Ezekiel - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 1, Letter in Reply to "Three Considerations", A

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THREE CONSIDERATIONS; PROVING UNSCRIPTURAL THE SUPPOSITION OF THE PERSONAL REIGN OF CHRIST ON EARTH DURING THE MILLENNIUM.''1

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

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

Christ, we own, is King. We own Him as our Priest; but the place of the exercise of His priesthood is in the presence of God in heaven; so that, while the Jewish system was permitted to continue, He could not be a priest there. " If he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law." Did Paul deny the priesthood of Christ in saying this? He was proving it, and showing the place and manner of its exercise. Again, Christ, the anointed Man, is King; but the world and the Jews are the kingdom given to Him. But while we admit His title from the beginning, He was born King of the Jews, and to Him were the Gentiles to come. We read, at a given time, " the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ." Mr. Stronach surely will not say that this time is come yet. If any enquirer will turn to Dan. 7, he will see " one like the Son of man " brought before the " Ancient of days," and a kingdom " given to him": the Ancient of days having judged and consumed the beast. We believe, when the Son of man takes the kingdom, He will suffer no evil at all; that until He does so, He works by His Spirit in the hearts of His people, teaching and strengthening them to show the life and patience of Christ in the midst of the evil, and forming them for a better and a happier world: as to this world, they are in the kingdom and patience, not the kingdom and power, of Jesus Christ. A time is coming when they will have to say, " We give thee thanks, 0 Lord God Almighty, because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come," Rev. 2:17. Does any one suppose that God then first had great power? The mention of it shows the folly of such a thought; but He took it, and reigned, and wrath came. He had, for a long time, held His peace; now He arose. Christ is Lord, Head, Bridegroom of the church; but the scripture speaks of Him as King of the world (as before, and also in futurity, of the Jewish nation). As God, every real Christian owns Him, as Jehovah, King of eternity. But the writer must know that this is not the question, but of office, of a kingdom taken as Son of man-a given kingdom, a kingdom to be delivered up.

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

The next is Acts 2:30-36. In this, again, there is not one word about Christ's being made King; so that the writer is obliged to add to, or rather change, the passage to make it answer. The point proved is first the resurrection;3 secondly, the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God, and the house of Israel were to know that He was made Lord and Christ. The question of the kingdom, though this proved His title, was left in total abeyance. As to Israel's being typical of the Israel of God (though I think it no type, and a very imperfect analogy, and do not believe the Israel of God to mean the church, but the believing portion among Israel in the days of the Apostle), it is sufficient to say, that there is not a word in one of the passages about the kingship of Christ over the church at all.

Matt. 28:18. The only answer is, nobody (i.e. no believer) can question it. The only question is, is He exercising it in every way? Clearly not: for example, judgment. This, we know, is reserved to an appointed day, yet it is the very witness of Christ's power; so, that though He has confessedly " all power," the manifestation of it is not yet made in every way. " The apostle Paul," we are told, " declares, that Jesus is crowned king "; where? Heb. 2:9-not a word about it. It so happens that the words here, " glory " and " honor," are the words used in the Septuagint about the garments of priesthood; at any rate, there is nothing about being king. In Eph. 1:20-23, nothing still about king; and further, it shows the mistake of the writer as to the position in which Christ is here shown to stand. He is Head, the church is His body-Head thus to the church, not over it, but over all things. It describes here, not His lordship over, but His union with, the church, and over all things with it, as His body. That Christ died, and rose, and revived, that He might be the Lord of the dead and living, is quite true; but what about His being King, or how King of the dead? He will show Himself their Lord in calling them before Him, raising them; but while the resurrection showed Him Lord of the dead and living, it has surely nothing to do with the present character of the exercise of the power to which He is entitled. As we have said, this will be shown as to the dead in resurrection; but this is not shown yet, though we know He has it, nor in the same manner His just royal power; 1 Cor. 15:25. That Christ, as sitting upon the Father's throne, exercises all power, no one denies; but the

exercise of His dominion as Son of man in given title over the world, is the very thing here proved-this must be subjected also. These are all the passages quoted.

The conclusion is in no way the scriptural mind of God. Who told the writer that there would be succeeding ages of this world's history? We have not so learned to say, "Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly!" "Our Lord shall exercise undisputedly." This is exactly what He does not do now in the church; for we wrestle with principalities and powers, "against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," Eph. 6:12. If the exercise be far more extensive than at present, it is clear; in some sort, there is a power which He has not taken. This is the thing we assert from Scripture: the question is, what is the manner of it? The writer, if he says anything, must say, Christ can exercise His power in no other way than He does now. We think He can, and we think the Scriptures say He will; for example, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel," Psa. 2:9. We do not think that this is the gentle influence of His Spirit in the hearts of His people, by which, according to the notion of the writer, He is King in Zion. These nations are not Zion at all, and the exercise of the power is quite a different thing yet to come. When Mr. S. says, " Christ will still continue seated where He now is "-if he mean that the Man, Christ Jesus, shall never leave His place in heaven, it is clean contrary to Scripture, and a denial of the faith; for we read, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," Acts 1: 11. And again, " Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and he shall send Jesus... whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began," Acts 3:19-21. When the times of refreshing come, then Jesus is sent, the heavens receiving Him till then. Not so those who deny His return, and look for the times of refreshing to come, without Jesus being sent at all. This, though the universal testimony of Scripture by all the holy prophets, the unbelieving church now rejects and denies. We believe that the heavens will receive Him till a time, which time is a time of refreshing-not the final judgment of the dead and sending them to the lake of eternal fire.

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

Now, as to the quotations under the third head, that the resurrection of all the dead is invariably represented in Scripture as taking place at the same time, I have only to say, it is an entire misstatement; John 5:28, 29. Here I see, on the contrary, there is a resurrection to life spoken of, and a resurrection to judgment, showing they are distinct things; if the word " hour " be spoken of, reference to verse 25 will show that the same word can be applied to the time of Christ's work in the flesh, and also, the time of His work when exalted, which last part has already lasted eighteen hundred years. This text proves, not that there is one resurrection, but two- a resurrection to life and a resurrection to judgment.

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

Acts 24:15. That there will be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust, all admit; the question is, will they take place together? Of this the passage says nothing. John 6 and 1 Cor. 15 speak solely of the resurrection of the righteous, and prove, of course, nothing of the simultaneous resurrection spoken of the wicked: they rather show, that the resurrection of the godly, believers, is a distinctive privilege. If the verses (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54) be referred to, it will be plainly seen to be the believer's privilege: how so, if it be a common resurrection of all? It is clear, however, that none but believers are spoken of, and that it is their privilege as such. If the verses of 1 Cor. 15:51-54 be read, or indeed the whole passage, it will be plain that none but blessed saints are spoken of at all, as is distinctly expressed in verse 23, " Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming; then cometh the end." Surely this does not represent all rising at the same time. As to Rev. 20:11 to end, I do not see how those of whom we have previously read-" they lived and reigned "-could be called the dead, specially when it is said, "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished."

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

Matt. 25:31 to the end. How is this shown to apply to resurrection at all? I do not see that it does. Where is anything spoken of resurrection in it? The chapters seem to run in this order: chapter 24 commences with the judgment on Jerusalem and the Jewish people; then at the end, the disciples or church looked at immediately, their actual calling in particular responsibility to meet the Bridegroom, and the actual gifts-a solemn truth, for which they were responsible in the use, ' occupying till he come '; then the Gentiles (all the nations) called before Him for the manner in which they had received the messengers of His mercy. This, so far from being a general judgment of the dead, takes in no Jews at all, but is contrasted with them- does not include the previous judgment of the church-does not include any dying before Christ came (for the terms of the judgment preclude this), nor any to whom the message of truth did not come-in a word, very, very far the greatest portion of the subjects of a general judgment. It is, in a word, the judgment of all the Gentiles in that day, as He had before judged Jerusalem and the Jews. It may involve many principles, as the whole passage does, but this is its simple statement; nor is there a word about resurrection in the whole passage, but of judgment on all the Gentiles, when the Son of man sits upon the throne of His glory.

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

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

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

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

Lastly, Rev. 20 (to disprove the application of which the other passages have been quoted). The statement is simple, and the language plain. We read of God and Christ, of the devil and Satan, the first resurrection and the second death. This is not symbolical, but plain; and (what is very important to remark) it is not a state of things described, but a reward of persons. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him," said the apostle; and so, in another place, "If so be we suffer with him that we may be glorified together." "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." We do not (though figures may be used to express them) believe that the things here spoken of are figures; we do not believe, that, when the Lord said that people who suffered with Him should also reign with Him, He meant that the principles which they suffered for should prevail in persons who were reigned over, however happy they might therefore be. His suffering church is one with Himself, His body; and when He appears, we shall appear with Him. When He reigns, He will make us reign with Him. The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom. He must do it in the necessity of His own love; His word has declared it for the comfort of His people. We cannot let go His grace out of our hands; we shall be priests of God and of Christ, reigning a thousand years with Him, a Priest upon His throne, reigning upon, or rather over, the earth.

Isa. 65 and Ezek. 37, compared with Luke 20 and Rev. 20, will show the difference of the earth blessed under the saints' reign with Christ, and their reigning with Him-the instruments of the blessing. In a word, He is to gather together in one, both things in heaven and things on earth. Luke and Revelation show the former, being written to the church; Isaiah and Ezekiel, being written to the Jews, the heirs of the latter, show the earthly glory and blessing which shall result from Satan being cast down (see Eph. 6:12, margin, and Rev. 12); and the Lord and His saints taking the place they held, and all blessing coming in consequence, as described in Hos. 2:21, 22. We admit, from Isaiah, that there may be death among those on earth during the millennium (not, of course, among the risen saints); but it is only spoken of as being judicial. It does not appear, that I see, that the godly will die even on earth during the millennium: "as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands." It would in fact be only a little prolongation in blessing, of that which was shown to be originally more natural to man in sorrow even on the departure of creation from God-blessing now restored, as when his days were not as the evening shadow, till well nigh the verge of as long a day as that which yet shall be but short from its blessedness in favor under the securing reign of the Lord from heaven, the second Adam.

As to the concluding paragraph generally, I never saw more terrible confusion and error resulting from confounding the kingdom taken as Son of man; and the divine majesty, which can never pass away. The kingdom spoken of in 1 Cor. 15 is a kingdom "given up," a kingdom exercised during, as well as till, the last day, but at the end given up. Therefore, says the writer, we conclude, "that the King, the Lord of Hosts, shall fill His throne in the highest heavens till the last day." He will, surely, forever and ever. "Till the solemn hour." Does the writer believe that the King, the Lord of Hosts, will ever give up His kingdom? This is a strange way of securing the Savior's Person, and offices. It just shows the awful error persons are brought into, when they resist the plain testimony of Scripture-an error which, in his thoughts concerning our blessed Master, I gladly own, I believe, the writer to be quite free from, but which his denial of the given, and afterward surrendered kingdom, taken by the Son, and confounding it with the divine and unchangeable royalty of His Person (a conclusion also made by C.G.T., in referring to 1 Tim. 6:13), completely involves them both in; for this connection of 1 Cor. 15:25, etc., with His glory as the King, the Lord of Hosts, is a direct statement that He gives the latter up, holds it only till a given time; which I believe and am sure both the writers would hold to be a blasphemy against the divine glory of the Lord Jesus, Jehovah, " God over all, blessed for evermore." If the kingly power of the Lord Jesus is simply as the King, the Lord of Hosts, and, using 1 Cor. 15 for this, " we conclude " that He " so " fills His throne till the last day; then is it most certain that this He gives up to God, even the Father; and I trust that such a statement will awaken the writer's eyes to the truth, that there is a time when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His glory, when He distinctly, and before the world, shall be upon His throne, as now the church knows Him to be set down on His Father's, in the rightful and glorious tide of Son of God, a place where He, one with the Father, alone of all that ever were in the form of man, can, or has title to, sit in the glory which He had with Him before the world was. But there is a throne, His throne, on which, in the blessed love of His grace, they that overcome shall sit with Him according to the truth of His word. If he examine the passage in 1 Cor. 15 a little closer, he will see that it refers to the subjecting of all things to man in resurrection (not the King, the Lord of Hosts, in tide unvarying, in glory never changing-the same, yesterday, and to-day, and forever, who was and is to come, the Almighty, Jesus, our Lord).

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

There is one subject more remains to be noticed-the rejection of Christian ministry-to which the short reply is, that we reject nothing but un-Christian ministry. I do not believe that persons appointed by the king or chosen by the people, are therefore ministers. This is the point in question. I disclaim the title of either to choose or appoint them, or of any but God. But I believe Christian ministry to be as essential to this dispensation, as the fact of Christ's coming. So far am I from setting it aside, I believe it to be essentially from God, and object to the perversion of it, or the mere will of king or people-though both are to be respected in their place-interfering with so holy a thing. I read that when Christ ascended up on high, "He gave some apostles, and some prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." This

is the only source of ministry, not the appointment of a king, nor the choice of a people. I see it, on the one side asserted, that authorities have a right to appoint, and, on the other, that the people have a right to choose: I do not believe either. Christ gives when and how He pleases-woe be to them who do not own it! In a little tract called "The Protestant Dissenter's Manual," it is stated, that a man has as much right to choose his own minister as his own lawyer, or physician. This seems to shut out God altogether, just as much as what is objected to. If Christ has given a gift, the saint is bound to own its use, and Christ's word by it. Where is the proof of an evangelist's gift? In the converted souls which bless God through his means. The church may own and recognize them in it, but they must do so if they are spiritual, if the gift and therefore appointment, of God be there: they sin against Christ who has sent him, if they do not. The consequence of these human appointments, or choosings, has been the fixing a person who pleased the people, fit, or unfit, as the one only person in whom every gift must be concentrated, or the Church lose part of its inheritance and portion: and the whole service has been turned habitually into a preacher.

We do not object to ministry, but to the assumption of the whole of it by one individual, who may or may not be sent, and, if sent, may have one qualification, and not all. A man may be eminently qualified for an evangelist, and he is made a pastor, for which he is in no way fitted; he is qualified to teach, perhaps, but not to rule, and he is put to guide the flock. It is the substitution of a minister, good or bad, for the whole work of the ministry, of which we complain, and the dislocation of the frame of Christ's body, which is the consequence. What is the Home Mission, and the Presbyterian mission, and the like, but the effort to correct this plainly seen nuisance in the frame-work of these bodies which call themselves churches? The reason I say that ministry is essential to this dispensation, is the declaration in 2 Cor. 5 " God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation "; more correctly, " and committing unto us." That is, God in Christ was doing these three things: reconciling the world, not imputing trespasses, and committing ministry. This was essentially part of the work of God manifest in the flesh, the manner in which He was revealed. Amongst the Jews it was not so. They were a people formed by birth, and a certain code of laws was prescribed to them as such. But when God was in Christ, being a reconciling God, a ministry was necessarily the way of fulfilling this very purpose; it was the distinctive character of the dispensation, essentially characteristic of it. The grace of this may be amazingly concentrated, as it was in the apostle: it is habitually distributed in various competencies of service. These are for use, and the church is bound to own them, or it denies Christ's title in committing them, which is as real and essential to Him as the power in which He was reconciling,4 and could forgive, and not impute trespasses: any one who is reconciled is competent to state, and bound, as far as able, to state Christ's glory as the Reconciler to them who are ignorant. There are those who may have the special gift of evangelizing; the church, of course, is not the place for this, ordinarily speaking, for they are the church, because they have received it; no one has the smallest right to speak in the church to whom God has not given a competency to edify it; nature has no right there; we, as to it, are dead in Christ-out of Him, dead in trespasses and sins-our right in flesh is only everlasting destruction. I know no right that a rebellious sinner has but to go there; a saint has none-he is bought with a price-Christ has all, and power too; neither has grace any right to speak, unless for the edification of the brethren. If they are edified they will soon find it out; if not, it proves the incompetency of the speaker, let him be as wise as the Prince of Tire: for the Spirit always speaks to profit to them to whom He speaks.

It is true there may be so evil a state, as that men will not endure sound doctrine; but for this there is no remedy but the direct intervention of prerogative mercy, in sending some one able to bring them back. The church, then, has a right to the profit of all the ministry, with which God has endowed any of the brethren, for its edification; those who cannot do so, must, of course, be silent, for it is God who alone can provide, and He will shew His prerogative by giving it by whom He pleases. If anyone be exceedingly gifted of the Lord in knowledge and wisdom-in that affectionate and watchful discernment of the state of souls, and ability to minister the right remedy in Christ-to control the unruly in the manifested power and energy of the Spirit of God-to detect the devices of Satan-his value in feeding the flock of God will soon be felt; the godly part of the church would soon be apt to cling too much, rather than too little, to such an one for guidance, comfort, and support; and he is bound to exercise his ministry according to the measure given to him, whether locally or more extendedly. If anyone be able, with much gift from God, rightly to divide the word of truth, though he may not have such qualifications as previously spoken of, he may teach, with as much, or more even, of profit than the other, yet not hold the same place of service among the brethren; he may have a word of wisdom, though not of knowledge, or the converse; the church is entitled to all. Whatever He gave, He gave to the church to profit withal; how shall we get it, if it be not exercised? That Christ will demand the account of the talent is certain; but there is much more gained than merely the exercise of whatever gifts God may give: for, the Spirit of God being owned, the power of communion is there, and, the Spirit of God being honored, blessing accompanies all in the power of grace and communion otherwise unknown. We quite acknowledge, then, Christian ministry, but not to be altogether in the hands of those who would thus confine it to a single individual, whatever his extent of qualification. There may be persons who have a constant gift of a given character, and it is their duty to exercise it; a word of profit might be given to any at any time. If there are those who are experienced, through divine grace, in the guidance and governance of the church, the saints will, guided of God's Spirit, be in subjection for their own profit; yea, all will be subject one to another. Where the Spirit of grace and love is, all will be well; where not, it will be surely ill, unless the Lord in mercy interfere, by sending someone able to control the unruly, and convince the gainsayers. The Lord will surely afford for His church all that is needful for its good, though He may, for our profit, keep us waiting very closely upon Him for them, and thus teach us dependence upon Him. If He were more looked to, we should have fewer difficulties, for He would act more- perhaps I should say, more manifestly to us. Further, I add, that while every office or gift is a blessing to the church, and to be fully recognized, it is the clear privilege of any two or three Christians, where not done in the spirit of schism, to meet and break bread together, should they not have any ministry at all, nor any office whatever. It is their privilege as Christians-the rest is their profit, of course, as saints, and to be gladly welcomed and ministering to the other, but, indeed, no way to be compared with their actual abiding privilege of communion together, their privilege and duty and substantially the everlasting part of the whole matter. The necessity of a priest for this, for such it in fact comes to, is a mere remnant of the principle of apostasy in the church, though where there are many, whoever may preside, one who is an elder would be the natural person to fulfill such an office, as someone manifestly must;5 public sanction before, and by the world, is not at all necessary for any office. This is what is called being a clergyman, and is one of the seals and marks of apostasy; the union of the world and the church, whether in the Establishment or Dissent. If this is what is meant by being a minister, I would utterly disdain and abhor it in such a sense: nature, I am sure, likes it: the authority to minister comes from the competency given of Christ; its recognition by the church is therefore a responsibility which solemnly rests on them; if the Spirit of the Lord be amongst them, He has ever, and will ever, order all things needful for this and for the expulsion of error. When I speak of authority to minister, it is, indeed, a deep responsibility, to be exercised according to the word, of which Christ will take sure account, and judge our neglect. Any recognition by the church may be all well for itself as to order; it is not what confers competency to minister-woe be to the church, if it owns not what Christ has given-separation to any special service the Lord may make, if He pleases; if He does, He will provide the way for Himself, in His wisdom, and it will be proved and made good, and, I will add, justified of wisdom's children. It is not necessary for the church's continuous blessing, as is manifest from the history of the church of Antioch; God works, I trust, though we are feeble and foolish-is working much more deeply and powerfully than the devised order of human

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

Another book has been put into my hands, containing remarks on a letter by Mr. Newton, by a clergyman. I have read it through, but I cannot think that in point of argument, scholarship, or good manners, whatever its pretensions, it claims any answer. If those amongst whom it is circulated feel any difficulties from its contents, there will not be much difficulty in replying to it separately.

