

THE STONE THAT BECAME A GREAT MOUNTAIN

And Other Sermons On The Victory Of The Gospel



ROBERT L. DICKIE



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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS POSTMILLENNIALISM AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?



What Is Postmillennialism?

Postmillennialism is a prophetic view of the future. It believes that the gospel will bring in an era of great spiritual prosperity. This future blessing is often referred to as the Latter Day Glory. This period of spiritual victory on the earth will be the result of faithful gospel preaching, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the planned and determined efforts of the church to make Jesus Christ Lord over every area of life.

This unique period of spiritual prosperity will be known as the millennium. This is based on the 1000 years mentioned in Revelation chapter 20. This 1000 year millennium is not to be understood as a literal one thousand years, but rather it is symbolic of a perfect amount of time where the gospel will usher in a period of peace, prosperity, and economic well-being and the spread of Christianity over the entire earth.

This millennial period will begin when the conversion of the

ethnic Jews takes place as the Apostle Paul teaches us in Romans chapter II.

When this millennial period of history comes to a close, there will be a brief falling away from the faith in an apostasy that will lead to a sharp conflict between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

Finally, at the end of time, Jesus Christ will return. Those who are alive and believing at that moment will be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. This is the second coming of Christ. At the same moment, there will be a resurrection from the dead.

Why Do We Need Postmillennialism?

Because it gives us hope. The Postmillennial view of history is one that fills the hearts of those who embrace it with great joy and hope. This view was held all throughout the history of the Christian Church. F. Nigel Lee wrote a book specifically stating that it was the Postmillennial view of eschatology that dominated the early church and all throughout church history. Even critics of this position must admit that Postmillennialism fills the church with such a joyful expectation for the advancement of God's Kingdom on earth that those in this particular eschatological camp are quite frequently the most passionate, ardent, and faithful builders of God's Kingdom on earth. We need Postmillennialism because it gives us encouragement. There is a Latin phrase, "Nil Desperendum." This Latin phrase means, "Never despair!" Because of our risen Savior, because of His victory over the grave, death, and hell, we never need fear the future or ever worry about slipping into a state of despair. Our battle cry, "Nil Desperendum!" Never despair because the victory belongs to Jesus.

Because it is biblically true. Of course we would say this. If we did not believe that the Bible taught this position, why would we promote it? Now before you dismiss what I am saying here, just remember that many of the greatest theologians in the history of the Church held to the Postmillennial view of eschatology. Permit

me to name a few. I would argue that both Jesus and Paul taught this view in principle. St. Augustine, John Calvin (whom J.I. Packer called the “Mind of The Ages!”), Jonathan Edwards (the greatest theologian this country has ever produced), B.B. Warfield, Samuel Rutherford, Matthew Henry, Matthew Poole, Charles Hodge, A.A. Hodge, R.C. Sproul, to name just a few.

Because it presents Christ as a victorious King. We serve a risen Savior. Jesus is a conquering King. He reigns now and ordains all that comes to pass. All authority has been given unto Him. It was foretold in the Scriptures that He will reign until all of His enemies are made His footstool. Somehow, in spite of all this, in spite of the only true God, with the greatest message, the greatest gospel, the greatest Savior, and the Scriptures, we should conclude that this grand work of Jesus will limp along in history and ultimately have very little impact on the nations of the world. Something is wrong here with that picture. I believe the Bible describes the future of God’s kingdom on earth in a much more positive light. May we never forget that we serve a victorious King.

Because it presents the gospel as the victorious wisdom of God regarding salvation. The gospel is God’s wisdom. The gospel is God’s power unto salvation. The good news of all that Jesus Christ has done to save, redeem, regenerate, justify and to sanctify sinners is the greatest story ever written this side of eternity. A victorious Saviour and a victorious gospel cannot be stopped. They cannot be defeated.

We need the Postmillennial view for all of these reasons. This doctrine will inspire the hearts of many disciples to become champions for the Kingdom of God by their holy living, their persistent praying, their untiring devotion, and their faithful proclaiming of the unsearchable riches of Christ. We should not be surprised when we see that the church was at her best when the eschatology of victory was the prevalent view in the land. A defeated army slumps away from most battles in discouragement and defeat. An army,

even though greatly outnumbered, will be a formidable foe before all of its enemies.

Isaac Watts wrote this hymn in 1721:

Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follow'r of the Lamb?
And shall I fear to own His cause,
Or blush to speak His name?

Must I be carried to the skies
On flow'ry beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face?
Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace,
To help me on to God?

Sure I must fight if I would reign;
Increase my courage, Lord;
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by Thy Word.

Thy saints in all this glorious war
Shall conquer, though they die;
They see the triumph from afar,
By faith's discerning eye.

When that illustrious day shall rise,
And all Thy armies shine
In robes of vict'ry through the skies,
The glory shall be Thine.

CHAPTER I
A POSTMILLENNIAL SERMON BY
JOHN B. ROMEYN, ISAIAH 66:10-24



A Sermon,
BY JOHN B. ROMEYN, D.D.
Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Cedar-Street, New-York.

ISAIAH 66: 10—24.

Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations ; that ye may milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem. And when ye see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the LORD shall be known towards his servants, and his indignation towards his enemies. For behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with

all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens, behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD. For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me. For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

The Church of God constitutes the salt of the world, preserving it from entire corruption and that ruin which would inevitably result from such corruption. She is the perfection of beauty [Ps. 50. 2.] in the earth, for whose preservation, glory, and prosperity, the Lord Jesus Christ, in his mediatorial character, exercises the government of the universe. He directs all the movements of his providence to the accomplishment of this grand, this sublime purpose, making the wrath of man to praise him, and restraining the remainder of wrath. Such is the consolatory and animating information which we find upon record, in the sure word of prophecy. Amidst all the darkness, which to human reason envelopes the divine government, both in relation to the World and the Church, this word of

prophecy shines like a light to the eye of faith, unfolding the path of duty, and the springs of comfort. What though “the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing:” what though “the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against his Anointed, saying. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” [Ps. 2. 1-9.] Since such is the decree of God, the Church is safe in the midst of a hostile world, a world in arms against its Sovereign. Her borders will continue to enlarge, though with many interruptions, through fearful apostacies and bitter persecutions, until they extend “from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.” [Ps. 72. 8.] To her final establishment over all opposition; to her tranquility in all her borders; to her security from all enemies; to her purity, and to her glory, “looking forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners,” [Solomon’s Song 6. 10.] the prophet attests in the text. No subject, therefore, can be more suitable to our present meeting, [The annual meeting of the New-York Missionary Society, April 7, 1812.] since Missionary Institutions are founded upon the prospects of the Church according to prophecy. Let us then, without attempting a critical analysis of the words, examine,

- I. The future state of the Church as here predicted.
- II. The means by which this state will be produced.
- III. The circumstances which will precede and usher in this state.

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The first will excite our desires for the accomplishment of prophecy; the second will exhibit our duty to engage as workers with God for this accomplishment, and the third directs our faith as to the aspect of present circumstances, and their ultimate issue.

1. Let us first attend to the future state of the Church as here predicted. This is unfolded to us under the figurative expressions of "New heavens and a new earth," whose creation you find announced in the preceding chapter. [v. 17.] They evidently refer to a great and universal change in the Church, which in its effects, when they are accomplished, will produce a great and universal change in the world; for heaven is the symbol for the Church of Christ, and the earth for the kingdoms of this world. This change commenced with the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the establishment of a new and more spiritual economy. The consummation and perfection of this change, will take place in the Millennial period, or that period when Christ shall reign with his saints upon earth, and Satan shall be bound for the space of one thousand years. [Rev. 20. 2-6.] To this period especially, the text refers our attention, and of the state of the Church then it affords us some important and interesting information. This information will be unfolded in very brief detail, for our improvement. First, the Church will constitute one visible body, united in name, doctrine, and discipline; for then the prophet says, "the glory of the Gentiles shall extend to Jerusalem; brethren shall be brought as an offering unto the LORD out of all nations, to God's holy mountain Jerusalem; where all flesh shall come to worship before the LORD." [v. 12, 20, 23.] "The glory of the Gentiles," is the same with the glory of Jerusalem. As the latter consists in the gracious presence of Jehovah, and his blessings resulting from that presence, so the former unquestionably must be the accession of the Gentiles to Jehovah's visible Church, the spiritual Jerusalem.

The brethren, of whom mention is made, are called, "your brethren," that is, the brethren of the Church of whom the prophet speaks, "Zion, whose gates Jehovah of old loved more than all the dwellings of Jacob." [Ps. 87. 2.]

These brethren are to be brought "out of all nations" to Jerusalem, and there all flesh shall come to worship before the LORD. From these passages, as well as others of the same import, we are assured that the divisions which now exist in the Church shall be done away. They did not exist in the primitive Church, though extensively diffused over the earth. They originate not in the genius of the Gospel, but in the depravity of human nature, in the corruption of true religion, and in those distinctions which the separations of civil society produce. To these causes, we can satisfactorily trace the various denominations existing in the Christian Church. The real Church of God, the Spiritual Jerusalem, is but one, and never has been more than one. Thus she existed visibly under the law; thus she was actually in the commencement of the Christian æra; and thus she will be throughout the earth in the Millennial period. Then the Jew will belong to her communion as well as the Gentile. The distinctions of names, of countries, of doctrines, and of government, will be done away. There will be but one fold as there is but one Shepherd; but one body as there is but one Head; but one spiritual community as there is but one Lord. The Reformed Dutch Church, the Church of Scotland, the Church of England, the Reformed Church of France, and the like, will not then be known; nor will believers be called by names derived from forms of government; for all division on this subject will then be terminated. The terms Arminian, Calvinist, Methodist, Lutheran, and others of the same nature, will be forgotten or lost in the term *Christian*, the only name which the members of the Church ought to bear.

Then the great principles of the Gospel will be received and defended by all within the Church, and that discipline which is best calculated to promote holiness of life, will be universally enforced. Believers will see, eye to eye and face to face, throughout the whole

Church. As they will bear but one name, so they will avow but one system of truth, and yield obedience to but one form of government. Then the contest existing at present between the different parts of the Church will be brought to issue; and it will be proved to the satisfaction of all which scheme is correct, or in other words, which accords with the Scriptures. The strife of ages will terminate, and they who have kept apart will unite. It will be delightful to see the descendant of Abraham acknowledging a Gentile as a brother, an Episcopalian taking a Presbyterian by the hand and vowing to walk with him. No liturgy or ceremonies, no clerical dresses or ecclesiastical formalities will be allowed, save those which accord with the simplicity of faith and the character of *saved sinners*. The distractions of party will not be witnessed, inasmuch as there will be no place for the leaders of party. The pride of system will be unknown; for there will be no diversity of opinion on the subjects which constitute the system. Believers will speak one language; not that of unfledged Christian Sciolists [*i.e.*, those with little real understanding], but that of experience; not that which the experience of one, two, or three years, but of many, will dictate. Children will then keep their place as children, and *novices* their places as *novices*. The visible unity of doctrine and discipline will not be touched by unhallowed hands, or impaired under the shallow pretext of maintaining it, whilst a language is used, which admits of disagreement, or opposition to established principles.

Nor will this unity be affected by the national prejudices of Church members; those prejudices which now so often blind and mislead good men. As all the nations of the earth will be Christian, so all national feeling will be lost in the feelings which the truth produces. The human race will constitute one family, united in principles and in practice. They will regard each other as fellow-members, and as such, walk together in the bond of friendship and of love.

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Secondly, The beauty and power of the Gospel will be displayed conspicuously in the conduct of those who are members of the Millennial Church; for we are told, "The hand of the Lord shall be known towards his servants, and his indignation towards his enemies; all nations and tongues shall come and see the LORD's glory; brethren shall be brought as an offering; unto the LORD, to his holy mountain, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. And of them will the LORD take for priests and for Levites. All flesh shall worship before the LORD." [v. 14, 18, 20, 21, 23.]

As the hand of man is the chief instrument of his power and operations, so the hand of the LORD denotes his almighty power. The exercise of this power, saith the prophet, shall be *known*.

The glory of the LORD is his righteousness and grace combined, as manifested in the wonderful work of redemption through our Lord Jesus Christ; a work which illustrates the perfections of Jehovah more than his works of creation and providence. This glory shall be *seen by the nations*.

The brethren brought to the LORD as an offering from all nations, are converts, "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God." [1 Thess. 1. 9.] These in their moral and spiritual state, when presented in the holy mountain, will be *acceptable* as the oblations under the Mosaic economy, which were offered according to God's direction.

Of them God will take for teachers, as the priests and Levites were of old, to *instruct the people*.

The worship which will be offered up to the LORD, will be such as *he has commanded and approves*.

The different parts of this prediction, show that in the Millennial Church there will be among her members,

1. An universal light in the understanding. The knowledge which will then be enjoyed, will not be confined to a few, but extended to all. "The earth," saith the prophet, "shall

be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea"; [Isa. 11. 9.] nay, "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold as the light of seven days." [Isa. 30. 26.] The Church will then be blessed with teachers abundantly qualified to instruct in all those matters which pertain to God's glory and human happiness. Men will then be well and thoroughly acquainted with the principles of human conduct. That miserable class, who now are "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth," [2 Tim. 3. 7.] will then be extinct. The truth will be known, for "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased;" [Dan. 12. 4.] even knowledge of every thing which pertains to God's glory and the benefit of sinners. The Spirit of God will, to an extraordinary degree, enlighten the minds of the members of the Millennial Church ; so that they will understand their duty and privilege, in all the relations of life, social as well as religious, and civil or political as well as social. In a word, "they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the LORD; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD." [Jer. 31. 34.]

2. Light in the understanding, according to the correct philosophy of the human mind, produces excitement in the affections. The intellectual powers of the soul being called into exercise and directed in a proper channel, the active powers obey. As the sun by his light imparts heat, so the saving knowledge of the truth, is connected with the influence of that truth over the heart. The will following the conclusions of the understanding, that which is spiritually discerned to be right and good, is chosen. In the Millennial

period, this will be especially the case. Then the members of the Church will be universally holy in their desires and in the objects of their love. The power of the Gospel will be felt more generally than at any preceding period. Sin, even all sin will be hated, avoided, and resisted, and its opposite will be loved. The affections of those who have named the name of Christ, will be placed on things above. Their hearts will peculiarly be kept with all diligence. They will constantly be stirring up their graces, cherishing the warmest and liveliest emotions of love to him who loved them and gave himself for them.

3. The holiness of life will be more general and striking, than at any former period. Luxury and excess will then be corrected. Persons of rank and affluence will not abuse their blessings to gratify pride and vanity; nor the abundance of their tables, to promote gluttony, drunkenness, and lust. [Fraser's *Key*.] For we are told by the prophet Zechariah, that "in that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the LORD: and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts." [Zech. 14. 20, 21.] The members of the Church will then be emphatically "shining lights." Their walk and conversation will display the power of religion over their hearts. They will "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things;" [Titus 2. 10.] "be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." [1 Cor. 15. 58.] Those fearful falls, those sad failures in duty, which now so often occur, to the reproach of the gospel, will then be, if not unknown, at least scarcely known. Believers then will visibly walk with God, displaying the fruits of the Spirit in public and private, in all the relations of life.

Thirdly, The spiritual enjoyments of the members of the Church, will then be overflowing; for they will "suck and be satis-

fied with the breasts of her consolations; they will milk out and be delighted with the abundance of her glory; they shall be borne upon her sides, and dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforteth, so the LORD will comfort them. And their hearts shall rejoice, and their bones shall flourish like an herb." [v. 11, 12, 13, 14.]

This language of the prophet, which needs no explanation, directs our view to the privileges of the Church, and the effects which those privileges will have upon her members. These privileges are her glory, and may be summed up in a sense of pardoning mercy, the enjoyment of covenant mercy, the aid of the Holy Spirit, and the hope of eternal happiness. These impart to the members of the Church solid and permanent pleasure.

In the Millennial period, as spiritual knowledge will be universally diffused, so the privileges of believers will be universally understood; and as the knowledge thus diffused will be thorough and intimate, so the consolations arising; from this knowledge will be abundant, overflowing; yea, more than abundant and overflowing. All that is delightful, tender, joyful, sweet, encouraging, exhilarating, transporting, will then be experienced; not in a small measure, or only now and then, but in full measure, from day to day. Their very bodies will feel the influence of these consolations to an astonishing degree. No wasting sicknesses, nor corroding cares, such as are now experienced, will then harass and diminish the human family. "No more shall there be there an infant short-lived: nor an old man who hath not fulfilled his days; for he that dieth at an hundred years, shall die a boy." [Isaiah 65. 20. Lowth's translation.] "The voice of weeping shall no more be heard in Jerusalem, nor the voice of crying:" for "the days of her mourning shall be ended." [Isaiah 65. 19. and 9. 20.]

Fourthly, There will be in this period universal peace. The LORD "will extend peace to the Church like a river, and the members thereof will go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against the LORD. Their worm shall

not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh." [v. 12, 24.]

We have already said, that there will be no parties in the Millennial Church; men then will not say, "one, I am of Paul, another, I of Apollos, and another, I of Cephas." There will, therefore, be peace among her members; for altar will not be erected against altar, throughout her borders. And as her borders shall extend from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth, so the peace she shall enjoy will be universal.

In fact, the nations and kingdoms of this world, will then be the nations and kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. A complete and thorough change will then take place in the governments of nations. The magistrate will then be, what he ought ever to be, according to the design of his office, a minister of God for good. The kings and judges of the earth will then do, what they now ought to do, "kiss the Son," that is, acknowledge the mediatorial authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. The State will then be the handmaid of the Church, The officers of the one will co-operate with those of the other, for the promotion of God's glory, and the happiness of men. Hence, there will be no wars during this period, nor rumours of wars. The nations, with their rulers, being obedient to the faith once delivered to the saints, the influence of that faith will preserve them from variance, jealousies, or wars. The confused noise of the battle will no more be heard, and the garments rolled in blood will not be seen. All the enemies of the Church will be slain, and their memory be an abhorrence to all flesh.

Thus delivered from the hands of those who are her enemies ; protected and nursed by the magistracy; united in her members, peace will indeed be extended to her as a river. There will be nothing to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain. The very beasts of the field will be at peace with men, as well as with each other. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together ; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and

the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den." [Is. 11. 6-8.] Such is the glowing language in which the peace of the Millennial period is predicted by the prophet.

Fifthly and lastly, This state of the Church will be permanent, not transient; "for as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain." [v. 22, 23.]

The duration of this period, we are informed, is one thousand years. [Rev. 20.] As in a few instances, attempts have been made to explain these years as prophetic, making 360,000 civil years, it may be proper to mention, that those writers who have paid most attention to the symbolical language of prophecy, and are best acquainted with it, do with one voice reject this construction. It does not come within the scope of my design to detail their reasons. For the space then of 1000 years the Church shall enjoy all that happiness, peace, holiness, knowledge, prosperity, and blessedness, which have merely been sketched in a few prominent particulars.

"Let it be observed, however," I use the words of another, "that the Church of Christ shall not be oppressed nor overcome by her enemies, when those thousand years shall expire. She shall continue triumphant to the end of the world, and for ever in a future state. By the Millennium is meant, that for these 1000 years, no attempt whatever shall be made to disturb the peace and interrupt the prosperity of the Church of Christ, and of the world; that there shall be no persecutions nor wars on the whole earth: but at the end of these 1000 years, certain persons, styled Gog and Magog, instigated by the Devil, shall attack the Church of Christ, and by bloody wars shall disturb the peace of the whole world for a time: but that they shall be disappointed in their wicked attempts, and totally destroyed: and that by their destruction, the Church of Christ, and the world, shall be left in a state of complete and final triumph and peace." [Johnston on the Revelation.] So permanently, then, will the

new heavens and new earth remain; so long will be the continuance of the Church, both of her seed, and of her name.

Let us now pass on,

II. To the means by which this great event will be produced. This is exhibited to us in these words, "I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape out of them unto the nations; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering." [v. 19, 20.] We have here the instrument used, and the agents by whom it is employed. Let us briefly attend to each in order.

1. The instrument, is "the declaration of God's glory."

We have already explained the meaning of God's glory, under the first head, as referring to the display of God's perfections in the plan of redemption through Christ. In this view, the gospel is God's glory, and to declare this glory, is to preach the gospel. By this gospel, and in no other way, are sinners converted. The law is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ; [Gal. 3. 24.] but the law alone does not convert. The Spirit of God uses the gospel to create sinners anew, and not the law. Does the preaching of the gospel, then, make void the law? God forbid! It establishes the law; for it exhibits "Christ as the end of the law for righteousness." [Rom. 10. 4.] He magnified the law by his obedience; he satisfied it by his death. In him is life, and in him alone. He is "the image of the invisible God," [Col. 1. 15.] and in him God is reconciling the world unto himself. [1 Cor. 5. 19.] In this character. He constitutes the sum and substance of the gospel. To him the eye of faith must be directed; and from his grace sinful men must obtain ability to glorify God. To exhibit these truths, is to preach the gospel; for preaching the gospel is not preaching morals, or the law, but Christ. In him, and in him only, there is "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace." [Ephes. 1. 7.] He came

“to save that which was lost:” [Matt. 17. 11.] his blood cleanses from all sin: [1 John 1. 7.] he saves his people from their sins. [Matt. 1. 21.]

These truths, which are gospel truths, make the gospel the instrument in the hand of the Spirit to awaken dead sinners, and give them life. Though under the condemnation of the law, yet pardon is freely offered through Christ. God, though he is righteous and holy, manifests himself as gracious and merciful. In this view, as able to forgive without violating his justice, he has made himself known to us. The gospel knows of no God but God in Christ. As such, we are commanded to fear, love, obey, and trust him. The glory of God consists pre-eminently in his being just, and yet the Justifier of the ungodly who believe in Christ. And this exhibition of God as a God in Christ, was that, which the Apostles and primitive Christian teachers gave. This same exhibition you find in the writings of the first Reformers, as also of the most eminent ministers of the gospel in Europe, who succeeded them. This is the exhibition which breaks the hard heart, and captivates the wandering affections. What wonderful success crowned the labours of the Apostles, and in later days, the labours of the Reformers ; and in still later days, the labours of [George] Whitfield, [Gilbert] Tennant, and a host of worthies. They preached the Lord, the Lord God gracious and merciful, through Christ. They preached Christ crucified, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. They exhorted sinners to flee to the city of refuge; to accept of salvation as a gift. Thus is Christ now preached by [Johannes] Vanderkemp, [William] Carey, and others, whom God hath blessed. Thus is the glory of the Lord declared with success among the Hottentots and Hindoos, and other Pagans; and thus will it be declared to all the nations before their conversion. The gospel, the glad tidings of a Redeemer, a Surety, through whom sinners can be restored to the favour of God, and enjoyment of heaven; this is the instrument by which the world will be converted to the faith.

. . .

2. The agents who will use this instrument, are described as “those that escape,” *viz.* from the corruptions of their brethren. These God will “set as a sign” among the nations. They will be Gentiles and Jews.

The Church at present, as you know, is composed of Gentiles. Very few of the descendants of faithful Abraham have, since the apostolic period, united themselves to her. She is divided into parties, between whom there is much disagreement, to say the least, and but little friendship or harmony. The different denominations who belong to her, are all more or less corrupted. It is from those who escape these corruptions, that God will raise up Missionaries to declare his glory to the nations. Missionaries must be men such as the apostles and martyrs were. Those whose labours God will own, must be pre-eminently holy men, men who like Caleb follow the Lord fully. [Num. 14. 24.] Until such men appear to undertake the work, success need not to be expected. Such men God will raise up when he is about making the new heavens and the new earth.

Previous to that period, the Gentile Churches will fall far short of their primitive glory. They will become more and more worldly and corrupt, so as to draw down upon them the displeasure of God. From those who then shall escape the corruption, God will send forth his messengers. But more particularly are the Jews meant. They will be converted before the Heathen shall be universally subdued to Christ. Though we have reason to expect that the whole nation will return to the promised land, yet previous to such restoration, God will snatch many of them from the midst of their countrymen, and make them monuments of his grace. As the casting of them off was the reconciling of the world, so the receiving of them shall be life from the dead. [Rom. 11. 15.] From a variety of considerations which the prophecies have originated, I have little doubt but the converted Jews will be the chief agents in carrying the gospel to the nations, and in subduing them to the faith. Let one passage suffice: “In those days, it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations,

even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you." [Zech. 8. 23.]

Until, therefore, the Jews be converted, we need not look for the Millennium ; for, from among them chiefly, messengers will be sent to declare the glory of the Lord. Their character as Jews, the mercy they have experienced, the recollection of God's dealings with their fathers, his care of their nation, and a thousand similar circumstances, will all conspire to make them pre-eminently qualified to act as agents to make known the graciousness of the Lord to the remotest ends of the earth.

