but still if others do not bend who stand in their way, they do not scruple to use force. This is more perhaps what we see in Edom's conduct to others. Hence, as we know, they coveted the possessions of the Horims at mount Seir in early days (Deut. 2: 22), a peculiar race that lived in caves and dens of the earth. But the sons of Edom destroyed them and succeeded in their stead. Again, they have one of the most remarkable cities in the world, consisting of what is called troglodyte habitations where the old race had dwelt, as afterwards themselves. They were dwellings, and not uncomfortable dwellings, cut out of the yielding sandstone of Petra and other places of Idumea. The climate being remarkably dry, and the stone exceedingly suited for such works, great or small — private dwellings as well as public reception rooms — they used these caves to live in. The remains are remarkable even to our own day. The Edomites coveted such a natural fortress as suiting well their destiny; for, being of a remarkably warlike character, they saw with clear instinct that, exposed as they must be in the edge of the desert to the predatory attacks of robbers, their Ishmaelite connections or others, the rocky abodes of mount Seir would prove an admirable means of easy defence against surprise. Never were the outward circumstances of a land more adapted to national characteristics and a purpose defined by prophecy, though I do not say that they were conscious of being so governed in their choice.

Whoever may live there now, the Edomites will be found there at the close. This appears to me

intimated by the word of God, which is the sole conclusive authority always and in everything; and scripture leaves little ground for hesitation to the believer about the matter. It is not the case of a nation simply transplanted into another place, striking root there, coalescing with others, and forming in some sort a new stock. A solemn doom awaits that land and race by and by. They may have others to supplant them for the moment (of this I am not giving any opinion); but it is clearly known from the word of God that the Edomites will be in Idumea, and that there the judgment of God will not fail to overtake them at the last, when the Messiah stands at the head of His ancient people.

It would seem then that their special character, gradually if not from the first, is a relentless hatred of the children of Israel. Of old the good hand of God in Israel's favour, and the glorious purposes that He has in store for them, will have had but one effect on Edom. Instead of reaping any comfort from the thought, that if they were themselves not the most honoured, at any rate those who were near to them had that highest place by the gift of God, Israel's gain, on the contrary, will draw out as before nothing but deadly jealousy; and this increasingly and above all in the distresses of the Jew, which should have drawn out their pity.

This gives the occasion for Obadiah's prophecy. Nor is the theme confined to him. The pencil of Isaiah has drawn a most awful picture of the judgment that awaits the Edomites. Hence, our prophet being very brief, I purposely connect a few other scriptures with it.

In Isaiah 34 we read that "the indignation of Jehovah is upon all nations." It is evident enough that in its full import this is a future scene. There may have been and was no doubt the indignation of Jehovah on particular nations in times past; but it would be hard to say it was on all nations in the marked manner which is described here, when "all the hosts of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea." How can sensible men, not to say believing and reverent men of God, apply it all to what people call the day of judgment? For when the wicked dead stand before the great white throne to receive their doom, it will be no question of Idumea or any other land. It is undeniable that, when the elements of the universe are dissolved with fervent heat, there will be no question of one country or race more than another, but of a wholly new and final state of things. Here it is the judgment of the earth while it still subsists, not that eternal judgment where the old creation disappears in order to the "new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." In fact the judgment of Idumea, though beyond anything in the past, is very far short of this radical and final change for eternity.

As a whole then the prophecy, whatever partial accomplishment it may have received, awaits its complete and punctual fulfilment before the time and the scene of the great white throne in Revelation 20 at the end of the millennial reign of peace and blessedness, which therefore in the nature of things it must precede. Compare also the connection with the following chapter, Isaiah 35. The millennium certainly is to follow the most tremendous blows of divine judgment; and this on Idumea is one of the worst. "For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of Jehovah is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams; for Jehovah hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea."

Bozrah was one of their chief cities. Not only therefore have we the land in general, but even the city retains its existence or reappears ere that day. "And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls." Of course the language is highly figurative; on all sides this is admitted. The question is, Figurative of what? Of heavenly things or of earthly? Of eternity or of time?

Unquestionably the latter. "And their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. For it is the day of Jehovah's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion." It is not the new heavens and new earth, but the earthly people are coming forward — Zion, the city of the great King, the Messianic royalty, the universal kingdom of the Son of man. Therefore it is that the judgments of the nations can be no longer deferred. It is emphatically the earth which is in hand, and solemn questions as to the nations which must be solved before the Lord reigns as the true Solomon. This makes the real nature of these judgments abundantly plain.