Miscellaneous 5, Vail on the Heart of Israel, The

THE people of Israel, in spite of their vaunted veneration of Moses, did not in reality receive him as the messenger of God. They rejected him in Egypt, saying, " Who made thee a prince or a judge over us ? " (Ex. 2:14.) And afterwards, when, sent of God, he presented himself again with the manifest tokens of the reality of his mission, they murmured against him again and again. At the close too he bears testimony to them, " Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you." (Dent. ix. 24.) " For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck : behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord ; and how much more after my death ? " (Deut. 31:27.) But when Jesus, " the true and faithful witness," " the true light," came, the Jews rejected His claims by putting forth those of Moses. This is one of the traits of the evil heart and perverted will of man. He refuses constantly to own the rights of God. Despisers of His grace in Christ, they pretend to own His rights in the law, and use the law to reject Christ. But Jesus would not admit the pretended submission of the Jews to Moses : " Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father : there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me : for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how can ye believe My words ? " (John 5:45-47.) The vail was upon their hearts when they read Moses.

The gospel of the grace of God is the revelation of the glory of God in the person and the work of His Son Jesus Christ. It is the perfect expression of that name which God had proclaimed to Moses. (Ex. 34:6.) The word, " true and worthy of all acceptance," is, " that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." (1 Tim. 1:15.) The only ground on which God addresses man in the ministry of reconciliation is that he is a lost sinner. Peter told Israel as a people, " Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." (Acts 3:26.) But in spite of the clearness of the testimony the vail remained upon their heart ; they looked constantly to Moses. They confirmed their national crime when they rejected the Holy Ghost who spoke to them through Stephen, and killed him, as they had before denied and killed the Son.

When the apostle of the Gentiles was called, he testified of the perfect glory of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. " Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins : and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38, 39.) But the vail remained on their hearts. " It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you : but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:46.)

Let us turn now our attention to a truth which is much represented in our days, " Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

(Zech. 4:6.) It is possible to preach the gospel of the grace of God in a very full and clear manner ; but while it is opened to those " that find knowledge " (Prov. 8:9), it remains as to its true meaning hid without the quickening power of the Spirit, and the grace is not apprehended. In the same manner we may be forced through the clearness of the exposition to accept with the understanding the doctrine of the grace, and all the time the heart remain unconscious of its own needs, and show soon that it rejects the grace of God, and that independence instead of boast in Christ is its sole principle. When the Lord said to the Jews who had been attracted by His miracles, " Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you : for Him hath God the Father sealed," what did they answer ? " What shall we do that we might work the works of God ? " (John 6:27, 28.) Man with the vail upon his heart is ready to do, but refuses a God who gives. He is ready to labour honestly and diligently to establish his own righteousness, but refuses to submit himself to the righteousness of God. To submit is to own God's grace, i.e. that God of His own free gift, for His own sake, can give to man what he did not deserve, and what he had no right to demand of God. The vail must be taken from his heart to see these things, and then the vail drops at the same time both from his heart and from the face of Moses.

" Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away." (2 Cor. 3:16.) There is only one power which can turn the evil heart of Israel to the Lord ; miracles are for this powerless. The history of that people was full of miracles from the beginning ; nevertheless they were "a perverted and crooked generation." When Jesus in His great condescension invited them to come to Him, He adds, "hut I said unto you, that ye also have seen Me, and believe not." (John 6:36.) Although Jesus had spoken to them " as never man spake," the servants who testified this of Him were interrupted angrily by the religious leaders, " Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him ?" (John 7:46-49.) They had been eye witnesses of His miracles, " but though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him." (John 12:37.) And when the Holy Ghost came down from heaven as witness of the glory of Him whom they had crucified, enabling uneducated and ignorant men to testify of Him with such clearness and boldness, they are reminded of the word, " Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost : as your fathers did, so do ye." (Acts 7:51.) What more could God do for Israel that He had not done ? They are without excuse and righteously afflicted with blindness till this day.

But though the Lord could do no more for Israel, He can for His own sake do the wonderful work in them of turning their hearts to Himself. And this will happen. " Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you." (Ezek. 36:25, 26.) " I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for Mine holy name's sake." (v. 22.)

" Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you : be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel." (v. 32.) The Spirit quickens. God alone has life in Himself; He alone can communicate life. The Spirit, where He works for salvation for this ministry, opens the ayes to see and the ears to hear, and then the vail is removed from the heart and the heart is won for the Lord.

But is it only a question of Israel, or are not the words of the apostle also addressed to us and meant for our instruction ? Often we learn our position best when we see it mirrored in that of others. Surely not without a purpose does the apostle, through the Holy Spirit, refer to the future conversion of Israel when writing to the converted of the nations. The Corinthians might easily think that a cultivated civilisation could only be advantageous to the cause of the gospel. But Paul refuses such an auxiliary from the outset. His testimony among them was " not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power : that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor. 2:4, 5.) Those wise Greeks had drawn the line of civilisation, and considered those barbarians who stood outside of this line. But their wisdom was linked with the grossest superstition.

In distinction to the wise Greek is the pious Jew who testified to the oneness of the Godhead. But the testimony of Paul was the same to both, although they stood opposed to one another, " to the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." (1 Cor. 1:23.) The vail was on the heart of the latter as well as of the former ; they were equally opposed to the doctrines of grace. The apostle counted solely upon the power of God to remove the vail and to open the way for the reception of His testimony. When the Lord Jesus was on the point of leaving His disciples, He gave them the promise, " But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me : and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning." (John 15:26, 27.) This double testimony is equally necessary, viz., the testimony of the servants of God and the quickening testimony of the Spirit. The clearest exposition and the most pointed proofs are unavailing without the quickening power of the Spirit. And because He is the Spirit of truth, He bears testimony in the soul which is quickened by Him, " because the Spirit is truth." (1 John 5:6-10.)

Although there may be individual cases in which God sends a "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie," it cannot yet be said that the great mass of nominal Christians has been given over to delusion in the judgment of God as Israel has been. Yet morally an equally dense vail rests upon the hearts of the great bulk of those who call themselves Christians, as regards the true gospel, as on the heart of Israel in respect of the coming Messiah. Leaving out popery, which has evidently an anti-Christian character, how does it stand with the great number of Protestants by birth and tradition, even with those who read the New Testament, if it is really read at all ? The Holy Scriptures are read by the light of tradition, i.e. with a mirror, which alone is sufficient to make the Word of God void and of none effect. They are read like the writings of any human author, whereas this Word comes to man with divine authority, representing God's thoughts and demanding the obedience of faith ; or else one looks in the Holy Scriptures for accounts, annals, histories, without heeding in the least the truths connected with the facts, i.e. the teaching of the gospel. Therefore they may be read without the living power of the Spirit being in the least felt -a power which speaks to sinners or disciples now as directly as in the first days of the Church, when this Word issued from the lips of° the Lord or of His apostles. (Heb. 2:3.) And thus the word becomes true : " The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." (2 Cor. 3:6.)

Christianity exists, the presence of the Church is owned ; but these two facts only help to keep the vail on the heart when the New Testament is read. To hold fast Christianity as known, to confess one or other of its many forms of worship, is generally considered sufficient to make a Christian. But there is little desire to know God as revealed in Christ. The foundation principles of the gospel are dimmed or made powerless through human additions. The strife between Protestants and Catholics is more regarding the senselessness of the Catholic faith than regarding the vital question of saving faith as it was at the time of the Reformation. Unto this day the vail is upon the mass of the Protestants when they read the Holy Scriptures. They stumble at the threshold : " Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3.) Allowing the fullest value to sound criticism, recognising all the light which the discoveries of recent travellers have thrown on Holy Scriptures, and accepting thankfully the many helps which are offered to the student of Scripture, yet we maintain that all these things by themselves are powerless to remove the vail from the heart. The law could not give life, and these things can do it just as little. " It is the Spirit that quickeneth." (John 6:63.)

In this, as in many other cases, the Lord is above men : " Now the Lord is that Spirit." (2 Cor. 3:17.) God allows man to bring out all his resources to make evident the distance which exists between man and God. Thus in this particular case, where the gift of life is in question, the line of separation is drawn very clearly. " I am the life," says Jesus ; " I am [not shall be] the resurrection and the life." " The Son quickeneth whom He will." "The last Adam is a quickening spirit." " The life is the light of men." The quickened soul sees in the Lord Jesus the salvation of God.

When the Lord spake with Nicodemus the subject was, so to speak, " man." " Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast-day, many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man : for He knew what was in man. But there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews : the same came to Jesus by night and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God : for no man can do these miracles which thou doest except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 2:23-25; 3:1-3.)

Nicodemus is presented to us as an honest man who values the miracles of the Lord rightly and owns that they confirm His divine mission. Nicodemus was " ruler of the Jews," one of the religious authorities of that day ; yet at the very outset he meets with a statement which confounds him. The vail was on his heart, and he hesitates (an instance of the curious inconsistency of man) to accept a doctrine, although presented by One whom he owns "a teacher come from God," because this doctrine silenced his understanding. It is therefore possible to accept the mission of Jesus, supported as it is by glorious, incontestable proofs ; but without the quickening power of the Holy Ghost it is impossible to accept the doctrine. Only he who is born again can see and believe that the same Person can be teacher and doctrine at the same time.

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I DESIRE to meditate a little on John 3, and its connection with some other parts of scripture; more particularly in reference to the new birth. I desire to do so for the profitable understanding of what the new man is; and the place in which we are set as made partakers of it, as we now are in Christ. I shall necessarily go over some ground with which Christians are familiar, in speaking of such a subject; but this is necessary, in order to connect with it the further developments and distinctions which lead me to treat of the subject.

Many believed in Christ when they saw the miracles which He did, but Jesus did not commit Himself to them.... He knew what was in man. (Chap. 2: 23-25.) Their conclusion about Him was a just one, but it was a conclusion drawn by what was in man. It was perfectly worthless; it left man in his own nature, and under the motives, influences, and passions to which he was subject before; nor did it take him out of the domain of Satan, who had power over the flesh and the world. The conclusion was right; but it was only a conclusion: the man remained what he was-unchanged. Jesus, who knew what flesh was, had- could have-no confidence in it.

But Nicodemus (chap. 3), under God's leading, for our instruction, goes a step farther. The others believed it, and left it there. But where the Spirit of God is at work, it always produces wants in the soul, craving and desire after that which is of God and godly; and so the sense of defect in ourselves. There is at once, instinctively too, the consciousness that the world will be against us; consciousness too of its opposition and scorn. Nicodemus comes by night. There was a want of something better in his soul; but his being a ruler and especially an ecclesiastical ruler, made it more difficult for him to go to Christ. The dignity of one set to teach is not a facility for going to learn. However, conscience urges him to go, and he goes; the fear of man makes him afraid, and he goes by night. How poor is that dignity which tends to hinder one learning of Christ! Nicodemus, though spiritual craving had led him to Christ, goes on the same ground in his inquiry as those who had no such want at all. "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." (Ver. 2.) It was a conclusion drawn from proofs, perfectly just, but that was all. Still he wanted something from Him who showed them; but he took for granted that he was, as a Jew, a child of the kingdom, and would have teaching. The Lord meets him (for he was sincere and known of Him) at once, by declaring that the whole ground he was on was wrong. He did not teach flesh, nor had He come to do so. God was setting up a kingdom of His own. To see this, a man must be born again, completely anew. The kingdom was not yet come visibly, not with observation; it was there among them; but to see it a man must have a wholly new nature. Nicodemus, arrested by the language, does not understand how this could be, stops as a human reasoner, though sincere, at the present difficulty, and in truth does not see the kingdom.

But two great truths had been brought out here already. First, God is not teaching and improving man-as he is. He sets up a kingdom, a sphere of power and blessing of His own; there He acts. And secondly, man must have a new nature or life. He must be born again, in order to have to say to God who so works. Flesh cannot even perceive the kingdom. Both facts are of supreme importance. A new divine system is set up where the blessing is-a new nature is needed in order to have to say to it.

But the Lord does not leave the inquiring Nicodemus here. He shows definitively the way of entering into the kingdom: "a man must be born of water and of the Spirit" (ver. 5)-of the word and Spirit of God. The word of God-the revelation of God's thoughts-must operate in the power of the Spirit, judging all in man-bringing in God's mind instead of his own (supplanting it by God's), and an absolute new life from God, in which these thoughts have their seat and living reality-a new nature and life. It is not that two births are here, but two important aspects and realities in being born again. "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth" (James: 18); "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Eph. 5:26); "ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3.) It is-not teaching flesh, which has its own thoughts, but-supplanting all its thoughts by God's. We are born of water. Next, it is a nature coming from the Spirit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6.) Everything born follows-is of- the nature of that which begets it. So here: the water acts on man as man, his person is not changed; but the Spirit communicates a new life, which is of itself [the Spirit]-just as flesh's nature is flesh-in that which is born of it. We have now, not flesh taught; but the thoughts of God, operative in power, and the partaking of the divine nature which is imparted by the Spirit -the mind and nature of God vitally communicated to us. This is my life, as mere flesh was before.

This clearly opens out the blessing to Gentiles. "Marvel not" (said the Lord to Nicodemus), "that I said unto thee, Ye [Jews] must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth... so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (Chap. 3: 7-8.) The sovereign communication of a new nature (needed by the Jew, as much as by the Gentile, when we come to his nature), as an entirely new thing, a new nature given-in which the man thenceforth lives with God-is as applicable to a Gentile as to a Jew. For thus a man, as to his life, is neither [Jew nor Gentile]. "He is born of God." This truth is here not unfolded; only the groundwork is laid down for it. The far deeper truth of the fact of the divine life, and that sovereignly imparted, is what is taught: only the other is directly implied.

This again stops Nicodemus. He does not come forward with "We know;" he must be silent to learn. And now some other truths come out which associate us with heaven. But first the Lord shows, what Nicodemus ought to have known, that, as to even earthly promises, the testimony of God was clear, that Israel had to be born again, born of water and of the Spirit. Chapter 36 of Ezekiel is clear as to this:

"But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen, whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; I do not this for your sakes, 0 house of Israel, but for mine holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall

receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, 0 house of Israel." That is, to enjoy the blessings of God's promises in the land Israel must be born of water and of the Spirit-must be cleansed according to God's thoughts and be renewed by the Spirit of God. The statement of the Lord is more simple, more full and absolute, because He is laying down the truth in itself, how man can enter into the kingdom, and, therefore, brings out the need of the communication of a wholly new life in terms- with the blessed assurance, that it is a being really born of the Spirit, so as to partake of the nature of Him of whom we are born. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (Ver. 5.) But Nicodemus, as the teacher of Israel, ought to have known that such a change was needed for Israel, in order to partake of their earthly blessings with God.

But this brings out the difference of the Lord's instructions and their character here from the way in which the prophet had spoken of the matter. He had stated it prophetically, as the practical operation of Jehovah's grace; and that was all right and in its place. But the Lord had another kind of knowledge. The prophecy had perfect divine authority, because the prophet said what he had been inspired to say. But the Lord knew the things themselves, in their very nature. He could tell absolutely what was needful for God, because He was God and came from God. This is indeed divine teaching, teaching of infinite price. We learn from Him, who essentially knew it, what is needful for God. It tells us what the Christian is. He has the knowledge of God from God Himself, according to His own nature, and is partaker of that nature-in order to know it, and to be able to enjoy it- without which he does not know it; and this brought down in man to us. But as the Lord spake that which He knew, so He testified that which He had seen. He could tell of the heavenly glory and what became it, what was needed to have a part in it.

Man did not receive this testimony. The human mind understood human things-what was heavenly and spiritual not at all. That which was heavenly and spiritual was darkness and foolishness to it. Those who received this witness were born again. (Chap. I: 12, 13.)

Let our hearts dwell a little on this blessed truth. In Christ we have One fully revealing God Himself. His words told His nature, the nature of God Himself; told it to man, so as to reveal what was needed in man in order that he might have to do with God in blessing, but told it directly, fully. His words were a revelation of the divine nature, which He knew. We are in the full light, with God Himself. We have-not merely messages, however true, and however blessed it be to have them from God, but what leaves nothing behind-the revelation of God Himself, and in His nature; so that what is perfect in blessedness is revealed, and revealed perfectly. Here it is nature first of all, then the fact of what He had seen; but it is the competency of witness specially which is expressed in this verse. But this necessarily leads to the nature of the things. No prophet could say " We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." (Ver. it.) God revealed future things to them, or sent messages to the people; and they announced the one and the other. But if Christ announced what He knew, and testified that which He had seen, these were necessarily heavenly things. Of course He knew what had been foretold of God; but, in speaking of the nature needed in order to have to say to God, and of that which He knew and had seen, He goes beyond that to that which is above. Thither consequently He leads us. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." (Ver. 13.) No one had gone up to bring down word of what was there. But He came thence; and He could tell perfectly what was there, and was ever there, for He was God. But this divine knowledge was knowledge for man; for it was the Son of man had it. Heaven and man were connected in the person of Christ. If man out of Christ-as all yet were-had not in any sense entered there, still there was One who was in His person the revealer of that which was heavenly. But how could man- who could not, even if a teacher of Israel, understand the reality of the new nature (even as needed for the known earthly things), for he thought in the old nature-understand heavenly things? But this brought out another truth, the necessary door of what was heavenly; but if so, it is the open door to every one that should believe. Not only was it necessary to be born again, even for earthly blessings, but there were further counsels of God.

The Son of man-for Jesus was more than Messiah-must, in the counsels of God and in the need of man, be lifted up, rejected from this earth. But this lifting up was His rejection by the world. Christ could not (for man was a sinner) take His place as Messiah in blessing to Israel. He was to suffer in the character in which He had to say to all men, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness" (ver. 14); so, instead of a living Messiah, they were to have a rejected dying Son of man. The cross was healing saving power for man. Whoever believed in Him would not perish, but have everlasting life; for God so loved the world-an immense truth then, which opened the way to the fullest display of God and of grace, if one should not rather say it was such. It was an efficacious work of God (not to fulfill prophetic promises merely, but) to bring to God, "that whosoever believed in him" (this Son of man) "should have everlasting life." It was needed. Atonement must be made-redemption must be accomplished- if sinful man was to have to say to a holy God. If there was a revelation of the divine nature, and man's partaking of it was connected with his having to say to God, there must be atonement as well as a new birth. The Son of man-He who as man was to have in man's nature the inheritance of all things, and who took up man's cause-must be lifted up, like the serpent in the wilderness, made sin for us, that men may look on Him and Jive.