III. Let us, lastly, attend to the circumstances which shall precede and usher in the Millennial period. These are unfolded to us as follows: "For behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many. They that sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens, behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, shall be consumed together, saith the LORD." [v. 15, 16, 17.]

The subjects of the Lord's indignation are open, or concealed enemies. Open enemies are Pagans and Mahometans; concealed enemies are the adherents of the man of sin, and false Christians among the different protestant denominations. By some, it is supposed that the prophet here refers to the battle of Armageddon, of which mention is made in the book of Revelation. [16. 16.] He does not, however, according to the most correct opinion I have been able to form on this subject, refer to this one event; but rather, to a series of awful judgments, including this event, and terminated by it, which will precede the latter-day glory. By such judgments God established his Church in Canaan, driving out the Heathen before her. By such judgments he established his Church

in the Roman empire, after Christ's incarnation. And by such judgments he will establish his Church in the world.

These judgments in the establishment of his Church in Canaan, were not confined to the Heathen. Before the Church entered the promised land, she herself was purged of her rebellious members by fire and sword. Before she made her footing sure in the Roman empire, she was purified by fire and sword. Thus also before the Millennial day, the Church must be tried, and pass through the waters of affliction. The Lord will previously plead with flesh, even all flesh, by his fire and sword. The particular judgments he will inflict, can not all be designated. But, among them are bloody and long continued wars, earthquakes, the eruptions of volcanoes, thunder and lightning, hail, tornadoes, and that long, fearful catalogue of diseases, which waste the spirits and terminate the lives of men. In these different ways, the Lord will plead with all flesh, before he brings in his ancient people together with the fulness of the Gentiles. Having done so in time past, when he was about appearing in behalf of Zion, we must expect that he will do so before the latter-day glory. Many passages from the prophets might be adduced, to establish this truth, but time forbids. Let one or two suffice. "Proclaim ye this," saith Joel, "among the Gentiles. Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up: Beat your plow-shares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. Put ye in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe: come, get ye down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The LORD also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake." [Joel 3. 9-16.]

“I will turn my hand,” saith God by Isaiah, to the Church, “upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness. The faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.” [Isaiah 1. 25-28.]

In this way, by pouring out his indignation upon his enemies, will he usher in the Millennium. In these judgments, though his people will share, yet they will be supported by his grace. They will be enabled to enter into their chambers, to shut their doors about them, and to hide themselves as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. [Is. 26. 20.] “The LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.” [Joel 3. 16.] Is this, then, you may ask, the prospect before us? Such is the conclusion I am compelled to draw from the prophecies of Scripture. Would that I could believe with those who think that the Church has seen her worst days. Certainly it would gladden my heart, and remove present anxiety. For in a day like this, who that loves the Lord Jesus, does not feel anxiety for the ark of God? It is the sheet-anchor of the world. He that forsakes this ark, or is ignorant of it, must be overwhelmed in that flood of calamity which is let loose upon the nations of the earth. The Lord indeed has come with fire and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. The Lord indeed is pleading with all flesh by his fire and his sword. I need not advert to facts, they are well known. And he who cannot in them see the judgments of God, is blind indeed. Every where, here and abroad, we see these judgments, written in letters of blood. In terrible indignation, with marks of desolation, the Lord is purging his Church, and punishing the world.

Before the Millennial period, there will be a general and thorough destruction of civil and ecclesiastical establishments throughout the earth. The former things must be done away before

the new heavens and the new earth will be created. Not to warn of the approaching storm, therefore, would be cruelty to the generation now starting up around us. Men are dreaming that the evil days are past, and thus neglecting preparation for meeting them in time to come. A day of darkness and calamity is unquestionably coming upon the Church and the world, before the latter-day glory.

What then is the use of missionary exertions? you may ask. In reply, I ask you, when you expect a storm, or any severe attack, why do you strive to secure that which you consider most valuable? It is our duty, the duty of the Gentile Church, to deposit the seed of the gospel in commanding stations, that during the approaching storm, it may silently and secretly vegetate, and presently spring up and bear fruits. Duty is ours, and consequences are the Lord's. We therefore are bound to go forward in this work, as the Israelites were commanded to go forward when they had reached the Red Sea; [Exod. 14. 15.] but in the discharge of this duty, we are bound to exercise discretion. One class of men have been too long neglected, that is, the Jews. You have already heard what agency they will have in introducing the new heavens and the new earth. Our chief efforts ought to be directed to them.

Next to them, the Heathen in our own land claim our immediate attention.[1] They are dependent upon us, and we are responsible for them. For their benefit this Society was formed, and to them, so far as opportunity permits, we have sent the messengers of peace. Our success has not indeed equaled our wishes, but we will not despair. With other societies of the same nature, we wish to be found doing. We wish to deposit the treasure of the gospel in the earth, that at the appointed time it may bring forth fruit to God's glory. We want means and we want labourers.

We stand before you this night, as Moses stood in the camp of Israel, and inquire. Who is on the LORD's side? [Exodus 32. 26.] Ye who desire the glory of Zion; who pray for it, and look for it; we solicit your aid. Ye who wish to be workers with God in the promotion of his cause, turn us not away from your presence. On all who call themselves Christians, we have a strong, a powerful claim.

Reject us not; for you then, so far as we have an opportunity of advancing the interests of Christ's kingdom, by rejecting us, oppose our Master. In aiding Missionary exertions upon proper principles, you are promoting your own benefit. They who are on the LORD's side, when he shall plead with all flesh, shall experience his gracious support; but they who are on the side of his enemies, will be slain.

The day is hastening which will terminate all doubt. The clouds have been gathering, and are still thickening. The thunder has been rolling, and grows deeper, and more awful. The tempest has from afar been approaching, and is drawing nigher. Presently the LORD shall "come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many." AMEN.

NOTE.

The author has expressed his belief, that the Church in the Roman Empire, the Latin earth, has not seen her darkest days; he takes the liberty of introducing in this place, the grounds of his belief, in an extract from two Sermons, preached September 8, 1808, a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, appointed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. This subject is the more important, because, if the belief prove to be correct in the issue, the Church out of the Latin earth, on account of the commercial and political connexions subsisting between different parts of the civilized world, will necessarily be greatly affected.

"By the witnesses are meant, faithful christians in general; all the true followers of Jesus Christ, as distinct from apostates and false professors. This is evident, from the name given them of the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks, standing before the God of the earth:" [Rev. 11. 4.] in which allusion is made to a prophetic

vision of Zechariah. He saw a candlestick of gold, with two olive trees by it; one on each side: which the angel explained to be the "two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." [Zechar. 4. throughout.] These were Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high-priest; so called because they were set apart to their respective offices by the anointing of oil. [Johnston on the Rev. vol. I. p. 373.] They had the superintendence and management of re-building the temple, and restoring the city of Jerusalem; both which had been trodden under foot of the Gentiles. As such they are symbols of all true believers, who are kings and priests unto God and his Christ, by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. In this character they are represented to us, as witnesses for the truth, who, by their exertions, seek to preserve the church of God, the spiritual temple, from utter destruction by her enemies. These are described as a new race of Gentiles, who had succeeded in gaining possession of the outer court, which they had trodden under foot. The witnesses are retired to the inner court in the temple, or "holy place," as it was called; which, under the Jewish economy, was typical of the true church on earth, under the new testament. Here they prophesy in sackcloth; not literally predict; but full of the Spirit of God, they preach God's word, and bear witness to the truth, against prevailing apostacy, under the greatest discouragements, and the heaviest persecutions of their enemies. They are said to be two in number, because that is the number required in the law, and approved by the gospel. Upon former occasions, two were joined together in commission; as Moses and Aaron, in Egypt; Elijah and Elisha, in the apostacy of the ten tribes; Zerubbabel and Joshua, after the Babylonish captivity. "As the testimony of the witnesses is to be of equal duration with the apostacy itself, it cannot well be meant of any two particular persons: nor is there any reason to understand it of any two particular churches, or bodies of men in perpetual succession." [(Moses) Lowman, p. 109. Note.] "The spirit of prophecy," in the words of bishop [Thomas] Newton, "teaches us, that certain persons should appear in every age, during the reign of Antichrist (the grand apos-

tacy,) few indeed in number, but sufficient to establish the truth, and clearly attest the corruptions of the Church of Rome, and the anti-christian supremacy of her head.”[2]—This appears to be the general opinion of the best writers upon the subject.

“Neither my plan, nor my time, will permit me to enter into further particulars concerning their character and work, as exhibited in prophecy. Their death and resurrection, by many worthy persons of former as well as present times, are supposed to be past. Some refer these events to the murder of John Huss and Jerome of Prague, by order of the council of Constance, and the subsequent triumph of their followers in Bohemia, over the imperial forces. Others, to the poor protestants in the valleys of Piedmont, who were expelled in 1686, at the instigation of the French, by the duke of Savoy; but who afterwards regained possession of the same, sword in hand. Others to the destruction of the league of Smalcald, by Charles V. and the restoration of their cause afterwards, by Maurice, elector of Saxony. Others again to the revocation of the edict of Nantz, by Louis XIV. and the French revolution, which introduced religious liberty into that country.[3] An attentive examination of the subject, however, has. led me to conclude the event is still to come. For,

“1. No calamity has yet befallen the true Church by the hands of THE MAN OF SIN, THE SON OF PERDITION, which answers, in a satisfactory manner, to the symbolical representation of slaying the two witnesses. The faithful followers of Jesus, who are meant by them, have never yet generally, throughout the western empire, at any one period, ceased from their testimony against the grand apostacy. They have visibly existed, as witnesses for the truth, in one part, if they have been destroyed in another; as the history of their persecutions fully proves. And yet, an universal destruction of them seems to be meant. This cannot be a destruction of their civil privileges, nor a deprivation of the existence which they formerly had, as members of society: for their character

of witnesses, and their work of prophesying relates, not to political, but spiritual matters. When they were butchered in scores before the Reformation, in many parts of Europe, and treated like beasts of prey, they still prophesied—prophesied in spite of danger and death. As civil privileges, therefore, and the protection of the magistracy, were not necessary for them to fulfil their work, the termination of that work by external violence, cannot be the destruction of these privileges. It must rather refer to some awful persecution of them—some universal slaughter, far exceeding any of former times; by which, within the bounds of the western empire, the church, to all human appearance, will be exterminated. Not that all true believers will be slain; many will yet remain; but they will be silent—they will not be known. They will sigh for abounding iniquity, but will not dare to appear as witnesses, and prophesy, even in sackcloth. In this character, they will cease to exist; and from this work they will completely withdraw themselves. Thus, in the days of Ahab, Jezebel thought she had cut off all the true prophets of the Lord but Elijah. No more were publicly known, as witnesses for the truth; and yet there were seven thousand hidden ones, who had never bowed the knee to Baal. [1 Kings 18. and 19. chapters.]

“2. The witnesses still prophesy in sackcloth : that is, the true church is still in a suffering, depressed state. Even where protestant principles are professed, the ways of Zion mourn, through the universal prevalence of essential errors, of studied indifference to the truth as it is in Jesus, and of gross immorality. The very spirit of the man of sin too much pervades and animates the communities, which have visibly separated from him. Many of his superstitious rites are retained with pertinacity by some of them, and he himself is no longer viewed as the SON OF PERDITION, even that wicked one, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” He still reigns dominant over a great part of Europe, as the Vicar of God, and, until very recently, his followers oppressed and persecuted the protestants in Austria, Hungary, Poland, and Germany. In Spain, Portugal, and Naples, heresy, by which is meant protestant

principles, is, by the laws, still punishable with death. The true church is evidently, therefore, still held in bondage; the witnesses still, therefore, prophesy in sackcloth. If they have been slain, they have not yet been raised; for their death will be, not only the last persecution of protestants, but the last stage of their depression, which will be followed by a glorious day for the true church. The spirit of life from God will enter into the witnesses, and they will stand upon their feet. They will be miraculously raised, in their character of witnesses, to the terror and confusion of their enemies. They will testify anew to the truth, but not in sackcloth: for they will ascend up to heaven in a cloud. The faithful followers of Christ—the true church, will become dominant over her adversaries throughout their own territories. The tenth part of the Roman city will fall by an earthquake, which will destroy seven thousand men: and the remnant, being affrighted, will give glory to the God of heaven. Then will follow the proclamation of the angel, that the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.

“3. The witnesses, it is expressly said, will be slain, not when they shall have finished their testimony, as we read, but when they shall draw near the close of it. [Fraser’s Key.] As they commenced their testimony with the grand apostacy, so they run parallel to it, in time, and will be brought to a violent end, three prophetic days and a half before its termination. As many years, in all probability, will elapse before this—half a century at least—with moral certainty we may conclude, that the witnesses are still prophesying in sackcloth. But as these years constitute a very small proportion of the whole number 1260, the witnesses are, strictly, drawing near the close of their testimony.

“4. I add the opinion of the great archbishop Usher, and other eminent and godly men of an early day, who, on many occasions, displayed a spirit not unlike that of prophecy. These characters, from the predictions of scripture, especially that of the death of the witnesses, looked with certainty for the revival of popery at some future day. Usher, in particular, was deeply affected with the

prospect before the church, and repeatedly made known his impressions. Other names might be mentioned, were it necessary, but time forbids.

“Such are the chief grounds on which the opinion rests, that the prophetic period of which we have been speaking is yet to come. It will be a period of calamity, distress, impiety, ferocity, tyranny, superstition, and gross ignorance: a period darker than the middle ages, for even then, the witnesses prophesied, though in sackcloth: but now they will be dead, and their dead bodies will lie unburied, to feast the malice of their foes: a period in which the principles of civilization will be destroyed by those of barbarian rudeness. The state of society will be deplorable, both as it respects intercourse between man and man, and nation with nation. The bonds of union will be dissevered; the foundations of order torn up; and a lawless, unprincipled, and superstitious tyranny, in church and state, will prevail; not in one nation, but throughout the spiritual Sodom and Egypt—the mystical Babylon, among all the ten kingdoms, which have given their power to the beast.”

NOTES

[1] To neglect these Heathen, whilst we are spending money and exerting talent for the Hindoos, &c. discovers but little of Christian discretion, in the use which we make of our money and our talent.

[2] Vol 3. p. 134. 3d ed. Lon. The bishop gives a very particular account of these witnesses in different periods; so also does [Moses] Lowman.

[3] This latter is the opinion of Mr. Bicheno in his *Signs of the Times*,

CHAPTER 2
A POSTMILLENNIAL SERMON BY
ARCHIBALD MASON, ISAIAH 30:26



*The Spiritual Illumination of the Gentiles, Coeval with the Conversion of
the Jews.*

Archibald Mason,
SEPTEMBER 13th, 1814,

“A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.”
Luke ii. 52.

*“Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light
of the sun shall be seven fold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the
LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their
wound.”*

Isaiah 30:26

AN EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISE OF GOD TO THE children of men, and a description of the time when he will accomplish it to them, are contained in this text.

The promise is recorded in the beginning of the verse. "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days." These words may be considered either as a promise or a prediction. As a divine promise, they exhibit to us an unspeakable blessing, which the Lord has graciously engaged to bestow on the nations, at the appointed season. As a divine prediction, they foretell a glorious change, which the LORD shall produce among men, at the latter day. These expressions are metaphorical. As spiritual blessings are often represented, in Scripture, by the light of the sun, and the moon; so the natural light of this world is employed in the text, to represent the spiritual light of the gospel, which brings salvation to men. This light is promised, not to the Jews only, but to the Gentiles also. When this promise shall be accomplished, Jesus will be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as he will be the glory of his people Israel. This promise has a peculiar respect to the Gentiles. As the sun and the moon are the ordinance of God, for enlightening the whole world; so when Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, shall arise on men, in the glory of his gospel and grace, he will diffuse his radiant beams, over all the nations of the Gentiles. These nations are divided into two classes—the nations who are destitute of the word and gospel of Christ, and are in gross darkness; and the nations that are in possession of those precious blessings. Both of these are the objects of this promise. On the former, this light shall be bestowed, and to the latter, it shall be greatly increased. The meaning of the promise, or prediction, appears to be this. When this promise is fulfilled, there shall be as great a change produced on the religious and moral world, as there would be in the natural world, were the moon, in the season of the night, to blaze like the meridian sun, and the sun, during the day, to shine with seven- fold

brightness, concentrating, into one day, the light and splendour of seven.

The time when this promise shall be fulfilled, is described in the end of the verse. "In the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." The people whose breach the LORD binds up, and the stroke of whose wound he heals, are the people of the God of Abraham, the posterity of Jacob, who were formerly his peculiar people. This title, his people, generally signifies, in the Old Testament Scriptures, the chosen nation of Israel, in opposition to all the other nations of the world, which are usually called, *the people, the nations, the Gentiles*. For the happy time in which those things shall be fulfilled, we are not to look, either to the day when the army of Sennacherib, in the reign of Hezekiah, was, by the power of God, miraculously destroyed; or to the day when the captives of Judah were delivered from their bondage in Babylon. The expressions in the text are too grand and sublime, to have their accomplishment in these events, or in their consequences. We cannot look for the accomplishment of this prediction, even to the days of the apostles. After the resurrection of our Redeemer, who is over all God blessed for ever, such a change indeed was effected in the church, that the light of the moon was as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun was seven-fold, as the light of seven days. The gospel was preached to the Gentile nations, and multitudes embraced the faith of Jesus. The people who sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them who dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, did light spring up. At this most eventful day, however, the LORD did not bind up the breach of his people, nor heal the stroke of their wound. It was rather the day, when the Jewish nation, for their iniquity, was broken with this dreadful breach, and received the stroke which produced that wound, under which they have languished for near eighteen hundred years. We are, therefore, constrained, for the complete fulfilment of these things, to look forward to those blessed days which are promised to the church, when, to use the words of the apostle, the natural branches shall be grafted into their own olive;

when, through the mercy of the Gentiles, the Jews shall obtain mercy, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and when all Israel shall be saved. The day, in which the LORD shall bind up this breach, and heal the wound of his ancient people, shall be the time, when the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, to the Gentile nations.

The text, therefore, unfolds to our view this interesting truth,—All the nations of the Gentiles shall be spiritually enlightened, at the conversion of the Jews.

In discussing this subject, it is proposed, I. To illustrate the nature of the spiritual change, which shall be produced on the nations, as it is represented by the metaphor that is used in the text; II. To mention some of the blessings that are contained in this promise; III. To describe the manner in which it shall be accomplished; and IV. To explain the character of that day, when this promise or prediction shall be fulfilled, in the day when the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.

- I. It is proposed to illustrate the nature of the spiritual change which shall be produced on the Gentile nations, when the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days.

1st, This metaphor represents the spiritual change, that is signified by it, to be new and unprecedented. The moon's shining as the sun, and the sun's shining with sevenfold more brightness than ordinary, would produce phenomena in nature, which would be altogether singular and extraordinary. The blessed change, in like manner, which the church shall then experience, will be unexampled, and

without a parallel. The singularity of the case does not consist in the shining of the sun and the moon; for they have shone on the earth from the beginning; but it consists in the extraordinary degree of their shining. So this extraordinary change does not consist in the shining of spiritual light upon men, for this has at all times been the church's enjoyment, but it consists in the peculiar degree of spiritual light, which shall then break forth on the nations. When the blessing signified by this metaphor, shall be conferred on men, the LORD will create a new thing in the earth. The glory of that light shall transcend all former examples. As far as the light of the moon, when shining like the sun, would exceed the light she has always reflected on the earth; so far will the light of the church, at that time, excel any of her enjoyments of this kind, in former ages. As far as the light of seven days combined into one, would excel the light of an ordinary day; so far must the spiritual light of that season exceed the light of any of the past ages of the church. If it is not a change that is without a parallel in past times, there is neither propriety nor truth in the metaphor. Though the LORD will never produce such a change in the world of nature, as that which is mentioned in the text; he will certainly accomplish that alteration in the world of grace, of which he has made that natural change the similitude; and when it takes place, it will introduce the church into a situation, which shall be entirely new and extraordinary.

2d, This metaphor represents the change that is signified by it, to be productive of peculiar emotions in the minds of men. Were the moon to shine as the sun, and the sun with the light of seven days, men would be filled with fear, surprise, wonder, and astonishment. This spiritual change, which shall be produced upon the nations, will also fill the minds of christians with very extraordinary emotions, and lead them to special exercises of soul. This change will fill their hearts with holy fear and reverence. This they will express in their song of adoration, "Who shall not fear thee, O

Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy," Rev. xv. 4. It will fill them with surprise and astonishment; they shall then cry out, "When the LORD turned again the captivity of Sion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." Psa. cxxvi. 1, 2. It will produce in them holy admiration, and cause them exclaim, "Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exod. xv. 11. On this extraordinary occasion, they will abound with the high praise of the Lord, This is ascribed to them, Rev. vii. 10, "And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb." O how vehemently will they utter such praise as that, Psa. cxxxvi. 4. "To him who alone doeth great wonders; for his mercy endureth for ever." They shall also be employed in giving thanks to God for his wonderful works. In the summary account of this change on the nations, which is contained in the eleventh chapter of the Revelations, this part of the church's employment is mentioned in verse 17th; "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." They will then be constrained to say, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people." Luke i. 68, The christians of those times will also overflow with joy and gladness. To this they are called. Rev. xviii. 20. "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her." To this exercise they will invite one another. Rev. xix. 7. "Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Nor will these spiritual emotions, though carried to their highest pitch, be found existing in the souls of believers, without a sufficient cause. This change, when it shall be accomplished, will be so glorious in itself, so beneficial to men, and so conspicuous to all, that it will prove an abundant reason for the most enlarged exercises of this kind, in the members of the church. If it is a divine rule in the duty of christians, to render to the LORD, according to the benefit done unto

them, and nothing can be more reasonable, the church, in those days, receiving from her God such special mercies, will be laid under obligations peculiarly strong, to bring the sacrifice of praise, and of every other religious duty, into the house of the LORD. For these exercises, the Members of the church, in her enlarged state, will be perfectly qualified; for the external change which shall be produced in the church, at the accomplishment of this promise, will be accompanied with a proportionate alteration in the inward spiritual condition of the saints, which will make them all fire, zeal, and life, in the service of the sanctuary.

3d, This metaphor represents the spiritual change that is signified by it, to be a glorious manifestation of God, as he is the God of grace. The change in nature, mentioned in the text, would brightly display God's glory, as he is the God of providence. He is the Creator of the sun and moon. "And God made two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." Gen. i. 16. "He giveth the sun," saith the prophet Jeremiah, "for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night." Whatever these great lights are in themselves, whatever are their motions and revolutions, whatever beneficial effects they produce on the face of the earth, and whatever services they do to the creatures below, all these things are of Him who hath appointed the moon for seasons, and from whom the sun knoweth his going down. Were these great lights to shine as it is expressed in this metaphor, the glory of their Creator and Preserver would be brightly displayed. It must necessarily follow, therefore, that when this great spiritual change shall be accomplished on the church of Christ, which this metaphor represents, the glory of the God of grace and salvation will be manifested abundantly. At that desirable period, these words of Isaiah, xlv. 5, shall be fulfilled, "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." The revelation of the divine glory, consists in the display which Jehovah will make of

himself and of his attributes, by his operations of grace among men; and all flesh seeing it together, signifies the church's perception and acknowledgment of this glory both the one and the other shall, at that time, prevail in the world; for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. How will he display the glory of his sovereignty, in fixing the time of this happy state of the church, and in choosing the persons who shall enjoy it! How will the glory of his wisdom be seen in ordering the means, and bringing forward the instruments, of introducing and maintaining it! How brightly will divine power appear, in overcoming opposition, and in raising his church to the height of her prosperity and glory! How will the faithfulness of God shine forth, in fulfilling his promises to his people, in executing his threatenings on his enemies, and, in both, doing as he has said! And how will the divine love, grace, and mercy, be illustrated, in bestowing on the church and her members, in an extraordinary degree, and freely, for Christ's sake, all spiritual blessings in heavenly places! The glory of each divine person shall then conspicuously appear. At that time, all shall be convinced, that "grace and peace," in whatever degree they may be enjoyed, "come from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." Rev. i. 4, 5. As this glory shall be revealed, so also shall it be discerned and acknowledged; for of them it is said, "And they sung the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."