Hence it is that nothing can exceed the strength of the language of the prophetic Spirit. As he says here: "The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever."

We are all aware of the haste with which some readers (prophetic students they can scarcely be called) have tried to show that this has been accomplished already. An impression existed widely ever since the beginning of the present century, that if a man attempted to go through the land of Idumea he must surely die; and if not on the spot, at least very soon after. All this was in principle a mistake. Without speaking of natives here and there, not a few travellers have passed through Idumea, and have lived to write and publish their accounts, so that, ignorant as we may still be, we know considerably more about the country than had been known for centuries. Therefore even if we take the lowest ground of matter of fact, it became evident, not that the prophecy had failed, but that the time for its accomplishment is yet future. Such is the only just inference. It is to be a land where people no longer dwell, and where no strangers pass through for ever. It will be made an outstanding example of utter consumption through the unsparing wrath of God before the whole world.

What brings all out more strikingly is that the awful description of Edom's absolute desolateness, and this under the mighty hand of God, is at or just before the time when the wilderness and the solitary places shall be glad on account of the overthrow of their former desolators, when that which is now a wilderness shall exult and blossom as the saffron. Who can avoid seeing in this the predicted, long-expected, millennial day? Not that "that day" is to be either a mere difference in degree from the present day, nor on the other, as some suppose, the perfect extinction of all evil. "The new heavens wherein dwelleth righteousness" will be a scene of absolute good, when all evil shall have been judged and consigned for ever to the lake of fire. Thenceforward the separation is eternal. 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, their God. Good is then alone; evil is punished and put away for ever. But the millennial state only will be a pledge of this; there will be a real and public testimony to it, but not the thing itself in its fulness, leaving nothing more to desire.

In the millennium, for instance, there will be death, not as the rule, but as the exception. Still death, though only a judicial infliction, will not be quite extinguished as yet. There will also be the need of healing, as we gather from Rev. 22: 2, as well as Ezekiel 47. There will even be judgments from God where needed, as is plain in Isaiah 65: 20, Isaiah 66: 24; Zech. 14: 17-19; though it is granted few and under exceptional circumstances, without reckoning the last outbreak of the distant Gentiles at the end of the millennium. (Rev. 20: 7-9)

Plainly then the gracious power of God will both restrain mercy and vouchsafe unprecedented bounty and goodness among men, not the elect merely as now. That day will be a period of government which in itself always supposes evil that requires to be controlled; whereas in the new heavens and new

earth there will be none left. Then righteousness will not merely govern, as often noticed, but will dwell where all things are made new, and there is no need of governing more, but rest and joy, love and praise, abide for ever. Thus therefore Christ's kingdom over the earth for its allotted term, when partial application occurs of the new heavens and earth, will be characterized by righteousness reigning, the eternal state of the new heavens and new earth by righteousness dwelling. Such is the scriptural distinction between the two. In the millennium righteousness shall control any evil which, still subsisting, may show itself; which will be rare because the great leader of evil is bound, and the glory of the Lord will shine and His goodness supply freely and to the full. But in the new heavens and new earth there will be no evil save in its own place, and Satan never more prowls about to lure men to rebellion and destruction, making God appear a mere Judge, instead of leaving room for the flow and fulness of His love. All judgment will have passed before the appearance of the new heavens and the new earth. All who have taken their side with Satan definitively will have been definitively judged; and so there will be a lasting separation between that which is of God and with God for ever, and what is finally rejected to suffer the consequences with Satan, whom they preferred to God and His Anointed.

Such is the statement of scripture, and a more solemn reality cannot be. The same revelation which lets us see beforehand the everlasting state shows us the lake of fire no less than heaven and earth. Thus with equal plainness we learn the everlasting wretchedness of those that are lost as certainly as the eternal blessedness of those that are saved. If I have ground from God to believe the one, I have the same authority to believe the other. Can the man who allows himself to choose out of scripture be considered a believer? He who believes only what he thinks reasonable is a believer in his own mind, not in God's word. A believer is one who accepts what God says, and all question for him is at an end.