This met the need of man, but it was only one side of the truth. When men rest here, they see what meets the holy nature and judgment of God, but God stands as a holy Judge; nor does this therefore give full liberty to the soul. It is the propitiatory, the needed side of Christ's death. But how did this come about? It was that God so loved the world, that the Son of man who must be lifted up was the Son of God whom He had given in love. God so loved that He gave. Thus, though propitiation was needed, love was the source of all; the holiness of God's nature, His righteous judgment, maintained as regards sin; but His love manifested. The Son of man was Son of God-both with a view to one wondrous object-that sinful man, whosoever believed in Jesus, should have eternal life. This was the final test of man too. We have thus the nature of God revealed; and a twofold work wrought which, while it fits man to enjoy that nature by his being born of it, glorifies it too in all its character: so that the gift of eternal life maintains and displays the love and holiness and righteousness of God. And this is what is essential and blessed. But the full peculiar dispensed character of this, as wrought out in grace, is not brought out here: and it is this which I would now endeavor to bring out, the gracious Lord helping me.

If the Son of man was lifted up, died to bring us to God, where and how is life? It is in resurrection. This too leads us to another important element of truth. If risen, I am risen from the dead. I have died in Christ. This, we shall see, has a double character. I may look at myself as having no spiritual life-hence as dead in trespasses and sins; or I may look at myself as alive in sin and the flesh, and then I speak of having died to it. Christ could speak of a new nature needed in order to enter the kingdom; but He could not then call on any one to reckon himself dead. He could connect that nature with God directly-in the statement of what it was, and what He was; and that was peculiarly suited, as is evident, to His person-a divine revealer of what He knew and of man's partaking of the divine nature. This was indeed the excellent part. But

for our deliverance another truth was to be connected with this-the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We receive Christ as our life: when He has died and risen, He is a life-giving Spirit. Because He lives, we live. He is our life- that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us. But, for sinners to have part in this righteously, and according to God, Christ must make the propitiation, must die. He died to sin once; and now, alive in resurrection, lives to God. We receive Him through the Spirit in our hearts, and have life. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." (1 John 5: I I, 12.) But He whom we receive is the dead and risen One, our life-the true "I" in which I say of sin, this is no longer I. " I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." In us this is the life of Christ as risen from the dead-the power of life in resurrection. We are alive for faith, only in and by Him, though the flesh be in point of fact there; yet I do not own it as alive and part of myself, but only as an enemy which I have to overcome. Thus in Rom. 7:5 we find, "When we were in the flesh;" and in Rom. 8:9, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Many other passages illustrative of this point will come before us in pursuing our subject.

I have said, that this view of the divine life in resurrection comes before us in two ways in scripture. Man may be viewed either as alive in sin; or as dead in sin. His flesh is alive and active as regards evil; it is utterly dead as regards God-not one movement of soul in the natural man towards Him. The epistle to the Romans presents the former view; that to the Ephesians the latter. They coalesce in presenting the man as risen with Christ; though the epistle to the Romans barely reaches this ground, but just touches on it. Their epistle teaches fully Christ's being raised by God the Father, but only just touches on our being alive to God. The Ephesians saw, as regards the doctrine of their epistle on this point, Christ as dead, and the sinner dead in sin (chap. 2: 1); and both raised up together. This flows from Christ's being seen exalted on high and the Church united to Him. Man is not contemplated doctrinally as wickedly living in sin (although the fact is recognized), but in the full apprehension of his state in relation to God-he is dead in sin. And the whole condition of the Church is the result of the same power being exercised in raising Christ Himself and every believer spiritually. (Chap. 1, 2.)

In the epistle to the Romans, Christ is seen risen from the dead, but not ascended (save an allusion in one verse of chapter 8), because the object is to show the putting away of the old state, and the introduction in life and justification into the new-not the glorious results, save in hope. Man's guilt is largely proved. Christ has died for us; but Christ has risen also, for our justification; we are justified-dead to sin and alive to God-delivered from the law.

The epistle to the Colossians is between the two in doctrine. It views man as living in sin, but the Christian as having died and as now quickened with Christ. Our new nature there, as born of God, takes, when our condition is fully displayed, the character of our having died and risen again with Christ, and even of our sitting in heavenly places in Him.

But my object now is, our condition in life. Let us recall, that Christ as thus risen is our life. The work of atonement must have been accomplished, or no sinner could have been united with Him. He could have given no life according to God to any. The corn of wheat would have abode alone. Not that life and the power of life was not in Him, but that the righteousness of God would have been in abeyance.

But that work has been accomplished; and now Christ-not the first Adam-is my life as a believer. But then I say, When I was in the flesh. I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. The first Adam in his sin and responsibility is not my standing before God at all; but the second, who has become my life. I am in Him as my righteousness: He is in me as my life. Now I say, I have died to sin; I am crucified with Christ; I am alive to God through Jesus Christ. "In that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves." (Rom. 6:10, 11.) This is what Paul insists on in Rom. 6 "We were baptized into his death" (ver. 3); "planted together in the likeness of his death." (Ver. 5.) We are dead to sin. " If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him." (Ver. 8.) Hence (for, as I said, the apostle only just touches this ground) we are to reckon ourselves alive to God through Him. (Ver. 11.) So in the epistle to the Galatians, "Christ liveth in me." (Chap. 2: 20.) "The Spirit is life because of righteousness." (Rom. 8:10.) But we are not said to be risen with Him.

And remark in the elements even of this doctrine, necessarily from its very nature we are not called to die to sin. No such thought is in scripture. We are called upon, as alive in Christ, to mortify every movement of sin; but not to die to it. We are alive in Christ who has died, and we are viewed as dead; and called upon to view ourselves as dead, because Christ who is our life has died. "I am crucified with Christ." (Gal. 2:20.) "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh." (Chap. 5: 24.) "Reckon yourselves to be dead." (Rom. 6:1.) "Ye have been planted together in the likeness of his death." (Ver. 5.) "Buried with him unto death." (Ver. 4.) "Ye are dead." (Col. 3:3.) Such is the uniform language of scripture. All the sentimental talk about crucifying being a lingering death is the setting aside the plain and imperative sense of these passages. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. 2:20.)

We have died in Christ: this is the doctrine of scripture.

The Epistles to the Galatians, the Romans, and the Colossians, &c., all alike teach this and press it on Christians. I am wholly delivered from the whole system in which I lived as alive in the flesh. So the apostle appeals, "If ye be dead with Christ... why, as though alive [living] in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" (Col. 2:20, 21.) This is life then (being born of God) as possessed by the Christian, now that Christ has died, and become, as risen, his life.

The Epistle to the Ephesians goes a step farther. It does not, as I have said, view Christ as alive in blessed love and godliness, and man in sin; but man dead in sin, and Christ is first seen as dead, which was for and to sin. That is, the apostle sees man down in the ditch and grave of death through sin, and Christ has come down into it in grace, where man was by sin. But so He has put away the sin as guilt, and come down to save and redeem out of that condition: God raises up both by the same power. "What is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe... which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. 1:19, 20.) Of "His great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." (Chap. z: 4, 5.) Thus we are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." (Ver. to.)

Thus as chapter 3 of John's Gospel taught us the nature of the life which we receive (that as born of the Spirit it is spirit- divine, morally speaking, in its nature), so do the epistles show to us the position in which the possession of this new life places us, inasmuch as it is the life of Christ risen, after being delivered for our offenses and having died to sin once. And what is the consequent effect as to our relationship to sin and to God? The Epistle to the Romans, as indeed that to the Galatians, teaches us that we have died with Christ, and that we are to reckon ourselves dead to sin, that our old man has been crucified with Him; but that we are alive to God; that it is not we that live, but Christ that lives in us. The Epistle to the Colossians teaches us that we have died with Christ, and that we are risen with Him; and further that, when

dead in sins and the uncircumcision of our flesh, God has quickened us together with Him, having forgiven us all trespasses-brought up from the dead with Christ into newness of life as to ourselves; but, according to the blessed efficacy of His death, entirely forgiven all the sins and state of sin in which we were till thus raised, consequent on the efficacy of His death. This last point the Epistle to the Ephesians takes up fully and exclusively, and shows us quickened with Christ and raised out of the death of sin by the same power which raised Christ Himself. It is not merely the divine nature become our life, but death to sin, life to God; raised up, forgiven, and accepted, as in the state in which He is as risen, yea, sitting in heavenly places in Him. The nature is divine. That is supremely excellent; but, by death and resurrection having come in and our being united to Christ, our whole relative condition is changed; we are not, for God and for faith, accounted as alive in the old man; we are not in it at all, we have put it off. It is (for the reckoning of faith, and that according to the possession of and being alive in a new life) dead and gone. We are in Christ, and Christ is our life: alive in Him and alive in what He is alive to-to God. Our standing is not consequently in the first Adam at all. We have died as in the first Adam to all that he is; we are alive in the last Adam, the Lord Jesus, according to all the acceptance in which He now lives before God.

Thus chapter 3 of John's Gospel teaches us the intrinsic excellency of the life we receive of God, and shows it in direct connection with what is divine, Christ speaking what He knew and showing that we must have a nature from God, and fit for God Himself. Christ speaking thus, that which He knew is of the deepest interest-the direct communication of what is divine. This life is there shown in its nature and origin as contrasted with flesh. Its proper character and excellency is more seen in John. The Epistle to the Ephesians however confirms it in result: "That we should be holy and blameless before him in love." (Chap. 1:4.) But in its condition and state, the epistles are more full as to this life. There-inasmuch as Christ died-living in the life of Christ we are [looked at as] dead to sin, the life being a new thing wholly distinct from the old man, and we alive in Christ. We are not in the flesh; we have died and are risen again. Being regenerated is being dead and risen again; for we receive Christ as life. It is having left Adam, his nature and fruits, condemnation, death, and judgment behind; and being, as delivered from all these things, in necessary and righteous acceptance, according to Christ's acceptance before God. The natures are distinct. I am not in the flesh; I have died; I am risen again; I am accepted in Christ risen; I am partaker of the divine nature and to enjoy its fullness in God.

Letters 2, Satan

Dear brother,—Now for the questions. Satan is a fallen creature, and he does not possess either omniscience or omnipotence—John 8:44, and probably, Ezek. 28:17, where many Christians believe that Satan is represented under the figure of the king of Tyrus, and I think too they are right. However this may be, John 8:44 is a distinct testimony. But Satan has a whole multitude of demons under his authority, so much so, that in the poor Gadarene there was a legion: he is the prince of the demons.

With respect to the knowledge of thoughts, he does not know them intuitively, as God does; but he knows as a spirit full of intelligence and subtlety, who discerns with the greatest clearness the motives of the heart, and who has gained experience by the practice of many thousand years: but I believe that he understands nothing of the power of love. He was able in his malice to raise up the Chaldeans, etc., through desire of plunder, against Job; but not in any way knowing the purpose p of God to bless him by this means, he did nothing but fulfill it. He did all that he could to get Christ put to death, but he only fulfilled the wonderful purpose of God for our salvation. However, when he has to do with the evil heart of man, the case is different. He can present objects to awaken lust. If we reckon ourselves to be dead, dead to sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, he is not able to tempt us, at least, the temptation remains without effect; but if the flesh is not held as dead, then he can present objects which the flesh likes, and suggest to a man the means of satisfying his lusts. Thus he. put it into the heart of Judas to betray Jesus for a little money. But man is responsible, because without lust Satan could do nothing: he has nothing to offer to the new man, or if he offers anything, it only produces horror in the soul; the soul suffers as Christ suffered at the sight of evil in this world, or else it overcomes as Christ overcame in the wilderness. But, when the soul is not set free, he can indeed insinuate wicked thoughts, and unbelieving thoughts, and words of blasphemy, in such a way that these words and thoughts seem to proceed from the man himself. Nevertheless, if the man is truly converted, we always find that he has a sense of horror at the things that arise in his mind, and we see that they are not really his own thoughts. If he is not converted he does not distinguish between the demon and himself, as we find in the gospels. But also when he is converted, it is a proof that he has opened the door to the devil by sin, hidden sin it may be, or by negligence.

Further, Satan is the prince of this world, and its god, and he governs the world by means of the passions and lusts of men; and he is able to raise up the whole world against Christians, as he did against Christ, and so try their faith. He can seek to mingle truth and error, and thus deceive Christians if they are not spiritual; and also as the demon at Philippi did, to get Christians mixed up with the world in order to destroy the testimony of God; he can change himself into an angel of light, but "the spiritual man discerneth all things." Satan has but little power over us, if we walk humbly, close to the Lord, following faithfully the word of God, having Christ as the only object of the heart. Satan knows well that he has been conquered; therefore it is said, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." His influence in the world is very great through the motives of the human heart, and he acts on men through each other; likewise, from the rapidity of his operations and actions, he appears to be everywhere; and then he employs a great multitude of servants who are all wicked; but in fact he is not present everywhere. Now God is really present, and if we are under the influence of the Spirit of God, and the conscience is in the presence of God, Satan has no power. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." However things may be with us, if we are truly the children of God he will fulfill the counsels of God with respect to us; it may be by chastisement if need be. But God knows all things, He in the most absolute sense penetrates everywhere: He orders all things—Satan's efforts even—for our good; and if we are armed with the whole armor of God, the darts of the evil one do not reach the soul.

I do not know whether these few lines as to the devil are sufficient. The question is not a new one, but the manner of Satan's working is not told us, but it appears in the gospel history. I have not spoken about possession.

We have had good meetings at Nismes, and I have visited those in the Cevennes, except St. Andre, where the road was broken up by the effects of the rain. I have never had such large meetings, and such solemn ones.

I hope that the brethren of Gard have woke up a little. The Lord has wrought some conversions.

Your affectionate brother.

March. 1872

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Prophetic 4, Prophecy in Connection With the Church, the Jews, and the Gentiles, Elements of

The first grand and capital point is to have the end and design of God clearly and settledly in mind, so that it should be constantly before us as the key and test of all. For " no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation... but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The divine glory is ever the end of all things; but I speak now of the effect of divine counsels in which God glorifies Himself. Now this is altogether in Christ, known in the various glories in which He is revealed. In the church the office of the Holy Ghost, who moved the holy men of old, is to take the things of Christ and show them to us. Hence, though Jerusalem, or Israel, or even the church, may be that in connection with which Christ may be glorified, it is only as connected with Him that they acquire this importance. So of the word even of the Old Testament scriptures: they are all to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. On the other hand, as it is evident that this alone gives, to whatever subject may be mentioned, its true and just importance, so, if Jerusalem is connected with Christ, with His affections and glory, Jerusalem becomes important; and I get in its connection with Christ, so far as I understand His glory, the key to interpret all that is said of it. It has, in the mind of God, its development in connection with the manifestation of His glory.

There may have been in the times of Israel certain manifestations of the governmental dealings of God, important for their faith and subjection to God by the way, which were partial accomplishments of such or such a prophecy. But these, though true, and though research may discover them, are, in a certain sense, comparatively lost now in the sum of the whole scheme of all which closes in Christ. It may be interesting and instructive historically, as regards God's dealings, to observe them in their place, but they become history-important, interesting history-not prophecy, for us.

The first point, then, important to understand is, that neither the church, nor Jerusalem, nor the Gentiles, are in themselves the objects of prophecy, still less Nineveh, or Babylon, or the like, but Christ. But this is what gives us the true scope and intelligence of the real importance and place of each subject; namely, as Christ is to be the center in which all things in heaven and earth are to be united, various subjects become the sphere of His glory, as connected with Him, and each subject is set in its place in its connection with Him, and by this connection I get the means of understanding what is said about it. Thus, if the church is the Lamb's wife, it is in this character and in this relationship I must apprehend what regards it. If Jerusalem is the city of the great King, it is in this that I shall get the key to the dealings of God with it. If the saints are to live and reign with Christ, and to be kings and priests unto God and His Father, here I shall find the intelligence of what concerns them in this character: not united with the Bridegroom, but associated with the King and Priest. And so of the rest.

Not only is this the only way of understanding prophecy as to the objects of it, but, the affections being right, the understanding is clear-the eye is simple and the body full of light. I see with God in the matter, for He regards Christ; and thus prophecy becomes sanctifying, not speculative, because what it teaches becomes a part of Christ's glory for the soul. The importance of this cannot be well overrated. I ought not to have to persuade Christians of the truth of this; I gladly would of its importance. This, however, is the work of God. Objectively, I may cite Eph. 1:9-11 as stating this great truth according to the purpose of God.

I may now endeavor to present some of the main subjects or landmarks for the study of prophecy; that is, of the revelation of God's ways for accomplishing His glory in Christ. No present circumstances, note, though they may be historically instructive and also confirmatory of faith, can be the proper accomplishment of prophetic truth; because, though they may be conducive to it, under God's superintending government, and a lesson at the time and afterward, they are not identified with the manifestation of God's glory in Christ, nor the immediate objects in which that manifestation takes place (for we are supposing things precedently accomplished). This shows that, in accomplishment, all necessarily is found in the actors of the scene at the close, when judgment will fully manifest, not in measure to intelligent faith, but by the public acts of God, what His judgment is; and as this judgment is on ripened evil, the full character of this (whose principles have from the beginning been working, been discerned spiritually, judged partially so as to stay their power for the accomplishment of God's gracious designs)-the full character, I say, of their fruit will then be shown, and God publicly justified in His judgment before all, as well as bringing in blessing, by setting aside in power the evil, and replacing it by His own reign in good. And this is the vast moral difference of our present state, as well as of true saints in all times, from the world to come. We have the power of God internally, through grace and by the Spirit, to make good the will and glory of God in the midst of evil while subsisting; whereas then, i.e., by the presence of Christ, the evil will be put away by power, and good be at ease.

The next simple remark that I have to make is that, though the relationship of heaven with earth may be discovered to us, in so far as heaven and those there are revealed as the established governing power (that is, that there are, in the seat of government placed above, objects of special revelation), yet the proper subject of prophecy is the earth, and God's government of it. And it is only so far as the heavenly company are connected with the government of the earth that they become a collateral subject of prophetic revelation.

Further, providence is not the subject of prophecy. By providence I mean the ordering of the course of all things by divine power, in such sort that all results which happen in the world are according to the divine purpose and will. Often inscrutable to us in its reasons and even the means it employs, and leaving the government of God obscure, still it is certain to faith, and that by which it remains true that God is not mocked-what a man sows this will he reap. Faith will recognize the hand of God in many things, and believes it in everything; but to the world all of it is hidden. Certain principles, universal with God in their application, by this means are verified, as " righteousness exalteth a nation." The men of this world see nothing of the bearing of the moral causes on the effect, or, if they do see the causes, the result issuing thence is that they ascribe the effect to them, and God is shut out. His immediate action and government is excluded. Now the subjects of prophecy are the contrary of this. The public products of God, coming in power, are revealed. They are either the day of the Lord, or the characteristic results which bring it about-a judgment which man has to acknowledge as of God. Now it is evident that the day of the Lord, properly speaking, closes the history of this world; it is the opposite of that secret course of government which is carried on, and from the checks of which the pride of man rises again to pursue his course of evil. When God sets to His hand, the proud helpers do stoop under Him.

I do not deny that certain grand and remarkable judicial interventions of God are called, in a subordinate sense, the day of the Lord, in virtue of their practical analogy with that time of which it shall be said " the Lord alone is exalted in that day." But even these are in contrast with the course of providential government, which, in its very idea, does not interrupt but regulate the ordinary course of events. There are

prophecies which may, to some, seem to refer to the course of providence, but these confirm, in a remarkable way, the distinction.

Take the ten horns. What is the providential history of these horns, taken as usually applied by commentators? Scourges, which continued some one hundred and fifty years, from first to last, working the overthrow of the Roman Empire, as previously settled, and establishing themselves as conquerors in all its Western territory. We may inquire, if done humbly, with profit, why this scourge was permitted. Whether it was the public civil evil, or the corruption of the church. What moral causes led to it. How it executed the moral judgment of God on the evil. Why the East was spared. How it led the way to a more terrible spiritual tyranny than had yet been seen in the world.