4th, This metaphor represents the spiritual change which is signified by it, to be a peculiar display of Christ's glory, and a great increase of beauty and lustre to his church. Were the sun and the moon to shine as it is stated in the text, a glory would be drawn around the sun, and a lustre would be added to the moon, far superior to any thing that has been seen about them, since the begin-

ning of the creation of God. In the Holy Scriptures, Christ is compared to the sun. "But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise, with healing in his wings." Mal. iv. 2. The church of Christ is also compared to the moon. "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon?" Song vi. 10. By this metaphor, therefore, the enlarged manifestation of Christ's glory, and the increased lustre of his church, may be represented. At this season, his glory will be brightly displayed to the nations. If he manifested forth his glory, at the beginning of his miracles, in Cana of Galilee; will he not also display his glory, when all dominions shall serve and obey him? If he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him "from the excellent glory, This is my beloved son, hear ye him;" shall he not also receive from him honour and glory, when he shall give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession? The brightness of his glory will then appear to the nations, by means of his word and ordinances, rendered effectual through the operation of the Holy Spirit, for regenerating, justifying, and sanctifying all them who are saved. Christ will then appear in the glory of his divine person, and in the glory of his divine and human natures in his one person, as our Mediator. Opposition to this great mystery of godliness shall then be silenced. He will appear in the glory of his eternal engagements, to be the head and surety of the covenant of grace, and the Redeemer and Saviour of his people. He will be manifested in the glory of his offices, with which, by his Father's appointment, he is invested. He will then be universally known and acknowledged in his glory, as the great Prophet of the church, as the great High Priest of the christian profession, and as the alone King and Head of his church. The glory of Jesus in his mediatorial righteousness, for the justification of the ungodly—in his communicated fulness, for the supply of his people's wants—and in his everlasting salvation, which he bestows on his people on earth and in heaven, shall then be exceeding bright, and extensively known. The church shall then be enabled to utter these words, in a very peculiar manner, "We beheld his glory,

as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." In consequence of these discoveries of his glory, they will be constrained to say, with singular impressions on their spirits, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." At the accomplishment of this promise, the church also, who is bright and glorious by the light of the Sun of Righteousness shining on her, and is comely through his comeliness put upon her, will appear with a lustre and beauty to which she has never formerly attained. In the purity of her doctrine, the spiritual simplicity of her ordinances, the scriptural form of her government and censures, the number of her members, the zeal and spirituality of her ministers, the holiness of her saints, and the feigned submission of her enemies, the church shall be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God.

II. Head of this Discourse, was to mention some of the blessings that are contained in this promise or prediction—"The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days."

1st, This promise contains the blessing of a greater degree of knowledge in divine things. This is the plain import of the metaphorical language of the text. The increase of light is the metaphor, an increase of knowledge is the blessing signified by it. Though all true believers, in every age, have had a sufficient and saving knowledge of divine truths; yet there must have been a great difference in the degree of that knowledge, of which, in these different periods, the members of the church were possessed. In the days of the patriarchs, and under the Mosaic dispensation, the knowledge of divine mysteries, concerning our salvation by Jesus Christ, was comparatively small. As that dispensation advanced, and the church enjoyed the ministry of the prophets, the light of the knowledge of the way of salvation would gradually increase. When the Son of God had

appeared in our world, and had finished the work which the Father had given him to do, the gospel of the kingdom was preached, the former darkness was dissipated, the Jewish ceremonies were set aside, the spiritual ordinances of the gospel were brought into operation; and he who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into the hearts of many, to give them the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ. As spiritual light increased, under the former dispensation; so we have reason to believe in its increase, during the evangelic economy. The path of the church, as well as that of every believer, shall be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The people who shall live in the church, when this prediction shall be fulfilled, will enjoy, in a very high degree, the knowledge of divine truths. They will clearly understand the prophecies of Scripture, by having the accomplishment of them before their eyes. Their knowledge of these things will greatly increase their acquaintance with both the doctrinal and practical truths of the gospel. Great activity will be exerted to propagate among men this divine knowledge; for Daniel was informed, that, “at the time of the end, many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” Dan. xii. 4. The elaborate researches and discoveries of gospel doctrine, in former generations—the number of those who shall then be employed in biblical studies—and the happy unanimity in the faith of Jesus, which will prevail in those days—shall greatly accelerate their progress in the knowledge of divine truths. The wonderful works of grace and providence, performed by the LORD, for introducing and establishing this happy state of the church, being deeply impressed on their mind, will excite them to accomplish a diligent search into the words of eternal life, which, by the blessing of God and the working of his Spirit, will cause them attain extraordinary degrees of knowledge in the mysteries of God.

2d, This promise contains the blessing of a more extensive communication of the light of the gospel to the nations of the world. This

blessed light shall be confined no more to a few of the gentile nations; but it shall spread comparatively over all the earth. The prophet Isaiah proclaims this truth, chap. xi 9. "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." The prophet Habakkuk confirms this, chap. ii. 14. "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." Isaiah also foretells the willing subjection of all the nations of the earth to the sceptre of Christ; chap. ii. 2. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." The same thing was represented to John, Rev. xi. 15. "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." If the knowledge of the LORD, and of the glory of the LORD, shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea; if all nations shall flow to Christ; and if the kingdoms of this world shall become his kingdoms, a great extension must certainly be given to the gospel of divine grace among the nations, when "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days." Nations the most ignorant and barbarous—nations the most remote,—and nations the most hostile to Christianity, shall then yield subjection to the Redeemer, and shall wait for his law. If barbarians and Scythians were found among the subjects of Christ's kingdom, in the apostolic age, persons and nations of that description will certainly be ranked among his followers, when this promise shall be accomplished. The great multitude which no man could number, and which were clothed in white robes, and palms in their hands. Rev. vii. 9. represented the members of the millennial church, as the sealed company symbolized professing Christians, while the church abode in the wilderness. If this great multitude comprehended persons of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, then nations the

most remote, and the most hostile, will receive the gospel of Christ, stretch out their hands unto God, and stand before the throne and before the Lamb.

3d, This promise contains the blessing of a more powerful efficacy of the gospel on the souls of men. If the moon should shine as the sun, and the sun emit sevenfold more light and heat than usual, their influence on the inhabitants and productions of the earth would be greatly increased. When the religious and spiritual state of things shall be introduced which is signified by those metaphors, the efficacy of the gospel on mankind must be inconceivably enlarged. The rod of the Redeemer's strength shall then be sent out of Sion, and will make many willing to submit to him in this day of his power. The weapons of the gospel warfare, which are not carnal but spiritual, shall then, in a most wonderful degree, be mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. The work of convincing sinners of their guilt and misery, by the precepts and threatenings of God's holy law, shall then be general and powerful among the inhabitants of the earth. The glorious work of converting sinners to Christ, shall then prevail wonderfully among men. Multitudes, in many nations, shall be turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified, by faith that is in Christ. In that day, the work of building up christians in their most holy faith shall so prosper in the church, that they shall be enabled to keep themselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. When all nations shall flow unto the mountain of the LORD's house, in the last days, the Prophet represents the language they shall utter, Isaiah xi. 3. "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways,

and we will walk in his paths.” No such causes shall then exist, as now are, and have been, for the ambassadors of peace to weep bitterly, and to say, “Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?” for then, the power of the LORD being present to heal, the earth shall bring forth in one day, and nations shall be born at once.

4th, A greater degree of fruitfulness among the members of the church, is another blessing which this promise contains. Were the sun and the moon to shine in the way stated in the text, accompanied with a proportionable quantity of rain, the fertility of the earth would probably be increased. Whatever may be in this, we are assured, that, when this prediction shall be fulfilled, christians shall attain extraordinary fruitfulness in every good work, and unexampled increase in the knowledge of God. The fruitfulness of believers consists in their holiness and comfort. In the former part of the 19th chapter of the Revelation, which describes the condition and employment of the church at this blessed day, their fruitfulness in these things is clearly stated. At the beginning of the chapter, John heard “a great voice of much people in heaven, saying. Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.” After describing the causes of their joy, in their deliverance from their anti-christian enemies, it is said, verse, *4th*, “The four and twenty elders, and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God, that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.” In the *5th* verse, a voice comes out of the throne, calling them to the exercise of praise. In the *6th* verse we find them saying, “Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” In the *7th* verse, they encourage one another in this delightful work; “Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.”

All this indicates a most joyful and comforted state of the church. In the *8th* verse, the perfection of her justifying robe, and the purity of her garments of sanctification are described; “and to

her was granted that she shall be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." The 9th verse, which concludes this part of the chapter, declares the felicity of those who shall enjoy such attainments in holiness and comfort. "And he saith unto me, write, Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." The fruitfulness of the church, at this season, is described also in the Old Testament predictions. Respecting this day, Isaiah, chap. lx. verse 21st, declares, "Thy people shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." In these words, extraordinary degrees of sanctification, great spiritual privileges, and much holy joy and enjoyment are foretold of the church. The same happy condition is predicted, Isaiah xxxv. 1, 2. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing." When this season shall commence, the darkened nations, which were a wilderness, a solitary place, and a desert, being fertilized by the word, the Spirit, and the grace of God, shall bring forth fruit as Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon; "and they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God." The christians of those ages shall be fruitful in their profession, and in their practice—in their profession, for Christ's Father's name shall be written on their foreheads—and in their practice, because they shall follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. As the church and her true members will still be in a state of imperfection, even under all these enjoyments, it is vain to suppose that the former will be freed from nominal professors and hypocrites, or that the latter shall be delivered from the operations of indwelling sin, or from those trials and sorrows which are incident to them who are yet in the body.

III. Head was to describe the way in which this promise or prediction shall be fulfilled.

. . .

1st, It shall be fulfilled by the grace and power of God the Father. Every spiritual blessing, that is enjoyed by the church, or by any believer, is bestowed by the grace and power of God. This great blessedness, therefore, which the church and her members shall then enjoy, must flow from the same fountain. All those who come to Christ, must be drawn by the Father, and must hear and learn of him. Those who are the children of the church are all taught of God. These operations of grace and power must be performed by the Father, on the nations, when they submit to the sceptre of the Redeemer, and on the numerous individuals in them, who believe in him to the salvation of their souls. The cause of all spiritual good to men is unchangeably the same in God, who is the Father of lights, the Author of every good gift, and every perfect gift, and with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. The displays of the grace and power of God are great, in proportion to the magnitude and number of their effects. These perfections of God are manifested in every situation of the church; but when this prediction is fulfilled, they will be more brightly displayed; for when the LORD shall build up Sion, he will appear in his glory. The grace of God freely provides the blessings which he hath in store for his church; and his power, at the appointed season, effectually bestows them on her. It is by grace that the church, at that time, shall be saved. This wonderful deliverance shall not be bestowed on them, by works of righteousness that they have done; but it shall be according to his mercy that they shall be saved. The accomplishment of this promise to the nations shall be such a display of the riches, sovereignty, and freedom of divine grace, that, when the headstone of this building of mercy for the church shall be brought forth, it shall be with shoutings, crying, Grace, Grace unto it! In the accomplishment of this prediction, the power of God will also be manifested; for at that time, "the LORD shall make bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." Is. lii. 10. The obstructions to this change are so great and many, that nothing but divine power can remove them; and the blessings to be conferred are so numerous

and important, that divine power alone can bestow them. As this perfection of the divine nature was exercised at the church's deliverance out of Egypt, so it shall be illustriously exerted when the prediction of the text shall be accomplished. Respecting the enemies of Israel, the LORD said, "And in very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." Concerning Israel themselves, it is declared, Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake, that "he might make his mighty power to be known." Ex. ix. 16. Psal. cvi. 8. When the LORD shall deliver his people from spiritual Sodom and Egypt, from Babylon the Great, and from all her other enemies, and when he shall advance his church to the enjoyment of her promised prosperity and glory, his power will be signally displayed; for at the time of executing this purpose, the millennial church, will peculiarly celebrate his praise, as "the Lord God omnipotent, who reigneth." Rev. xix. 6. Whatever mountains of opposition, therefore, may seem to obstruct the performance of this glorious work, the faith of the saints is warranted to answer every doubt that may arise in their mind about it, as Christ replied to the Sadducees' objections to the resurrection of the dead, "Ye do greatly err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." Matth. xxii. 29.

2d, This prediction shall be fulfilled by the mediatorial agency of Christ, It is he who gathers his sheep out of every fold, and draws men to himself. "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." John x. 16. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John xii. 32, To John in the visions that he saw, the mediatorial agency of Christ, in this great work, was frequently represented. This was pointed out to him in the very first vision he had of Christ, when he saw him walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and holding in his hand the seven stars. Rev. i. 13, 16. This was unfolded to him also at the opening of the first seal,

chapter vi. 2. "And I saw, and behold a white horse, and he that sat on him had a bow, and a crown was given to him ; and he went forth conquering and to conquer." This was likewise set before his view in the vision of the harvest of the earth, which may be the symbol of the church's deliverance, as that of the vintage is, of her enemies destruction. This is recorded, chapter xiv. In the 14th verse, the Redeemer is described: "And I looked, and, behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat, like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle." His agency is represented in verse 16. "And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the harvest of the earth was reaped." His agency in these things is also mentioned in the victory he obtains over his enemies, when this prediction is accomplished, Rev. xvii. 14. "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." We have another most magnificent exhibition of his mediatorial agency, in fulfilling the predictions which introduce and establish the church's deliverance and prosperity, in chapter xix, from the beginning of the 11th verse to the end of the chapter; which deserves the careful consideration of every Christian. To the ancient prophets also, this agency of Christ was revealed. Isaiah, when speaking of him as the Father's Servant in the work of our redemption, who shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high, and whose visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men, says, "So shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him, for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider." To the prophet Zechariah, his agency in these mighty and merciful works of God was declared, chapter vi. 12, 13. "Behold the man whose name is the BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." In the execution of his offices,

the divine Mediator, as glorified at his Father's right hand, will exercise this agency; and those who interfere with the prerogatives of his offices shall be broken in pieces, while those who yield themselves to him shall be saved. He will at that day so manifest his glory, by his operations among the nations, as will determine them to believe his gospel and submit to his law. Since Jesus has purchased all blessings for his church and children, it must be a display of God's wisdom and righteousness, when he commits all judgement to the Son, lays the government on his shoulders, and gives him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as he hath given him. As our Mediator is the Sun of Righteousness, the Light of the world, and the Bright and the Morning Star; it must be necessary, as well as suitable, that he have a special agency in fulfilling, to his church, such a promise as this, "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days."

3d, This prediction shall be fulfilled by the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit. It is by his personal influence, that the whole scheme of grace, in the application of eternal life to them who are saved, is carried on and perfected. At this blessed day, the Spirit shall be poured on men from on high, and the wilderness shall become a fruitful field. As a more abundant communication of the Spirit to the church is one of the peculiar characters of gospel times, so at this brightest period of that dispensation, the Spirit shall be poured out in a most extraordinary manner, and the effects produced by his influence, shall be most beneficial and extensive. The prophecy of Joel, which was so remarkably accomplished in the days of the apostles, Acts ii. 16, shall also have at this time, an eminent fulfilment. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy; your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants, and upon the hand-maids, in those days, will I pour out my Spirit." Joel ii. 28, 29. The

great gift of God to men is his Holy Spirit, which he will communicate to them. The subjects of this gift are all flesh, persons of all nations. These subjects are more particularly described,—sons, daughters, old men, young men, servants, and handmaids; including persons of every age, sex, rank, and relation among men. The effects which this gift of the Spirit shall produce on them are also stated—prophesying, dreaming dreams, and seeing visions. These expressions are taken from the scriptural accounts of the way in which the Spirit formerly influenced and guided the holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by him; and they signify the Spirit's work on the souls of men, by which he will bestow on multitudes spiritual knowledge, saving grace, gospel holiness, and ministerial and christian gifts, for glorifying God and edifying the church. The personal agency of the Spirit of God in fulfilling this prediction, is also declared in the Revelation of John. In chap. i, verse 4th, He is called “the seven Spirits, which are before his throne.” In chap. iv. verse 5. it is said “and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.” In chap. v. verse 6, when speaking of the seven eyes of the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, they are said to be “the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth.” The Holy Spirit, who is one in his person and office, receives the name of the seven Spirits of God, that the perfection and variety of so his relations to believers, and of his influences on them, might be made known to the church. From these representations of the office and work of the Holy Spirit, we may be assured, that his operations are connected with Jehovah's throne of grace; that he acts on the souls of men like fire, purifying, enlightening, and warming their hearts; that he is intimately connected with the Mediator and his kingdom in all his work; and that he is sent to the church to take the things of Christ, and to show them to the children of men. As he came unto the apostles like a mighty rushing wind, in communicating to them extraordinary gifts, and, on various occasions, and in different nations, fell on all them that heard the word, that the gospel kingdom might be established in the earth; so he will exert a pecu-

liar and powerful agency upon the children of men throughout the world, that the promise in the text may be fulfilled, and that these wonderful changes, in the moral and religious state of the nations, may be accomplished. If any should ask, how these grand changes shall be produced? The answer may be given in the words of Jehovah himself: "Not by might; nor by power; but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." Zech. iv. 6.

4th, This prediction shall be accomplished, by the instrumentality of the word and ordinances of God. No spiritual or saving blessing will be conferred on any person or people, without the use of those means. When the Lord shall heal the nations, he will send his word and heal them. When he brings sinners to the Saviour, he magnifies his word above all his name, and gives testimony to the word of his grace, by making it effectual for turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. When the LORD gives spiritual reviving to his people, it is by his word that he quickens them. For their spiritual illumination, the word of God must enter the nations, and either go before or accompany the preaching of the gospel. Inspired men, as in the days of the apostles, might be instrumental, before the canon of Scripture was completed, in preaching the gospel, in converting sinners, in edifying believers, and in planting churches, before the written word was put into the hands of the members of the church. But, after the canon of Scripture is finished, and useful inventions are discovered, under the direction of divine providence, facilitating greatly the communication of the words of eternal life to the nations; it seems necessary, that the preaching of uninspired men, as in our own times, should either be preceded by the word of God, or accompanied with it, that their labour may not be in vain in the LORD. The written word, the preaching of the gospel, religious conference, prayers and praises, are the principal means by which the nations of the earth shall be constrained to bow to the Redeemer's sceptre of grace. These are the weapons of the gospel warfare, which shall be mighty, through God, for making the king-

doms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. These constitute the rod of his strength, which shall be employed, when he accomplishes his promise to Christ, in the last days,—“I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth, for thy possession.” When Isaiah predicts, in lofty strains, the flowing of all nations, in the last days, into the kingdom of Christ, he states the means by which this great work will be accomplished; chap. ii. 3. “For out of Sion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Whatever has been done already, in any part of the world, or in any age of the church, for propagating the religion of Jesus in a land, and for maintaining its existence in it, has been accomplished by these, and the like means. When “the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days,” the word and ordinances of God shall be the means of producing it. When this happy time arrives, the LORD will furnish the nations with his word, and send his commissioned ambassadors to preach it to them; for this blessed promise shall be accomplished by the written word, and by the preaching of the gospel, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

IV. The last branch of this subject was to explain the character of that day, mentioned in the text, when all these things shall be fulfilled—“In the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.”

1st, The LORD will accomplish this prediction to the nations, in the day that he bindeth up the breach that subsists between himself and his ancient people. For the space of almost eighteen hundred years, a great breach has subsisted between God and the Jewish nation. The ground of the controversy that God has with them, is their great sin in despising Christ while he dwelt among them, in crucifying the Lord of glory, in rejecting the gospel when the apostles preached it to them, in persecuting the ambassadors of Christ and the professors of his name, and in their aggravated immorali-

ties. With these acts of wickedness they were chargeable, both in their national and personal capacities. By this conduct, the Jewish nation committed great trespasses against the LORD, contracted much guilt in his sight, and subjected themselves to grievous punishment. For these causes, the holy and righteous Judge, according to Christ's prediction, "brought great distress into that land, and wrath upon that people; so that they fell by the edge of the sword, were led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem was trodden down of the Gentiles." This breach between God and the Jews is so exceeding great, that all the breaches between him and them, while they dwelt in the land of promise, were but faint shadows of it.

The time of binding up that breach shall come. The binding it up is the LORD's work; for the "LORD bindeth up the breach of his people." Of himself he says, "I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal." Deut. xxxii. 39. Of him we may therefore say, "He maketh sore, and bindeth up; he woundeth, and his hands make whole." Job v. 18. God shall be reconciled to them, and they shall be reconciled to God. There are several expressions of Paul, Rom. xi. chapter, which confirm to us the healing of this breach between God and his ancient people. In verse 11th, the Apostle says, "Have they," the Jews, "stumbled, that they should fall?" that is, finally and forever. To which he answers, "God forbid." This imports that they shall be recovered from their stumbling, and that their fall is but for a time. In the 12th verse, he speaks of the fall and the diminishing of the Jews, and also of their future fulness. This proves, that as they have fallen and have been diminished by their breach, and by the stroke of their wound; so they shall yet enjoy a blessed spiritual fulness, in the binding up of the one, and in the healing of the other. In the 15th verse, he mentions the casting away of the Jews, and also the receiving of them; which shows, that as they have been cast away from their church state and privileges, so certainly shall they be received in again to the enjoyment of them all. In verse 24th, the healing of this breach is also secured: "For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted,

contrary to nature, in a good olive-tree, how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree?" The apostle here represents the future conversion of the Jews, to be equally certain as the calling of the gentiles, at the beginning of the gospel-dispensation; and that it is more reasonable to expect the former, than to have looked for the latter. The Apostle also expressly says, verse 26th, "And so all Israel shall be saved." The last proof to be mentioned is contained verse 31st, which is remarkable for ascertaining, both the conversion of the Jews, and the causes and means by which it shall be accomplished: "Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy." The blessedness which is reserved for God's ancient people is stated in these words, "they shall obtain mercy." When Paul represents the goodness of God to him in the day of his conversion, he says, "But I obtained mercy." 1 Tim. i. 13. As the breach was made up between God and Paul, who had been before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, when he obtained mercy; so the breach shall be bound up between God and his ancient people, who have been long in a state of rebellion against him, when they shall obtain mercy. It is through the mercy of the Gentiles that they shall obtain mercy. The holy word of God, the preaching of the gospel, and the other ordinances; a revelation of Christ, of God in Christ, and of salvation through him; the gift of the Spirit to the church, and of divine grace and spiritual blessings to her members—all these belong to the mercy of the gentiles. It will be by these causes and means, that the LORD will bind up the breach between himself and his ancient people, and cause them to obtain mercy. By these he will convince them of their sin and misery; he will humble them to the dust on account of their wickedness, and the iniquity of their fathers in rejecting the Saviour, and continuing in unbelief; he will manifest to them the Lord Jesus, as the Author of eternal salvation to all them who obey him; and he will bring them to embrace and submit to him, as their Prophet, Priest, and King. At this happy time, the promise in the text shall be fulfilled to the Gentiles.

2d, The LORD will accomplish this prediction to the nations, in the day that he bindeth up the breach between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. This breach began in the days of Rehoboam, by the defection of the ten tribes from his government, and the instituted worship of God at Jerusalem. It was occasioned by the folly of the king and his juvenile counsellors, in rejecting with pride, harshness, and insult, the reasonable proposals of the people. This breach was consummated, in the choice which the congregation of Israel made of Jeroboam to be their king—in his erecting among them, for political purposes, a religious system of will worship and idolatry—and in the subjection given by that deluded people to this erastian and wicked establishment. This breach was still continued, notwithstanding the means that were used, by the ministry of some of the prophets, and by the judgments of God upon them, to reclaim them from their rebellion and idolatry. This breach produced the most dismal consequences:—it involved the far greater part of God's ancient people, whom he had brought out of Egypt and settled in the land of Canaan, in the great sin of total apostasy from him, by worshipping the golden calves at Dan and Bethel;—it was infinitely dishonouring to the God of Israel, provoked him to anger against them, and procured the entire ruin of that people. This breach became wide as the sea in the reigns of some of their kings, when bloody and revengeful wars were carried on between the two kingdoms: and this breach was rendered, in all human probability, irreparable, in the total captivity of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria, and in their settlement in the towns on the river Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. From their dispersion, that people has never yet returned; and this breach has not yet been bound up.

Scattered as the posterity of the ten tribes may be, in the land of the children of the cast, they shall be gathered together, converted to Christianity, embodied with their brethren the Jews, and restored to their own land, in the day that the promise of the text will be fulfilled to the nations. This recovery of Israel, as well as Judah, seems to be evident from the words of Paul, Rom. xi. 26.