It is needless to go through the other scriptures that speak of Edom, but I may direct attention to Isa. 63 as the prophecy of Jehovah's return after the judgment has been executed, which was first threatened in chap. 32. Compare also Jer. 49: 7-22, where, it will be observed, contrary to the hope held out to some enemies, Jehovah does not say that He will bring again their captivity in the latter days, any more than from Philistia, Damascus, and Hazor: their fate is sealed though for different reasons. Edom especially must have this marked and definite character of judgment. The joy of the age to come will not reverse its sad sentence. As long as the earth endures, Idumea will be given up to desolation; the unrelenting implacable hate of Edom's sons for the Jews will bring on them justly merited destruction.

Just so in the New Testament we may see that the Babylonish system of Rome, the great centre of idolatry and of corruption, will be similarly the object of judgment without mercy from God. This appears to include Rome physically or geographically, according to the aspect defined in 14: 8, Revelation 16: 19, 18, more particularly in Rev. 18. The smoke is described as rising up for ever and ever; a solemn and public exhibition that the age of universal blessing to the honour of the Son of man will be no less the time of judgment on some pre-eminently guilty. What a warning to all nations! "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness."

Nor will divine vengeance fall on certain Gentiles only: those in the last verses of Isaiah, I conceive, are or at least comprehend apostate Jews. Though the form of the word may not be the strictest term for transgressing the law of Jehovah's covenant, it is applied to Jewish as well as Gentile impiety, as may be seen clearly in Amos 1, 2. The mass or "the many" spoken of in Daniel will suffer supremely, as well as the Gentiles who will either join the antichrist or fight against the Christ. But the description first of this sin in Isa. 65, then the standing witness of the punishment in Isaiah 66, inclines me to infer that some at least must have been under the law. Gentiles are never called transgressors in the sense of violating the law or covenant, but rather "sinners of the Gentiles," though we have seen

that it may be said in the general sense of an impious rebellion or ungodly opposition to God. We never hear of such a thing as transgressors (παραβάται) of the Gentiles. The Jews, being under the formal or positive conditions of the law, are consequently brought to a point; and if they violate that law, they are not merely sinners like the Gentiles but also transgressors; that is, they are guilty of the distinct violation of the known law of God. Consequently their guilt is greater, and hence a special example will be made of them, though not of them only, as we may see in Matt. 25: 41-46. They will have renounced the true God of Israel, Jehovah; they will have accepted him who comes in his own name, the antichrist; they will have become again worshippers of idols. Thus, having refused the true Christ and received the false, rejected the testimony and the Spirit of God, they will be given up to the last great lie of Satan and their lawless chief, and be met by divine judgment in that condition. They are accordingly described as made a perpetual- shame and warning in their suffering before the eyes of their fellow Jews, as indeed before "all flesh," exposed to view, as God will know how to effect it, in the valley of Hinnom, outside the city of the great King. There will be this spectacle, the more awful from its proximity to the earthly centre of glory and blessing in that day.

No doubt it is founded on such illustrations as this that so many have formed their notions of hell. But a great mistake lies under it, though not at all in the direction of aggravating the horrors of perdition. If we believe the scriptures, it is impossible to exaggerate the awfulness of eternal judgment; but in my opinion the Jesuit conceptions of hell are low and vulgar and earthly. They bring in elements almost ludicrous to natural minds and expose the truth of God to derision. At the same time they are founded upon a perverted truth. There is no reason to think that the everlasting judgment of those that reject the gospel of Christ will be an earthly spectacle such as this is. Those who have sinned in an 'earthly way will be punished after an earthly sort; but he who disbelieves the gospel now will be punished in a way suitable to that which he rejects. There is always a righteous measure in the dealings of God, a perfect graduation of punishment to sin, though man may not be an adequate judge of it. To reject the gospel is yet worse than violating the law; because it goes far more deeply against the divine glory than the mere failure of man in his duty to God and his fellows. This is the law. But to reject the gospel is to reject the grace of God in His Son; it is to reject the truth that God is, willing to save sinners at His own sole cost through the redemption that is in Christ, throwing back, as it were, the infinite gift in His face.