Take the prophetic account. A beast rises out of the sea with ten horns all full grown, after which a little horn comes up, and the beast, horns and all, are the subject of God's judgment, not the executors of it. This is prophecy; that was providence. We have what characterizes the object of prophecy and its judgment, and the reason of it. All the providential part, out of which commentators have woven an immense system, is left out-so of the statue. It is all there at once, the application of it to the empires given, the character of four, the closing object of judgment in the feet and toes, and the execution. Of the providential course of events, by which one takes the place of the other, we find nothing.

I have taken the cases which would seem to give the greatest room for it, and of which in this respect men have said the most. And with what result? Such that, if taken as a literal accomplishment, a child can see the discrepancy. What analogy between one hundred and fifty years' war to destroy an empire, and ten kingdoms, all in full energy and growth, arising out of it and forming part of it as the symbol of its force?

In the Apocalypse, before the end, we find summary judgments executed with progressive severity in the seals, trumpets, and vials, before the King comes forth to destroy the beast: judgments inflicted of God; but not, in Scripture, providential history. They are all proper immediate judgments, though they be but preparatory, and introductory, inflicted on either the circumstances or the persons of the men of this world-on the wicked. The hand of God is seen. But there is no explanation of causes or providential course. We find their moral state, exceptionally, in that which they refuse to repent of in one case; but, in general, it is not the course of events guided by providence to order all things well, but the earth subject to the judicial vengeance of God. No careful reader can question this. The end of providence is the present ordering of God's government to bring about His designs. The Apocalyptic history consists of judgments inflicted.

Further, we may add, that providence is occupied in the daily discipline of the children of God. Prophecy treats of the judgments of God (removing out of His sight those whom He judges), and of the full blessing of His people. I do not think any prophecy can be alleged speaking of a course of events applied to His people while they are owned. The nearest approach to it is Isa. 9:7 to 10: 25; but these are inflicted judgments, and no course of providence.

Having thus spoken of the subjects of prophecy morally, I may turn to the positive subjects it embraces.

Besides the creation, of which He is the Head, in which we may comprise angels, there are three great spheres in which Christ's glory is displayed-the church, the Jews, and the Gentiles. The church, properly speaking, is not the subject of prophecy. As to Old Testament prophecy, the New declares in the most absolute and positive manner that it was a mystery hidden in all ages, and now revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit. The church belongs to heaven, is the body of Christ seated there, and while He is so seated. Prophecy relates to earth. The church is viewed, it is true, when it takes part in the government of the earth for that reason; and the marriage of the Lamb and the description of the heavenly Jerusalem give the epoch from which dates the character of this relationship with earth.

In the New, the relationship of the church with Christ caused the Holy Ghost to remain in it, and communicate the needed light on its position while waiting for the Lord. There was no presence of God attached to formal institutions subsisting, to consistency with which a series of prophets was to recall a people (necessarily, while they subsisted, the people of God). In one respect, however, though the church was not the proper subject of prophecy, while it subsisted as owned of God, certain things connected with it are predicted; that is, its decay and corruption, as a present moral warning; but this passes into mere apostate wickedness, as a distinct object of judgment.

Hence when, as I doubt not, and as a vast number of Christians believe, the Lord would give a picture of the church's history as an external body in the world, in a state for the most part in which He could not at all own it as His heavenly body, He selects, with divine wisdom, seven churches which afforded the moral character of the states into which it would successively fall, and presses His judgments morally on them. But it is not made a positive subject of prophecy. Whatever may be our judgment of the subsequent part of the Apocalypse, which treats of events subsequent to the period of the seven churches, it certainly consists of judgments on the world, not of any prophecy of the church, save as stated at the close. There is the simple fact, that the beast overcomes certain saints, and that he puts to death two witnesses. No general prophecy of the church itself is found in the course of the Apocalypse. It was right to give these facts.

The reason is evident to one who knows what the church is. It is not of the world. It, as such, sits in heavenly places in Christ, where prophecy reaches not. It never will be established on earth, as the Jews. It is not its calling. The government of God will never settle it there in peace. His blessing for it will be to take it away from earth, to be with the Lord in the air. A partial application of the Apocalypse to what has the name of the church, but is the power of evil in the world, I do not deny; but this does not make the church a subject of prophecy. Accordingly, we find, as we have said, the church in heaven at the end in connection with the earth, when all is united in Christ; but no account of any dealings of God to establish it, or a progress towards a result of any kind. She is to reign with Christ, and suffer with Him.

The remaining spheres of the display of the glory of the blessed Lord are the Jews and Gentiles, subjects in different degrees of His earthly government, as the church was the full exhibition of His sovereign grace in redemption, which places her in heavenly places in Christ, that in the ages to come God might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. This distinction is full of interest. Man is not governed in introducing him into the church. He is taken as a rebellious lost sinner, a hater of God, a child of wrath, be he Jew or Gentile, and set in the same place as Christ. This is not government, it is grace. The Jews are the center of God's immediate government, morally displayed according to His revealed will. The Gentiles are brought to recognize His power and sovereignty displayed in His dealings with them. I speak of the thing, properly speaking, in its revealed character; for every sinner in all ages, is saved as such, individually, by grace, and every Christian is under the immediate government of the Father as of the heavenly family; but even so the object of government is different. With the Christian, it is to prepare him for heaven; with the Jews, on the contrary, it is to display God's righteousness on the earth: I speak of them as a body or people. Christ and the church suffer for righteousness, and reign. The Jews, as a people, suffer for sin, and the result of their history will be, " Verily, there is a reward for the righteous; verily, there is a God that judgeth the earth."

Further, prophecy does not apply to a state where God's people, responsible under the government of God, walk well, so that He can bless them as walking under His own eye in testimony of His favor. This special intervention, for such prophecy is, applied to the case of their failure. Hence, when Shiloh was overthrown and the ark taken, Samuel was raised up, of whom the Lord therefore says, " Beginning at Samuel and all the prophets." This character of prophecy is completely evident in reading the prophets, who addressed their prophecies to the people in general. Indeed, its principle is evident. But, if they showed the people their transgressions, they pointed out constantly the Messiah, the great Deliverer. Thus it is in Hannah's song (1 Sam. 2:9, 10), where the government of the world by Jehovah in sovereignty and the exaltation of Messiah are fully brought out. So, historically, Samuel was raised up on the failure and ruin of Israel, and introduced David. Prophecy judges the people in their responsibility, and announces the sovereign purpose of God.

But this leads me to note two characters of prophecy, arising, as regards the Jews, from two different positions in which we find them in Scripture: first, a people more or less fully owned of God (God acting amongst them on known principles of government); secondly, rejected for a time (the sovereign power in the earth being confided to Gentiles). This last period forms the times of the Gentiles.

For the moment, I confine myself to the Jews. God, while He could in any sort own His people, addressed Himself directly to them. Until Nebuchadnezzar's time, God's throne and presence was in the midst of Israel. From that period, the sovereign power in the earth ceased to be immediately exercised by God and was confided to man, among those who were not His people, in the person of Nebuchadnezzar. This was a change of immense importance, both in respect of the government of the world, and God's judgment of His people. Both lead the way to the great objects of prophecy developed at the close-the restoration, through tribulation, of a rebellious people, and the judgment of an unfaithful and apostate Gentile head of power. However the previous relationship of Israel and the nations is not left out; but we must introduce another all-important point for the development of this.

Israel, we have seen, as between it and Jehovah, had been unfaithful, and Ichabod written on it; the ark of God, His glory and strength in Israel, delivered into the enemy's hand; enemies left in the land by their unfaithfulness. But God comes in, in sovereign grace, and raises up David, figure of Christ, who descended from him according to the flesh, king of Israel in grace and deliverance. Evil arising in his descendants, the major part of Israel revolt from the king of his family: two tribes remain, and to a residue of them brought back from Babylon, Christ is presented and rejected. Hence two things gave occasion to Israel's judgment-idolatry and rebellion against Jehovah, and the rejection of Christ.

Having brought out this second ground of judgment, I leave it for the moment, in order to consider the former ground, rebellion against Jehovah. Israel ought to have been the witness of the blessedness of being in such a relationship with the Lord. " Happy are the people who are in such a case; yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God." Israel, on the contrary, learned the ways of the heathen; yea, became more corrupt than they, and the Lord allowed the surrounding nations to attack and distress them. This had its full development in the ten tribes; the house of David, raised up in grace, being for a time a stay to Judah. Though all the surrounding nations had their share in these attacks, the principal in result was Asshur. Accordingly, in the end, this power prevails entirely against Israel and overruns Judah, the Lord only at the close defending Jerusalem, where the son of David was a stay in righteousness. Still, if Israel had deserved all this chastisement, these rods of chastening had in their animosity despised the Lord, His people, and His throne. Asshur especially had exalted himself against Him that hewed therewith. Hence they become the objects of destroying judgment themselves.

All these elements are found at the close, though they have a partial historical fulfillment, Nebuchadnezzar executing the judgment at that time. The nations will overrun the country. The Assyrian, in particular, will be the scourge of God as an overflowing flood, and the double event will take place; first Judah and Jerusalem then (by an attack before the end- proof of its application at the close) the whole people will be overwhelmed; but afterward, when the true Son of David shall be there, and the land will be actually Immanuel's land, Jerusalem will be preserved and all these nations judged. Jerusalem shall tread them down as sheaves upon the threshing floor. These vast circumstances, under God's teaching, open out a vast mass of prophecies, of which Isaiah gives the most complete and orderly course, other prophets taking up divers parts of it.

But the family of David itself, as placed responsibly on the throne of the Lord at Jerusalem, was, we know, unfaithful, and the sin of Manasseh made their government insupportable to Jehovah. Judah was removed out of His sight, as Israel had been. But, then, what remained of the sphere of the direct government of God on a given law? Nothing. His glory left Jerusalem and the earth, for it had filled the temple of Jerusalem. (See Ezek. 1-10.) This judgment then was of a far weightier character and import. It removed the government of God from upon the earth, and confided power to the head of the Gentiles. Israel was laid aside for a time. But Judah, providentially restored in a partial way, have Messiah presented to them, but, as we have seen, reject Him, declaring that they have no king but Cæsar. This placed Judah under the Gentile power, not only as a chastening for their rebellion against Jehovah in the person of their King and of David's race, but on the ground of their own rejection of the promised Messiah and taking the Gentile for their head. This also consequently has its accomplishment in judgment in the latter days. The special Gentile part of it is scarcely alluded to in the prophets, who address Israel as more or less owned. It is the subject of Daniel, and we may add of the Apocalypse, for a reason we will add just now. Judah is seen in prophecy in the latter days under the oppression of the head of Gentile power, deceived by a false Christ, and oppressed. But God regards Israel still as His, having caused it to pass through the deepest tribulation. Those who, through grace, cleave to the Lord, call upon His name, and receive the word of the Spirit of Christ, instead of joining idolatry with the Gentiles and their chief, will be delivered, and the apostate Gentile power and the false prophet judged.

Another element introduces itself here. On the rejection of the Jews, as we know, Christianity came in. But alas! man was as unfaithful here as in Judaism. Early in the apostles' time, the mystery of iniquity began to work, resulting in an apostasy, and the ten kings of the Gentile world make war with the Lamb. In a word, a public apostasy in the sphere of Christian profession and the revelation of the man of sin, the open war of the beast and kings associated with him against the Lord, came in as an element of the latter-day events, completing the character and description of the Gentile power, which had taken the place of God's throne at Jerusalem, and to whom He had confided authority in the world. This, with its antecedents, is that which the Apocalypse furnishes of the prophetic volume.

The result of the destruction of this power, as well as of that of the Assyrian and other nations, is the establishment of Israel in blessing under Christ upon the earth, the throne of the Lord being thus re-established in surety at Jerusalem. The destruction of the Gentile power does not reach this latter period entirely. Hence Daniel, who treats of the period of Gentile power, never speaks of the millennium. He is made just to reach the deliverance, and stops there. The effect of the destruction of the Gentile power is to reunite the Lord, Jerusalem and Israel, and then

comes the judgment of the Assyrian and the various enemies who have risen up against the Lord and His people. This brings in the full reign of peace. Their connection with Israel has led in many respects to the anticipation of what regards the Gentiles. However, it will be well to speak of them also.

We have a double character of the Gentiles in Scripture, as will have been already seen: their opposition to the people of God when they had this character, at least externally; and their pride, and rebellion, and oppression of those who had borne the name of His people, when power was given to them of God. The difference of these two states was great. Until the time of Nebuchadnezzar, various kingdoms and nations were owned as such in the providential government of God, though left entirely, morally, to themselves, their existence being the fruit of His own judgment in Babel.

As regards the ten tribes, at least the great body of them, this will not be their history. Having determined to be like the Gentiles, God has not suffered it; they are not under Antichrist and not cut off in the land, but brought, like Israel coming out of Egypt, under God's rod, and the rebels cut off, so as not to enter. Israel and Judah will then be under one Head, Christ, who will gather from all sides any left in divers lands.

Israel was the center of this general system, being owned as His people (known alone of all the families of the earth), the Lord having, in separating the sons of Adam and dividing to the nations their inheritance, set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. But Israel having failed in this position, and the nations, and especially Assyria, having been guilty of wrong, God judges them all, for " it contemneth the rod of his son " (Ezek. 21: io), and how should the rest subsist? The whole governmental order is set aside, and with Israel the independence of all the nations is lost; and wheresoever the children of men dwell, the dominion of Adam is placed in the hands of the head of the Gentiles. Of all these nations, which existed previous to Nebuchadnezzar (besides which Isa. 18 refers to some unnamed people outside their limits, and Ezekiel introduces the northern Gog in his inroad in the latter days), the history and judgment in the latter day is given in the prophets; and they are found in one way or another hostile to Israel, and gathered against Jerusalem in the latter day. In general, we find Zech. 12 and 14, Isaiah 30, Mic. 4, and other passages, reveal the gathering of the nations against Jerusalem. But these passages reveal also that it is taken once, and a second time is not, because the Lord is there and defends it. The nations themselves are judged. In this the haughty pride of the nations is broken, as that of Israel (who, save the residue, have sought help far from God, and have been broken and oppressed) is brought down by their own trials. And, however the nations may have exalted themselves, they are found to bow to the sovereignty and power of God, and own that He is in the midst of Israel whom they have despised. Those spared of them will own Jehovah in Zion when He has appeared- Zion established in peace by the presence of Jehovah.

Such is the history of the nations, as such, but the statue (or the beasts) is besides all this a distinct history, as we have seen, and also a distinct prophetic subject. Man used the power confided to him of God to exalt himself against Him, to oppress His people and trample down His sanctuary. Nor was this all: the last beast in particular imbrued his hands (vainly washed before men) in the guiltless blood of the Son of God, and thus associated himself with the apostate part of the Jewish people.

Alas! this was not all. The mystery of iniquity working in the midst of the church brought on apostasy there, and evil men, crept in, brought out the peculiar character of those to be judged by Christ at His coming in the last day. This apostasy gave occasion to the rise of the man of sin, the full expression of the wickedness of the human heart under the full power of Satan. Owning no God, setting up to be God, deceiving as a false Christ by signs and wonders; such is the religious end of man left to himself; all this associated with and maintaining the public power of Satan on the earth. Such is the last character of the power of the Gentiles where Christianity had been introduced. It will have at once an atheistical and an apostate Gentile form, growing out of and accompanied by apostate Christian forms. The last rebellious and self-exalting actings of power at Jerusalem will bring down ruin on the chief and his supporters by the manifestation of the Lord Jesus. Thereon will follow what we have already spoken of-the taking up of royal power in Israel by the Lord Christ, and the destruction of all the enemies who will have gathered together against Him.

Here it is we find the church in prophecy. The marriage of the Lamb having taken place with the church already gone up on high, the saints come forth with the Lord on the white horse to the triumphant destruction of the beast and the false prophet. And then the church is seen in her relationship with the earth in blessing, as the heavenly Jerusalem: striking contrast with the corrupt and corrupting intercourse of Babylon with the kings of the earth, which ends in the nations and the beast hating and destroying her.

In this scene of woe, which precedes the destruction of the beast, we find in the prophets a remnant of Jews, who, in the depth of their distress, look, and learn more and more to look, to Jehovah, being animated by the prophetic Spirit of Christ and taught by it. To this the whole body of Psalms apply, giving us, besides Christ's sympathy with them, the various expression of it. Isa. 65 and 66 dwell upon this remnant. One other circumstance must be noted here, of which prophecy speaks. Before the execution of judgment, there will be within the circle of special evil, and without it, a testimony of God. These must not be confounded. In the earlier half of the last week of Daniel, there will be a testimony rendered to the God of the earth. The beast, rising up in his last form, will put an end to this, adding this to his other wickedness, in order to please men and pursue his career of evil unchecked. During the last half week there is none, save the refusal to adore the beast. At the same time, there will be a testimony of the coming kingdom sent abroad among the nations, that all who have ears to hear may, through grace, escape the coming judgment. This gives occasion to the judgment of Matt. 25 For this the reader may consult
Matt. 24:14; Rev. 14; Psa. 96

The result will be the full establishment of what was shadowed, or rather connected with the responsibility of man, in the previous condition-namely, the full blessing of that people and the throne of the Lord at Jerusalem; but there is added what was shadowed out in the Gentile power-the full dominion of the Son of man over the world. It remains to add, that Old and New Testament prophecy alike declares that Satan will be bound, driven from on high (whence he has corrupted even the good that God has placed in the hands of men), and from earth soon after. He is shut up in the bottomless pit, the blessing of the world is uninterrupted till he be loosed again. Even then it does not appear that the saints will suffer. They will be assembled together apart from those seduced. The judgment of the dead follows, and the new heavens and the new earth, the mediatorial kingdom being closed and delivered up, and the family of the last Adam enjoying the full everlasting blessing acquired for them by their Head.

Notes and Jottings, Revelation, Further Notes on the

WE find a very important characteristic in chapter 1: 8, as well as in chapter 4: 8, and that is, the name of " Lord God Almighty." These names give to us leading thoughts, which are very valuable guides in the understanding of the Scriptures. The " Father," that is to say, the relationship of Father, is not found at all in this book. It is prophecy, and this is not relationship, but a testimony to a people unfaithful in relationship, or who have not got it. It is not church-relationship, nor Son-relationship.

But we do get the Old Testament names of God, and these give us the character of the book, i.e., government, judgment. In chapter 4, it is a throne, not the Father's house. These names are:-

1. Almighty (Shaddai), with the patriarchs;

2. Jehovah, with Israel.

3. Most High, in the millennium.

But the name of "Father" is the name of God revealed in grace to us Christians.

Ques. Was “Most High" not given to Abraham?

It was told to Abraham when he had overcome all his enemies; and God gave him then the blessing of the millennial day; Gen. 14:18-20.

We have a most beautiful dialog in Psa. 91 founded on these three names.

The subject of the fourth book of Psalms is, the bringing in the First begotten into the world; and it gives a kind of title to the book, " He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High "; this raises the question as to who is the Most High, and the answer is, that whoever has found out the secret, that one " shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty," i.e., of Abraham's God.

Then Messiah says, " I say of Jehovah, My refuge and my fortress; my God, I will confide in him." And the reply comes, in verses 3-8, " Surely he shall deliver thee," etc. In verses 9-13, it is the Jewish remnant that is speaking. Then, in verses 14-16, the voice of Jehovah is heard. But we do not find " Father " until Christ came and revealed the name of Father to us.

Ques. What is " Most High " in Deut. 32?

It is the bringing in of the millennium. And so, too, after seven years of madness, Nebuchadnezzar owns the Most High' Ques. Is his being a beast symbolical, or not?