“And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written. There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” The people who shall be delivered and saved, are called “all Israel and Jacob.” The posterity of the ten tribes, as well as the Jews, are included in those names. The posterity of Judah and Benjamin are not all Israel, nor all the descendants of Jacob; this salvation, therefore, cannot be confined to them, but must be extended to the whole house of Israel, and to all the sons of Jacob. But we have a very clear prophecy concerning the LORD’s binding up this breach between Israel and Judah, Ezek. xxxvii from the 15th verse to the end of the chapter. The symbolical actions which the prophet is commanded to perform, are mentioned verses 16, 17. “Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick and write upon it. For Judah and the children of Israel his companions; then take another stick and write upon it. For Ephraim and for all the house of Israel his companions; And join them one to another into one stick, and they shall become one in thine hands.” The meaning of these symbols is explained, verse 19th: “Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hands.” In the following part of the chapter, the Lord condescends to amplify this explanation, to write the vision, and to make it plain upon tables, that he may run who readeth it. In those verses, the gathering the whole posterity of Jacob, the close union of the two kingdoms, their return to the land where their fathers dwelt, their subjection to him who is the Root and the Offspring of David, their covenant-relation to their God, their happiness in that condition, and their continuance in it to the end of the world, are all particularly foretold. As no dispensation of providence has taken place, for this divided people, that can be considered as an accomplishment of this most minute prediction; we may assuredly look for it at the latter day, “when the LORD will bind up the breach of his people, and heal the stroke of their wound.” There is another prediction of the same event, Jer.

xxxiii. 24, 26. "Considerest thou what this people have spoken, saying. The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off?" In answer to this reproach cast upon his people, he assures them he will never cast off the seed of Jacob and David his servant, and expressly says, "for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy upon them." This promise has a respect to both the families of his ancient people; and, when it is accomplished, he will heal the breach that subsists between them, and gather the dispersed of Israel into one.

3d, This prediction shall be accomplished to the nations, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach which has subsisted, between the Jews and the Gentiles. This breach took place between those parties, before the coming of Christ. The gentiles, through their ignorance and idolatry, despised the peculiar people of God, and opposed their holy religion. In the times of their degeneracy, the Jews also, by an abuse of their peculiar privileges, did often treat with supercilious contempt the gentile race. The ceremonial law, that middle wall of partition between them, was the occasion, and the corruption of their hearts, which produced enmity at each other, was the cause, of this breach. Though the wall of partition was taken down and abolished by the death of Christ, and though access was administered to both Jews and gentiles, by faith in Jesus, into a state of reconciliation to God, and to one another; yet this breach, by the Jews rejecting Christ and his gospel, did mournfully continue. It was very great, in the days of the apostles. The account of it may be given in the words of Paul. In 1 Thess. ii, 15, 16, when speaking of the Jews, he says: "Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sin alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." This breach has remained to the present day. Though mingled with all nations, the Jews are not incorporated with any. By their stubborn attachment

to the antiquated system of the Mosaic dispensation, they are contrary to all men, and are equally at variance with heathenish, Mahometan, and christianized gentiles. But this breach shall be healed and bound up. They shall be cordially reconciled to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles shall be brought into a state of real friendship with them. The time shall come, when the same God in Christ shall be the object of the worship of them both—the same Spirit shall animate them all—the same gospel shall be believed and received—the same Saviour shall be the foundation of their confidence,—and the same salvation shall be enjoyed by them both. All these things are signified and secured by the words of the Apostle, in which he represents both Jews and Gentiles as branches grafted into one and the same olive-tree. He introduces this most beautiful and significant metaphor in Rom. xi. 16. and finishes his consideration of it in verse 24th. The nature of the privilege of both Jews and Gentiles is stated in verse 17th. “And thou,” speaking of the gentiles, “being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive-tree.” The way of the restoration of the Jews to their gospel-privileges is mentioned verse 23d; which is by the power of God, and their faith in Jesus. “And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for God is able to graff them in again.” The certainty of the joint enjoyment of Christ, who is the true vine, by both Jews and Gentiles, as the good olive-tree, is asserted, in verse 24th. “For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree.” Jews and Gentiles shall be branches of the same olive-tree, and shall mutually partake of its root and fatness. This expressive metaphor teaches us, that both Jews and Gentiles shall be the property of the same husbandman, shall grow in the same fruitful soil, shall be supported by the same root, nourished by the same fatness, covered with the same leaves, shall yield the same blossoms, and shall bear the same fruit, which shall be unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. When all this shall be performed by

the LORD, the breach betwixt Jews and Gentiles shall be completely bound up. Nor are the Scriptures of the Old Testament silent on this delightful theme. In Isaiah xix. 23. 24, 25, the same blessedness is foretold; and He who confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers, will fulfil it in his season. "In that day shall there be an highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt, and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." This remarkable prophecy, in which Egypt and Assyria represent the gentile nations, foretells a time, in which the most delightful peace, friendship, and intercourse, shall subsist between Jews and gentiles, and among the gentiles themselves; and when all of them, having been brought to the faith and profession of the gospel, shall be the objects of the divine favour and blessing. This can be fulfilled only when the "LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

4th, This prediction shall be fulfilled to the nations, in the day that the LORD healeth the stroke of the wound of his ancient people. He will not only bind up their breach, but he will also heal the stroke of their wound. God has smitten them in his holiness and justice, with a mournful stroke, of which, all the former strokes of his anger on them were imperfect representations. The wound which they have received by this stroke, has been a grievous wound indeed. The destruction of their civil polity—the subversion of their church-state in the land of promise—the desolation of their city and temple—their extermination from the land of Canaan—their total dispersion among the nations—the great sufferings which they have endured by the unjust and cruel conduct of the gentiles to them—and, above all, their exclusion from the favour,

service, and enjoyment of God, through their unbelief—constitute that distressing wound which is inflicted on them for their sin, by the stroke of the LORD's anger.

The LORD will heal this wound, by restoring them to their own land, by making them a glorious church on the earth, and by enriching them with temporal and spiritual blessings. Their wound, and the healing of it, were predicted by Hosea, chap. iii. 4, 5. "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days." We have seen the prediction in the former verse most minutely fulfilled, in their low estate under the stroke of their wound; and the blessing foretold in the latter verse shall be as distinctly accomplished, when God shall fulfil his word to them, "I am the LORD that healeth thee." The lx. chapter of Isaiah contains a prophecy concerning this day and the events of it, which are mentioned in our text. Both the wound, and the LORD's healing it, are foretold in verse 15th. "Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations." As the expressions of this verse, and indeed of the whole prophecy, are too grand to receive their accomplishment in the Jews' return from Babylon, we must therefore look to the latter days for its fulfilment. "The same things are predicted, in chap. lxii. 4. "Thou shalt no more be termed, Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed. Desolate: But thou shalt be called, Hephzibah; and thy land, Beulah; for the LORD delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married." This verse refers to the things of which we are now speaking; for it is their last, and most grievous desolation, unquestionably, to which the words relate. No more were they to be termed, Desolate, nor their land any more termed Forsaken, after their restoration; it must, therefore, signify their present calamitous condition. While they lay under the stroke of their wound; the name of their nation

was, Forsaken; and the title of their land was, Desolate; but when they shall be healed, they shall be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name; verse 2d. For their nation, the name shall be “Hephzibah, for the LORD delighteth in thee;” and for their land, the name shall be, “Beulah, for it shall be married.” The greatness of the misery which Israel now suffers under their bleeding wound, shall be exceeded completely by their glory and prosperity, when the LORD their God shall heal the stroke of their wound.

An improvement of the subject, in some inferences, shall conclude this discourse.

1st, Our duty, in improving the gospel light we enjoy, is evident from this doctrine. We are possessed of the same light which has enlightened the church in former ages, and which she shall enjoy afterwards in a superior degree. It is therefore our duty to walk while we have the light, lest darkness come upon us. Jesus hath said, “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John viii. 12. Let it, therefore, be our great endeavour to embrace Christ, and to rest on him, in his obedience, and sufferings, and death; so shall we be delivered from the darkness of our natural state, from the darkness of a sinful course, and from the blackness of darkness for ever; and shall be brought to enjoy the light of eternal life, both in grace and in glory. Though the light of the moon is not like the light of the sun in our day, nor the light of the sun sevenfold; yet this gospel-light of salvation shines on us as really as ever it did shine at any former time, or ever will shine on any future period, to the end of the world. We enjoy the whole word of God, revealing law and gospel, precept and doctrine, threatening and promise. We enjoy all the instituted ordinances of divine grace, both the word and ministry of reconciliation, exhibiting to us God as on a throne of grace, willing to bless

us with all spiritual blessings—Christ the one Mediator, able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him—the Holy Spirit ready to apply to our souls the blessings of salvation—the grace of faith, which is the mean of interesting us in Christ, and in that everlasting salvation which is in him—and the life of holiness; for those who have believed in Jesus “must be careful to maintain good works.” O, how great are our privileges! Though the time of the church in which we live is a day of small things, yet it is really a day of salvation to saints and sinners. Woe shall be unto all those who despise it; but blessed shall all those be who improve it to the Redeemer’s glory and their own salvation. Endeavour, O Christians, to consider daily your responsibility to God for the use you make of your privileges—the aggravated condemnation of gospel-despisers—and the blessedness of all those who receive Christ and walk in him—that you may walk in the light as he is in the light, may have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son shall cleanse you from all sin.

2. The very mournful situation of the darkened nations of the earth is obvious from this subject. They have no gospel vision ; and where this is wanting, Solomon informs us, the people perish. The church, by the enjoyment of divine revelation, is called “the valley of vision.” Isa. xxii. 1, 5. This vision signifies a revelation of the will of God to men, by which they have an opportunity of knowing and complying with truth and duty, for their salvation. This sense of the term vision is evident from the words of the verse where it is found. Prov. xxix. 18. “Where there is no vision the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” The want of vision, and the enjoyment of the revealed law, are here contrasted. The Lord Jesus is the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. To those who have heard of Christ, who have believed in him, and who have yielded, to his holy commandments, the obedience of faith, he will be the Author of eternal salvation, and to no other. The nations of the earth, that are yet in spiritual darkness, are in the same

condition in which the enlightened Gentiles were, before the light of the gospel shined on them. This was mournful indeed. The best description that can be given of it is found in the apostle's words, Eph. ii. 12. "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." Alas! brethren, how miserable is their situation, who are strangers to Christ, the only Saviour of sinners, to the blessings of eternal life which are in him, to the everlasting covenant which God hath made with his chosen for our salvation, to the exercise and comforts of faith and hope, and to God himself, who is the infinite portion of his people! But this is the present state of all the unenlightened nations. Their condition is also described, in that prayer of the church, Psa. lxxiv. 20. "Have respect unto the covenant, for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." By the murderous rites of their abominable idolatry which they practised, and by the barbarous conduct which they acted to one another, the dark places of the earth were full of the habitations of cruelty. It is a fact which is confirmed by satisfactory and unimpeachable evidence, that the dark places of the earth, at this day, are as full of the habitations of cruelty, in these and other particular ways, as they were in the days of David. How ought we to pity them, to pray for their deliverance, and to use every mean, competent to us, for sending to them the word and gospel of Christ! In the days of our remote ancestors, our own land was in the same miserable state; but, in the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us. Should we not, therefore, be filled with concern, that the same mercy may be extended to them, to guide their feet into the ways of peace?

3. This subject presents to our view the low and pitiable condition of God's ancient people. They are still under the breach with which they were broken for their sin, for it is not yet bound up. They are still suffering by the wound which they have received by the stroke

of the Almighty; for the time of healing is not come. That people are divided into two families; the posterity of the ten tribes, who composed the kingdom of Israel; and the descendants of Judah and Benjamin, who constituted the kingdom of Judah. The former, it is now supposed, inhabit some regions in the East; and the latter are wanderers among all nations. In their miserable lot, the LORD has raised and maintained, for his glory, and for warning men, a monument which proclaims the greatness of the sin and punishment of those who reject divine institutions, and despise divine grace. For departing from divine institutions under the former dispensation, and despising Moses' law, the off-spring of Israel have existed under the judgments of the LORD two thousand five hundred years. On account of their rejection of Christ, and the revelation of divine grace in him, the Jews have suffered the displeasure of God about eighteen hundred years. O that those warnings would produce a proper effect on professed Christians! Contemplating the peculiarity and magnitude of their former privileges, and the greatness and singularity of their present distress, our minds should be filled with compassionate concern for their restoration. Fix your attention on them, O Christians, when they triumphantly marched out of Egypt, passed through the Red Sea, traversed the wilderness by the direction of the pillar of fire and the protection of the pillar of cloud, stood before the LORD at Horeb, walked through Jordan, conquered and possessed the land of promise, enjoyed the tabernacle and the temple of the LORD in the midst of them, assembled before the LORD in their solemn feasts, were fed to the full in the land flowing with milk and honey, and were often miraculously delivered from the hand of their enemies—and say if the words of Moses were not verified in them, “Happy art thou, O Israel! Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the Shield of thy help, and who is the Sword of thine excellency.” Deut. xxxiii. 29. Consider them also in their present state, banished from their own land, wandering among the nations, despised and persecuted by many, proverbially prophane, deceitful, and avaricious, blaspheming that divine Saviour to whom all their prophets gave witness,

despising that atonement which all their sacrifices typified, turning away from him whose day their religious progenitors desired to see, and existing under all that temporal and spiritual misery which is the effect of their forefathers' imprecation, when they killed the Prince of Life, "His blood be upon us, and on our children,"—and you will see the reason they have to adopt that lamentation, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger." Lam. i. 12.

4. From this subject we may see, that no very remarkable revival will be bestowed on the gentile churches, nor any general diffusion of gospel light will be made to the darkened nations, till God's ancient people shall be converted to Christianity. Our text informs us, that the "light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days, in the day," at the very time, "when the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." From this we may conclude, that this promise will not be accomplished to the nations, till the breach of the Jews is bound up, and their wound is healed. Great exertions may be made, with encouraging success, and such are made in the present time, for edifying Christians who reside among the heathen, and for converting some of the heathen themselves; but all this will be like the morning twilight only, which will be the harbinger of the approach of this bright meridian day of gospel light. Till this happy season come, there is reason to fear, that the gentile churches may continue under the judgment of division; errors may prevail in the doctrine of some, human inventions may be retained in their worship, unscriptural forms of government may be practised, partiality and unauthorized usages in her censures may continue, and the papal interest may preserve its existence, prevalence, and influence in many lands. But this is not all: there is also reason to believe, that there will be a time of calamities to the gentile churches, and to the nations of the earth, till that great and

notable day of the LORD shall come. The prophecy contained in the seven vials, which foretells the last judgments on the church's enemies, is not completely fulfilled. It is probable, that the fourth vial, under which the sun of the papal world scorched men with fire, is now poured out. There remain three other vials of the LORD's wrath to be poured on men—the fifth, which shall be poured upon the seat of the secular or papal beast—the sixth, which shall overturn the Turkish empire—and the seventh, by which the awful scene of judgments shall be completely finished. Those persons, therefore, who now look for a very long period of undisturbed tranquility among the nations, may perhaps have reason to say, "We looked for peace, but no good came; and for a time of health, and behold trouble!"

5. We may see from this subject, that, at the time of the conversion of the Jews, the darkened nations shall be enlightened with the gospel, and the gentile churches shall be exceedingly revived. This is evidently contained in the text. At the time of the binding up the breach of Israel, and the healing of the stroke of their wound, the nations that have not the gospel, shall be visited with this invaluable blessing; and the nations that are possessed of it, shall be favoured with a clearer view, and a deeper experience of its saving truths. Respecting the gentile churches, the apostle declares, Rom. xi. 12. "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the gentiles, how much more their fulness." From these words we see, that there was a time when the Jews fell from being a church of God, and were diminished, and the gentile nations, who had been in spiritual poverty, were then enriched with the unsearchable riches of Christ; and that there is a time to come when the Jews shall enjoy the fulness of the blessings of the gospel of Christ, which shall be the mean, much more than their fall, of increasing the spiritual riches of the gentile churches. In the 15th verse, the apostle says, "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be

but life from the dead.” As the season in which the Jews were cast away, was the time chosen of God for reconciling to himself multitudes of the gentile world; so the blessed day of his receiving them again, shall be, to the gentile churches, as life from the dead. When this day shall come, the gentile churches will be low and languishing, and will be in great need of a revival. The change which will then take place on them, will be so great and salutary, that it is compared to a resurrection, even to life from the dead. The conversion of the Jews will be both the occasion and the mean of the gentile churches’ glorious revival. The spiritual illumination of the darkened part of the gentile world, at the conversion of the Jews, is also, in this chapter, revealed to the church. “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, least ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part has happened to Israel, until the fulness of the gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved.” Verses 25, 26. The day of the conversion of the Jews, as it is the time of enriching and reviving the gentile churches, so it shall be the season of bringing in the fulness of the gentile nations, to the knowledge of the way of salvation, by the grace of God reigning through the righteousness of Christ, unto eternal life. At this happy time, the Lord will say to his ancient people, to the gentile christians, and to the darkened nations, “From this day will I bless you.” Hag. ii. 19.

6. That there is a particular time fixed by the LORD, for performing this glorious work among men, is evident from this subject. The text mentions a day in which the LORD will act the part of a Physician to his ancient people, by binding up their breach, and healing their wound; and in which he will cause light to arise upon the gentile nations. Several descriptions of this day are contained in the word of God, from which we may obtain some knowledge of it. In Dan. xii. 7. we have two of these descriptions. In verse 6th, this important question is proposed to the man clothed with linen: “How long shall it be to the end of these

wonders?" And in verse 7th we have his answer: "And I heard the man clothed in linen, who was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by Him that liveth forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." A numerical statement of this day, and a characteristic sign of it, are here, by the highest authority, and in the most solemn manner, made known to the church. The person whose voice Daniel heard, was the Son of God. The description he gives of this person at the beginning of chapter x. where this vision commences, accords so exactly with that given of Christ, in Rev. chapter i, as constrains us to believe, that he was the same person who was seen in vision, both by the Prophet and the Apostle. The way in which he confirms his answer, is by a solemn oath, with his hands lifted up to heaven. The numerical statement of this day is given in those words, "it shall be for a time, and times, and an half." This refers to the same day which those of John describe, Rev. xii. 14. "A time, and times, and half a time," which fixes the duration of the season of the woman's abode in the wilderness. The same period is mentioned, Rev. xi. 2. "And the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months:" and verse 3d, "And they shall prophesy a thousand and two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth." These three designations of time relate to the same period. The second and third enable us, with certainty, to fix the duration of the first. The time of forty-two months, allowing thirty days to each month, agrees exactly with twelve hundred and sixty days; and each of these numbers contains precisely one year, two years, and half a year. As a day is the prophetic symbol for a year, the time of the church's sufferings, and of her enemies' prevalence in the world, will be one thousand and two hundred and sixty years. The most probable and satisfactory opinion concerning the beginning and termination of this time, is that which dates its commencement in the year six hundred and six, and brings it to a conclusion in the year eighteen hundred and sixty six. Then shall the precious promises of our text, if this

calculation is correct, be fulfilled to the Jews, and to the enlightened and darkened parts of the gentile world. The characteristic sign of this day, which is given in this verse, is contained in the last clause, "And when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished." By the holy people we must understand the posterity of Jacob. The LORD's accomplishing to scatter the power of that people, signifies his bringing his work of judgment upon them to an end, his closing up the period in which they were dispersed among the nations, and his finishing the season in which their political and ecclesiastic power was totally suspended.—Another characteristic sign of this day is found, Dan. xii. i. "And there shall be a time of troubles, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." This character of that day, which consists in great judgements from God, and grievous calamities on men, agrees exactly with the representation which was made to John, when the seventh angel poured out his vial. Rev. xvi, 17, 18. "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air, and there came a voice out of the temple of heaven, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake and so great." The effects of this earthquake are detailed in the three following verses, which signify great moral, political, ecclesiastic convulsions among the nations of the earth. There is another characteristic sign of this day mentioned by Christ, Luke xxi. 24. "And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the gentiles, until the times of the gentiles shall be fulfilled." The fulfilling those times, signifies the finishing the season in which the gospel and the ordinances of it are to be the peculiar privilege of the gentiles, and in which the posterity of Japheth shall have the exclusive possession of the tents of Shem. The LORD of the church has appointed her to exist in the world, through the whole course of time, in four grand periods. The first is that time in which the true religion was revealed unto all nations, which began at the

giving of the first promise, and ends at the settlement of the Israelites in the land of Canaan. The second is that period in which the true religion was confined to the posterity of Israel; which began with their enjoyment of the land of promise, and ended in the days of the apostles. The third is that season when the true religion was exclusively enjoyed by the gentiles; which began at the rejection of the Jews, and shall end when they shall turn to the LORD. The fourth period is that in which the true religion shall be the common enjoyment of all nations; which shall take its rise on the day mentioned in the text, and shall continue to the end of the world. The times of the gentiles shall be fulfilled at the end of the third period; when the gospel shall be no more the peculiar privilege of the gentiles, but all Israel shall also enjoy the word and ordinances of eternal salvation. Another characteristic sign of this very day was made known to the church as early as the days of Noah : "God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant." Gen. xix, 27. The posterity of Ham, whom Canaan seems to represent, inhabited the vast regions of Africa and some parts of Asia. The period of time mentioned in this verse, is that in which the descendants of Japheth, or the gentiles, succeeded the posterity of Shem, or the Jews, in the enjoyment of the privileges of the church. During this time the posterity of Ham are doomed to a state of servitude to the gentiles; but when that season shall expire, they shall be delivered from this bondage. At this glorious era, they also shall be converted to Christianity; for, of two of the principal kingdoms of that race, the Scriptures foretell, that "Princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." Psal. lxxviii. 31. The African slave-trade is the last, the worst, the most degrading and wicked species of that bondage which that unhappy people have suffered. While its partial abolition indicates the approach of this day; its total abolition, among all nations, will be accomplished when this light shall shine.

. . .

7. This subject presents to our view the happy state into which the church shall be introduced, when this day of light to the Gentiles, and of healing to the Jews, shall come. Many Scripture prophecies have a principal respect to it, and shall obtain the highest accomplishment which they can have on the earth, at this eventful era. The last prediction concerning it is recorded, Rev. xx. 1.—6. In these verses, the following things are foretold.—*Christ's glorious victory over Satan*. He who has the keys of hell and death, shall descend from heaven, in a bright display of his justice and power, shall lay hold on Satan, bind him with his great chain, cast him into hell, shut him up in his prison, and place his seal on the door of it.—*The restraint that shall be laid on this enemy*: “He shall deceive the nations no more.” The influence he has exerted in leading the nations to false religion, tyrannical government, abominable idolatry, inhuman cruelty, gross immorality, barbarous war, and the like, shall come to an end.—*The dignity and happiness of the subjects of Christ's kingdom*: “I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given unto them: And they lived and reigned with Christ.” These words express the power which the saints shall enjoy and exercise at that blessed day. Both civil and ecclesiastic power shall be in their hand; and they shall be directed, supported, and comforted, in an uncommon degree, with the word, the Spirit, the presence, and the blessing of Christ.—*The character and principles of the subjects of Christ's kingdom*: “And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.” The Christians of that time will be the true successors of the most holy and faithful members of the church, who have lived in the preceding ages.—*The low condition of the subjects of Satan's kingdom*: “The rest of the dead lived not again.” The men who are of the same principles and spirit with the wicked generations, who have lived in former times, shall be few in number, and reduced in their influence.—*The spiritual employment of believers at that time*: “They shall be priests of God and of Christ.” They shall be holy, spiritual, devoted to God, and Christ, and religion, and exemplary in all things.—*The duration of their happy time*, “a thousand years.” As this

number is used six times in seven verses, and as no other number is mentioned to represent the continuance of this season; there is reason to believe, that its duration will be one thousand years. Such shall the time be, which the accomplishment of the promises in the text shall introduce, and establish in the earth. This clear revelation of such a joyful day should have a practical effect on us, by influencing us to the exercise of an assured faith and hope of its coming; of ardent desire, patient waiting, and diligent preparation for its approach; for in its season it will come, as the effect of every vision. Since the LORD has been pleased to foretell and promise such a day; since its coming will glorify his name, honour Christ, and bring unspeakable blessings to men; your warrant is clear, and your encouragement great, O Christians, to cry mightily to God, at his throne of grace, that he may speedily cause Babylon to fall, and the kingdoms of this world to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. Contemplating the quickening and purifying life that shall be infused into the gentile churches, considering the glorious light that shall arise on the darkened nations, and meditating upon the wonderful deliverance and enlargement that shall be wrought for the people of the God of Abraham at that day, we may exclaim, in the words of the Psalmist, "Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous works. And blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

8. From this subject we may be informed of our duty, respecting the important matters that are contained in the text; and that is, to do every thing in our power to promote their accomplishment. Bear with me a little, my Christian Brethren, while I address you on this necessary duty. God, in his holy providence, has put in motion a great work, in our day, for conveying the knowledge of his word and gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. In the erection of the British and Foreign Bible Society at London, which is now existing in its eleventh year; and in the erection of a great number of Bible Societies and Associations, both at home and abroad, we recognise this wonderful work of God. This general combination of

Christians, for propagating the word of God, presents to our view one universal Society, which is entirely new, in its constitution, object, mode of operation, and extensive range. The grand design of the radical Society, and its auxiliary branches, is to furnish a more liberal supply, to the poor and others at home, of the authorised version of the Holy Scriptures; to give pecuniary and other assistance to Societies, having the same object, in other parts of the world; and to translate the Scriptures into foreign languages, to print them in these languages, and to circulate them among the people by whom these languages are spoken; languages which have never formerly been the vehicle of conveying to the human understanding and heart, the words of eternal life. If these exertions are continued, with the blessing of God, they may, in a few years, be the mean of bestowing the holy oracles of God, upon many nations, where they have never been known. Of the nations who may be thus privileged, we may say, with a little variation, as was said in the second chapter of the Acts, concerning the people, from different nations, who were at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, when they were addressed by the Apostles, after these ambassadors of Christ had received the gift of tongues; They were all amazed and marveled because they did read in their own language, and in their own tongues wherein they were born, the wonderful works of God. As the miraculous gift of tongues was a dispensation of God, which was most suitable to the Apostolic age; so the translating and printing the Scriptures in foreign languages, are equally congenial to the present state of things. The latter, as well as the former, we hope, is a grand operation of God, which will, in due time, promote his glory, and the salvation of men.