Some indeed have a dogmatic system which tells us that all men are judged simply according to the law, on the assumption that such is the one ground of responsibility for all men, Gentiles and Jews being viewed as alike under it. But the assumption is not erroneous only; it evinces the most painful insubjection to or ignorance of scripture. It has every fault which a vicious hypothesis can possess. The facts are neglected, and the true principle untouched; theirs never did apply as they suppose it always does; and at the present time no part of it applies, because a deeper responsibility is come in. It makes too much of the old state of the Gentiles; it makes too little of the judgment now impending over every soul that neglects the great salvation. The scriptural way of presenting judgment therefore makes it incomparably more profound and tremendous. It is plain that the Jesuits are as feeble in appreciating either the privileges of the gospel or the judgment of God, as their main point is a human use of terror in order to act upon the dark heart and guilty conscience. They have been thus accounted great as preachers; but their way is a dramatic representation as of the sufferings of the damned, so also of the external circumstances of the cross of Christ. Undoubtedly all this has its real place; but God's part is habitually left out.

There will then be at least three distinct applications of judgment for those on earth immediately before the millennial reign. To the north and east of the land will be those that play their part in the

earthly history as the antagonists of Israel: to the west those that will come forward as friends after the gospel to the Gentiles. To these must be added those who come forth from themselves, the apostate Jews of the latter day, who will make common cause with the Latin kingdom and western powers. All is in perfect order: all we need is more simple faith in scripture and in God's willingness to give us the right understanding of it by the operation of His Spirit.

Thus it would appear from Ezekiel 25 that the divine vengeance on mount Seir and the Edomites is to be by the hand of Israel. And the great burden of all the numerous prophetic warnings is that the presence of Jehovah is to be manifested in it; next, that it will be at the time when all nations and all the earth are to come under the hand of God: and thirdly, that the epoch of the judgment is to be just when blessing comes beyond example and unchangeably to Israel and to the earth in general. Compare Isaiah 11, Isaiah 34; Lam. 4: 21, 22; Ezek. 25, Ezek. 35. Isaiah 63: 3 in no way excludes (what is elsewhere affirmed) that Jehovah will execute His judgment through Israel; for "of the people" should be understood "of the peoples" or nations, without including Israel amongst them. No extraneous instrument will be employed in this work: Jehovah with Israel as His means will do it effectually.

In the prophecy before us Obadiah unveils the future to the same purport. "Thus saith Jehovah concerning Edom: We have heard a rumour from Jehovah, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle," because of their resistance to God's manifest will who made Edom a little people, with the fastness of mount Seir as a natural hiding-place and security. But they sought great things and detested the dignity of Israel. "Behold, I have made them small among the heathen; thou art greatly despised." This is not so where a man or a people is content with the lot assigned and becoming; it is especially the doom of such as aspire beyond their measure. Then to be despised is of course particularly painful; and such was the history of Edom. For as we see pride in Esau from the first, so we see it in the Edomites to the last. They seem to have been after all as mercenary strangers usually are — despised by those who served themselves and employed them. It is the doom of one false to his kin to sell himself to aliens for an odious task, and then to be thrown completely off when their purpose is served and he seems of no more use. Somewhat like this would appear to have been the experience of Edom: "The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock." Their naturally impregnable position would prove no protection when God invited the instruments to pull them down from their proud heights. Be it that their "habitation is high;" be it that Esau, if not with his lips, "saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?" the word is gone out from God, "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith Jehovah." Their fall should be so much the more complete and hopeless.

But even worse than this remains. Not only should their security turn out vain in the day of trial when Jehovah took them in hand; but further the retribution of their rapacity would be unsparing. They had lived by the sword and by the rapine which generally follows the sword; and so should be their punishment. "If thieves came, to thee, if robbers by night, (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough?" Even such as live by plunder ordinarily would be satisfied when they had stolen what they could carry off in their hasty visit and flight: and those who honestly toil among the vines do not so thoroughly gather as to leave no remnants here and there; for "if the grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes?" and Jehovah will expressly make it good of Israel by and by, when their pruning will come in order to the establishment of His earthly kingdom in their midst. This, as all know, is usual. But not such should be their doom. "How are the things of Esau searched out!" There is nothing left behind whatever — nothing to pick up when the spoilers are gone. "How are his hidden things sought up!" What made it so bitter was too the fact that those they counted

friends and partisans helped it on. "All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border." Those words plainly show that those they had fully trusted turn out their enemies at last, able to injure them the more because more familiar with their persons, their habits, their dwellings, and their possessions. "The men of this place have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee." "Thy bread" (meaning those who eat the bread of Esau) "have laid a wound [or "snare"] under thee." Plainly, therefore, "there is no understanding in him." "Shall I not in that day, saith Jehovah, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau?"