It is both. It happened to him as written, and Nitocris took care of everything for him. He says, " I, Nebuchadnezzar, was walking in the midst of my palace," etc., and he who had been set up a golden head became really a beast until seven times passed over him. But it is also a symbol.

Ques. In Psa. 91:9, where the pronoun is changed, who is speaking?

The Jews or Jerusalem. In verse 3, it is the testimony of the Spirit in the same. This Psalm is, so to speak, a riddle propounded by the Holy Ghost: he who has the secret of the Most High, shall have all the promises and blessings of Abraham's God. This is the Psalm which the devil quotes to Christ, to show that God would take care of Him. But what a key it gives to the devil's quotations!

Ques. In verse 2, is it Christ who is speaking?

Yes.

It is well to notice the difference between cherubim and seraphim, because here it is a judicial, governmental throne that will carry out God's purposes; but that which is seraphic is judgment according to the holiness of God's nature; at the end, there will be found both these things. There will be governmental judgment in putting an end to heathen power; and with this, positive judgment of evil t " These shall go away into everlasting punishment," i.e., judgment according to God's holiness.

Ques. Does the seraphic character include government?

Well, yes, it will do so. But when they were carried away to Babylon, it was not seraphic judgment, because they were to be restored later on. In Isa. 6, it is government: their cities wasted, and their land desolate, and so on. The whole relationship of Israel was broken; it was, therefore, condemnation as well as judicial government, though they were to be brought back. But when they rejected Christ, then it was all over with them.

Ques. How would you define " Providence "?

It is in God seeing and ordering everything, so that not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him.

Isa. 6 is a testimony to judgment, but, of course, it had not been executed.

Ques. Was it then, final?

No; it was final only as under the old covenant; but sovereign grace will bring them in under a new covenant. Christ refers to this passage, " These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him." It was, therefore, all over with them: " Ye see me no more "; they were entirely lost and cut off.

Ques. The old covenant was law mingled with mercy and long suffering?

Yes; though it was still law; and although mercy spared them, they were, governmentally, put back under law.

Ques. Do we find any seraphic work in Israel?

Not that I know of, it is cherubic there.

Ques. But are the cherubim connected with the live coal?

" Seraph " means a burner. It is the word for burn, and the only other thing called a seraph, is the fiery serpent. The point is, that they cry, " Holy, holy, holy "; in the Revelation, they have eyes within and eyes without. He takes a coal, because directly a person is upright in grace, it purifies. When Isaiah said, " I am a man of unclean lips," etc., then the seraph flew and laid the coal upon his mouth, and his iniquity was taken away. In Isa. 6, we find the final thing, as well as judicial government; there is the actual closing of the relationship, but a remnant reserved.

Ques. What, then, is Matt. 25?

It is both seraphic and cherubic; that is to say, there is the burning judgment of God in that way; if there is good, it purges the dross away; but if there is not, it becomes final judgment.

" Every-one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." Salt is the power of grace separating from evil. The sacrifices were salted with salt; salt is that which purges entirely by separating from evil. Every sacrifice had it. It is called " the salt of the covenant of thy God," because it was the complete setting apart to God.

The judgment, then, was the entire setting aside of Israel as to the ground of their responsibility. It was final, in the sense that God had gone through everything with them.

Christ is really the root and offspring of David. Priesthood had failed in Eli; prophets had been rejected in Samuel; then comes David, who was prophet, priest, and king. But Solomon also fails, and so Babylon is brought in, and God's throne is taken from the earth. He then sends the true Son of David, who is rejected. That was final. Not that God cannot restore them in grace, for He will yet do this; but, as to responsibility, He cannot. He will restore them in sovereign grace under a new covenant.

In John 12, we read, " Though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled," etc. (vv. 38-41). There we find one of the proofs that Christ was Jehovah; for it says, " These things said Esaias; when he saw his glory, and spake of him."

And therein is shown the Lord's patience; for the judgment pronounced in Isaiah, He never put into execution for more than eight hundred years.

The throne of Jehovah was thus removed from Israel, and His people were sent to Babylon; but a remnant was brought back to be tested by the coming of the Son of David; and this remnant rejected Him.

The rejected Son of David then assumes another character, and becomes Savior of the world.

Ques. Is this rejection quite fulfilled until the end of the Acts?

No; but it was fulfilled in the remnant.

In Rev. 4, the elders give, as always, a reason for their worship; there is spiritual intelligence shown by them; but the angels never give any reason.

Ques. Do the twenty-four elders include all the heavenly saints in glory?

Yes; the number is an allusion to the twenty-four courses of the priests. Here, they are seen as twenty-four kings crowned and sitting on the twenty-four thrones, and they cast down their crowns and worship. The beasts and the elders are here quite distinct from each other, and there are no angels seen.

The Lamb then appears, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. He is able to open the book; and the beasts and elders are now seen together, whilst the angels take a distinct place. In chapter 4, the beasts and the elders are separate, and there are no angels, because unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come whereof we speak. But in chapter 5, the living creatures (i.e., power) are mixed up with the elders; Christ having taken authority, there is transfer of power to men, the angels being apart; and so the living creatures are seen distinct from the angels. The expression, " living creatures," is, of course, symbolic.

Ques. Are they the same in chapters 4 and 5?

They are always the same symbol, but they are transferred in their connection. Here, they form part, as it were, of the governmental throne.

There are two words employed for " round about," meaning, (1) that which forms part of the thing as round about, and (2) that which is in a circle around it; just like, for instance, the four legs of this table which are round about it; or, just as we are all sitting around it.

When the Lamb comes out, they sing (not " sung ") a new song. Notice that the angels never sing. People make them sing, but they never do in Scripture. Angels shout and cry, but there is only one note found with them. Man has all kinds of infirmities, but he can be tuned; it takes such as man to be tuned. The angels shout and praise, and that is lovely. And they stand. And at the tomb, two angels sat. But these elders sing a new song.

In verse 9, it is a question whether the " us " should read " them," or. be left out altogether; but in verse 10, " And made them" is settled.

When the Lamb is brought in here, then we find priests. " Which are the prayers of saints," does not mean that they pray for the saints.

Ques. If, in verse 10, we say, " they," is it as speaking of the church?

Yes; but if " us " is put in verse 9, and " they " in verse 10, then it would be the church speaking of those still on the earth.

Ques. How could the living creatures join in and say " us "?

It is not so, as I think; for we find here that the beasts and the elders are together, and the angels apart, and, accordingly, the " us " would be better left out.

The living creatures are the symbol of the governmental power of God. First, God employs the angels, as we see from Heb. 2 Angels are in power until Christ comes out, but when the Lamb does come out, power is transferred to men; chap. 5.

Ques. To whom do the " they " and the " them " refer, in verse 10?

To those who are redeemed out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Ques. Would it include themselves?

Yes, of course it would.

Ques. What of, " they sing," in verse 9?

That is an impersonal expression; it is not " they sung," for that would carry on the history.

Ques. Has this anything to do with, " Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world "?

That to which that passage refers is more governmental- the throne proper; but in the millennium, it is not a question of seraphs.

Ques. You said angels do not sing, but in chapter 5: 11, it says, " I heard the voice of many angels "?

Just so; it is " the voice "; that does not say they sang The nearest thing is in Job, when " the morning stars sang together "; but there, the whole expression is an image.

Ques. Do you distinguish between " the morning stars," and " the sons of God," Job 38?

One is clearly a figure. I had thought of them both as being the same, but I do not know that they need be so taken.

Ques. But if that is of creation, how then?

It is only " the earth ": " Where was thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? " So that there is no difficulty. It is not necessary that they should be the same, though I had always taken them as the same.

Ques. " Seen of angels," in 1 Tim. 3:16, has been taken to show that God had not been seen by angels before He was manifested in the flesh; if this is so, how do you understand the words in Matt. 18:10, " Their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven "?

Well, it is merely to show they have the best and most honorable place.

When the Lamb begins to open the book (chap. 5), we have in a general way providential dealings in the earth.

Ques. What are " horses "?

They express God's power, just as we see in Zech. 1.

Ques. Are the beasts and the elders distinct, again, in chapter 5: 14?

It does not say that the beasts fell down, but merely that they say, " Amen."

It is a great thing to lay hold of symbols in an abstract way. Horses, as in Zechariah, are the symbols of God's power introducing a certain state of things on the earth. A white horse is a symbol of triumph, it may be of good or of evil; what is important is to get hold of the abstract idea. So as regards the sun: Christ is the Sun of righteousness; but, when it is evil, the sun scorches people terribly.

Ques. What about the other colors in Zech. 1?

I do not know, just now, as to the exact translation about them.

Ques. Are the four horses, the four Gentile powers?

It is more God's overruling providence in the midst of them. They are found again in Zech. 6 They had quieted His Spirit in the north country, because God had put down Babylon, which was the first of the four kingdoms of the Gentiles.

Babylon was put down by Persia, which thus became, in that way, a horse to execute God's purpose.

Angelic power is occupied in this; for when Gabriel came to speak to Daniel, he had been kept waiting three weeks, because it was a question whether the Jews should be restored; nobody stood by him but Israel's angel-" Michael your prince."

Ques. Does Michael represent the Lord Himself?

No, he does not; the passage in Jude makes that quite clear. Ques. What are the four horns?

They are really these four kings, viewed in this particular character. Then the carpenters come to fray them away; and in the last one Christ is, so to speak, the carpenter, for it is He who puts down the beast.

Ques. What is the pale horse in Rev. 6:8?

It is the power of death; and hell (hades) follows him.

The Lord is here beginning to get ready the judgments; then the fifth seal is opened, and the martyrs are seen under the altar; they had been slain for Christ's sake and their righteousness is here recognized, only they must wait a little longer.

Ques. Are these future martyrs?

They are chiefly, but not necessarily, so; the future martyrs are those that should be killed like them. So these must wait for the martyrs of the last half-week.

Ques. What part will Israel have in these trials?

Here, we have nothing to do with Israel. And we do not find any Jews until chapters 10 and 11. Sealed of God they are in chapter 7, but they are not the subject of this prophecy. Chapter 6 is a complete revolution; things are closing in and they end in the breaking up of everything. The sun, i.e., supreme authority, becomes black; the moon, i.e., subordinate authority, becomes as blood; and the stars of heaven (inferior authorities) fall. The heaven also departs, i.e., the whole scene of government. The complete subversion of all earthly authority takes place.

They think, mistakenly, that the great day of wrath is come;

it is, of course, judgment, but not that of the great day. Ques. Why do they speak of the wrath of the Lamb? Because they have been fighting against Him.

Ques. How do they know Him?

It is the Lamb who has to take the power.

Ques. Why is it the Lamb?

I think that, in the Revelation, the " Lamb " indicates that the suffering One is to be the glorified One, and that He is to come judging. It is not exactly the thought of atoning.

Well, although the great day of His wrath was not really come, this was a tremendous political convulsion.

Ques. Could anyone say that this could not happen in the lifetime of persons now on the earth?

No, they could not; but the Church goes up out of all this. The sixth seal is far on in post-rapture times; but it is not yet in the last half-week.

Ques. Does this extend beyond Christendom, or is it confined to this latter?

It takes place mainly in Christendom as a whole; but the Roman empire is more especially in view.

Ques. In verse 15, is " kings of the earth " only those of the Roman empire?

No; I do not confine it to them, for others also may be frightened. Russia and Prussia are not in the Roman earth; a little bit of Prussia still is.

Ques. Is Ireland?

No, but it comes under its feet; he shall stamp the residue with his feet. Neither does the north of Scotland form part of it.

Chapter 7 is a kind of parenthesis, showing how God takes care of the remnant of Israel, and also of many from amongst the Gentiles.

Ques. Are these found in Christendom?

No, none of them, only in so far as Jews are found in Christendom, but they are not part of it.

If men reject the gospel now, they will not get the gospel in that day. People have thought that after the present gospel testimony is closed, they might still get a supplementary one; but 2 Thessalonians is clear enough. And, " He that believeth not is condemned already "; while " the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." That embraces all who have had the truth and have not believed it.

Ques. From whence will come the innumerable company?

Not from those who have heard the truth now and have rejected it, but from wherever this gospel testimony goes.

Ques. Who will take out this gospel testimony?

Well, I believe it will be Jews.

Ques. Is there anything that speaks of the conversion of these Jews after the rapture?

You get the two witnesses.

Ques. Does their testimony commence as soon as the church is gone?

Yes; we find them in Psa. 94-100, which speak of the coming in of the First begotten. This last one is worship.

Ques. Is there any reason why there should not be quickened souls, as a sort of dovetail, between these two periods?

I cannot say. God may be now, in a certain way, preparing Jews, just as He may give peace to the earth for Christianity to spread.

Ques. Would men of understanding, in Dan. 11, help as to this point?

Yes; there will be such found amongst these witnesses. Ques. They testify during the time of the covenant? Yes.

Ques. But if the testimony begins at once, there is only one half-week left.

The angel flying in the midst of heaven, in chapter 14: 6, 7. and having the everlasting gospel, is quite at the end, for the hour of His judgment is come.

Ques. Would the special action of the Spirit of God at the time mark the commencement?

Yes, but your question is, When will that begin? The moment I get the church taken away, I see God acting in this way: " Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come," but it does not say in so many words when that will be.

Ques. Has there ever been a time when there was no testimony?

No.

Ques. So that there is nothing to show that there may be an interval without any testimony?

Well, except that there is a time of judgment such as that nobody can go into the temple. But that does not say that there will be no testimony, for the two witnesses will be witnessing at that time.

Ques. Are the names of the twelve tribes symbolical? Not that I know of.

Ques. Why is Dan left out?

Twelve names are wanted. In Jacob's blessing, Dan comes in at the point of apostasy, but consequently, too, at the point of waiting for blessing. In the first ones, we have general responsibility; then Dan is like to an adder in the path biting the horse's heels, so that his rider falls backward. And then comes an interjection, " I have waited for thy salvation, 0 Lord "; faith says that God must now come in.

Ques. Has this any application to the antichrist?

It will have. The people are bowed down under the burden of the Gentiles (Issachar), with other details; they wait for Jehovah's salvation, and then blessing all follows on. Dan was the first that openly set up idolatry.

At the seventh seal, nothing happens; there is quietness for a little while. Then we come to the trumpets; this is the second series of seven. Judgment becomes now much closer, in consequence of the suffering of the saints, which shows there is a testimony near. This judgment is not merely general and providential, but it falls directly on the " third part," which I have no doubt is the Roman empire.

The three woe trumpets then follow. We see here, the division of seven into three and four, as is the case nearly everywhere in this book; the seven churches are divided at Thyatira, and so on.

Ques. What is the main idea of that?

I do not know. Four go on in a general way, and then come three more; there is quite a division in that way.

Ques. What is the character of the prayers which are put upon the golden altar in chapter 8?

It is the cry of the saints, answering to judgment in a general way. The Angel-Priest (Christ) offers the incense, not with the prayers, but to give efficacy to them, i.e., to make them effectual. The dealings of the trumpets are the effect of the answer to these supplications.

Ques. Is this the time of the imprecatory prayers of the Psalms?

Partly so, but not exclusively. I connect it more with Luke 18:7: “Shall not God avenge his own elect?"

In chapter 9, we pass over to the East; at least, I think so myself. That gives us one division of the fours and the threes. Four is generally that which falls on the Roman empire.

And now we close in rapidly towards the end. The bottomless pit is opened, and we have direct diabolical power coming out of it.

When the seals are opened, a general providential ordering of events takes place; then, in the trumpets, we have bitterer judgments; and also judgments on men themselves, not merely on their circumstances.

Ques. Would those in the fifth trumpet be apostate Jews? Yes, there it would be so.

Ques. And the seven trumpets would be within the seven seals?

Yes.

Ques. Why is the time specified as hour, day, month, and year?

To show that God has exactly measured the time, even up to an hour.

Ques. This foretells the coming in of the Eastern hordes upon the Roman empire?

Yes.

Ques. Is it the same thing as the way of the kings of the East?

Ah! I did not say that.

The tail of the dragon draws the third part of the stars of heaven; that is, the Roman empire sweeps all these under its power.

Ques. Is there no judgment of the Assyrian in the Revelation?

No.

There were two classes of prophets; the one, when Israel was owned of God, and the other, when Israel was disowned of God; this latter is Daniel (the vision), and the Revelation, and partly also Zechariah; while in Ezekiel, Israel is never called " My people " as a present thing, but only in the future.

Chapter 10 is a parenthesis which runs on to chapter 11: 14. " I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow," i.e., the covenant with creation, was upon his head. It is Christ coming to take possession, with one foot on the sea and the other on the earth; and then we have the declaration that there should be no longer delay.

Ques. Why does this parenthesis come in here?

Well, we have the trumpets going on regularly to the end; but he wants to bring in what is morally more important than the trumpets, and this he does by introducing, in this parenthesis, the ten-horned beast and all that belongs to it; and thus he includes it in the general history. All that closes totally at chapter 11: 18. A number of details are given afterward.

Ques. When does the last half-week commence?

I do not know. Half a week before the end; but then, when does the end come?

Ques. When is the end of the first half-week?

At the beginning of the second! In one sense, it was the end of the first half-week when Christ was put to death.

In chapter 10, Christ is seen asserting His title to the earth, but John is not allowed to write what the thunders say. A little open book, i.e. something revealed, is then given him. It was pleasant to the taste, to get this knowledge, but it was actually bitter in his belly.

After this, he sets to prophesy again. And, in chapter t 1, we have described the state of things in Jerusalem, followed by a history of the evil in the world, which comes to its full head and crisis, together with the history of the beast and false prophet. God has a people the while. And witnesses testify.

Ques. Who are they?

All that I see in these witnesses is, that the testimony of two men is true.

We find here true worship, and adequate witness. The Gentiles trample down everything, but these witnesses stand before the God of the earth. God is asserting His power and title as to the earth, but men will not have it.

Ques. But they give glory to God, in verse 13?

Yes, but it is too late then, and will not do.

Ques. What is the meaning of the temple?

It simply means that He recognizes it, that is to say, the house itself. The outside court is given up to the Gentiles. The true inward thing is still owned, but the general profession is trodden under by the Gentiles. There will be these two things; the worship of those that are really the Lord's, though in terrible trouble; and there will be prophecy, too. Both the worship and the testimony will be in the midst of the power of the beast.

Here, we have the same word as in chapter 8: 3. " I will give power," or efficacy, " to my two witnesses and they shall prophesy." Not that these things are given in order at all; but there is adequate testimony: two candlesticks, two olive trees. These witnesses have the power of Moses and Elias. Elias prophesied when Israel was apostate, and Moses did so when the nation was under Pharaoh's power; that is the case here, for these witnesses have the characters of Moses and Elias. When they have completed their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit, kills them. Their dead bodies are then seen exposed, and, after three and a half days, the spirit of life from God enters into them, and all those beholding them are awfully afraid.

Now we see one class of heavenly saints, who are not of the church. This is the last act of the first resurrection. The close of chapter 11 looks right on to the end.

Chapters 12-14 are complete in themselves; chapters 15-18 give us another thing, viz., the plagues which fill up. Of both Babylon and the heavenly Jerusalem we have descriptions, but these do not give us the course of history.

First of all, there is the beast; then, in chapter 15, another sign is seen in heaven; then, Babylon, etc., and we find further details given of that which has been already summed up in the parenthesis.

Ques. What about the months and days in chapter 11? They are the last half-week.

Ques. Not the two half-weeks?