It matters not with whom this august scheme originated, or by whom it is conducted; sufficient it is for us to know, that it is the work of Him who does what he will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. God is sovereign, wise, and holy in the choice of his instruments; and, therefore, it becomes us in this, as in many other things, to be still, and know that he is God. By giving these societies their most cordial support. Chris-

tians are by no means obliged, either to relinquish any of those principles of religion, which, by divine authority, they deem themselves bound to maintain; or to approve of any of those sentiments or practices in religion, against which, by the same authority, they feel themselves bound to testify. As there can be no valid objection, so there should be no distressing scruple, to prevent them who delight in the law of the LORD from giving assistance to a scheme, which is so scriptural in its object, and which has produced already such salutary effects. The extraordinary success that has attended the exertions of the parent Society, and others, as it should encourage those who have already contributed to continue their support; so it should excite those who have not yet countenanced this work, to come forward speedily to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty. As the former have put their hand to the plough, let them beware of looking back; and, as the latter are solicited to assist, let them be on their guard lest they be found caring for none of those things.

It is impossible to read the correspondence between the radical Society of London, and some of the foreign Societies, without being deeply affected and even, in some instances, shedding tears. These will be tears of mingled emotions; tears of joy and wonder at the magnitude, extent, and efficiency of the exertions; tears of praise and thanksgiving to God, for his exciting grace, and superintending providence; and tears of faith and hope of glorious results. The holy Scriptures are the mean of humanizing mankind, by making them live like rational creatures;—they are the mean of civilizing them, by making them taste the sweets of social order, and of a more improved state of things;—they are the mean of evangelizing rational creatures, by causing them understand the doctrines of the gospel, the blessings of salvation, and their own moral and religious duties;—and the sacred Scriptures are the mean of spiritualizing men, by bringing them out of their natural state, endowing them with the image of God, clothing them with the

righteousness of Christ, introducing them into fellowship with God, and enabling them to live a life of faith and holiness; the consequence of which shall be, that, to multitudes an entrance shall be ministered abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Impressed with these considerations of the necessity, importance, and utility to men, of the holy Scriptures, who would not rush forward to devote a part of that substance which the LORD has given them, to promote this wonderful work?

We are met here this evening, my Christian friends, to unite more fully this district of the parish in an annual contribution, for supporting these Societies in this great work. This is a privilege, and an honour, bestowed upon us by God in his providence, as well as it is a duty required at our hands. Let none be discouraged from coming forward, on account of the smallness of the sum they are able to give. Such persons should remember that the lowest contribution may be as generous in itself, and as acceptable to God, as the very highest that has been made, if the willingness of the mind, and the difference in the outward possessions of the contributors, are duly considered. Let not our love of the world, on the one hand, nor our poverty on the other, prevent us from contributing, according to our ability, for this precious purpose; but let both those classes of persons remember the words of Solomon, Prov. xi. 24. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that which withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."—That we may have to give to him that needeth, and to contribute, at the same time, to the important purpose of supporting Bible Societies, let us beware of every sinful extravagance, in rioting and drunkenness, in chambering and wantonness, in strife and envying. Ah! what fruit shall we have in these things? Alas! Christians, the end of these things is death. Let us, in contributing for this end, glorify God with our substance, and with the first-fruits of our increase, and consecrate part of our gain to the LORD of the whole earth. Let us accompany our contributions with the fervent prayer of faith, for the blessing of God on the whole undertaking. Let us hope and pray, that, while we are endeavouring to furnish others

with the Holy Scriptures, the Spirit of God, who is their Author, may more clearly manifest, and more powerfully apply, the doctrines, promises, precepts, and consolations of that word to our own souls. Let us daily study to embrace Christ, to believe in him, and to rest on him for our eternal salvation; and, in consequence of this, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, let us live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world. Let us come cheerfully forward, at the call of God, to contribute for spreading the knowledge of his holy word, both at home and abroad; so shall we be found using a most eligible mean for promoting the accomplishment, to Jews and Gentiles, of the precious promises contained in the text: "The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound."

CHAPTER 3
POSTMILLENNIAL SERMON BY
JAMES R. WILLSON, ISAIAH 4:5



THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH.

James R. Willson,

April 19, 1824

Isaiah 4:5

Upon all the glory there shall be a defence.

“The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.”—*Isaiah 60:19*

WHEN ELIAB, THE ELDEST SON OF JESSE—THE BETHLEHEMITE, presented himself before Samuel the prophet, “Surely,” said Samuel, “the Lord’s anointed is before him.” The stature of the young man, his countenance, and outward aspect, were no doubt commanding, and such as might be thought well befitting royalty. “But the Lord said unto Samuel, look not on his countenance, or the height of his stature; because I have refused him; for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord

looketh on the heart.” The value of sensible objects is often rightly estimated by outward appearance, and the senses are judge; moral worth and dignity are not to be judged by sense, but by a nobler faculty. The personal figure of David’s first-born was no doubt finer and more stately than that of David; but the Lord, who inspects the heart, and judgeth by the intellectual and moral dignity of the inner man, knew that David was much better qualified to sway a sceptre, handle the sword of the captain, and wear a diadem, than Eliab. Had the excellency of Emmanuel been adjudged by his outward appearance, how mean, how unjust, would have been his estimation! In this way, indeed, the great body of the Jews did decide upon his claims; and, as there was no beauty nor comeliness wherefore he was to be admired, they prized him as a worm, and no man.

As this standard of judgment is fallacious, when applied to individuals, so is it when used to settle the worth of social bodies. When we would appreciate the church of the living God, of which the prophet Isaiah speaks in our text, we must not look on the outward appearance. We must open the book of the understanding, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and examine by faith her order, beauty, stability, and destiny, guided by the lamp of truth held before us in the Holy Scriptures, and survey her glory in the light of heaven, under the guidance of the unerring Spirit. Were she to be judged by her outward splendour, and estimated by her worldly influence, wealth, refinement, and power, there would be no beauty wherefore she should be admired; we should account her, instead of “the perfection of beauty, out of which the Lord hath shined,” as carnal men have thought of her, composed of “the offscouring of all things.” “But the Lord seeth not as man seeth.” We should not, in this business, see as man seeth.

Let us go round about her, examine her bulwarks and tell her towers, and be guided by Jehovah’s rule of judging: and we shall soon learn that she is beautiful and glorious; “for the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for upon all the glory there shall be a defence.” The

text presents two topics—the glory of the church, and her safety, in the possession of this glory. Let us meditate together on each of these, for the purpose of practical improvement.

- i. The glory of the church. The name by which the prophet in this chapter designates this society, is Mount Zion. On the north side of this mountain, the city of Jerusalem was built, and above the city near the highest part of it, on mount Moriah, one of its tops, the temple of Solomon was erected. From the ground around the temple, there was a fine prospect of the city on the north, with its walls, palaces, streets, and magnificent public works; of Milo on the west, and of the city of David on the south and west. The mountains around Mount Zion, rise in the form of an amphitheatre, all of which were in view of the temple: Calvary on the west, and Olivet on the east. The whole scenery was highly picturesque and beautifully diversified. In the temple of Solomon the priests of the Lord had their dwelling: there costly sacrifices were offered up, there the sacred fire continually burnt before the Lord, there the incense smoked on the golden altar, there the Shekinah dwelt between the cherubim, above the mercy-seat of God, over the ark of the covenant; and thither, three times in the year, the tribes of God went up to worship in their solemn assemblies. It was the ecclesiastical capital of the Israelitish church, and hence by a beautiful and very expressive figure, the whole church of God is called by the name Mount Zion. There was, indeed, an outward glory displayed on and around ancient Zion hill, in its natural scenery, in the city of the great king, in the temple—its appendages and costly worship; but these constituted not the real, and permanent excellency of the church, which is of an incomparably higher order.

The Lord of hosts is her God. "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory." [Isaiah 60:19.] All the nations have their gods; but the gods of the nations are wood and stone, the work of men's hands. By their base gods they are debased. In paying their adorations to degraded objects, they acknowledge that they are themselves still more degraded; for the God should be greater, and much more exalted than his worshipper. It is in the church alone, that the worshipper is honoured by the object of his devotions. No other society has ever worshipped the God by whom the heavens were created; none other could ever say of him: "Lo, this is our God." But God is the inheritance of the church. The apostle Paul, addressing the members of the church, under the character of children, calls them "heirs of God." [Romans 8:17.] How glorious an inheritance is this. The Lord God Almighty, the everlasting God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is the portion of the church! See his glory expatiated on the stupendous fabric of the material universe. His power sustains this ponderous globe, and all that it contains. Its oceans teem with wondrous productions; its continents are replenished with minerals, vegetables, and animals, all arranged in stable order, displaying every where their harmonies, and pouring forth from their several kingdoms a profusion of riches. "Earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea." [Psalm 104:24,25.] The sun pours upon the earth his copious light by day, and the moon and stars dispense their feeble rays by night. The atmosphere of the earth is the great field, where storms rage, where the clouds array their moving squadrons, where the forked lightnings stream, and heavy thunders utter the dread voice of the Lord. In the atmosphere, meteors blaze along the dark vault of the night, and demonstrate the presence of the Lord. This

vast world, with all these mighty appendages, the finger of the Almighty guides in its wide orbit, with a force and velocity inconceivable. But great as this world is, thus contemplated apart from the universe, it dwindles into a speck, when regarded as a portion of the vast map of nature. When we enlarge our field of vision, so as to take in the solar system, it diminishes into a dark and little sphere, seen among the mightier orbs that roll above and below. Extend we still farther our conceptions, for vision fails, to the countless systems of worlds that people the unmeasured regions of space, our little earth appears like an atom dancing in the sun-beams. "The heavens are the work of thy hands." [Psalm 102:25.] How great the glory of the Creator. "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever." Lo! this is our God. This God is the inheritance of the church; "for our God is the Lord, by whom the heavens and the earth were created." How glorious to have such a God. "Thy God shall be thy glory." But are we to rest here in illustrating the glory of the church's Lord! In the riches of the earth, and glory of the heavens, there is much to awaken our admiration, and call forth our praise, to him who is our glory; and yet all this is but the hiding of his glory. The human body, fearfully and wonderfully made, is his work, and he breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul. The human mind endowed with faculties so noble, and powers so exalted, even amidst the ruin of the fall, even though "the gold has become dim, and the most fine gold changed," is a greater work than the creation of the earth. "Let us make man in our own image, and let him have dominion." Man's understanding, and reasoning powers, by which he manages long trains of ratiocination, and arrives at remote conclusions respecting matter, abstract relations, and mind; his fancy and imagination which travel

backwards and forwards, from the creation of the world, to the consummation of all things, by which he ascends to heaven, and descends into the depths beneath, by which he breaks away beyond the flaming bounds of the universe, what power and wisdom of their author do they display! “He that formed the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall himself not know?” But the glory of Jehovah is not revealed in the formation of one man only; thousands of generations, and unknown millions are his work, with all their associations into families, nations and empires, where their intellectual powers are displayed, and their energies roused into action. It is “he that forms their hearts alike,” overrules and governs all their enterprises. He puts down one and sets another up, giving the kingdom to whomsoever he will. At his command, empires rise, and become great, decay and are abolished. The glory of the Lord is seen upon them all; for, seated upon the throne of his holiness, he rules the nations. Lo! this is our God: “Thy God,” O Zion! “shall be thy glory.”

How shall I speak of the thrones, principalities, and powers of the heavenly kingdom, where there are made still more eminent displays of the glory of the God of Israel? “He maketh his angels spirits; and his ministers a flaming fire.” “Man, though crowned at first with dignity, and honour, was yet made a little fewer than the angels.” Their exalted natures, their pure intelligence, their great power, their spotless holiness, their ranks in the celestial hierarchy, their elevated employments, and perfect felicity, it is not for man to know, it is not lawful for man to utter. But we do know, that in wisdom God has made them—that he is their Lord, that his glory is displayed by all their glory, and that even in his glorious image, seen in them, is the hiding of his power. “Lo! this is our God.” This “thy God,” O Zion! “shall be thy glory.”

There is yet one other revelation of the church's God, which transcends all these. Angels, who saw the corner-stone of creation laid, and shouted for joy, who stood by his right hand, when Jehovah set his compass upon the deep, settled the site of suns, marked out the tracks of comets, delineated the paths of worlds, put into motion the mighty machinery, and spread the mantle of his glory over the universe, for its garniture,—angels, who have seen for thousands of years the harmonious movements of the whole system, who have witnessed and scanned the complicated events of God's mysterious providence, who have seen the displays of his power in banishing from heaven the hosts of rebel angels, and the dread array of his justice, in the sufferings endured by these fallen millions, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, who have contemplated with rapturous delight, the image of their Maker, in their own seraphic nature and hierarchy, and who have ministered before the throne of his unveiled glory; do yet seek to pry into that mysterious exhibition of the divine attributes, to which your attention is now called. This they do, that they may learn the manifold wisdom of God. You know I refer to the mystery of redemption—the chief of the ways of God, in which he makes a richer display of his glory than in all his works beside, and to subserve which all other creatures were made. The formation of a new and everlasting kingdom, out of the two branches of the providential kingdom—the angelic and the human, under Christ Jesus the head, whose subjects should be angels, confirmed in holiness and felicity, and men redeemed, is indeed a mystery angels might pry into with the most intense admiration. If the object to be attained were great and most glorious, the means for its accomplishment, bore a due proportion to the end. God sets his love upon a chosen number of fallen men, he appoints his eternal and well-beloved Son to be their Redeemer, and their redemption is to be effected by his substitution in their room, to obey as their surety and representative the law of God, which they could not obey, and to suffer in their stead, the penalty of its violation, which would have subjected them to endless torments. In order to accomplish this he must assume their

nature, though lower than that of angels: the God of glory must partake of flesh and blood, and suffer for their sins Imputed to him as their head. "O! the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" In this most mysterious working while God illustrates the perfections of his nature, he at the same time becomes the God of the church, in and by which the illustration is made. From the very jaws of death, and from the very bosom of hell, he delivers the captives, and raises them by means which created wisdom never could have devised, to glory, honour, immortality and eternal life. He breaks down the barriers which sin had raised between heaven and earth, removes the wall of partition which sin had erected between angels and men, he dispels the darkness of death, which envelopes the world, and causes the light of heaven to shine upon the habitations of men. The vile and degraded sinner, condemned already, and the wrath of God abiding on him, is raised to the throne, and re-established in the fellowship of God and of angels. All this is the work of the Lord God of Israel, "Lo! this is our God." "Thy God," O Zion! "shall be thy glory."

2. The church is glorious in the Lord Jesus Christ, her head and king. It is in him that the Lord, the everlasting God, becomes the glory of the commonwealth of Israel, and by him his glory is revealed upon her. In the twenty-fourth psalm, he is called "the mighty Lord, the king of glory." Christ imparts his glory to believers, who through him are the heirs of salvation. This he does from the intimate connexion that subsists between him and them. They were chosen in him before the foundation of the world; for their sakes he was made of the seed of Abraham, they are members of a body, of which he is the head, they are branches in him the vine, they are built upon him, the foundation, and they are joint heirs with him in the glorious inheritance which he hath obtained, as the first born.

When Simeon stood in the temple of the Lord, with the holy child Jesus in his arms, he styled him, "the glory of the Lord's

people Israel.”[Luke 2:32.] This same Jesus is the eternal Son of God, and as such is “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image (χαράκτις) of his person.”[Hebrews 1:3.] Whatever glory of God is displayed in the works of creation, on which we have been meditating, is the glory of the Son; for, “all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”[John 1:3.] “He, also, upholdeth all things by the word of his power.”[Hebrews 1:3.] “He is in the form of God, and thinks it no robbery to be equal with God.”[Philippians 2:6.] All these, with many other texts, bear unequivocal testimony to his divinity. The work of creation is ascribed to God: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth:” and it is the work of the Son. The glory of God the Father is his glory, and his person is the express image of the infinitely exalted person of the Father. The sustentation and government of the universe are the work of almighty power, of infinite wisdom, and divine goodness—and they are his work. His form, or essence, is divine, and his power and glory equal with God the Father. He adorns the earth, and garnishes the heavens. In him, incarnate, “we behold the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”[John 1:14.] Can there be a higher glory conferred on any society of created beings, than that of the most intimate alliance with this most glorious personage? With him the church is thus allied; and for this reason his mediatorial glory is always displayed in connexion with her, to her, or for her interest.

Of this glory, the cherubim with the flaming sword, placed at the entrance of Paradise, to guard the tree of life, was an exhibition; for it was the antediluvian Shekinah. Moses saw it in the burning bush at Mount Sinai. It inhabited the pillar of the cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night, that guided and protected the children of Israel in their journeying through the wilderness. It was the glory of the church’s head that appeared in grandeur so terrific on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law. “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high.”[Psalm 68:17,18.] Stephen, of Christ as a prophet, says: “This is he that spake unto our fathers at Mount

Sinai.”[Acts 8:37.] How much more glorious the awful emblems of his majesty—the thunder, lightning, sounding trumpet, and thick darkness, with the voice of words, displayed before the whole congregation on the mountain’s dreadful summit, than the emblem of the same glory exhibited at the same mountain to Moses alone, in the burning bush? Still differently, and more gloriously, did he appear to Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, on one of the tops of Sinai. “And they saw the glory of the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness: also they saw God.”[Exodus 24:9-11.] Here was the appearance of a very glorious and most august personage—the appearance of a man; for he stood on a paved work of jewelry, resembling in colour and splendour the azure vault of heaven, when illuminated by the orb of day. But while he has the appearance of a man, he is God. It was the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth: a glorious, heavenly majesty. The glory of the burning bush; the glory of the tempest, lightning, and thunder of Sinai; the glory of the personage: standing on the sapphire pavement—is the glory of the God of Israel. He appeared there as the glory of his people Israel. O how ravishing, yet awful: how lovely, yet how full of majesty, the visions which Moses and other saints had there of the glory of the Lord our God, the God of Israel!

Joshua saw him on the bank of Jordan, as the captain of the Lord’s host. The ark of the covenant, and the Shekinah, were peculiarly emblematical pledges of his present glory. “The glory is departed, for the ark was taken.”[1 Samuel 4:21.] His glory was shadowed forth in the office of the high-priest; in his sacerdotal robes, made for glory and for beauty; and in the costly magnificence of the temple. Isaiah saw him, high and lifted up, his train filling the temple, receiving the homage of the cherubim. Ezekiel saw him over the wheels of living creatures, and above the firmament of terrible crystal. In the days of his humiliation, the glory of the Father was seen by his disciples through the vail of his humanity.

The earth quaked, the rocks, were rent, the sun was darkened, the vail of the temple was rent, at his crucifixion, to testify that the Lord of glory was suffering.

From Mount Olivet he ascended up most gloriously, leading captivity captive, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, made head over all things to his body the church. There John in Patmos saw him, "like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." [Revelation 1:13-16.] He saw him, too, the Lamb, on Mount Zion; and with him great multitudes which no man could number; as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, dispensing the light and glory of the God on all the hosts of heaven, who cast down their crowns before him, and worship him for ever and ever. This is the mighty Lord, the king of glory, the glory of his people Israel. Nations boast of their kings, thought to be great and good. Israel regarded with delight the memory of Moses, of Joshua, of David, of Solomon, and of Hezekiah. Even yet Greece boasts of her Alexander and Leonidas. France is proud of her Henry and Napoleon. Russia of her Peter and Alexander. England of her Alfred and her Edward. And our own country of her Washington. If nations estimate their national glory in some measure by the greatness of their kings and captains, even often when those are great only as the scourges of the earth; surely with infinitely better reason may Zion boast herself in the Lord Jesus, her king. He teaches senators wisdom, and kings knowledge. "By him kings reign, and princes decree justice. By him princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." [Proverbs 8:15,16.] Their wisdom is folly compared with his; their strength is weakness compared with his; and their diadems fade compared with his. Their authority is confined to a small territory; his is bounded only by the limits of the universe.

Their dominion lasts but for a day, an hour, or a year; his is an everlasting dominion. It is the glory of a city to be the seat of empire, and adorned by the palace and the throne of the king: Jesus, our king, the glory of his people Israel, and crowned by his Father, Lord of all, has erected his throne in Zion, and made it the place of his royal palace. While he sheds the glory of his reign on all parts of his dominions, it is in Zion that his glory Shines, and out of her it beams forth on remoter quarters of his empire. Let the church rejoice in Messiah her king; for he is the glory of his people Israel.

Is it the glory of a people to be governed by a wise king? "In Israel's glorious king are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." [Colossians 2:3.] "He dwells with prudence, and finds out knowledge of witty inventions," "Counsel is his, and sound wisdom: he is understanding." [Proverbs 8:12,14.] He knows the whole constitution of man; for all things are naked and bare before his eyes; seeing at one glance all the secret and hidden things of his great empire. No device formed against the interests of his government can elude his observation; for omniscience surveys heaven and earth, and penetrates into the darkness of hell. The church's head is her glory, in his wisdom.

Is the power of a people's king their glory? "He has an arm that's full of power." "Who can thunder like him?" "The armies of heaven follow after him," and "he tramples under his feet the hosts of hell." "He turns the hearts of kings, like the rivers of waters, whithersoever he will." He crushes rebels under the weight of his iron sceptre, with which he dashes to pieces the nations, like the shred of a potter's vessel. By the power of his grace, he subdues corruption in the hearts of his people, making them willing in the day of his power. The church's Head is her glory in his power.

Is the justice of a people's king their glory? His sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness. The *summa jus* of his laws have not the *summa injuria*. His administration dispenses perfect right to all—injury to none. By the eternal and unalterable rule of perfect righteousness, he rules over all, distributing justice with undeviating exactness to all, high and low. Not the least deviation from right, in

all the wide extent of his dominions, or in, the eternal duration of his throne, will ever occur in his royal doings. The church's Head is her glory in his justice.

Is the gentleness, mercy, and condescension of a people's king their glory?" "Tell the daughter of Zion, behold thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." [Matthew 21:5.] He came meek and lowly; in him compassions flow; he carrieth the little ones, the lambs, in his arms; he condescends to dwell with him that is of an humble and contrite heart; he guides the meek and lowly in judgment; he teacheth the meek, the poor, and afflicted his way; while he rides prosperously because of truth and righteousness, so does he because of meekness. The meekness and gentleness of Israel's king is the church's glory.

Is munificence a royal attribute, imparting glory to a kingdom? "All the paths of Zion's king drop down fatness." "He cometh down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth." He filleth the souls of his people as with marrow and fatness, while here and at death he enriches them with durable riches and righteousness. Where should we end, in the enumeration of his royal bounty? Thou, O Lord Jesus, art the glory of thy people Israel, for ever and ever! This glorious theme is inexhaustible. Have we, citizens of Zion, dwelt upon it too long? Let us pass on to other, but not more interesting, topics, in illustration of the glory of the church of God.

3. She is glorious in her institutions. Wise and wholesome laws, the diffusion of learning among all ranks, and the regular administration of all the departments, cover any people with renown. All these sources of greatness, furnish ample themes in the discussion of the church's glory.