They had plumed themselves on their special wisdom and prudence; but it failed them in the hour of their need. When the tide turned against Judah, they tried to turn to their own account the enemies of Judah, as well as to gratify their undying hatred of the fallen. They made friends with the Babylonians, with Nebuchadnezzar and his captains who came up against Judea. But this is the retribution which God will award them. "And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter." Yet what happened shell was not the end. This, it is trusted, has been already proved. It has been shown from scripture that, when the final scene comes at the end of the age, Edom is one of the objects of divine judgment on earth. Consequently there must be a reappearing of that race in their land in the latter day; but what took place under Nebuchadnezzar is a remarkable pre-figuration of what will be re-enacted in the beginning of the millennium, or rather during the brief crisis which precedes it, as has been repeatedly explained. "For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem." This refers clearly to their conduct in Nebuchadnezzar's day. Then "even thou wast one of them," taking part with the Chaldean spoilers. "But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger."

It is not yet the stern irreversible sentence of judgment against Edom. There is still a kind of transition in the tone of Obadiah. Jehovah is slow to wrath and full of compassion. Hence we find a tone of aggrieved affection in the prophecy as yet. When Malachi opens his mouth, all that is gone: — "Esau have I hated." This could be said then, and only then, in its depth of feeling. There is a preparation for it, as we saw, in Jeremiah, who probably was after Obadiah, and incorporates in his prophecy not a little of the very burden of judgment we are now considering. There can be no reasonable doubt that Obadiah was rather the more ancient of the two; but then, as each warning was given and Edom did not take either, but persisted in enmity and anger against the Jews, the words of God became still more unqualified in the denunciation of the wrath of Jehovah against them. "But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger, neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress." There is nothing that exhibits more malice and wickedness than to take advantage of another when he is ruined or sorrow wastes the spirit and divine chastening. It is a heart altogether depraved that could take advantage of another's fall to trample yet more on him when he is in the dust. This course is exactly what Edom did then, and will I presume repeat in the day that is coming. For we do well to remember that there will be further dealings of God in cutting down the transgressors of His people, and Edom will take part once more in the displeasure of God with the children of Israel before God establishes them in their place of supremacy. History will repeat itself. Even in human things it is in a measure verified; but in divine history it is exactly and invariably true, because all scripture has more or less a typical character or prophetic character. Hence, therefore, what has been is that which shall be, and what has been in part will be once more in full. In such a world as this we cannot wonder that it applies to the evil quite as much as the good. Thus it will be conspicuously seen in the future of Rome, there will be special traits peculiar to the day when

it reappears as the beast ascending from the abyss. But as a rule it is true of all. Even in our blessed Lord we may see the lovely connection between what He was in all His character of grace in humiliation with the glory in which He shall be revealed at His appearing and kingdom.

"Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity." He repeats as a kind of refrain the words "in the day of their calamity." "Neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. For the day of Jehovah is near upon all the heathen." This, we easily see, is the emphatic link, and proof too, of connection between the future and the past. The day of Jehovah in its full and proper sense has never yet arrived. In a partial sense it has come on Egypt; it has come on Babylon; it has come on other great powers which have successively fallen under the divine dealings; but in the full sense the day of Jehovah on all the heathen has never yet shone. The proof is that in that day this earth is to be one united whole, all tribes and tongues, not at the end or gradually in its course by secondary means, but by the gracious and almighty intervention of Jehovah, blending in His praise when all idols shall be completely and for ever gone. This has never been since idols were forged by Satan's craft for this world, and never will it be till the day of Jehovah dawn: then it will characterize its course from first to last. Even the rebellion when the reign for the thousand years is over will be no restoration of Satan's wiles in idolatry. "For the day of Jehovah is near on all the heathen. As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee." For Edom we find condign retribution. "Thy reward shall return upon thine own head. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been."