Not as I take it. To support the theory of there being two half-weeks in the Revelation, you are obliged to transpose the verses entirely. In order to bring in the whole week, verse 2 must follow verse 3; for they say that the second half-week is after the witnesses are killed. I see no need to put verses 3 and 4 before the second verse, specially as it declares that the state of things lasts forty-two and not eighty-four months.

Ques. What is, then, the first half-week?

When the beast makes good friends with the Jews, and they think everything is going on all right.

The thing is, that the only place where we get a week is in Daniel. There are sixty-nine weeks up to Messiah, that is to say, seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks; the Messiah is then cut off. We have now one week to make up the seventy weeks; in point of fact, the time of Christ's testimony. After the sixty-two weeks, Messiah shall be cut off, this was nearly three and a half years, or the first half-week; but the Jews not believing in Christ, when the beast comes and makes a covenant with them, he does so as if only the sixty-nine weeks were run out, but / know that sixty-nine weeks and a half have run out. And so I believe that there is left only one half-week for faith.

Ques. Was there not John Baptist's time of testimony? But where do you find that John Baptist was testifying half a week before Christ?

Ques. Then will they have to go over the half-week again?

Yes; but the godly ones will not own it.

When the antichrist comes, the mass receive him and the remnant do not; then the beast, or little horn, in league with antichrist, begins to persecute them, and at the middle of the week, the sacrifices are taken away, with all else, and the Jews as a nation are put down. They say the saints are given into his hands; but Dan. 7:25 says, He... shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand "; i.e., the times and laws, but not the saints. There we see what takes place; the Jewish sacrifices and all are put into his hand. " Shall... think to change times and laws." That is abstract.

The seventh angel sounds (v. 15) and Christ takes His power. And the twenty-four elders say, " We give thee thanks, 0 Lord God Almighty... because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." And here we have the whole thing going right on to the new heavens and the new earth.

Ques. Would, " change times and laws," be like to cherubic action?

Yes; just so, like it. Power has come in (v. 18), and the whole thing is finished, going right on to the millennium and beyond. It takes in everything. The last verse really belongs to chapter 12. There, the temple of God is opened in heaven, and the signs of His power are seen.

Ques. Would you say, then, that " the time of the dead, that they should be judged " refers to the " great white throne "? Yes.

Ques. And the giving of rewards, too?

It does not say here what they are, but it includes the great white throne. The rewards are to " Thy servants," and " to the saints," and so on. It is the general description of the result of Christ's taking His power.

We come now to the development of things in connection with Israel; then, to antichrist; and then, to the last days. Chapters 12-14 go together; they give a summary of the whole thing as between Satan and God, Jerusalem being the subject.

Jerusalem is seen clothed with the sun, i.e., with power; she has upon her head a crown of twelve stars; and the moon (i.e., that which had been reflected light under the old covenant) put down under her feet.

Then a son is born.

The dragon, the power of Satan in the form of the Roman empire, stands ready to swallow up the child. But he cannot touch the child, for it is caught up to the throne of God. There we have the church with Christ, and in Christ; and the woman flees into the wilderness.

I get here a purpose of God, and in the woman fleeing away, the oppression of Jerusalem in the last days.

Ques. Is that the same thing as in Ezek. 20?

No; there, the ten tribes are seen in contrast with what we have here. The ten tribes are brought into the wilderness of the people, and there is all the difference between them and the Jews, for the ten tribes are passed under the rod, and brought under the bond of the covenant. We can see in this the righteous judgment of God in His ways, because the ten tribes, never having rejected Christ, are not put under the antichrist.

Ques. Is " the forest of the south field," in Ezek. 20:46, Jerusalem?

I do not know; I should rather think it was Egypt. In the next chapter, we find Israel and Jerusalem. Rev. 12:6 shows how the last half-week begins. There is, next, war in heaven; Michael and his angels fight against the dragon. The devil is cast out, and thereby loses his anti-priestly character. As the accuser of the brethren before God day and night, he was anti-priest; but he has still his anti-kingly and anti-prophet characters. It is all over with his accusing; and there is no place for him any more in heaven, though he has place on earth. " Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them," i.e. heavenly saints, including those martyred and taken up after the church has gone.

The dragon begins then to persecute the woman, and she is nourished for a time, times, and half a time, i.e., three and a half times, or the last half-week.

Ques. What is the difference between the " fleeing " of the woman 1260 days, in verse 6, and what is said of her in verse 14?

The first is the general statement of the " dramatis personae," as they say, of that which is to happen to her; and then, in verse 14, we learn how it is to happen. The beast comes out of the bottomless pit; one of his heads had been wounded to death and was healed; because so far as the world's history is concerned, the Roman empire had been destroyed and was now revived, and so all the world wondered after the beast. Power was given to the beast to continue forty-two months, and this being so, I do not understand how he can continue eighty-four months. Note that we have here the imperial beast, not the antichrist.

Ques. Is one the anti-king?

Two horns like a lamb is so far anti-king.

Ques. What is the difference between this beast of verse 2, and the fourth beast in Dan. 7?

In Dan. 7, it is a description of empire, but here, we find him in his last form. The one is more a temporal thing; but, in the other, we see all the moral mischief.

Ques. Should there not be some alteration in the reading of verse 8?

It should read, " Whose name had not been written from the founding of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb." As it reads in the Authorized Version, it is very good theology, but it is very bad teaching.

Ques. As to the " dwellers on earth," will there be any people upon earth in that day who will be called dwellers in heaven?

We are dwellers in heaven; but these saints are too late to have that character completely; still, as they have suffered under the beast, they will be taken up.

The proper character of Christians is that we dwell in heaven; we are strangers on the earth, although actually on it. After the church is gone, the " earth-dwellers," properly speaking, begin; but during the period that our chapter speaks of, if a saint is killed, he loses blessing on earth, and would lose blessing in heaven; so there is a supplementary taking up of such to heaven. To this class would belong those who had not worshipped the beast.

Ques. Are they not killed?

The beast goes to make war with them; he does not kill all of them, but all he can catch, he kills. The remnant of her seed is just that; when the dragon sought to destroy the woman, it was more the providential action of God that kept her safe; but all of these saints that the beast can catch, he kills.

Ques. Does the Lord refer to this time, when He says, " Except those days should be shortened," etc.?

Yes.

We find, next, a second beast. The first beast had power, and a throne, and authority; but with the second beast there is found proper devil-power, as you may say; this last-named comes up out of the earth, not out of the sea. He sets up to be Messiah the King, but if anyone listens to him, it is the devil: " He spake as a dragon." It is the direct power and influence of Satan amongst the Jews, though his mischief goes out wider still.

Ques. Is this second beast like the horn of Dan. 8?

No, I think not; that horn will come, I suppose, at the end of the Alexandrian kingdom, and from the part of Turkey in Asia.

This second beast makes fire come down from heaven; it is very solemn testimony. In 2 Thess. 2:9, the same words are used in the Greek, for the works of the one whose coming is after the power of Satan, as those used for the proofs of the Christ in Acts 2:22: " Power and signs and... wonders"; that is to say, the same things given to prove the Christ, are given also to prove the antichrist! The things given to prove that Jehovah was not man, but the true God, these same things are what antichrist does. When Elijah was to prove the true God, he says, " The God that answereth by fire, let him be God." And fire comes down, licks up the water, and consumes the sacrifice.

Antichrist will do all this-but in a lying way, of course.

Ques. Will his power extend beyond the Jews?

His mischief will. He causes all to receive the mark, and that is very wide; but it is within the Roman empire.

Ques. What is the number " 666 "?

I do not know; it will come out in its proper time. Chapter 14 begins at Jerusalem (Zion), and we find here a company that has gone through all the troubles and sorrows, because they would not worship the idols; they are, therefore "virgins.” They are not in heaven, but they learn the song that is sung in heaven. They have been spared, and they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; they have a special privilege more than those who have had no trouble at all.

Ques. Are these the same as in chapter 20: 4?

No; in that passage, we have all the raised and heavenly saints.

Ques. To whom does the number " 666 " belong?

To the first beast; at least I have always taken it so. The moment the first beast of chapter 13, i.e., the throne-beast (in verse 2, " seat " is really " throne ") goes to the east, the second beast, that is king there, is then seen more as a prophet. Prophet and king are both earthly characters, and as soon as the devil is cast down from heaven, he comes out in these characters.

Then, in chapter 14: 6, the last gospel goes out to the heathen. The everlasting gospel is not our gospel; it is, I believe, the gospel concerning the Seed of the woman that is to bruise the serpent's head; and that is now about to take place. " Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." God is here seen as Creator according to Psa. 96

Then comes another thing and that is, the fall of Babylon, and it is followed by a warning about worshipping the beast. Ques. What is Babylon?

Popery. But it may have daughters. As a Romish priest once answered one who told him Rome was Babylon, But who are her daughters, then? "

Next, Christ comes; and we have, first, distinctive, separative judgment; and then, vengeance judgment; i.e., harvest and vintage. The winepress is trodden without the city. And thereupon the whole scene closes.

Chapter 15 begins a new thing. " I saw another sign in heaven," etc.; and I get no sign but the seven last plagues in which is filled up, not the wrath of the Lamb, but the wrath of God. The difference is in the full character of it. God judges corruption, and uses instruments; but the Lamb comes in chapter 19 to execute judgment. Fire is always judgment; and glass is not for a man dirty with walking to wash in (v. 2). Here, they stand on purity, having gone through the fire to get at it. The sea is the same as in chapter 4, but here, it is with fire. They sing the song of Moses, and of the Lamb: " Great and wonderful are thy works, Lord God Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, 0 King of nations." Then come the last plagues of God upon the beast (see chap. 15: 6 to chap. 16: 2). Pouring out on the sea, is upon the masses of peoples; and " upon the rivers and fountains of waters," is upon the moral principles which give an impulse to their movements. All becomes blood.

Ques. Are these judgments the same as the trumpets?

No, of course not; these are the last plagues. Then we see that the sun becomes an awful tyrannical despot. All is wretchedness and darkness. There is no conversion or repentance here. It is poured out, too, upon the beast's throne (not merely upon his " seat "). The way of the kings of the east, whoever they are, is next prepared, that is, preparation for the wars and battles of the last days.

Then three frogs come forth; they are the spirits of devils, gathering all to the battle of the great day. People ask, What is this gathering? Well, at least, the devil is not the gospel gathering; it is the gathering power of evil. Nor is this the same as the close of chapter 14, which carries us through from the beginning to the end. It is another series, showing all that takes place in the beast's country before the closing judgments.

In chapter 17, Babylon is a fresh object of government.

Ques. How is it that Babylon, which begins as the head of civil power, has here this other character?

That is hardly the correct idea of Babylon. She is noticed in the Old Testament for fornication and corrupting the nations. (Note that the vintage does not take place until all this is over.) When Great Babylon comes into remembrance, the judgments of God within the limits of the beast are closed; chapters 17 and IS are a kind of appendix. We find the same thing with the description of Jerusalem, when he says, " Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." Here in chapter 17, we have a particular description of that which has been already judged: " Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters."

Ques. Why does it say, " into the wilderness " (v. 3)?

Because there, all was desolate and unproductive, no grass, no blessing, nor anything of the kind. The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her (v. 2), just as they are now doing with Rome.

Ques. What is scarlet?

Grandeur, I suppose; purple is more royalty. Upon her forehead was a name written, "Mystery, great Babylon, the mother of the harlots, and of the abominations of the earth." "Abominations " is idolatry, so used of Chemosh, and so on. It is the woman that is drunk, in verse 6, but it is the beast, the civil power, that does the wickedness. What a remarkable trinity of evil do we find in the dragon and these two beasts! The first beast was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit; it is a kind of resurrection; and then he goes into perdition. He was, and is not, and yet is.

We have here a description of Rome; the heads spoken of are different characters of Roman government, for this beast carries government.

The ten kings (v. 12) receive their power one hour with the beast, but this is not the breaking up of the Roman empire by the German power. The German nations upset the beasts entirely, while here they are all found together. It is Babylon, i.e., Rome. These different nations give their power to the beast. The Lamb overcomes them, but you have saints coming with Him: " They that are with him, are called, and chosen, and faithful." These are men, i.e., saints. " Chosen and faithful " might be applied to angels, but not " called." Angels are not " called."

Ques. " Many are called, but few are chosen "?

No; that is called by the gospel, and is quite another thing.

" The woman which thou sawest is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." John was astonished to see this. Then, in chapter 18, we have the complete pulling to pieces of Babylon. She is destroyed by the nations as such; the authorities of the nations are troubled about it; and the infidel power which comes up at the end is astonished at it as well.

Ques. Do the ten horns destroy the power of Rome?

Well, it is the nations rather than the kings, because the kings of the earth mourn over it; when the crash comes, they are distinct. The ten horns are not here the individual kings,, for these latter are sorry, because they have lost the means of ' governing.

We have passed over one thing in chapter 12:10: " Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ." This is at the beginning of the three and a half years; that is to say, as soon as ever the evil power is cast out of heaven, and before the earth is made clear. And here, in chapter 19: 1, 2, much people are saying, " Allelulia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore," etc.

Then follows the marriage of the Lamb. And heaven opens, and, in triumph, He comes out on a white horse, at any rate to victory.

Ques. But will the saints in heaven return to earth to find their place on it?

They will not come back to the earth, unless, like the angels, there is anything for them to do on it.

In chapter 19: 15, we have a quotation from Isa. 63 " He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." And His title, " King of kings, and Lord of lords," is also displayed. In Timothy we read: " Which in his times he shall show, who is...,King of kings, and Lord of lords." This refers to God. But here, in the Revelation, this same title is given to Christ. Again, the " Son of man," in Dan. 7:13, was brought to the " Ancient of days," whilst in verse 22, the " Ancient of days " came. This shows Christ to be Ancient of Days. In both these cases, the title of God is applied to Christ.

Ques. Would you say a word as to the righteousness of saints (v. 8)?

It should be plural, " righteousnesses," and it means, I believe, that God owns their practical walk. The language in the Revelation is very Hebrewish, and it is the custom in Hebrew, in moral things, to put the plural for the abstract idea.

There are no angels seen acting here; it is those who are associated with Christ as His companions.

Both the beast and the false prophet are destroyed; and then Satan is bound, and cast into the bottomless pit.

After this, comes sessional judgment.

Ques. Do you refer to Matt. 25?

It includes not that only, but also the judgment that goes on through the millennium. Satan is then let loose, and he deceives those amongst the nations who have not been kept by grace. He gathers them around Jerusalem, and fire comes down and destroys them all. The judgment of the wicked dead follows.

Ques. It says in chapter 22: 8, that John fell down at the angel's feet to worship him?

Yes; but the Lord has guarded us against the worshipping of angels.

Ques. What is the judgment of the " great white throne " in chapter 20: 11? Is it sessional?

Yes; this is all sessional; I mean verse 4 as well as verse 11; and all through the millennium they are sitting on thrones.

Chapter 21: 1-8 shows us when God will be all in all; it is, God shall do this, and God shall do that. The mediatorial kingdom has been given up. Everything is closed.

After this, John turns back, and gives a description of the heavenly city, just as he had already done of Babylon. In chapter 21: 8, the warning is given that closes all; and then it is too late to change.

Ques. What is the " book " in chapter 22: 7?

This book, i.e., the prophecy of the Apocalypse.

Ques. Should it not read, in verse 14, " that wash their robes "?

Yes; in the Greek it is not " do His commandments," but " plunontes tas stolas auton."

Ques. Is not the transition from an angel to Christ remarkable?

Yes; but the book is closed. And He says, “I, Jesus, have sent mine angel," and then He adds, “I am." “I am," is not prophecy.

He does not say here to the church " I will come "; " He which testifieth these things saith, Surely, I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

In verse 17, we have the whole circle of the church's affections and activities. " The Spirit and the bride say, Come,"

i.e., we have the coming Lord, and the Spirit in the church, leading it to say to the Bridegroom, “Come."

Then, addressing herself to the saints, she says, " Let him that heareth say, Come "; and next, the testimony goes out to those who are but half-awakened, " Let him that is athirst come "; and finally, the gospel message is to everybody, " Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The bride has the water of life for herself, but she has not yet the Bridegroom.

Ques. " Him that heareth," who is that?

Any Christian that hears. I am looking first of all for Christ; then, I can say to Him, " Come "; and then my heart goes out to the whole world; " Let him that heareth," join in the bridal cry, and say, " Come."

We see here what the heavenly bride is. Jerusalem is but an earthly thing.

Ques. Are the Old Testament saints found here?

We cannot say that, because the Spirit is in the bride. The bridal cry is in anticipation of conjugal affections; it is the state that should characterize us now.

Miscellaneous 4, Acts of the Apostles - Chapter 2, The

I think it of moment to notice here verse 1, because there is a general current idea that only the -twelve were present, that there were a hundred and twenty, and not the apostles only. " They were all with one accord in one place."

What of the " five hundred brethren" in 1 Corinthians 15:6?

There is no clue to that, that I know of. Very likely that may have been in Galilee, where the Lord had appointed others to meet Him, but there is no statement about it.

The hundred and twenty would comprise the whole assembly?

Not all who were converted, but those who were at Jerusalem.

Would it include the women?

Probably. Yes. In chapter 1:14 it says, " with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

But in verse 16 Peter addresses them " men and brethren"?

Yes, but it is clear that the Holy Ghost was poured out on women: " I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy," " and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit;" and Philip had four daughters who prophesied.

" By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body," how are we to understand that in connection with this?

They were baptized into one body then and there, only it was not fully developed until the Gentiles came in. The Spirit coining. down upon them then did baptize them into one body, but the term " baptism" is never applied to this, except at Pentecost, in scripture, that I know of; though all come into that one body. In chapter 1 The Lord says, " Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

But the Corinthians came in afterward?

Yes, and they are spoken of as " sealed" and " anointed." In John 1:33 " the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," it is the second part of the work of Christ. The first part was the taking "away the sin of the world" as the " Lamb of God;" the second, baptizing with the Holy Ghost.

What would that mean, " fell upon them as upon us at the beginning"?

That is not called baptism; but it is just the same thing in effect; the disciples were formed into unity by the coming down of the Holy Ghost upon them; it was a special case with the Gentiles to show that they were all one. The body was not in its developed condition before the Gentiles were brought in.

What was their condition before the Holy Ghost fell upon them?

They had intelligence of course but no power, like the disciples before Pentecost, as we were saying.

Would it be the condition of infancy in Hebrews 5?

That was the Jewish state before Christ's death and resurrection.

Would you not say that every believer is baptized with the Holy Ghost?

No. When brought into liberty, he is sealed and anointed, and comes into the general baptism; he comes into the same place then. I know how people speak, and God does not make a man an offender for a word; but you get the case of Cornelius clear enough, when God was saying, I will have the Gentiles in spite of you.

What would you call the action of the Holy Ghost in giving a believer his place in the body of Christ?

No action. He is sealed when he receives the Holy Ghost, it is not another Holy Ghost, and so he becomes a member of that body.

But in 1 Cor. 12, he speaks of Gentiles having been baptized into that one body?

Yes; it is merely the use of a word. The practical idea is simple. I do not find it applied to an individual; it is the same Holy Ghost and the individual receives it; if a Gentile came, he received the Holy Ghost, and was formed into the same unity, that is the important point, the thing to be thoroughly seen and believed, that we do receive the Holy Ghost, and so get into this unity. When a man receives the Holy Ghost he is a member of the body of Christ, only the difference between this, and sealing, and anointing, is important in this, that there are individual relationships as well as unity, because in receiving the Holy Ghost, he becomes a conscious son of the Father • I say conscious son, and he knows that he is in Christ, and Christ in him, by the Holy Ghost dwelling in him; there are many individual things you must not lose sight of.