Her laws—They emanate immediately from the fountain of all wisdom in the bosom of God. "He sheweth his word; unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord." [Psalm 147:19,20.] Is not this the foun-

tain, whence, by revelation, as by tradition, all the wholesome laws of all nations have been deceived? Are not all deviations from them corruptions, fraught with evils, whenever they have been introduced? How definite, how general, how perspicuous, how simple, how salutary are the laws, are the statutes deposited in the archives of the church! They apply and appeal to the innerman of the heart; they reach the conscience, discern the thoughts and intents of the heart; they comprise a perfect system of morals, for the regulation of the conduct of individuals; they furnish a complete system of economics for the government of families; and delineate the politics by which nations should be governed in their whole jurisprudence, penal codes and international relations. We cannot stay to specify. The attentive reader of the Bible cannot fail to recur to the specifications. To the church belongs the law; for she is the great depository of the Holy Scriptures.

Consider how great has been its influence over the nations, notwithstanding all their hostility to Zion's holy Lawgiver! Egypt, Assyria, Phenicia, Greece, and Pome, laboured for ages in the business of legislation; and guided by the feeble lights of tradition, their sages toiled in the fabrications of codes of law, that might do themselves and their nations honour. But how wretched systems were they all! Here and there, but rare and far between, a wise statute, shone like a feeble star in the firmament of heathen law, amidst the gloom of surrounding darkness. "As for God's righteous judgments, they did not know them." As the world by wisdom know not God, it could not know his holy laws. The systems of law left behind by these wisest of the gentile nations, are little better than monuments of human folly, or human wickedness. But weak or wicked as they were, they had interwoven themselves with every fibre of civil society, and embodied themselves in the habits of thought, feeling, and action of the least depraved citizens of heathen commonwealths. Their growth had been nurtured for ages, and they had struck their roots, deep, and spread them wide in the soil of human life. How should they, how could they be eradicated? The laws of Zion's king recorded in the Bible, and deposited in the church, were destined

to accomplish this work, and they in part effected it, when the Roman empire became Christian. The little which was found in the heathen systems, and which was essential to the very existence of human society, was retained, while the great mass was abolished very speedily after the abolition of Paganism from the firmament of the empire. The civil and penal laws recorded in the Old Testament, form the basis of the Justinian code, so much, and so deservedly applauded by those who are learned in the science of law. On that code is based the superstructure of the jurisprudence of all modern civilized nations. Defects there are in the code of the emperor Justinian, and great, even capital defects, which, unhappily for the world and for the church, are perpetuated in the systems of our own times. These too are destined to be removed ere long, with the demolition of the antichristian, tyrannical, or infidel thrones, before the commencement of the millennium.

That the laws of Zion's king should have already effected so much in the reformation of monstrous evils, so inveterate, illustrates their great, their superlative excellence, and demonstrates the glory of the church, in whose hands they are deposited.

3. The system of truth, in the knowledge of which, the sons and daughters of Zion are educated, bespeaks her glory. By it believers "are nourished up with words of faith and good doctrine." Her doctrines drop as the rain and distil as the dew, as the small rain on the tender grass, and the showers upon the herbs. In it there are no oppositions of science, falsely so called; nothing that ministers to strife, rather than to godly edifying; all is grave, sublime, lovely, and practical truth, of heavenly origin, and impressed with the image of God its author. The doctrines taught in the church is according to godliness; they are from God their source, are of a divine nature, and promote the holiness of those who in faith receive them. There is a knowledge that puffeth up. The science that embraces human knowledge when learned by minds that are unsanctified, cherishes pride and vanity, and the holy truths of the Christian system, when studied to gratify a carnal curiosity, and as a business of mere speculation, produce the same effect, and so become "the savour of death

unto death in them that perish.” But they are then perverted, as other precious gifts of heaven are, by men of depraved minds. The believing disciple of Jesus “sees in them as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and is changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the spirit of the Lord.”[2 Corinthians 3:18.] In the contemplation of truth for practical purposes, believers are nourished, grow up to the stature of perfect man in Christ Jesus, are prepared for the employments of the redeemed in the heavenly sanctuary. The knowledge of this celestial doctrine is taught in the church, the school of Christ, through the word and other ordinances under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, that the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty may be prepared for the glory of heaven: and the nature of the instructions corresponds with the exalted objects at which the pupil aims, and the elevated station for which he is destined.

Men educate their sons with a view to fit them for the performance of the duties required in those walks of life, in which they expect them to move; and the higher the dignity to which it is expected they will be advanced, the more noble the pursuits to which their attention is directed in the course of their education. The son who is heir to a throne, must be educated in the principles of civil government, and learn the history, policy, and condition, of the nations. God has destined his sons to the occupancy of glorious thrones in the heavens, high seats amidst the principalities and dominions of the heavenly world; and he has provided in the church the means of instructing them in those truths, which are adapted to the glory of that state that shall be revealed hereafter. As the glory of the people of God shall incomparably transcend all earthly glory, it would be an impeachment of the divine wisdom, to suppose that the excellency of the truths in the church does not transcend that of all the science of human schools. The nations pride themselves in the progress which they make in literature, in the excellency of their schools, and in the diffusion of learning among the citizens; how much greater the glory of the church, in possessing a sublime system of truth, taught by the Lord Jesus Christ, the great teacher sent from heaven, to enlighten the dark-

ness of our fallen world! Of this truth the Holy Scriptures are the great depository, in which we search for knowledge as for hidden treasures. There the nature and the attributes of God, the history of creation and providence, the origin of the plan of redemption, its fulfilment in the appearance of the Son of God in the flesh, in its application by the Holy Spirit in the church from age to age, and its consummation in heaven, are detailed with great perspicuity. These scriptures are committed to the church, for preservation, exposition, and application; and hence she is called “the pillar and ground of truth.”[1 Timothy 3:15.]

In the exposition and application of these truths, great and good men in the church have laboured in every age, and thus have drawn out in detail the general principles, and exhibited the symmetry of the system in its beautiful proportions. Confessions of faith, commentaries, sermons, systems of divinity, practical tracts, and powerful arguments, in defence of truth and refutation of error, have accumulated, enriching the heritage of God.

The ministers of the gospel have laboured in the same field, while as living teachers they have instructed the citizens of Zion, guiding them by the law of truth in the paths of righteousness, and preparing them for a better country. Thus the church is strengthened and adorned by the girdle of truth. In maintaining and exemplifying it, she is like a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots, and terrible as an army with banners. How great is the glory which she derives from this glorious system of heavenly doctrine! The doctrines of the heathen schools, priests, and people, relating to their gods, their devotions, their duties, their destiny, are all folly, and worse than folly. They walk in darkness, and there is no light in them. Their doctrines are the shadow of death, which overspreads their lands; for they are the doctrines of devils, proceeding from the father of lies. It is the light of revealed truth, shining forth gloriously from Zion hill, that disperses the darkness of the heathen, and converts the habitation of dragons, where each lie, into fruitful fields, excellent as Carmel, and beautiful as Sharon.

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5. The church is glorious in her members. To this the prophet alludes in the verses preceding our text. "And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem. When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning." The Holy Ghost works faith in the hearts of the true sons and daughters of Zion, unites them to the Lord Jesus, and thus applies his atoning blood to them for their purification. "Faith worketh by love and purifieth the heart," rendering the believer "inwardly all glorious, like the king's daughter;" while they are at the same time arrayed in the righteousness of the Redeemer, imputed unto them for justification—"a garment wrought with needlework, and embroidered with gold."

It is not to be denied, indeed, that even after the sinner is regenerated, justified, and brought among the righteous nation, that keepeth the truth through the gates into the city, he is still imperfect, and by his imperfections mars the beauty, and obscures the glory, of the house of God. Many, too, who are no better than whited sepulchers, within full of rottenness and dead men's bones, are found in the church, disturb her order, let in the enemy, awaken strife, and for a time are spots and blemishes, until they are cut off by excommunication, or go out from the church, because they are not really of Israel. Such traitors open the mouths of adversaries, and give the enemy occasion to blaspheme. Hence it happens, that though the church is fair as the moon, and clear as the Sun, yet there are dark places in the moon's disk, and spots on the sun's face; and these luminaries of heaven sometimes suffer an eclipse.

While all this is admitted, may we not fairly, challenge all other associations of men to a comparison with the church? May we not compare the church with the world? May we not ask all men whether there is not more purity of life among the members of the church, than among the men of the world? Where do we find the greatest ignorance of God? Where are the great mass of idolaters,

profane swearers, Sabbath breakers, despisers of parental authority, tyrants, traitors, murderers, whore-mongers, dishonest knaves, liars, covetous, proud, ambitious, gamblers, and profligates? Do we look for them in the church or in the world? From the church, when we ask these questions, we exclude Roman Catholics and those bands of heretics who have assumed the name Christian, as a mantle to cover their deformities. In the church, our enemies themselves being judges, do we not find sounder moral principles, more clear and just conceptions of the nature, attributes, law, truth, and government of God, than among others? Is it not in the church, exclusively, that we find an outward, social, and reverend homage paid to the God of heaven? Is it not here alone, that we find children trained up in the habits of duty to God, and in the knowledge of his ways? Is it not here alone that we find men earnestly and habitually engaged in seeking salvation, through the glorious Redeemer, and in preparing for the enjoyment of everlasting blessedness after death? Is it not here that we find the noblest examples of benevolence? Do we not discover in tracing the line of the church, from the days of Adam, to the present time, the most enlightened, the most active, the most virtuous, orderly, and religious of the human family, in the tract of her history? Has she not been the center of civilization? As she has extended her territories westward, savage and ferocious nations have been converted into civilized, enlightened, and regularly organized communities. In all this, we appeal to those who estimate human worth, by what men call virtue, learning, and refinement; and not by gospel holiness which makes man like God, and fits him for the fellowship of the Father, and of his son Christ Jesus, and the fellowship of the holy angels. It is to this latter that we refer chiefly when we speak of the glory of the church, derived from the character of her members. It was this beauty, and glory, which the Most High disclosed to the vision of the son of Beor. "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!" "As the valleys are they spread forth, as gardens by the river's side, as trees of lign aloes, which the Lord hath planted, as cedar trees beside the waters. He shall pour the

waters out of his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters, and his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.”[Numbers 24:5,7.] Her members are like the plants in the beds of spices, flowers, and fruits, as lign aloe and cedar trees; they grow up and shoot their branches on high, in moral greatness and beauty, far above the glory and excellency of the nations.

It is this beauty of holiness, which the Lord Jesus admires, where he says to the spouse: “Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.”[Song of Solomon 2:11.] Isaiah beholds it with admiration, when he exclaimed of the church: “Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.” [Isaiah 62:3.] Jehovah holds her in his hand, and while supporting her, contemplates her glory, and displays her to others as an object worthy to be admired. Every member is a gem in the crown, which shall for ever flourish on the head of Emmanuel.

The apostle Peter, when enforcing the practice of holiness in the fear of the Lord addresses the members of God’s family in the following emphatic language. “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.—Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”[1 Peter 2:5,9.] The church is here compared to a stately edifice, perhaps to the temple of Solomon, built of very costly materials, precious stones, like those in the foundation of the New Jerusalem; such are the members of the church, for preciousness and beauty, in the eyes of the Lord, comparable to the sardius, the topaz, the carbuncle, the jasper, and the diamond, garnishing the great temple of mercy, which the Lord buildeth to last through all ages, as his royal palace. They are also a holy and royal priesthood, consecrated to Jehovah, for spiritual services, that they may minister for ever in his temple, where they are both kings and priests. The sacerdotal vestments of Aaron and his sons, were made for glory and beauty; and the saints are clothed

with the righteousness of Christ, fine linen white and clean—a spotless robe, of which the splendid garments of Aaron, were but a feeble emblem. United to the Lord Jesus, who is king of kings and lord of lords, they are made noble princes. They are a chosen generation, chosen in Christ Jesus before the world began, as the object of electing love. To be loved and admired by the great, especially by great kings, and selected to be near their persons, as peculiar favourites, are esteemed the highest honours among men. The church's members from of old, from eternity, were the objects of the love of the glorious and mighty Lord, and chosen to be placed near his person, in his palace, at his table, and to minister in his kingdom. They are “a peculiar people.” Set apart in sovereign electing love, they are purchased as a peculiar treasure by the precious blood of God's eternal Son, and consecrated by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, for the glorious purpose of showing forth the praises of God. The universe is God's, angels are his, he loves and honours them; but the members of the church are peculiarly dear to him. O how glorious is the society, whose members are thus, among the ranks of creation, in this great universe, the peculiar treasure of Jehovah! They that are with Christ Jesus, when he overcomes all those who make war upon him “are chosen and faithful.”[Revelation 17:14.] They are “the hundred and forty four thousand, on the Mount Zion with the Lamb, who have their Fathers name written on their foreheads, who are not defiled with women, for they are virgins, following the lamb, whithersoever he goeth, and in their mouth is found no guile;” for they are, as clothed in the righteousness of Christ, “without fault before the throne of God.”[Revelation 14:1-5.]

All the glory they derive from Christ their head, as enjoyed in him. He is their strength, and the horn of their salvation.

6. Glorious things are spoken of the church in her millennial state. “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.”[Psalm 87:3.]

God in all ages has delighted in the church as his own most glorious work; angels have regarded her with wonder and admira-

tion, and the people of God have set her above their chief joy: not so the nations, which instead of admiring her beauty, have made her the subject of their scorn, derision, and oppression. But she shall yet become the perfection of beauty in the eyes of the nations; for “the gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising; the sons of strangers shall build the walls of Jerusalem, and their kings shall minister unto her; the nation and kingdom that will not serve her, shall utterly perish; when the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto her, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the Lord's sanctuary, and to make the place of his feet glorious; a little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation.”[Isaiah 60:10,12,13,22.] “The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.”[Revelation 11:15.] In the accomplishment of these and many other similar promises, a work of very great magnitude must be wrought, in the abolition of the kingdom of Antichrist, the subversion of the Mahometan power, the restoration of the Jews, and the overthrow of all the pagan dynasties and systems of idolatry and superstition, embracing more than seven out of eight parts of the whole population of the world; and a powerful reformation of the Protestant churches, to enlighten and purify them. That all this shall certainly be effected, and within a period not far distant, is realized by faith and not by sense. The nations, indeed are shaking, the Bible is translating and diffusing among people of all languages under heaven, mighty agencies are called into action, and a great excitement in Christendom moves the public mind. By the common consent of all, both Christian and Infidel, some stupendous change is expected in the state of the nations. This seems to be the beginnings of the spirit of God's moving upon the waters, to make them bring forth abundantly. But little should we hope that all this would eventuate in the mountain of the Lord's house, being established in the mountains and exalted above the hills; had not the sure word of prophecy taught us that such is the destiny of the church. By this we learn “that the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever

and ever, and that the kingdom, and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High.”[Daniel 7:18.]

The law shall go forth from Mount Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, to convert the nations to the obedience of faith, and to overthrow the temples of Pagan and Antichristian superstition, the mosques of the impostor of Mecca, and the sceptres of tyranny, which are swayed for the support of bad systems. The noise which Ezekiel heard, and the shaking which he saw among the dry bones in the valley of vision, shall be heard and seen by the Lord’s people, putting all nations into commotion; the wind, to which he prophesied, shall blow from the four quarters of the heavens, and breathe upon the slain that they may live, stand up on their feet, and become an exceeding army.

The nations consider the extension of their conquests, and the enlargement of their boundaries, as amplifying their glory, and to this object the ambition of kings, emperors, and republics have in all ages been directed, and out of it has arisen a great part of the wars that have wasted the kingdoms of the world. Already the church of God possesses an ampler territory than any kingdom under heaven. How great will be her glory, when she shall lengthen her cords, strengthen her stakes, and stretch out the curtains of her habitation, until she shall encircle the whole earth, and be the means of filling it with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters fill the seas! The nations think they add to their grandeur by the increase of their population. Already, the church numbers a population equal to that of the greatest empire. How great will be her glory, when her sons shall be brought from afar, and her daughters nursed at her side; when converts shall be numerous as the drops of dew from the womb of the morning, when they shall spring up as among the grass, and when all flesh shall see the glory of our God as it is revealed in Zion? Kings add to their renown when they extend the influence of their laws, customs, and manners to many and remote people. How great shall be the glory of the church when all nations shall learn the laws of the God

of heaven, as they are taught in the church, and shall attend upon the ordinances of the Lord, as they are dispensed in the church! "Many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem." [Zechariah 8:23.] Kings add to the splendor of their thrones and kingdoms by having many other kings subjected to their dominion, and tributary to their revenues. How great shall be the glory of the church, when all the mighty kings on earth shall do service to the king of Zion; when the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into the church; when the kings of Sheba and Seba, yea all the kings of the nations, shall bring gifts and offerings to him who reigns in Mount Zion. Wise kings consult well for the happiness and dignity of their subjects, when they can secure them long in the enjoyment of the blessings of peace. How great will be the glory of the church when through the benign influence of her religion, she shall have reduced all the nations, subjected to her Lord, to a state of peace which shall last undisturbed for a thousand years? "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." [Isaiah 11:6, 9.] "And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." For they shall be all taught of God, and shall say, "O house of Jacob, come ye and let us walk in the light of the Lord." [Isaiah 2:4.] Kings, princes, and nobles all shall rule for the glory of God and the good of the church, and the welfare of their own and of other subjects. The nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of the city of God. Truth shall be embraced by all people gathered into one church, and the Lord shall be

honoured by a pure worship, and holy songs of praise, sung to him by redeemed men in all the earth. O Lord hasten it in thy time. Zion is the perfection of beauty.

II. The church is perfectly secure in all this glory.

Perhaps it is a general impression among a large majority both of those who are within, and those who are without the church, in christian countries, that she shall continue to exist as long as the world stands. Some have indeed been mad enough to say, "Come and let us blot out the name of the church from under heaven, that there may be no more mention of the name of Israel." But the greater part of those who have had an opportunity of knowing her history, and observing her character, however hostile they may be to her interests, do not even hope for such a consummation. To destroy utterly a society which is known to have existed under every diversity of outward condition, and amidst the most powerful opposition, for nearly six thousand years, is, by the bulk of men, considered a hopeless business. This very impression is one means of the church's security. That she will so exist, real Christians do not doubt, and mere nominal Christians profess to believe. It might then seem superfluous to reason for the purpose of confirming what nearly all among us believe to be true. And yet after all, the best friends of the city of the living God, are sometimes harassed with fears, and perplexed with doubts for her safety, or at least for her prosperity. In her are all their well-springs, and their security is identified with her safety: destroy her, and all their hopes are gone. It is not merely the perpetuity of the church that we would establish, but rather her security to all the endowment, privileges, and honours, which constitute her permanent glory. In placing this before you, we illustrate also the grounds on which the hopes of the salvation of every individual believer are rested.

1. She, with all the glory which adorns her, is built a foundation, which never can be moved.

“Upon this rock will I build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” [Matthew 16:18.] Therefore thus saith the Lord God, “behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a precious corner-stone, a tried stone, a sure foundation.” [Isaiah 28:16.] A great part of the safety of an edifice is in the foundation; if it be laid in the sand, it is in danger of falling when the floods beat upon it, and the winds blow; but if it is founded on a rock, the winds and floods spend their fury upon it in vain; it stands immovable. The strength of the foundation, too, should bear a due proportion to the magnitude of the superstructure which it is to support. To all this, the Lord who hath founded Zion of old, has had respect. When the wisdom of Jehovah from eternity planned the building of mercy, he laid a sure foundation for the magnificent edifice which his mercy was about to erect, to the praise of his grace. This foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ, his own Son. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” [1 Corinthians 3:11.] Here is a precious, a tried, a sure foundation stone. Jesus Christ, who is God, equal with the Father, who upholdeth all things by the word of his power, is the foundation on which the church of God with all her glory, is sustained. To this Christ alludes in his declaration to Peter. He was commissioning his disciples to go out into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and committing to their hand the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. The authority imparted was very extensive, and involved the highest responsibilities ever imposed upon men. The structure of outward ordinances was to be remodelled; the whole Jewish ritual abolished; and a more spiritual worship substituted in its stead. Men were to be taught and gathered into the New Testament church from among the Jews and the Pagans. In effecting this great work, prejudices the most deeply rooted were to be eradicated, and the most tremendous and inveterate opposition roused into action. At the proclamation of the gospel, the powers of earth

and hell would combine their energies to retard or to destroy the work of building the temple of the Lord. To sustain them in this conflict, the Lord Jesus directs their faith to himself, as the eternal Son of God, whom they knew, and had just acknowledged as the Messiah. On this rock, the rock of my own divinity, my eternal power and Godhead, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Christ did not found his church on Peter, who was (ΠΕΤΡΟΣ), a stone, that might be moved: but upon himself, the rock, (ΠΕΤΡΑ), like the solid and immoveable strata on which the everlasting hills are founded, which implies,

(1.) That as the building is identified with the foundation, which constitutes a part of it, so Christ and his church are one: he represented it in the covenant between himself and his Father, and took upon himself all the sins of the elect, whom, from age to age, he would gather into it, and make secure of the profession of everlasting glory. Thus all those who should be built as lively stones on him, the Foundation, should be one with him. To prevail against the church, in which he affords to them the means of salvation, the gates of hell must prevail against him; but against the eternal Son of God, they should never be able to prevail.

(2.) That as the rock supports the vast weight of the mountain piled upon it; so Christ by his omnipotent power sustains the church. He has an arm that's full of power, and his everlasting arms are underneath the church to sustain her, and defend all her glory.

(3.) That he is always with his people, in his wisdom guiding them, by his bounty replenishing them with all grace, and at last making them partakers of glory. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and all this as their glorious Head. The enemy should never succeed in robbing the church of her riches and glory, unless they could break open and destroy the great treasury of the new covenant, which is the eternal Son of God himself.

(4.) The immutability of the decree establishing Zion; The decree to elect the church, and set up the Lord Jesus as her king, is eternal, and as immutable as the eternal Sonship of Christ, though the latter is necessary, and essential in the subsistence of the

persons in the Godhead, and the former dependent on the will of God. "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree. The Lord hath said to me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." [Psalm 2:6,7.] Here the going forth of the decree of the Father to build Jerusalem, is connected with the goings forth of the Son, in his eternal generation. There appears to be a certain fitness, that, when God decreed by a voluntary and immutable determination, to build a glorious edifice of mercy, he should appoint to this work him, whom, by a necessary generation, he had begotten from eternity, and that his only begotten Son should be made, as Mediator, higher than the kings of the earth, and have the heathen given him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. While by all this God instructs us in the doctrine of the relation of the persons in the Godhead, he assures our faith in the stability of Zion, and the permanency of her glory, in Christ her king. Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the people of the Jews, may confederate together; all the kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and his anointed; the principalities and powers of the nether world may sit in council in the gates of hell, plotting the destruction of the church, hat they shall not prevail against her; for the Lord, by an unchangeable decree, hath founded her on a rock—on Christ, who is his eternal Son, the brightness of his glory, the express image of his person, and in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. In this Redeemer the church is safe; "she dwelleth on high, and the place of her defence is the munitions of rocks." [Isaiah 33:16.]

2. She is secured by the charter of the new covenant. In Christ her head, "God hath made with her an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure." [2 Samuel 23:5.] God says: "I have made a covenant with my chosen. My covenant shall stand fast with him. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips." [Psalm 89:2, 28, 34.] The apostle Paul, speaking of this covenant made with Abraham, demonstrates its stability: "Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man

disannulleth or addeth thereto. And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.”[Galatians 3:15, 17.] Whatever be the import of the covenant referred to in these solemn declarations, we are sure it never can be abolished; whatever its stipulations are, they shall all be fulfilled; whatever the blessings are which it contains, they are secure; and whatever its promises are, they shall all be accomplished. It is a covenant between the Father and the Son, graciously entered into for the salvation of elect sinners; it is ordered, sure, and everlasting. God will not, and man call not, disannul it. When men confirm a covenant, it cannot be broken without transgression in one or both of the parties; and he who breaks his covenant is infamous. Even the laws of commonwealths do not interfere to break covenant transactions between private individuals, unless they contravene the public weal. The parties engaging in this transaction are two glorious persons of the Godhead. It is confirmed in Christ, who represents all his elect. The Father confirmed it by an oath, and Christ has ratified it by his blood, which is called the blood of the covenant. It establishes the connexion between the church and Christ her Head; through it he dispenses his laws, his truth, his promises, and his salvation, to her members. His reward, in being made head over all things, is bestowed on him according to its tenor; for the promise is: “I will make him, my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.”[Psalm 89:27.] All the glory, then, which we have found in our first topic of discussion to belong to the church, is covenanted glory; it proceeds from the bosom of this covenant, which is well ordered in all things, and sure. The mountains may be removed, and the hills depart, but the covenant of God’s peace shall not fail; he will not make false his promise.