But we may distinguish between the past troubles of Edom, which the heathen or Gentiles inflicted, and a still more appalling one in the future which seems distinguished in this brief prophecy, when by Israel as a whole mount Seir shall be given to desolation more than ever, because of the indignity they did to the sons of Zion, who shall then be saved and blessed. So it is written here, "Upon mount Zion shall be deliverance." It is not the beginning that decides a war, but the end. And this is a grave thought for us to keep in view habitually in all our ways. One often sees a good deal of ardour for a while; but they are wise who look on for another day, yea, who labour for eternity; they are wise who look not to what things appear now, but what they will be in the estimate of the Lord at His coming. There is no real test except that best of moral ones — the will and judgment of the Lord of all. To help us in this, the power of the Holy Spirit deals with our souls by the word of God. This certainly we ought to know intelligently; for there is no such means of keeping us sober yet humble, happy yet grave, feeling too that the Lord is the only ultimate and adequate judge of everything, and exercising ourselves to have a conscience void of offence: and this in no small measure by letting in the light of the day, that is the future, to deal with the present. Can there, in fact, be a proper outlook of faith without that day before our eyes? To judge without it will be largely according to appearances, and so far not divinely righteous.

In this prediction then we find how completely the tables are turned in that day, and that mount Zion is to be the place of deliverance, not the sign of Israel's desolation, and that the scum of the Gentiles tread the capital of Immanuel's land. "And there shall be holiness; and the house of Jacob shall inherit their inheritance." That this is in no way the gospel, but the kingdom when the two things shall be distinguished, instead of coalescing as now in Christianity, will be still plainer from the words that follow, which it is really absurd to apply to the church, and alike ignorance and error to explain away. The divines labour in vain to explain how a remnant of Judah can be called "the house of

Jacob," and "the house of Joseph." But this difficulty is only created by the false system which exaggerates the past, and indicates the future, and deprives the ancient people of God of their hope: a Gentile conceit (see Rom. 11) and not the truth.

These verses, like others in the prophets, contemplate the bright future for the earth, and the earthly people once more restored and united in their land. "And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for Jehovah hath spoken it. And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau: and they of the plain the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria: and Benjamin shall possess Gilead." As the places are particularly specified by name, it shows that we should not fritter it away by what people call spiritualising. In fact spiritualising is an incorrect term; it should rather be viewed as allegorising. To deny the hopes of Israel has not an element of spirituality about it. In these matters true spirituality consists in understanding the word of God in the sense in which He intended it. We may apply the principle of scripture, and this may be quite legitimate. We can take up what God says of Israel and enjoy it fully; for if God loved His people then, we may be assured that the church is well beloved now, and every member of that holy body. If we see how truly Jehovah loved the Jew as such, we should not doubt but believe that the Christian is loved yet more. All this is quite true, and therefore we can take the dealings of God with Isaac or Jacob, David or Solomon, with Isaiah or Hezekiah. We can listen to them all as full of instruction for the Christian.

At the same time we must remember that there were also points peculiar and special; and so, in this very scene, the mention of Samaria and Gilead and the like shows that it is no question of heaven or eternity, nor of the church or the gospel. The Jews have been just as guilty as the Gentiles of the same allegorical style of misapplying God's word. For instance, they interpret the Edomite as meaning the Christian, crowning their wickedness with the blasphemous lie, that the Lord Jesus, their true Messiah, was an Edomite. Yet Gentile doctors, being scarcely less censurable for their perversions, though of course desirous of honouring the Lord, have little reason to take high ground in condemning the rabbis.

Luther, for instance (blessed man as he was), through not holding fast to the general scope and connection, as well as the propriety of each phrase in detail, so far lost the true force of the prophecy as to suppose this chapter means the gospel. Can any further proof be asked of his lamentable deficiency in the knowledge of the Bible? He must have a most surprising imagination who brings the gospel into anything that has been read here as yet. The golden rule is never to force scripture: otherwise we never fail to enfeeble the truth by confounding things that differ. I do not say this out of the smallest want of homage for the great Reformer; for he was assuredly to be respected by all who love the truth. But the truth has higher claims; and his name must never be used to weaken its authority, as when he through ignorance (for instance, of the hopes of Israel and the future judgment of the quick) nullifies its meaning. But he was both rash and feeble in his thoughts of the inspired word. Thus we all, I suppose, are aware that he treated the Epistle of James as not scripture at all, and that he doubted about other parts of the word of God. In point of fact this is what has given the rationalists of Germany a certain ground of advantage, which they have not failed to press on their more orthodox adversaries. For after all the party which cry up rationalism are much influenced by tradition, just like those who seem most opposed, their reasoning, in my opinion, being of the most superficial kind. However this may be, even Luther did give his sanction to the school of interpretation which turns away the testimony of the prophets from the people who are directly in view; namely, the Jews.