Would the individual things you refer to be expressed in 1 Cor. 12?

No; that is a different thing. But there is " the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us;" and again, 44 at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you;" that is all individual.

How are we to understand in Acts 19, " Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed"? They were only John's disciples.

Were they not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Well, I suppose Paul saw something in them that made him ask the question. But they were not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ as risen.

What is the difference between anointing and sealing?

None. It is by the Spirit, and the Spirit is the earnest, but anointing is the general term; it is a figure; the leper was washed with water, sprinkled with blood, and anointed with oil: and when God anoints a man, He puts His seal upon him, and gives him the earnest of the inheritance and all other things.

Would you expect that to follow immediately on conversion?

Yes, when one heard a clear gospel preached. But I could not expect anything; that is a matter of God's condescending wisdom in particular cases, or He might see a person who wanted breaking down first, or a thousand things.

There seems to be an interval in the case of the Samaritans in Acts 8?

Yes, and so there was here too in chapter 2. I think it is gracious of the Lord to make all these things so distinct. I know what pious books say, that I receive the Holy Ghost when I am converted; it is all false, I receive the Holy Ghost after I am converted.

But the Holy Ghost works before?

Yes, of course, but my building a house, and my going to live in it when it is built, are two different things.

What is the " unction" in John's First Epistle?

The Holy Ghost, always. It is an allusion to the anointing with oil, after sprinkling with the blood. It is said of Christ, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, but Christ is never said to have been baptized with the Holy Ghost; you get " him hath God the Father sealed." Only remember, He was sealed and anointed in witness of His own perfectness, while we are sealed and anointed in virtue of Christ's work.

But the holy anointing oil was not to come on man's flesh?

Just so; and so Christ takes us out of flesh in that sense.

But before God does not anointing exist in every case whether known or not?

No, certainly not. These in Acts 19 were not anointed. I know no reason why there should be any delay. It was the regular thing when a man was sprinkled with blood, then he was anointed with oil.

There are many Christians who do not know what the anointing is?

The question is, Can they really cry " Abba, Father?"

Is that the criterion of having the Holy Ghost? Certainly; "because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts."

Does not that imply receiving the Holy Ghost as soon as we are sons?

Naturally it does... If I find a person in liberty with God, he will say " Father," and also if truly at liberty he will say, I am God's son. People may sometimes say " Father" through a measure of training and habit, but such will be afraid to say, if they have not the Holy Ghost, that they are God's sons. I mean even when they may use the name Father.

But there is such a thing as judicial blindness?

O yes, as chastisement there is. But, otherwise, when sealed, the consciousness of relationship will be there. That is a very distinct and definite thing. Just as a child may be forgetful and naughty, but still it lives in the consciousness of its being a child. It may have conscience deadened and hardened, but it is never out of the consciousness of the relationship after all. So when a person has the Holy Ghost, that gives him the consciousness of being a son.

Did the Prophet Joel think of the body of Christ? is it not merely a promise to the Jewish remnant?

That is what it really is, but it is promised to all flesh. It has its place so far here as well. But it is not true of us as its full final accomplishment. But we have the firstfruits of the Spirit.

But will it not be true of them that they will be baptized into one body?

No. But God was here going on in a way with Israel for a time.

But the full prophecy was not fulfilled here? No. In Joel it says "afterward" God will do it, but here it says, " in the last days."

How can we divide it?

We have it divided for us here; only Peter changes the language.

Is there anything to be learned from the quotation?

If you look at Joel it is clearly this, "And it shall come to pass afterward"-after God has restored Israel, and set them in blessing in their land, and they own Messiah, then they get the Spirit; but they are not connected with Christ in heaven then, because Christ is down here on the earth with them. The Lord will do great things for them; He will restore them in blessing, He will be jealous for His land, and will pity His people, so that they shall never be ashamed; they shall know that God is Jehovah, &c., " and afterward I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh." Now here Peter changes the word " afterward" and puts in " the last days," and so takes in a distinct testimony.

Then would you say that those in the last days who receive the Spirit will receive Him, and the Holy Ghost dwell in them?

Poured out upon them is all that is said, but they have Christ present with them.

What part was fulfilled at Pentecost?

Just the fact of pouring out.

He does not say it was fulfilled, but " this is that which was spoken"?

Peter stops in the middle of verse 32 of Joel. What he really gives you is the fact that the Spirit was poured out.

Is there anything in the leaving out of the " of "?

No. But you get it used of the, Holy Ghost in scripture, as in " because he bath given us of his Spirit." It is important to see that the Spirit is personally present on earth; that is another truth.

What of " I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath"?

That is warning.

Then the restoration in the land will take place before the outpouring of the Spirit?

Yes, but they are distinct parts of the prophecy altogether; and they are separated on purpose in the way that Peter is speaking. Verse 30 of Joel begins distinct testimony; he states a complete restoration of Israel to blessing; then He will pour out of His Spirit; and then in verse 30, before those days come, He will send signs and wonders; you get upon this little remnant of Israel, the Holy Ghost poured out, with the warning of signs and wonders before the terrible day comes. But Israel reject this, as they did all the rest, and then Paul comes out with the Son in heaven; and the ground of bringing that out is Stephen's murder.

Will the remnant get this pouring out of the Spirit before the Lord comes?

No. Joel says ' afterward.' I believe there will be a working of the Spirit, as by Elias, and so on; but they will not get this pouring out. You get the restoration of Israel to full blessing, then the Spirit. But then Joel says before the coming of the terrible clay of the Lord-the wonders.

The Lord delivers the people and then the Holy Ghost comes down, so that they are saved already before the Holy Ghost comes down, and then they shall never be ashamed.

Would the end of verse 29 be how- much of the-prophecy was fulfilled?

Yes.

But must not those words of Joel be the unity-of the body?

Why "must?" I have nothing to do with the unity of the body here; other teaching makes us know about that, but not this passage.

Why will not this outpouring make the Jews one when it comes? Will it not b3 a necessary consequence, because Christ will have left heaven then?

But can you make things necessary with God?

You cannot unite with a Head in heaven, when He is here on earth. Why is God to do in on(dispensation the same that He does in another? Christ's place now is ascended up on high to receive gifts for men.... and now the Holy Ghost (-rives gifts, but gifts have nothing to do with the nature of the unity of the church. There is a prophet now, and so there was in the Old Testament, but they are different; you are assuming that God is pledged to act in the same way always.

Will the Jews have these apostles and prophets?

No, I do not say that You get Christ's ascension in Psa. 68, and His sitting at the right hand of God in Psa. 110 But what comes out between that and His return, on being united to Him in heaven, is not presented then at all. He gives gifts for the rebellious also, that is Jews in Psa. 68, but the apostle does not quote that, but says " received gifts in man." But in the future day the Lord will be among them then as Messiah, and it is not the same order of things. Christ received the Holy Ghost again for communicating these gifts.

Does not the fact of Paul's ministry coming out, bring in a different character of action?

Yes, but it is Stephen's death which is the turning point.

Would you be good enough to divide Joel for us?

In Joel 2:17, they are to weep between the porch and the altar; in verse 18, the Lord is jealous for His land and pities His people, He sends them corn, and removes the northern army, and does 'Treat things for the land.

Is the northern army Gog?

I suppose so, but the Lord comes in with many blessings; and in verse 27, "ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel." There you get Israel completely restored, and that is one division. Then in verse 28, He goes outside Israel.

Is that after the last week in Daniel?

Of course it is. He goes outside Israel and pours His Spirit upon all flesh, and " on my servants and handmaids, in those days will I pour out my Spirit," that finishes verse 29. Then there is another testimony, "and I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke, the sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come." The day of the Lord is on the northern army; the " day" is the judgment of the Lord. Verses 28, 29 are together; but verses 30, 31 are distinct from them, and refer to what takes place before.

In the Acts of the Apostles we have the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh but a preliminary testing of the Jews. In chapter 2. Peter says, " Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

But in Joel, Israel is in full blessing before the Spirit is poured out on all flesh?

Exactly; he says " afterward," after Israel is completely established in blessing. We have it now before, and here in Acts the Jews had it as preliminary. And Peter does not say that it was the fulfillment of Joel.

Would you say the Lord was present then when the Spirit was poured out on all flesh, in Joel?

Joel calls on the Jews to repent, and as soon as they do that, there is this northern army which is oppressing them and cutting them off, put down by Jehovah, while the Jews weep between the porch and altar. Then He gives them complete blessing, so that they shall never be ashamed, and they are established forever and ever, and then He gives them the Spirit.

Does the Lord come personally to do all that? Surely; how is the day of the Lord to come without the Lord?

Do verses 31, 32 Then go back?

Yes, it says so, you get "afterward" in verse 28, and " before" in verse 31.

Then the whole of the chapter has yet to be fulfilled in detail?

Yes, it certainly has.

Why the weeping between the porch and the altar?

Humanly, it looked as if there would be destruction there, because this terrible enemy had come up.

Then verses 28, 29 are suitable to a remnant that received Christ as Messiah?

They are suitable to " all flesh."

But when the Lord comes back there will be only Judah and Benjamin in the land?

Well, but there is often a process going on, though you may not see every detail clear, I mean as regards Israel. You get Judah and the children of Israel their companions, and then the forming the whole house of Israel. What the Lord will do will be a long process, as I believe.

I get this, that the Jews are cut off in the land, but the ten tribes are cut off outside of it. In Ezek. 20 you have the restoration of the ten tribes.

I thought they came back after the beginning of Zech. 14, and so were not in the land when the Lord came down?

Very likely. When Gog comes up for the last time (he besieges Jerusalem twice in Isaiah), that is, this northern army of Joel. The Lord has already destroyed the beast, and then the Lord sets up His throne. Gog finds Him there.

The ten tribes never get back except as a remnant. The moment the Lord has destroyed the beast, He takes His throne, and the whole thing is settled.

Does Peter's preaching in Acts 2 imply that, if the Jews had repented, the whole of Joel's prophecy as to the Spirit would have been fulfilled 9

Well, in a certain sense, yes, and the Lord would have come. The more you see, the more you will see, that the Lord's dealings until Christ comes are provisional.

But many are looking now for the latter rain of the Spirit?

Well, then, they are looking in vain; but it is in a great measure ignorance.

There are two kinds of gifts entirely distinct; I said so thirty years ago to Irving. Those in 1 Corinthians xii. are gifts of power, so much so that often when there was positive power nobody was to use it; it was all under the rule and authority of Christ's order in the house. And so there, therefore, I get no promise of the continuance of gifts; but when I come to Eph. 4, I get no gifts that are signs at all; but, after the foundation of apostles and prophets, I get evangelists, pastors and teachers, those which the Lord uses to build up His church, "until we all come." I get Christ caring for His own body to build it up, and also the positive declaration of their going on to the end; they are "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." You have the caring for the church, and continuance.

What is " whether there be prophecies, they shall fail," &c.?

It means that there is no promise there of their continuance. Corinthians is merely power and the Holy- Ghost.

It is not a statement that these should pass away?

No, but there is no promise of their continuance though it may foreshadow their passing away. It is power, and then the Holy Ghost distributing to, every man severally as He will, but it is a perfect state of things; the gifts are in a certain sense meant to fail, and so their continuance is not the subject at all; but I do get the assurance of their continuance when I come to edification. The word of God never contemplates the continuance of the church, but it contemplates Christ coming. People say, How could God set up a thing and not provide for its continuance beyond thirty years? Of course He did not. He taught the saints to look constantly for the Lord as a present thing.

What is the difference between the talents in the Gospels, and the gifts spoken of in the Epistles?

I believe the talents are the gifts, the things that Christ gave when He went away. The lord left the talents with his own servants and not with anybody else.

Is it not important to see here that we get the Holy Ghost connected with a glorified Christ?

Yes, here and everywhere. And that is what I was noticing that Christ received the Holy Ghost afresh for us; " therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear."

Until the death of Stephen you get more of signs, and as in 1 Cor. 12, and the other gifts come afterward?

Yes, but you find signs too afterward... You see, until a man had gone to heaven, the complete thought of God is not brought out. We see God come down to the earth, and man gone up to heaven into the glory of God. As regards the cross, the immense thing is, not merely my sins are put away, that of course must be, but I get all the purposes of God founded upon it. I have man in absolute wickedness against God in the cross, then Man in His absolute goodness on the cross, and perfect obedience to God; " but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do"-absolutely obedient, and absolutely loving the Father, both; and then, too, at the cross, all the power of Satan is brought out as governing this world; while on God's side, I have His righteousness against sin in the cup Christ had to drink, and God's perfect love to the sinner also. I have every form of good and evil in man, and in Satan, and what God is in righteousness and love, brought out in the cross, and all settled-settled forever, and the consequence is, man goes into the glory of God. And then many other consequences come flowing out.

.... The entire question is settled, and it is no longer man upon his responsibility-like Adam who had to be tested-but man already tested takes his place in the glory of God, and the Holy Ghost comes down to reveal all this.

Did you say Christ received the Holy Ghost afresh after His resurrection?

No; but in ascension. He is exalted first. This same Jesus is made Lord and Christ, the One whom they had crucified. It is that that reaches. their hearts in the preaching-Him in that position, you do not get Jesus preached as Son of God, but the rejected Man is made Lord and Christ.

Is there any thought of the oneness of the believer there with the risen Christ?

No. It is perfectly true, but it is not brought out here. Peter is dealing with the Jews, and saying, You rejected Christ and God received Him.

Would you say that so far as the testimony went before Paul's conversion, it was an earthly thing?

Well, not quite; because you get in this chapter, " save yourselves from this untoward generation;" that did not refer to the ancient promises to Israel, though it was on earth in a certain sense. Still Christ had gone up as forerunner.

Is there any intentional difference in the form of the words here, :," in the name of Jesus," (ver. 38) and in Matt. 28:19?

No, not that I know of: is more the character, the effect.

In chapter 3:13, " His Son Jesus" should be " Servant" Jesus, should it not?

Yes, it is a mere mis-translation. It is so again in chapters 3:26, 4:27, 30; in the two last is rendered " child," but the same word in chapter 4:25 is rendered " thy servant David."

Is there anything special in Peter saying to them, " Repent and be baptized," or is that still to be the preaching?

It is not quite the preaching now, because people so largely profess to believe in Christ already. It is the same gospel though, as to the value of Christ's death and resurrection.

But if you were preaching to Jews, would it not then be correct?

Yes, I suppose so.... I believe it will be carried on in the remnant.

Then how would the apostles preach to Gentiles?

I cannot tell how precisely to Gentiles, because they never went; but there is no different gospel as to the foundation of it, whether to Jews or Gentiles.

But Peter went to Cornelius?

Yes, that is a special case entirely by itself. Could any who were not baptized at all be really happy?

Well, I suppose Christians might rejoice in the Lord who have not been baptized at all. Baptism here is " baptism for the remission," please all recollect that, the only baptism here recognized is for the remission of sins.

Would an assembly be justified in refusing those who confessed Christ, though not baptized?

It would not be in order to receive such; only you never get to the baptism for the remission of sins now, I mean to the ground the apostle takes here.

But how would you meet the case supposed? That depends; we are all in confusion about it, and there is no way out except patience.

But how would you deal with those who have been baptized as children, and do not think it baptism now?

If anyone is anxious to be baptized as an adult, who has already been baptized, he must settle that for himself.

But were not the sins remitted through the bloodshedding of Christ?

Yes; here is the doctrine of the bloodshedding of Christ for the remission of sins, and they were baptized on that ground.

Would it be baptism by the apostles for the remission of sins?

Whoever. baptized: Paul washed away his sins. Is not baptism death?

It is the figure of death, showing how the sins are washed away; still the fact of its being for the remission of sins shows what the administration of it is.

Did Paul preach it at all?

No, I do not get that, he was not sent to baptize, but he did not abrogate it either.

Does the commission in Matthew refer to the church at all?

The doctrine of the church was not brought out at the end of Matthew. There was no command to baptize Jews then.

Is there a single proof of the commission ever being acted upon?

No; but the question is the obligation of the command. The mission of the twelve was to teach all the nations, but in Gal. 2 They gave up this mission to Paul; and I should insist upon it that it never was fulfilled. Even to Peter, the sheet was let down before he went out to preach to Cornelius. But this is only proving what bad people the apostles were; they were to go discipling and baptizing and " teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," that is, the age.

Does not that refer to the seventy weeks?

I have no objection to that. Here I have a positive command to go and do something; I agree with you that it was not carried out, but that does not touch the command itself.

But is it not important to see that the disciples begin anew from the ascension?

Yes. Paul never owns them, nor even Christ after the flesh; and in that sense you must start from the glory.

I suppose Rome has kept to Matt. 28? Yes, and lost plenty else besides.

Baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is baptizing in the name of the Lord Jesus, is it not?

Yes, practically.

The kingdom of heaven goes on, I suppose, until the Lord comes after the church is removed.

Well, that is a transitional time.

But will not the testimony then be like it was before the Lord first came?

You cannot have a John Baptist again testifying to the people of a Christ born in Bethlehem; and so coining for their reception. But you may have testifying to His coming in glory.

How does Paul's work stand in relationship to the twelve?

I get Paul supplanting the twelve as to the Gentiles in scripture.

Are the twelve representative of us, or are they the apostles of the kingdom, looking beyond church time altogether?

In Matt. 10 the Lord takes up the ministry in the land of Israel, and that by the twelve.

But does not the latter part of that chapter make a difference?

But Christ tells the disciples, You go and do so and so, and you must not say they are not to do it at all: I do not say that it did not fall through, because it did; but that does not touch the authority of the command. " Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then the chapter is divided into two distinct parts, after " Behold I send you forth as sheep," turning to a testimony to the Gentiles. Christ has gone then, for the Holy Ghost has come, and it is to be the Spirit of their Father that speaks in them. First, it should be worse for them than for Sodom and Gomorrah through the disciples' then mission; and then He goes on to the time when the Holy Ghost should be there; and He does not think of the church, but says, "you shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come." The division is between verses 16, 17.

When is that testimony (ver. 18) borne?

When they are brought up as prisoners.

Have you not their mission to the Gentiles in Matt. 24?

That is yet to come.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Miscellaneous 1, God in His Essence and Attributes

WHAT is fundamental in speaking of attributes, is inherent in the very term itself. It is not the being in its essential nature, even though always found there, but what is rightly attributed to the being as such; and in speaking of God this is not without importance; and the difference will be found very simple. Attributes are relative; hence God, who is absolute, cannot be spoken of as being the attribute itself. It is only a character which belongs to Him. God is something in Himself. But He is also something in relationship to other things when they exist or are supposed to exist. The attributes may be a necessary consequence of what He is, and I suppose in God always are, but they are not what He is Himself.

Further, no attribute can be rightly appropriated to God, which removes Him from His place as God, in necessary and absolute supremacy. The Being to whom I attribute it is gone if I do so. God cannot be the object of judgment, or He has wholly lost His place as God; yea, he who judges sets himself up in His place, and puts God in subjection to him. Evidently He is thus no longer God. Cicero says in the de Officiis," Quasi material... subjecta est veritas." Now this evidently God can never be, for my mind is here supreme, and God subject to it. This is at once the

pride and the folly of man. This is what modern Rationalism (and I suppose the mind of man has always so acted) calls the supremacy of conscience, by which revelation and everything else is judged of. But if conscience, as my action and judgment, is supreme, there is no God at all. A God who is not alone supreme, is no God.