Joshua appealed to the experience of the children of Israel, to confirm their faith in the truth of God’s promises. “And ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning

you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.”[Joshua 23:14.] How very great were the difficulties to be encountered in fulfilling the promises made to Abraham! How improbable, judging by sense, human reason, and outward appearance, that all the good promised should be done! How should a company of unarmed slaves, with their wives and their little ones, free themselves from the bondage of a great and powerful monarch, such as Pharaoh, king of Egypt? How should they be provided with drink, food, and raiment, for forty years in the wilderness! How should they be protected against the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Philistines? How should they pass over Jordan, and vanquish the seven Canaanitish nations, whose cities were walled up to heaven, and defended by the Anakims, a people of great stature, fierce aspect, and mighty in battle? Yet all this had been accomplished; and Joshua, when about to go the way of all the earth, leaves them a great and flourishing people, in possession of the land of their enemies, and the terror of the surrounding nations. Not one thing failed. And not one thing will fail of all that God, as the God of the covenant, hath promised to Zion. He will accomplish all.

In God’s estimation, he that offends against his law in one point, is guilty of all; and could one point settled in the new covenant fail, then might be inferred a failure in the whole of its provisions. Such is the order of the covenant, that all, even those parts which might be esteemed the smaller parts, are essential to the symmetry and beauty of the whole; and were there the slightest failure, the system would be deranged, and the proportions marred. What infinite wisdom, goodness, and mercy, planned, infinite power will execute; “for the counsel of God shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.”

The great and precious promises display to the church the ample treasures of the new covenant; and by faith in them, the people of the covenant are enriched for eternity. The covenant is the grand charter and bill of rights with which the bounty of heaven has endowed this immortal corporation. The charter was

issued at the giving of the first promise; it was amplified in the Abrahamic covenant; its provisions explained in the benedictions of Jacob and Moses, to the twelve tribes of Israel; and disclosed with more ample illustration by Christ and his apostles. God will not revoke the charter. It is only the last acts of tyrants, who violate all faith, and wantonly trample under foot their subjects, to revoke those charters which are confirmed by the royal seal. They are always held to be among the most sacred deeds of the empire. The formation of the covenant charter of the church of the living God, and its issuing under the sanction of the great seal of heaven, is the most solemn and important transaction in Jehovah's empire. It is a glorious display of his gracious condescension to sinners, bringing with him a great salvation—a ray of light from his throne, dispensing consolation to our miserable world. Who can conceive, *absit blasphemia*, that our eternal and merciful king would undo so glorious a work, and in the administration of his government recall his charter, when few kings will dare to adventure upon the revocation of theirs. "If men, being evil, know how to give good gifts, how much more our heavenly Father?" The glory and dignity of the church reposes in perpetual security within the pavilion of the covenant, spread upon the rock of ages. This is real safety. The beams of our house are cedar, and the rafters of fir. "The place of our defence is the munitions of rocks;—for upon all the glory there shall be a defence."

This covenant is "a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from the storm and from rain." When the heat of persecution rages, the covenant of grace secures the church against destruction by its violence; and when the storms of adversity beat upon Zion, it shelters all the inhabitants in safety.

III. By the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in every genuine member of the church, rendering the word and other ordinances effectual, the glory of the church is rendered perpetual. The Lord, by his

word and Spirit, creates upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night. In this imagery there is an allusion to the pillar of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, that conducted and protected the children of Israel in all their journeyings from the house of bondage to the land of promise. Had this heavenly guide been withdrawn from the congregation of the Lord, while in a great and howling wilderness, what dismay would have seized upon Moses, Aaron, the elders, and all the people? While it imparted indescribable glory to the Lord's hosts, as the tribes advanced under their respective banners, or reposed in their tents, it secured them in the right way, protected from the heat by day, amidst the burning sands of the wilderness, and from the inroads of savage beasts by night.

While the word of the Lord is given to the church, as a light to her feet and a lamp to her path, the Holy Spirit is promised and given to abide in her for ever. What is it that secures the tribes or animated nature in perpetual succession, and in the order and harmony of their ranks? It is the energy of The Holy Spirit, that moved upon the great deep, and caused it to bring forth abundantly, and who perpetuates through their successive generations the life which he at first infused. "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, and they are created." [Psalm 104:30.] What is it that secures, from age to age, the existence of the vegetable kingdom, in its classes, orders, genera, and species? It is the energy of the Holy Spirit,—"Thou renewest the face of the earth." Who could imagine, had he never witnessed it, and had confidence in the order of nature, that the fields and woods covered with snow, bound in frost, and disrobed of all their beauty, would shoot forth, and be clothed in all the rich luxuriance of vegetation. God, by his Spirit, renews the face of the earth. What is it that sustains the order and splendour of the heavens, exhibited in the sun, moon, and stars; performing their tours for thousands of years without deviation? It is the work of the Holy Spirit. "By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens." [Job 26:13.]

It is the same Spirit that dwells in the church, as the perpetual Advocate and Comforter. Who knows but the object of imparting

to us instructions respecting the operations of the Holy Spirit in the various departments of nature, may be intended to strengthen our faith in the promises which pledge the everlasting exercise of his omnipotent energies in sustaining the existence and the glory of the church? It is he who prepares believers, as lively stones, and fits them into the great building of the temple of mercy; for “we are all made to drink into one Spirit.”[1 Corinthians 12:13.] “By him all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”[Ephesians 2:21, 22.] He who maintains the fairness and harmony of the natural world, so that they wax not old, are not impaired, and never run into confusion, will not exercise his power with less effect or constancy in the new and more glorious creation in the church, which is bought with the precious blood of Christ. The old creation subserves the new, and when this subserviency ceases, the Holy Spirit shall be withdrawn, and it shall then wax old, as doth a garment. Not so the new creation, in which, throughout eternal ages, the glory of the Godhead shall be displayed, with perpetually increasing splendour and beauty. This work, in which the third person of the Godhead is employed, and which was foreordained to a destiny so exalted, can never be forsaken by him who animates and adorns it. God dwells in the church by his Spirit; but he is no where said to dwell in the vegetable or animal kingdom, or in the starry heavens, by which we learn how much more secure the glory of the church is, than that of the material creation.

The bonds of affection which bind the members of the church one to another, are not easily broken—they are, indeed, absolutely indissoluble. This brotherly love is one of the graces of the Holy Ghost; engaging brother to love brother, and to love God, his truth, his law; and his church. This invisible tie imparts a strength to the church of which worldly men can form no adequate conception.

Is it necessary to defend the church's patrimony in behalf of truth and godliness! The (παράκλητος), the Advocate, who is the Holy Ghost, puts into the hands of his people his own sword, which

is “the word of God,”[Ephesians 6:17.] and teaches them to wield it both in defensive and offensive spiritual warfare. By him the hands of his people are taught to war, and their fingers to fight. “When the enemy cometh in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifteth up a standard against him.”

Is it necessary to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ Jesus? The same Spirit endows the Christian warrior with patience. “Tribulation worketh patience.” Hence the patience of the confessors and martyrs of Jesus in all ages—a patience which has filled even their most bitter enemies with utter astonishment. In the Lord Jehovah, through the Spirit, the church has everlasting strength. “If the Lord gather to himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh shall perish together, and man shall return unto his dust.”[Job 34:14, 15.] As the church is strong through the energies of the Spirit, the enemy is weak, for God withdraws from them his Spirit, and their wisdom is turned into folly, their wealth to poverty, their renown to infamy, their boldness into cowardice, their strength into weakness, and even their life into death. The Spirit of the Lord is a wall of fire around the church to consume her enemies; and the glory in the midst of her, to enlighten and make her glad. He imparteth strength to his people, who have no might in themselves; taketh the wise among their crimes in their own craftiness. Through the Spirit of the Lord, that animates the church, there is a defence upon all her glory.

IV. The glory of the church is effectually defended by the providential protection of Christ her king, who restrains the evil passions of her members within, guides all her officers, and sons and daughters in the way of duty, and who restrains the malignity of hostile men and devils, and employs his holy angels to guard her.

He restrains the evil passions of church members, and even overrules them for good. The commonwealth of Israel is composed of members called out of all kindreds, tongues, nations, and languages; out of all ranks of society, and out from among men of

every shade of character—some learned, others ignorant; some refined with every worldly polish, others rude; some wealthy, others in the depths of poverty; some as amiable as the young man whom Christ loved, others naturally of fierce passions and rough tempers; some active, others indolent; some intellectual, others sentimental; some bold and firm, others timid and wavering; and some high minded and ambitious, others tame and pusillanimous. Who shall harmonize all these adverse elements, when brought together into close contact in ecclesiastical fellowship? As far as indwelling sin continues, and it does continue in all, every one has some remains of the natural temperaments as habits of education, and even in the exercise of the graces of the Holy Ghost, each has peculiar shades of character. There are two diversities of gifts by the same spirit. The office-bearers of the church find some of their sorest trials on these quarrels, and all have reason to say, who is sufficient for these things? What prudence, patience, forbearance, firmness and gentleness are necessary to the beneficent government of a society composed of such materials! No human wisdom, or integrity, or influence, is equal to this very great work. But all is safe under the regimen of Christ our king. He infinitely excels all other kings, in that his eyes are as a flame of fire, he penetrates the secrets of all hearts, and has the most perfect knowledge of the peculiar temperament of every one's constitution, and the hearts of all are in his hand to turn them whithersoever he will. He can effectually restrain by a display of suitable terrors, he can move the conscience, guide the understanding, and direct the affections; and all this he actually does. He draws with cords of love as with the bonds of a man. He appoints unto all the times and the places, and the circumstances of their habitation. He puts down one and sets another up. He has omniscience and infinite power, and the sceptre of his kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness, by which he subdues the people under him. Endowed with all these qualifications, be wise, certainly exercise them in the preservation of the glorious honours and privileges of that church, which he has purchased with his own precious blood.

He restrains the nations, for "he is made head over all things to his body the church," and will reign until he overcomes every enemy. Were we to judge by sense of the safety of the church, estimating the numbers of the enemy, their wealth, their learning, their armies, their wisdom in their generation, their craft, and their leagues, as human politicians estimate their means; and were we to compare all these with the church's little company, her worldly poverty, her lack of worldly wisdom, her simplicity; we should utterly despair of even being able to maintain the conflict on terms and with resources so unequal. It is in this way that the enemy have reasoned. They have said, "We will go up to the land of unwallled villages; we will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil and to take a prey." [Ezekiel 38:11, 12.] Then they assemble great armies, and come up as a cloud to cover the land, against the people of Israel. But—the Lord Jesus appears in the exercise of his kingly power, for the defence of his people, and the destruction of her foes. "He rains upon the enemy, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone." [Ezekiel 38:22.] What Zion's king will execute signally upon Gog and Magog at the last judgment, he is preparing to do by the whole course of that providential government, which he administers over the nations.

What he promises he performs, and his promise is: "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall utterly perish; yea, those nations shall utterly perish." [Isaiah 60:12.] He has set them already on a slippery place, and will suddenly bring them down to destruction. They may muster their armies, replenish their coffers, and enter into their leagues; it will be all in vain; they shall utterly perish. He who destroyed the old world by a deluge, who rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, who destroyed the hosts of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, who dispossessed the seven nations of Canaan, who laid waste the city of Jerusalem by the Roman armies, who made Babylon a perpetual desolation, who desolated the plains of southern Europe, by the sword of the

northern barbarians, and who made Antichrist quake on his throne, at the Reformation, will accomplish it in his time. The nations are angry. He will utter his voice from his holy habitation, and the earth shall melt for fear. Messiah cannot be taken by surprise, in any invasion of his peculiar kingdom! for his eyes see and his eyelids try all the sons of men. He brings to nought their most skillful devices, and imparts energy to his own plans for the preservation of his inheritance.

Hence, there may be faint-hearted men, and traitors within, and a powerful and imposing array of hostile forces without, and yet Zion is secure in possession of her glory, resting under the shade of the wings of her King, who is almighty. She says; "The mighty Lord is on my side, I shall not be afraid."

The Lord Jesus, our King, has committed to him dominion over the things that are under the earth, and sways over all the hosts of hell the iron sceptre of Jehovah's wrath. The Scriptures certainly do represent a large part of the tribulations of the people of God, as the effect of the malevolence of the prince of darkness. Do errors (ἁρτησεις) disturb the repose, or mar the beauty of the heritage of God—the prince of darkness is the father of these lies? do the governments of the world make war upon the woman and her seed? the seven heads and ten horns of the beast are actuated by the dragon; do thorns in the flesh trouble their comfort? they are messengers of Satan; are they led captive for a time to sin? it is in the snares of the devil, who walketh about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. But even this enemy, with his hosts, is made subject, though involuntarily, to Messiah, "who destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." [Hebrews 2:14.] He has already triumphed over principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly in his death. He bruises Satan under their feet. At the commencement of the thousand years of the church's universal prosperity, he lays hold of this enemy and binds him, and all his religions in chains of darkness. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old

serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled.”[Revelation 20:1, 3.] Who is this great angel? It is he who has the key of the bottomless pit—Christ Jesus who “has the keys of hell and death.”[Revelation 1:18.] Even now Christ Jesus holds him in chains; for he “is reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, until the judgment of the great day.”[Jude 6.] Powerful, malignant, and crafty as the devil is, and numerous as are his hosts, the Great Angel of the covenant is infinitely more mighty than he. Messiah, our King, knows and will counteract all the devices of this adversary; for no device formed against Zion will prosper.

But even among the created powers of the invisible world, they who are with the church are more numerous and more mighty than those who are against her. All things in heaven are subjected to the government of the Mediator. Christ says:[Matthew 28:18.] “All power is given unto me in heaven.” Angels are employed by him “to minister for them who shall be the heirs of salvation.” These holy guardians in flaming array, stand as armed sentinels continually around the church, which is the bed in which the royal bridegroom of the church reposes. “Behold his bed, which is Solomon’s: three-score valiant men are about it; of the valiant of Israel. They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh, because of fear in the night.”[Song of Solomon 3:8.] The extent to which the war rages around the walls of Zion, between the powers of heaven and the powers of hell, no one can tell or conceive. We know, however, that the angels of Michael, and the angels of the dragon do fight. The angels of Michael are flaming spirits of great power; one of them in one night, destroyed one hundred and eighty five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians. What an idea of power does this convey! When many legions of those mighty spirits are engaged in conflict with the armies of hell, the fury of the battle must incomparably transcend our highest conceptions of military strife, derived from the onset of earthly

armies. When the king of Zion marshals the powers of heaven, as captain of the Lord's hosts; there is no room to doubt which side will be victorious. "And there was war in heaven," (the heaven of the church;) "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; and he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him." [Revelation 12:7, 9.]

Little has yet been told of the strength of the walls and bulwarks of the church of the living God, yet we are warranted in concluding this topic in the emphatic and consolatory words of the text. "On all the glory there shall be a defence." We shall now bring this discussion to a close, by making some practical observations, suggested by the subject.

I. The church is worthy of our most sincere love. Every true Christian perceiving the glory of Zion, will say with David: "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth." [Psalm 26:8.] "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand." "I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." [Psalm 84:1, 10.] "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of my Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." [Psalm 27:4.] These are the devout breathings of the ardent attachment of a saint of God to the church, and her ordinances, in ancient times, when she looked forth, fair as the moon, and when she was very far from having attained the perfection of that glory, which is now unfolded. The gospel day had not broken upon the church, by the incarnation of Messiah, nor had the shadows of ceremonial observances fled away, by the actual appearance of Christ, the substance. Yet the real believer could appeal to God for the sincerity and ardour of his love, to the habitation of his house, the tabernacles of God's grace, were very amiable in his estimation; because there the honour and

glory of Jehovah had their dwelling; there he beheld with admiration, the beauty of the Lord; there he realized the presence of God, graciously dispensing pardon, honour, peace and protection, on account of the promised seed; and there he had strength imparted to him to go on his way heavenward, rejoicing.

Now, the light of the moon has become as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun as the light of seven days, sevenfold, "The light of Zion has come, and the glory of God has risen upon her." The pillar of the cloud by day has been so greatly enlarged, and has ascended so far on high; and the pillar of fire, shining with increased splendour, casts its beams so far and wide, that people of every kindred may be enlightened, guided, and protected to the heavenly inheritance. They who love the Lord for all these gracious and wondrous doings; they who love the light of heavenly truth, they who love the Redeemer that reveals the truth; they who love godliness; and they who love the salvation of their own souls, will love the church, and seek her prosperity. Every one should say with the captives in Babylon: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

2. Those who enjoy the privilege of membership in the church, ought to entertain a grateful sense of the high honour which her exalted head has bestowed on them. Most men value highly the distinction of belonging to an honourable family connexion; they who are within the church, are members of the visible family of the sons of God. "Behold what manner of love the father hath, that we should be; called the sons of God!"[1 John 1:3.] This is an ancient title of the professors of religion. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men."[Genesis 6:2.] If we are what we profess to be, then are we "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."[Romans 8:17.] Men boast of inheriting by their birth, ample fortunes. The children of God are born to "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them." All earthly riches, glory, and grandeur fade away; but the rich inheritance with which

God through Christ Jesus endows his sons and daughters in the church, endures for ever. "Blessed are they who dwell in the house of the Lord." The freedom of the city of Rome was attained by great sums of silver and gold. The honour and protection which that privilege afforded, were soon brought to a termination by the death of the citizens; and the glory of Rome itself is departed to return no more. Citizenship in the city of the living God is purchased by the precious blood of God's own son; the blessedness, the glory, and protection which it secures, can never terminate; and the sun of this city's glory can never set. If ever there were blessings conferred which call for sincere and lively gratitude, these are the blessings.

How happy at this moment is our condition, compared with that of the disciple of Mahomet, who adores the impostor; with that of the Hindoo, who pays divine honour to the Ganges; with that of the Persian, who does homage to his god the sun; with that of the millions of other heathen nations, who pay their devotions to the shrines of devils, in temples erected to creeping things, and to stocks and stones, the workmanship of their own hands; or with that of the countless multitudes who, in lands called Christian, spend their time in abominable revelry, whose god is their belly, and whose end is destruction! We are assembled in the house of the living God, within the gates of Zion, to worship him by whom the heavens and the earth were made; who upholdeth all things by the word of his power; who brings redemption to his people by the blood of the covenant, and who endows them with the hope of a glorious immortality. All this is the doing of the Lord, let it be wondrous in our eyes, and for it let us praise his name for ever and ever!

3. Walk worthy of the connexion which you sustain with the most honourable society among men. Abstaining from all worldly lusts, which debase human beings and drown them in perdition, let the citizen of Zion cultivate knowledge, virtue, and especially meekness and gentleness. Without meekness, almost all other virtues and graces have their lustre tarnished. In maintaining the

interests of the church, and in contending for that truth and purity which are her brightest ornaments, some appear to imagine that the rough and fierce passions, coarsely expressed, are the only tokens of real fidelity to the cause of God and his church. All should remember, "that the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," that when we give a reason of the hope that is in us, it ought to be done with meekness—and that "a soft answer turneth away wrath." Indeed, the greatness and dignity of truth demand this temperate course. Godliness is grave, sober, and reasonable; and never flourisheth in an uncultivated soil, or amidst the fierce tempests of passion. The exalted character of the church, and of her glorious Head, renders deliberation, firmness of purpose, and sobriety of temper, well befitting him who is their friend and advocate. The opposite of these deforms the character of the Christian, disturbs the order of the church, and mars her divine beauty. The passions which we condemn, as unfriendly to the life of godliness and the interests of real religion, are not the fruits of the Spirit. These are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, meekness, temperance." [Galatians 5:22.] Let us consider for a moment the sober, grave, and stately operations of the same Spirit, in the vast economy of nature; in the growth of plants and of animals, and in the serene majesty and silent movements of the heavenly constellations. Witness the operation of the same Spirit, in the economy of grace, as imparting an unction to Christ, our redeeming Head, "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." [Hebrews 7:26.] The greatness of his zeal has no parallel; and yet, "when he was afflicted, he opened not his mouth; when he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, he opened not his mouth; when he was reviled, he reviled not again." "He did not cry, nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." "The bruised reed he breaks not, and the smoking flax he quenches not." [Isaiah 42:2, 3.] He says: "learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." [Matthew 11:29.] It is from this same Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, that believers derive all their strength to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour. In the cultivation of godliness, the assistance

which we derive from the Holy Spirit will enable us to attemper our zeal with meekness, and thus ornament our high and holy vocation.

4. Never despair of the church. It was a maxim in the Roman commonwealth, never to despair of the Republic. With how much more propriety and force is this applicable to the church of God! The Roman depended upon the arm of flesh; the Christian depends upon the arm of the Lord God omnipotent. God exercises his power in the sustentation of his church; but he does it in answer to the faith of his people. Is a passage to be opened through the Red Sea, that the people may pass over in safety? Israel must believe in the word of God, and trust in his strength for the salvation to be wrought. "By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land." [Hebrews 11:29.] Are the walls of Jericho to fall down? Faith in the divine power must be exercised in order to their demolition.—"By faith the walls of Jericho fell down." [Hebrews 11:30.] Does Christ heal the sick, he first asks: "Hast thou faith to be healed" and then says, "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole." To the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven to be committed to the apostles, the church to be built upon the rock Christ, and secured against the gates of hell—the apostles must profess their faith in Jesus, as the Christ, the Son of the living God. Are the seven vials, full of the last plagues, to be poured out for the destruction of the kingdom of Antichrist? They must be put into the angels hands by one of the four living creatures; It must be done in answer to the prayer of faith.

We see from these examples that faith in the promises of God, which pledges the exercise of the divine power for the preservation of the church, and for the advancement of her glory, is intimately connected with her prosperity. We know, also, that despairing of success, paralyses exertion, and doubting weakens effort in any undertaking, It is so in our labours and sacrifices for carrying forward the glorious designs of Providence in relation to the church. Were we influenced by carnal reason, in our hopes and expectations, there is much to make us doubt, and even despair, of the full and final prevalence of the gospel among the nations. We

do, indeed, calculate too much on the influence of human power and policy for the success of our dearest wishes in relation to the welfare of Zion. It is partly owing to this cause that we are alarmed at the excision of unholy members who may possess some wealth, some influence, some literature, or some reputation, however undeserved, for piety. There is indeed no reason to fear. The husbandman is not alarmed for the health or safety of the fruit tree, when he finds it expedient to lop off even large decaying branches. He wisely calculates, that though the boughs may be thinned by large and judicious pruning, yet fresh vigour and increased fruitfulness will be imparted to the tree.

From the opposition of the nations; from the numbers and zeal of the enemy; from the divisions of the church; from the ignorance, error, or immorality, of church members; the friends of Zion ought not to be discouraged. They are afflictive, indeed, and very painful; but what are they all, when weighed in the balance against the promises of God, which assure our faith and comfort our hearts! To them all, collectively, faith will say: "Who art thou, O great mountain! before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain." Though Jacob be but a worm, yet "he shall thresh the mountains with his new sharp threshing instrument, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. He shall fan them, and the whirlwind shall scatter them: and he shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall glory in the Holy One of Israel." "For upon all the glory shall be a defence." Amen.

CHAPTER 4
A POSTMILLENNIAL SERMON BY
ALEXANDER HARDIE, II
CORINTHIANS 3:8



BY REV. ALEXANDER HARDIE.

The Post-Millennial Advent

“How shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory?”
—2 Cor. iii. 8.

EXPLANATIONS.

APOCALYPSE . . . MEANS DISCLOSURE OR REVELATION.

Cbiliast . . . a believer in the personal reign of Christ on earth for 1,000 years.

Eschatological . . . from Eschatology, “the doctrine of the last or final things, as death, judgment, and the events therewith connected.”

Hermeneutics . . . the science of interpretation, exegesis.

Millennium . . . a happy period of 1,000 years.

Pre-millenarian . . . a person who believes that Christ will come before the millennium.

Post-millenarian . . . a person who believes that Christ will not come till after the millennium.

Parousia . . . presence or coming of Christ.

THE POST-MILLENNIAL ADVENT

The Church has always held the doctrine of the Second Advent. But occasionally, and only occasionally to any considerable extent, has the question of the *time* of the coming agitated the minds of Christians.

At Thessalonica after the reception of Paul's first epistle there was a pre-millennial excitement, which was caused by hasty interpretations of certain passages. On this account and more fully to instruct the erring, the apostle said in his second letter, "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by letter as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present; let no man beguile you in any wise."—2 Thess. ii, 1-3.

Again, in the midnight of the Dark Ages, in the year 999, when the lamp of knowledge was well nigh extinguished, many people imagined that the Saviour was then coming. Indeed, so greatly were some disturbed in mind that in the churches and in the shadow of the churches multitudes slept during the last nights of the tenth century. But this planet and the heavenly bodies went on in their usual courses, and the excitement died away.

Even in the present day there have been premature expectations concerning this great event. In 1843 unwise speculations on this subject disturbed some communities in New England.