The truth is Israel are as much the centre of the Old Testament as Christians are of the New; and

unless those two facts be held fast and in view, one is always in danger of mistaking and misinterpreting the mind of God.

Obadiah then speaks of an earthly deliverance, in verse 17, by God but on earth. It is the restoration not of the church but of Israel; and the Spirit speaks of mount Zion literally, as afterwards of the mount of Esau, the plain of the Philistines, and the fields of Ephraim and of Samaria. The figures of fire and flame devouring others as stubble in no way represent grace, but judgment when the world-kingdom of our Lord is come. Man, and even believers, may doubt; but "Jehovah hath spoken." "And the south shall possess the mountains of Esau; and the plain the Philistines; and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim and the fields of Samaria; and Benjamin, Gilead. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel, between Sidon and Tyre, which is [with] the Canaanites, unto Zarephath [Sarepta]; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad [Sardis, the metropolis of the Lydian kingdom], shall possess the cities of the south. And the saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau: and the kingdom shall be Jehovah's." These deliverers spoken of are, no doubt, instruments that Jehovah will employ in the day that is coming, for He means to put great honour on His ancient people when brought to Himself; He promises to make the feeblest among the inhabitants of Jerusalem like David, and the house of David as God, like an angel of Jehovah before them, as said Zechariah. These seem to be the persons here referred to. The connection excludes any reference to the Maccabean times; still less can Obadiah be considered justly to refer to the Christian state of things. It is plain that he speaks of the days which precede the millennium when the kingdom shall be Jehovah's. It is impossible to connect the statement with the eternal state when God shall be all in all; for then, as we are explicitly taught, the kingdom will have been given up to the Father, that God (Father, Son, and Holy Ghost) may be all in all. Here it is the previous era of the kingdom.

I believe there is no exposition of the scripture which satisfies all the conditions of the context and of the rest of the Bible but this. Who would deny that scripture must have as its ultimate force some fixed determinate meaning? There must be a true and full object for the word of God, and this is in no way adverse to the principle of applying particular passages meanwhile. This is all right, and would not be objected to for a moment; but we must distinguish between the application of scripture and its just interpretation. The latter means the full mind of God, the intention and scope whether of prophecy or of anything else. Application is justifiable according to apostolic precedent as a practical use of it before "that day."

It is well known that the Edomites pushed their successes as Israel and Judah decayed; so that they even took some of the southern districts and towns of Palestine. They became much mixed up with the Jews. Then came the people called Nabatheans, descended from Nebaioth the eldest son of Ishmael, who took possession of the land of Idumea, and turned the sons of Esau out to a great extent. In consequence of those men pushing up into Edom, the previous inhabitants thronged into the Holy Land, where some of them acquired considerable possessions, part of which they were obliged to give up before the time of our Lord, as is notorious. Yet it was an Idumean family which got the upper hand in the land. Antipater was the forefather of Herod the Great, who was reigning in Jerusalem when our Lord was born, and sought to kill Him. But this state of things is rather the converse of the prophecy than its accomplishment. In feet the close of our prophecy awaits the great future day of Jehovah for its fulfilment. It is a miserable idea that Obadiah predicted under such bright terms anything like the successes of the Maccabees for somewhat more than a century, followed by the Idumean family which reigned over the Holy Land. The days of Herod the king were far from the time when the kingdom should be Jehovah's.

Christianity on the other hand knows but one Saviour. The bright promises of Obadiah are as yet

unfulfilled. They, like all others which concern the nations and the earth, await the appearing of the Lord Jesus and His kingdom. It is not the eternal state, when God shall be all in all; for then the kingdom will have been delivered up to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He shall have put all His enemies under His feet. "The kingdom" will be that long period when divine power, administered by the Son of man, shall cause the earth to manifest blessed results according to God's will and word for His glory. But it will be a time of just rule on the part of the great King; that is, a time when power, combined with righteousness, shall openly reward on earth the good given abundantly and sustained in mercy, and withal shall put down whatever evil dares to show itself. Not so the eternal state which succeeds the kingdom; for then will have taken place, consequent on the judgment of the dead, the everlasting separation; the new heaven and earth in the absolute sense, where God dwells with men without death, or sorrow, or crying, or pain, more; and the wicked are consigned to the lake of fire, which is the second death.