Has man, then, no thought of God at all? Not so. He cannot judge by his mind, but he has the knowledge of good and evil-conscience. It may be corrupted, perverted, hardened, but he makes the difference of right and wrong. Scripture shows us he got this by the fall, and so as under sin. Still it brings in God, saying " The man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil." It is not a law, a rule from without, imposed, but what is intrinsic (in man). He says, That is a good thing, that a bad one; and he concludes at once, God cannot approve a wrong thing, nor condemn a good thing. A man may, from passions, education, habit, have a very wrong measure of right and wrong; and demon-gods may make him put evil for good, and good for evil; but he makes the difference, and the sense of right or wrong in itself leads him to attribute right to God, and not wrong. " Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? "

But this right and wrong is connected with obligation, and is measured by relationships. I owe to a father, a husband, my neighbor, what belongs to that relationship: so to God. That is, the unperverted sense of right and wrong puts God in His place, does not judge Him. It is not an idea formed, but a relationship recognized, and hence subjection. Thus Adam lived in peace before the fall. Divine supremacy and authority was there, and owned, and then with knowledge the relationship was transgressed.

But supposing this sense of right and wrong in man, and that it is connected with the relationships in which we stand, I do hold that God loves righteousness and hates iniquity, because I intrinsically know right and wrong, but right and wrong being apprehended in the relationship, God is supreme to my mind; that is the first of rights. He is God, as much as my father is my father, and I own subjection to Him as God. I do say, He must be righteous, for that is the expression of acting on what is right and good in the relationships in which He has placed others, as far as consistent with supremacy and righteousness. But this is not supremacy of conscience, as if I were judge, and my measure of right and wrong, or my discernment of it perfect; but that I do conclude from right and wrong abstractedly to right in God, but at the same time to supremacy and perfection as the point I start from. One must not confound the measure of right and wrong with the sense of it. To speak of the supremacy of conscience, is to assume that its measure is perfect and adequate, not obligation under it. When I judge God or any one, I take a measure to judge by, and may misjudge from the state of my own mind. That is not conscience. Conscience with God recognizes authority also over it, and supreme authority, or God is not recognized at all, and that is simply atheism. What these modern infidels claim-is to make their consciences the measure of right and wrong. This is false and grossly pretentious, and destroys the nature of God, and right as regards Him.

But we have already got into the discussion of relative qualities in God. This is what supposes other things besides the absolute being. If God is righteous, though He be so, He must be so towards others; it is relative. There are two words applied to God, which reveal His nature-Love and Light-and only these two. They affirm what He is in nature- not any attribute. Love is goodness, but in supremacy; for, in its abstract nature goodness is identified with supremacy, for it must be free. It is in this it is different from desire, even when it is a holy desire.

Love is used, I know, in human language for desire, in the best and most amiable sense. But though the same word be used in the sense of an inferior to a superior, or even an equal, this is in connection with a motive-is moved.

But love, as goodness itself, is blessed in itself and free in its actings, unless want or misery draw it out; but it has not a motive which characterizes it by its object. This is always the case in desire, even when it is in no way evil, but has the character of affection. In ordinary desires it forms so far the character; money, power, pleasure, give their character to the man who seeks them; but though love be used as to them, it is evidently in a lower sense, and, where desires are, the desired object so far rules over us. Where love exists in a divinely-formed relationship, it is, or may be a just affection. I say, " may be," because it may run into a mere desire and be idolatry, and the relationship falsified. But when rightly in exercise, save as man in certain aspects represents God, it looks up, and characterizes the person in the affection. It is conjugal, filial, and the like. A husband and a father in certain respects represent God in those relationships, and so far it partakes of what He is. But in the closest relationship where it is not this, it has the character I speak of: " Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

But God suffices to Himself, and goodness makes Him infinitely happy in Himself. For goodness is happy if it has no object, though happy in goodness when it is exercised towards one. Hence it is free, because it suffices for itself. Hence though, in certain relationships, man may be the image of God, yet as he cannot suffice to himself, and so be free and sovereign, he is not said to be love, though he is to walk in it. He is as to any right state subject and recipient. The divine nature is in the Christian, and he loves; still " we love because "!

But we are light in the Lord. The purity of nature which belongs essentially to God is made ours in the new man; as far as it acts in us it manifests everything around us in its true character. Christ was love in the world, and the light of the world. He is the measure of both for us. It is a blessed thing that the two essential names of God should be the expression of the new man in us; only, as we have seen, we are not said to be love. But that which is the nature of God characterizes us, and makes us to enjoy Him, and to act according to that character here through grace.

These, as I have said, are not attributes. Attributes are ideas which we attach to God in connection with what is outside Himself, though belonging necessarily to Him as God. He is omnipotent, omniscient, supreme; even righteous, holy; these, though more connected with His nature, are relative terms. I must think of God's dealings and claims to call Him righteous. He judges of something when He is righteous, only it affirms He always judges right. To call Him holy, I must think of evil which He rejects. Hence He is not called righteousness and holiness, but righteous and holy. What He says is truth, but He is not truth. Truth is what is rightly affirmed of something else. But God is not affirmed of something else. We can say Christ is the Truth, because He does tell exactly what everything is-what God is, perfect man is, and by contrast what evil man is, what the world is, who is its prince. Through Him all is exactly brought out in its true character. Hence we say, God in Himself is absolutely Love and Light-the last expressing perfect purity (invisible in itself), and manifesting everything as it is before God, and showing the way before us: and God is righteous, holy, omniscient, omnipotent, supreme, and the like-all of which are relative terms-the former moral, the latter natural attributes.

Righteousness is perfectness in, or consistency with the relationship in which anyone stands; evil and good being known. Holiness, the aspect of heart, which intrinsic purity of nature bears towards other things, according to their character. We may speak of things as holy when entirely set apart to God, and separated from all profane use; but properly it applies to persons expressing their abhorrence of evil and delight

in that which is pure and good. God is holy in Himself, abhorring evil and delighting in what answers to His perfect nature. The creature can only be holy as separated to God in what He is in His perfectness, because its nature can have no true and perfect object but Him, and its object gives its character to a nature in a creature, and holiness is the expression of a nature, not the obligation of a relationship. We are holy as far as every movement of thought answers to the impress and character of God, having Him for its object. Anything taken up in itself, apart from Him, is necessarily independency and sin. So far God is set aside. We have no object which makes the heart right but Him. Although we cannot leave God out as the author of, and as giving authority to, the relations in which we stand; yet, as we are placed in certain relationships, righteousness has somewhat more extensive range, though as a sanction God must be brought in. But whenever a relationship owned of God exists, it is unrighteous not to act up to it: not to be faithful to obligation in it.

Now God, as righteous, maintains judicially every obligation which any relationship imposes on us. But first and above all, relationship to Himself according to His supremacy and moral nature; this is the basis and stay of every other. Only Christianity has brought out a second and more perfect measure of this. It recognizes what is due from man according to the measure of man, his obligations in the place he is in towards God and his neighbor. Of this the law is the perfect measure, God making allowance for ignorance of the measure.

But besides this, God Himself has been perfectly glorified by the blessed Lord. All that He is, where sin gave occasion to the full revelation of all that He is, has been glorified in Christ, and a new ground of relationship formed according to what He is, based on what Christ has wrought. Hence man is in the glory of God, and God's righteousness is displayed in that.

Judgment is based on the actual obligations founded on the relationship in which man is. Acceptance goes much farther, and is according to the worth of the Lord's work; we are made the righteousness of God in Him. But God in righteousness maintains all the relationships in which man stands according to His will.

It is well also to distinguish between the righteousness of God in government, and the immutable character of God, according to which we must stand before Him, if in His revealed presence. His revealed requirement of righteousness forms, with long patience exercised on His part, through goodness, the basis of His righteous government, never to be fully revealed until Christ comes; partially displayed in Israel, where needed to maintain the recollection of it everywhere; and M a signal way in the flood which closed the old world.

But standing before God fully revealed, supposes not our obligations to Him in government exercised to maintain His authority, and the natural sense, or revealed rule of right or wrong, but fitness for His own presence. This is in Christ only. This is fully revealed in Christianity alone, and wrath from heaven in connection with it; Rom. 1:1-20.

When I speak of what is holy, it is not judicial authority, as in the case of righteousness, but what purity of nature abhors and rejects, or delights in. Righteous and holy are the attributes which attach themselves to the moral nature of God and His supreme authority.

But there is that in God, the sense of which is with difficulty lost in man, though he be without God in the world. This has turned the sense of a being above himself, perfect in knowledge and power, a Supreme Being, into what is the fruit of imagination or servile dread-Mythology and Fetishism. The visible powers of nature were deified, because a God was wanting for the heart. The legends of ancient days were turned into myths of the gods. Terror told of a revengeful power, and a world of retribution loomed to an unsatisfied conscience. Man would animate planets, because they moved without him: he would have poetical lusts in superficial and self-satisfied Greece; more calculated sobriety in Egypt, a sunny south of gods, and northern immensity of giants, and storms, and mountains in Scandinavia; or seek to solve the mystery of good and evil in Ahriman and Ahurmazdha in Arva, or revel in monstrous reveries in India. Cruelty and poetry might divide the world under the name of gods, but behind all there was everywhere Tertullian's " Testimonium anima: naturaliter christianae," an " unknown God "-a Brahm, the origin of all things, a primeval source or power.

In Fetishism-degraded into a dread of some terrible unknown power, which priests used for their own purposes; in more cultivated religions, kept as the secret mysterious knowledge belonging to them, or to the initiated only, while the vulgar were kept in play with the more convenient everyday materials of popular mythology-the gods and goddesses of nature and imagination; yet still, though inconsistently, clothing them with attributes and powers which, if true, could only belong to one supreme God. And this was so true, that each local mythology had this twofold character, and that, even to particular cities.

In India, in the sects of Vaishnavas and Saivas, and one supreme God above the rest, the idea of God, and attributes of supremacy, omniscience and omnipotence, ran through all, however confused and inconsistent. These attributes were symbolized, too, as in the winged bulls, and lions, and men of Assyria-symbols recognized in Scripture; with this immense difference, that in heathen symbols, save in the vague idea of divinity, God was thought of no further than the attributes or symbols.

In Judaism, these formed but the throne of a known God who sat above them; the clearest expression, on the one hand, of the mind of man losing itself without God in knowledge it could not retain or carry, and on the other, of the clearness of the revelation which made one true God known.1 Supremacy, omniscience, omnipotence, attach themselves necessarily to our idea of one God the moment the thought takes a definite form, and the attributes involved in them are not lost in mythological associations.

In heathenism, where these activities are attributed to subordinate energies, the one original God was mere abstract, inert godhead-abstract existence.

In India, sole existence, sometimes springing into activity of thought and desire, all which became creation, including the gods, and was Maia, or Illusion, and returning into abstract godhead again, when Brahm's occasional activity ceased.

Modern Materialism does little more than substitute scientific activities of nature for poetical activities, and is worth about as much; for after all, we must want a cause. Phosphorus may put activity into the brain, not moral thought; but what puts activity into phosphorus, or gives it this mental character? Indeed, wherever I find a regular difference in a like agency, I find a difference-maker! The tubers of a plant, which convert the elements of the same soil into a geranium or an oak, force on me the conviction of design and mind.

I do not connect omnipresence and eternity as attributes with God, not because they may not, in an ordinary sense, be said to be so; and Scripture itself so speaks practically, and it always speaks practically, because truly; but that in our minds they are connected with time and space, which do not apply to God. There is no time when God is not; no place where His eye and hand, to use human language, are not. " I AM

" is the proper expression of His existence. While time rolls on " I am " remains unchanged, and when time has rolled away " I am " subsists the same. It can hardly be called an attribute. This being understood, we may speak of eternal as a natural attribute of God.

As to omnipresence, God has no more to do with space than with time. He has created all things in a way apprehensible thus to us. In this creation nothing escapes Him. He is, morally speaking, omnipresent. He is not of, or in it, but pervades it. He is " through all "! He upholds everything, as He creates everything. He is not morally concerned in any motive (save as working in man in grace), but not a sparrow falls to the ground without Him.

Omnipotence is involved in this-the power to do whatever it is His will to do. Omniscience is involved in it also. Did not God know all things, He could neither know what to do rightly, nor judge morally. Supremacy is involved in our very idea of God as one, and active in power. They are inherent in our idea of God, and (when once the heathenish additions of what are confessedly imaginations are removed) cannot be separated from the idea of God. That which it is important to get fast hold of is, that there is a will in God. No moral being can be without it; a will guided by righteousness and holiness, and to which omnipotence and omniscience are subservient, but which is the source and origin of all that exists outside Himself, not of its state, for moral beings have a will, but of its existence.

He is a Creator. I do not say that simple existence can be proved to be a matter of creation by logical deduction. But simple existence is an abstraction. Man sees trees, planets moving; in a word, evidence of design, and that, which has been so often argued, involves a designer. The distinct knowledge of a Creator is a matter of faith. Yet if man does suppose the abstract existence of matter without a cause, he violates the first principles of necessary thought. He is accustomed to see man form many things out of comparatively formless matter, so he has an idea of this latter. But if he begins to think of why anything existed, he cannot avoid the thought of a cause. Why, implies it? and I can say Why? and it is my nature to say Why? I am so constituted as to look for a cause. I may not be able to define cause,2 nor can I conceive creation; but I cannot conceive, on the other hand, a thing existing without it. My mind may be inert, and so far take what exists as I find it; but as soon as it is in activity, it looks for why a thing exists. The same thing proves I cannot know a first cause, but only that there must be one. I cannot conceive a thing existing without a cause, therefore I say there must be one. But a first cause means what exists without one. That is, I cannot conceive it. Hence, too, I cannot conceive creation, though I know there must be a Creator. It is merely saying, I am a creature, and must think in the order of my being.

Goodness or love, omniscience and omnipotence, involve in them perfect wisdom; only all this supposes a God, with a free will to exist, before any attribute can be assigned to Him. If not free to act, omniscience and omnipotence are simply null.

One class of philosophers-unable as we are, in the nature of things as creatures, to conceive a creation (for the creature must think in his own order, that is, creature order; he can no more have an idea of creation than create-power is not in him), judges " Ex nihilo nihil fit."3 For him it is true; but it is only the great fallacy, common to philosophy, of taking our capacity of thought and action as the measure of what may be, which is simply absurd. It is our measure as to power, be it of thought or action; we must think or act according to our nature, and can think no more as to forming ideas. But it is wholly false if it deny the consciousness of what is above us and applicable to us receptively. We may be acted on mentally and physically by that which is no possessed power in us. Active power or capacity for it is not the measure of receptivity.

Further, I may negatively be conscious of the necessity of a thing of which I can form no idea, because it is beyond my order of being. Thus I naturally ascribe an effect to a cause, a power producing it. I see a thing becomes, begins to exist, as it is before me; I at once ascribe it to some cause. I am so formed as to suppose a why? It cannot be without some cause. It is not a formed idea of what the cause is, but the conviction that there must be one. It appears to me as an effect, and effect contains the idea of a cause in it. Hence I believe in creation. Not that I form an idea of it, but that negatively it cannot but be.

I have already said, the nature of the proof demonstrates that I cannot form an idea of the thing proved in itself. But there is clearly seen eternal power and godhead. And here note that creative power involves eternal power, for all begins by creation, and all creation begins. But what creatures must be, that is, exist absolutely without a beginning. " I am," therefore, or absolute existence, is the one just revelation of God as such.

We have thus one personal God-" I am," supreme, absolutely free, omniscient, omnipotent, wise, the Creator. These are, so to speak, natural attributes; moral ones are righteous, holy, good; known to man not by ideas or thinking, which is impossible, for then man's mind would be at least the equal of God, that is, He would not be God at all; but by conscience, or the knowledge of good and evil, the proofs in the creation around us of creative power and wisdom, and in spite of the undeniable, utter degradation of man, in corruption and violence, and the monstrous deities into which he had merged it, the idea of God, the abiding sense of unity, supremacy, absolute godhead, everywhere found.

If Jupiter be suckled by a goat in Crete, the idea of supremacy remains. If Krishna lives with the milkmaids, in time he is an incarnation of Vishnu, and Vishnu is Brahm, the rest Maia or Illusion. The gods are mortal; God is not. It may be Bathos, or Silence, or as unknown as you please, when the feeble mind of man tries to have a formed idea; but before it acts, behind the gods of imagination or lusts or fears, there is not only godhead, but one God. The Manitou of the Indian, the eternal being before Ahurmazdha, was active for good, or Ahriman, to spoil his work.

And remark here, that where ideas flow from a relationship in which we exist, which belongs to our nature in its original constitution, it may be by thinking and imagination, education, habit in religious things, priestcraft, be perverted, falsified, degraded (and the mind with it), or reasoned against from the inadequacy of the mind to master it as an idea; but the roots of it are in the nature. To have it falsified, there must be something to falsify. " Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret." Hence, prone as the human mind is to indulge its imagination, stop short of God whom it fears, and have gods and idols which it can manage after its own lusts and thoughts, yet, when the truth of the relationship is brought out, the soul recognizes it.

The unity, supremacy, omniscience, omnipotence, of 'God, and our responsibility to Him, are owned, when divine revelation has brought them out, as the only truth, by all. I do not mean by that, that the mind of man cannot or does not seek to disprove it, and have no God at all, because it does not like one, does not like responsibility, and likes to be supreme- at least to have no one above it. But this is an effort, and an effort whose effects never last with the masses; that is, with man according to nature-an effort, too, always connected with oppression or violence and profligacy, as in the fall of the Roman Empire and in the French Revolution. Morality must disappear; for there can be no morality without responsibility, and responsibility without God is impossible. For to whom am I responsible if there be not one above me? Responsibility

refers to relationship, and all relationship, even human, is founded on relationship to Him. Without Him self-will acts; each one will have his own, and man becomes a mixture of the devil and the brute, or is kept down by power because it must be, or worse; while power in result will cultivate superstition, because of its sway over men's minds. And, indeed, where faith or revelation does not give a true sphere outside self, man cannot rest in self, and he will make a false one. Hence, under Satan's power, the religions of the world.

Revelation, in making known the true God, meets-not the knowledge, but the wants of the human mind. It is the witness of its own truth, because it meets and clears out those springs in the soul which were the subjective adaptation to the relationship in which it stood in truth with God; and the objective revelation perfectly meets them, fits in, and so far God is known.4

If we take Scripture, we find there the attributes of God- the one true and only God-shine out, and in every page, with unclouded luster. He is one, supreme, the Creator of heaven and earth, of all things; knows all things. If we go to heaven, He is there; to hades, He is there (Jer. 23:24); can do all things. His eye and presence are everywhere; He is the eternal God; He is righteous and holy; His goodness is over all His works. The cravings of the heart of man are met with the clearest and fullest revelation of God. I refer to the Old Testament, because there God, as such-the one true God-is fully and specially revealed in contrast with idols and man's imaginations. It is its special, direct revelation, with the law of His mouth-though promises and prophecies accompany it.

The New fully confirms it, I need not say; but there is a much fuller revelation in the Father sending the Son for the accomplishment of His ways in grace, and this characterizes it. He does not give a revelation, He is revealed. Hence, though of course the attributes remain true, it is not attributes which characterize it, but what He is-light and love; righteousness and holiness necessarily coming in-but His own. Not the requirements of man's for Him, which quite alters the character of them as revealed. In the Old we could say, " The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." " Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? " Now, He-Christ-is our righteousness; we are made the righteousness of God in Him. It is in the New Testament we find God revealed in Christ as light and love, and we, " light in the Lord," and partakers of the divine nature, have to walk in the light, and know, through the redemption that is in Christ, that perfect love that casts out fear.

This is more than attributes, as we have said, though it confirms, is in a certain sense the source of, and makes us to know them all, and give each its own and full place.

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