But the doctrines of Pre-millenarianism are conspicuous by their absence from the great Creeds of Christendom.

In the Apostles' Creed, which had its origin in the days of primitive Christianity, are these statements: "From thence he shall come

to judge the quick and the dead;" "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

The Nicene Creed, which was formulated in 325 A.D., declares: "And he shall come again with glory to judge the quick and the dead;" "I look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."

The Athanasian Creed, which is placed in the fifth century, contains the following: "From whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies; and shall give account for their own works. And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire."

It is highly significant that these three great Catholic Creeds contain no pre-millennial clauses, while, on the other hand, they do most unmistakably favor the post-millennial view. Dr. William B. Pope affirms that Millenarianism was "by no means at any time the faith of the Church, as is proved by its absence from all the early Creeds." He further states that "the doctrine of a pre-millennial coming of Christ was excluded from every form of early Creeds, the keynote of all these being, From THENCE HE SHALL COME TO JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD." From these facts it is fair to conclude that whatever unwarranted speculations on the *parousia* may have occurred, they never disturbed the theological thinkings of primitive Christianity.

Furthermore, in addition to these Creeds, the Christian world possesses six pre-eminently valuable documents—documents that really give a consensus of the faith of the Church Universal.

The Prayer Book of Episcopalianism is a venerable embodiment of holy teaching. Its Thirty-nine Articles give doubtless a good summary of the Christian faith of the sixteenth century, and its fourth article, on the Resurrection of Christ, affirms: "Christ did truly rise again, and took again his body, . . . wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day."

There is another very venerable document, the Westminster

Confession of Faith of Presbyterianism. In reference to Christ, the Mediator, in chapter eight, article four, it declares: "On the third day he rose from the dead with the same body in which he suffered; with which he also ascended into heaven, and there he sitteth at the right hand of the Father, making intercession; and shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world."

The Augsburg Confession was drawn up under the supervision of Luther and Melanchthon. The original document was read before Charles V. in 1530. This Confession is the chief standard of faith in the Lutheran Church, and largely represents the Protestantism of Europe. In its eighteenth article—"Of Christ's Return to Judgment"—are these words: "Our Churches also teach that at the end of the world Christ will appear for judgment; that he will raise all the dead; that he will bestow upon the pious and elect eternal life and endless joys, but will condemn wicked men and devils to be punished without end."

Likewise the Heidelberg Catechism is a largely representative theological statement. "It was compiled at the request of the Elector Frederick III.," was published in 1563, was "recognized" as an authoritative by the Synod of Dort in 1610, and has been translated into all the languages of Europe. It is the standard of all the Dutch and German Reformed Churches of America. In this compilation of doctrine we find these words in answer to question forty-six: "That Christ was taken up in sight of his disciples into heaven, and in our behalf thus continues, until he shall come again to judge the living and the dead."

The Larger Catechism of the Orthodox, Catholic, Eastern Church, which is the Greek Church, teaches the same doctrine concerning the *parousia*. This Catechism was approved by the Holy Synod and received the sanction of the Czar of Russia in 1859. (Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. ii, pp. 445, 542. See especially pp. 479-481. Questions 226-234.)

The Discipline of Methodism, though not as venerable, is a highly venerated, influential document. It gives both polity and theology to one of the most spiritual and intelligent post-

reformation, ecclesiastical organizations. Its evangelistic work and its Scriptural teachings are held in honor by the piety and learning of Christendom, and its third article, "Of the Resurrection of Christ," declares: "Christ did truly rise again from the dead and took again his body . . . wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day."

Surely it may be asserted that the three Creeds of the primitive Church and the great Confessions of Protestantism, so far as their doctrinal statements have any bearing on the question, most decidedly favor Post-millenarianism. Dr. William B. Pope says that "Mediæval Chiliasm was generally the badge of fanatical and heretical sects," and that "there have been no if Christ has already come, the Church has been in a most grievous error during all these centuries in celebrating the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Every minister of the Gospel is very familiar with these words: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this wine ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come."—1 Cor. xi, 26. Thus the whole of Christendom has been under a dreadful delusion for nearly two thousand years, or Christ did not come at the destruction of Jerusalem. We may be assured that Whedon is right when he says: "Nor is Christ represented as coming at the destruction of Jerusalem."

In the Apocalypse of Daniel and in that of John a clear light is thrown upon this question of the Second Advent. But it seems expedient at present to bestow special attention upon the Apocalypse of our Lord. Let us turn, then, to Matt, xxiv and xxv, Mark xii, and Luke xxi. The reader, especially when aided by a harmony of the Gospels, can discern the general order of events in this prophetic discourse. Still, it may be well to give the following outline, which is based upon Robinson's English Harmony which is divided into parts for the convenience of reference, and which, like the other quotations in this pamphlet, is according to the Revised Version:

1. "And Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on his way; and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said unto them, See ye not all these

things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

2. "And as he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"—Matt. xxiv, 1-3.

I.

1. "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man lead you astray. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall lead many astray."

2. "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet."

3. "For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. But all these things are the beginning of travail."—Matt. xxiv, 4-8.

4. "But take ye heed to yourselves; for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in synagogues shall ye be beaten; and before governors and kings shall ye stand for my sake, for a testimony unto them."—Mark xiii, 9. "Settle it, therefore, in your hearts, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries will not be able to withstand or to gainsay."—Luke xxi, 14, 15. "And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."—Matt. xxiv, 10-13.

5. "And this Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come."—Matt. xxiv, 14.

. . .

II.

1. "But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. Then let them that are in Judea flee unto the mountains ; and let them that are in the midst of her depart out: and let not them that are in the country enter therein. For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."—Luke xxi, 20-22.

2. "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is the Christ, or, Here; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. If therefore they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the wilderness; go not forth: Behold, he is in the inner chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east, and is seen even unto the west; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together."—Matt. xxiv, 23-28.

3. "And they shall fall by the edge of the sword; and shall be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled."—Luke xxi, 24.

4. "And there shall be signs in sun and moon and stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows; men fainting for fear, and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."—Luke xxi, 25-27.

5. "And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."—Matt. xxiv, 31.

III.

. . .

1. "But when these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh."—Luke xxi, 28.

2. "And he spake to them a parable: Behold the fig tree, and all the trees: when they now shoot forth, ye see it and know of your own selves that the summer is now nigh. Even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh." Luke xxi, 29-31. "Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away."—Matt. xxiv, 34, 35.

3. "But of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only."—Matt. xxiv, 36.

4. "And as were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came and took them all away; so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Then shall two men be in the field: one is taken and one is left ; two women shall be grinding at the mill; one is taken, and one is left. Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh."—Matt. xxiv, 37-42.

5. "But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what watch the thief was coming, . . . There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—Matt. xxiv, 43-51.

IV.

1. "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened to ten virgins. . . . Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour. For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants,

and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents. . . . There shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.”—Matt. xxv, 1-30.

2. “But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep and the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto those on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. . . . Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels. . . . And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life.”—Matt. xxv, 31-46.

1. In the beginning of this apocalypse our Lord predicts the destruction of the temple. This meant a great deal to the Jew; and therefore, in his discourse, Jesus often returns to the *tauta*, the “these things,” that refer specially to the temple and city—to the external overthrow of Judaism.

2. The disciples have now been with their Master for three years, and must have been taught many things concerning the purposes of God and must have known the bearing of their leading questions about the “these things,” the Second Coming, and the end of the world, or *æon*. This phrase, “the end of the world,” is used in the parable of the tares so as to define its meaning. “The harvest is the end of the world. As therefore the tares are gathered up and burned with fire; so shall it be in the end of the world.” “So shall it be in the end of the world; the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the righteous.”—Matt. xiii, 39, 40, 49. There need be no doubt about the disciples as intelligent questioners, though the vast content of the far-reaching answers was not fully apprehended.

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I.

1. Jesus began his answers by a caution against false Christs.

This was necessary. Milman says that “false prophets suborned by zealots kept the people in a feverish excitement, as though the Deliverer would still appear.” In vain hope, the deceived multitudes remained in the city, and on this account there was the unprecedented slaughter of 1,000,000 Jews during the siege. Nothing but our Lord’s earnest and repeated warnings caused the Christians to depart when Titus came against the city with his legions, and thus saved the Mother Church of Christendom.

2. Jesus, after speaking of wars and rumors of wars and comforting his disciples, distinctly informs them that “the end is not yet;” or, as Luke expresses it, “the end is not immediately.” Some say that Christ here refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. But, taking a general view of this discourse, it would appear that he answers their last question first. In that case the reference is probably to the primitive days of Christianity. Then political commotions were prominent features of history; and though there were persecutions, the Church extended and grew mightily, until in 312 it ascended the throne of the Cæsars in the person of Constantine. At that time Christians might have been deceived—might have imagined that the pretty general diffusion of the Gospel throughout the Roman world was the fulfillment of the prophecies; but Jesus at this place wisely cautions his Church: “The end is not yet.”

3. In this paragraph there is a more general statement concerning wars and calamities. The eye of the seer is now lifted to distant events. From the division of the Roman Empire in 328, when Constantinople was made the Eastern capital, through most disastrous periods when Goth, Vandal, and Hun did their work of destruction, to the downfall of Rome in 476 many peoples were in

the agonies of military disaster. Then followed the transition from pagan to papal Rome, which was the adding of hypocrisy to all the known wickedness of the world. Well might the Great Revealer say: "And these are the beginnings of travail." This passage in the original is very expressive, and shows that now began the birth pangs of the Church. In Rev. xii, 1-6, there is an explanation of this *travail*. "And a great sign was seen in heaven; a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; . . . and she cried out travailing in birth. . . . And the dragon stood before the woman which was about to be delivered, that . . . he might devour her child. And she was delivered of a man child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron: . . . And the woman fled to the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that there they may nourish her a thousand two hundred and threescore days." Taking a day for a year, this brings us down through the Dark Ages, when millions suffered death for Christ. Memorable centuries of imminent peril and dire distress! Amid throes of travail died the martyrs whose blood was the seed of the Church; and with unutterable pangs the Church brought forth reformers who fought the battles of civil and religious liberty for mankind. During these dismal ages God had a tower of refuge for his people in the wilderness of the Alpine Mountains. Assuredly, the light was set on a hill for illumination and for safety. Though Romanism ravaged all Europe for over one thousand years, yet the dragon was not able to devour our blessed Christianity, the child of the Church and the destined ruler of the nations.

4. In this part, as might be expected, our Lord prepares his followers for great trials. He comforts their minds by a special promise that words and wisdom will be given them when brought before rulers. Then, again, follow very sad predictions. Many shall stumble, false prophets shall arise, hatred shall show itself, iniquity shall increase, and the love of many shall grow cold. But salvation shall be given to them that are faithful to the end of life.

5. Now comes the welcome announcement that the Gospel of the kingdom shall be universally preached for a witness or testi-

mony. There has been discussion on this word "witness." The idea of preaching as a witness against men is quite contrary to the spirit of the Gospel, which is the good news of salvation. On this point Whedon says: "Assuredly God does not send the Gospel to increase man's condemnation." Christ told the disciples that they were *his* witnesses. He did not send them forth to witness against men, but to witness for him. "For God sent not his Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him."—John iii, 17. This is emphatically true, and only the coldest and narrowest dogmatism could imagine the dreadful pre-millennial exegesis, which makes the preacher principally a witness against men. Such preachers would not be the publishers of "good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people."—Luke ii, 10. But we need not have any doubts on this matter; for the Scriptures themselves plainly show what happy results shall come from this world-wide preaching. Daniel had a vision of a stone cut out without hands—a stone that moved, grew, crushed opposition and filled the whole earth. This vision plainly teaches that the Kingdom of God shall grow and crush all wicked powers; and fill the world with mighty and divine influences.

The all-pervading and all-subduing powers of Christianity are taught in the parable of the leaven. Christ brought truth from heaven and planted it in the hearts of men, and this truth shall leaven the whole world.

Paul throws light on this subject when he affirms: "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."—Rom. xiv, 17. This passage sets forth the character of the Church, which is a Holy Ghost Kingdom, which was set up on the day of Pentecost, and which is destined to universal sovereignty. This kingdom is present among us and is in us. It is under the gracious and infinitely powerful ministry of the Third Person of the glorious Trinity. This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, and his ministry is more to be desired than even the incarnated presence of the Saviour. Jesus himself knew this, and said it was expedient for him to depart that he might send the

Comforter. This blessed Spirit will renew the earth, so that all nations will in due time join in the triumphant anthem: "The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."—Rev. xi, 15.

Trusting in the Holy Ghost, one may safely conclude that the preaching, the witnessing, is unto salvation, and that in the good time coming the world will be full of testimony for Christ, and full of believers. This state of things will surely give humanity a thousand joyous years of a highly Christian civilization. "And then shall the end come," according to the words of the Great Prophet. In the foregoing paragraphs is the divinely given order of events, and the Second Advent is not placed before the general diffusion of Christianity among the nations.

II.

1. Having just given in outline the history of his Church, Jesus begins again at Jerusalem, and more fully explains certain matters of paramount importance. Urging his followers to make good their escape, he pathetically utters predictions of sorrow and slaughter attending the siege by the Romans.

2. There is here a return to the subject of false Christs, and that his followers may know how to detect them a certain sign is given. The Lord tells them that when he comes it will be with inimitable celestial manifestations. Merely to fully inform his disciples against deceivers, without reference to the chronological order of events, at this place is introduced. a description of the *parousia*. It was needful for the Jerusalem Christians to have this sign in reference to the manner of the coming, that they might be in no danger from deceivers, and in no danger of perishing in the destruction of the city. That such was the purpose in mentioning the *parousia* in this connection is evident from the context. In the very next verse, which must refer to the Roman army, are these words: "Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together." Evidently the destruction of Jerusalem, false prophets, and the

necessity of enabling his followers to detect deceivers are the great thoughts now in our Lord's mind; and his reference in this place to the coming is merely explanatory. Thus understood, the passage is quite plain, and does not disturb the order of events.

3. There is foretold in this part the destruction of the city, the saddest captivity of the Jews, and the fulfilling of the times of the Gentiles. But it is intimated that this, the longest captivity, will have an end. Is it not in harmony with the idea of a universal Christian civilization that wealthy converted Jews should take an interest in the Holy Land, and should build beautiful homes amid the precious memorials of the prophets, priests, and kings? They will love the sacred places that hold blessed memories of their long rejected, but now lovingly accepted, Prince of the House of David. Railways are already taking people to the Holy City, and Christianity will bestow beauty and plenty, peace and happiness, upon the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for an everlasting possession. Why should not our holy religion make the world in general, and Palestine in particular, bloom as the rose and flow with milk and honey?

But we must return to our subject and give attention to the latter part of Luke's statement: "until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." These words are of such large import that they must be interpreted by the Scriptures themselves. Happily Paul gives us the content of this passage in Romans, where he says,

"Now, if their fall is the riches of the world and their loss the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness."—Rom. xi, 12.

Again, in verse 25:

"For I would not, brethren, have you ignorant of this mystery, lest ye be wise in your own conceits, that a hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved."

Paul states that the fall of the Jews meant Gospel riches to the world, that the loss of the Jews meant bountiful outpourings of grace to the Gentiles. But how much greater blessings, Paul inti-

mates, will be bestowed on humanity when the Jews, beholding the triumphs of a world-wide Christianity, shall be constrained to read the New Testament and to accept their own Messiah. Now these fulfillings of God's gracious purposes, these fullnesses of blessing to Gentiles and Jews, can mean nothing less than the conversion of the world by the blessed Gospel. And what is a converted world? Will it not be the happy home of the millennial reign of righteousness? Now, observe, the Saviour places these times of fullness before his Second Advent.

4. To aid the student it may be suggested that the wickedness of the Jews after Pentecost foreshadowed the little season of apostasy which will follow the millennium, according to Rev. xx, 3; that the portents which Josephus declares appeared in the heavens prefigured the indescribable concomitants of the *parousia*; and that the destruction of Jerusalem represented the final catastrophe of the world. However, it is plain that after the fullness of Jews and Gentiles there will be wonderful appearances in the heavens, distress among the nations, and finally the coming of the Son of man. This order of events which is given by Luke is the same as that given by John in Revelation. After the millennium—sad thought!—part of humanity will relapse into wickedness. Then strange astronomical signs will appear, and fear and apprehension will overtake the backslidden nations. And finally shall be seen the infinitely glorious presence of the Judge Eternal.

5. After the solemn and dreadful declarations of the previous predictions, another comforting and gracious promise is made to the faithful. Amid the universal consternation and confusion their precious dust shall be remembered and shall be gathered from the four winds of the earth.

III.

. . .

1. Once more the Saviour comes back to the *tauta*, the “these things,” that refer to Jerusalem, and comforts his listening followers. He returns again to what particularly interested them. Lange says: “In harmony with apocalyptical style, he exhibited the judgments of his coming in a series of cycles, each of which depicts the whole futurity, but in such a manner that with every new cycle the scene seems to approximate to and more closely resemble the final catastrophe.” Remembering that Jesus returns more than once to Jerusalem as a starting point, aids in explaining these symbolical passages. Again the listening apostles are instructed and inspired, and are informed that the deliverance of the Kingdom of God from Judaism is nigh. The Master was a patient Teacher and knew that oft-repeated lessons are seldom forgotten.

2. In the parable of the fig tree is another guiding sign concerning the then near future. Jesus, moreover, tells them plainly that “these things,” the *tauta* of their first question which referred to Jerusalem and the city, are nigh at hand—that “this generation shall not pass away till all *these things* be accomplished.” That generation did witness the establishment of the Kingdom of God on the day of Pentecost, the overthrow of Judaism, and the destruction of city and temple. Note that the *tauta* is in the first question and has no reference to the Second Advent.

3. Jesus further teaches men that the times are in God’s keeping, and that men especially must be contented with only a dimly outlined knowledge of the great future.

4. The suddenness of the *parousia* is also emphasized. In the days of Noah the flood overtook the unprepared. Likewise at the Second Coming consternation will overwhelm the wicked; but as God took Noah into the ark, so he will take the good men and the good women, and will leave the bad to destruction. Well might the Church watch through all the ages for her Lord.

5. Earnest exhortations are given that God’s people may not be found unprepared at last.

. . .

IV.

1. These parables of the virgins and of the talents inculcate watchfulness and diligence. The parable of the talents shows also that a considerable time may elapse between the departure and return of our Lord; for the master mentioned went into a foreign country—into a “far country,” according to the Authorized Version. This fact should prevent any from placing undue stress upon such words as *immediately*.

2. We now approach the closing part of this glorious Apocalypse; and reverently would we listen to the awful sentences that are so easily understood. Here the Divine Majesty speaks in sublimest and simplest language, and settles the question under discussion. The Saviour finally and plainly states to his disciples that when he comes in all his glory, with the holy angels, there will be the general judgment of all nations, and the appointment of all human beings to their final states. These most solemn declarations closing the Apocalypse unmistakably show that the Second Advent and the Judgment of *all* mankind will take place at one and the same time.

Thus this prophetic discourse, beginning with Jerusalem and ending with the consummation of all things, when its parts are placed in their order, outlines in simple language the history of the Church, and proves that Christ will not come until after the millennium—until the last day; until the end of the world; until the general judgment. Notwithstanding this, the bride through all the centuries longingly and lovingly looks forward to the appearance of the bridegroom. Also, often in her loneliness and afflictions has she exclaimed, “Come, Lord Jesus!” But the bride must wait in patience, must attend to the duties of the hour, and must guard against false announcements and false bridegrooms.

It is apparent that the Great Prophet in this wonderful Apocalypse gives a simple and straight answer to our question. He has arranged the leading events of Church history in their true order, and has placed his coming after the millennium. Our question is

really answered. Still, it may be well to show that the general trend of Scripture is in harmony with this Apocalypse and to explain certain misunderstood passages.

In accordance with the foregoing post-millennial conclusions are the plain eschatological declarations of Scripture.

Hear Daniel: "And many of them that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."—Dan. xii, 2. The prophet evidently believed that there will be only *one* resurrection, and that it will take place at the time of the general judgment.

Listen to the Saviour: "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of judgment."—John v, 28, 29. Can there be any reason for not understanding this emphatic statement? The Saviour is very definite: "The *hour* cometh in which *all* the dead," the good and the bad, "shall come forth." It is impossible to explain away such passages. They are unanswerable proofs that there will be but *one* resurrection previous to the one judgment.

Mark Paul's declaration before Felix and the assembled Jews and Gentiles: "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust."—Acts xxiv, 15. In similar language the Apostle warned the Athenians: "He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness."—Acts xvii, 31. These are noteworthy expressions—*a* resurrection for both the just and unjust; *a day* for judging the world.

Observe Peter's explicit prediction: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."—2 Pet. iii, 10. This clearly shows that "the day of the Lord," which is the *parousia*, will witness the utter destruction of the Kosmos; not the inauguration of the millennium.

That these points may be forever put to rest in our minds, turn

to one more passage: "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it: and death and hades gave up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works." —Rev. xx, 11-13.

From the foregoing quotations it must be inferred that Daniel, our blessed Lord, Paul, Peter, and John believed in post-millenarianism. We are, therefore, warranted in concluding that the whole drift of Scripture favors the synchronizing of these four eschatological events; namely, the *parousia*, the resurrection, the end of the world, and the judgment of the whole human race.

1. There will be only one resurrection.
2. It will take place at the Second Coming.
3. The Second Coming will be at the end of the world.
4. At the end of the world will be the general judgment.

These conclusions cannot be set aside, because they are clearly and repeatedly revealed in Holy Writ. Even if two or three passages were found that could not be harmonized with them, still one would be compelled by the just principles of hermeneutics to accept the above statements. Let us examine the two or three passages upon which premillennialists lay so much stress.

There may be some misapprehension about Paul's meaning in 1 Thess. iv, 16, 17: "The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with him be caught up into the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord." All this is quite simple. The righteous dead will be raised before the living are changed.

Also, there is no harm in supposing that as a matter of precedence the righteous will come out of their graves before the unrighteous. But all these events will take place in a very brief space

of time. "We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible."—1 Cor. xv, 51, 52. These verses present no difficulty. In truth, they favor Post-millenarianism.

But the next passage for consideration has caused a good deal of trouble, and one should approach it in a reverent and prayerful spirit. In Second Thessalonians Paul instructs his erring brethren and tells them not to be beguiled—tells them of "the man of sin," "the son of perdition," that will sit "in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." Now comes the crucial difficulty—"And then shall be revealed the lawless one, whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of his mouth, and bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming."—2 Thess. ii, 3-8.

In commenting on Second Thessalonians, Mr. Wesley states that "this epistle was written soon after the former, on account of some things therein which had been misunderstood," and adds that Paul "corrects their mistake concerning the coming of our Lord." They had taken superficial views, and it was necessary to set them right, by showing that the Second Advent was not imminent, because "the son of perdition" must be revealed before the *parousia*.

But who is this "that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God, or that is worshiped?" Mr. Wesley's comment is doubtless correct. "In many respects," he says, "the Pope has an indisputable claim to these titles. He is emphatically the man of sin." Of late some have been giving a pitifully insignificant explanation by calling Nero "the man of sin"—Nero, who was merely one of the despicable emperors of Rome. But Romanism, the vile mother of unutterable monsters and unparalleled crimes which darkened long ages into blackest night—Romanism, "mystery of iniquity," somewhat adequately corresponds to the stupendous and appalling metaphors of Scripture. The old commentators knew this antichrist better than we do, and were assured that only the diabolism of Romanism could answer this description of the "son of perdition."

Now, Paul states that this "man of sin," this antichrist of all the

antichrists, will have his period before *the parousia*. This is generally believed. And, if Romanism is tottering to the fall, which appears to be the case, may not the Second Advent be expected at any moment? In answer, observe, the apostle states that by “the breath of his mouth” Christ shall slay this “man of sin.” The Authorized Version reads: “The spirit of the mouth.” But this breath or spirit of his mouth can mean nothing else than the preaching of the Gospel in the power of the Spirit. According to Isaiah: “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.”—Isa. xi, 4. It is plain, therefore, that by preaching, which is the two-edged sword that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord, “the man of sin” will be slain. Yes, Christianity will destroy the papacy. This prediction accords with the signs of the times. What vast triumphs have been won since the days of Luther! In no country can the Inquisition now burn a Christian, and only in the very darkest parts of the earth can priests burn Bibles. Indeed, at the present time under the very walls of the Vatican the Holy Scriptures are sold. Moreover, public sentiment is so generally Christianized that the Pope is beginning to talk patronizingly of the Word of God. The temporal power has gone, the influence of the priesthood is going, and the mother of abominations is becoming such a noisomeness in the nostrils of nations that soon an indignant and outraged humanity “shall slay” this most gigantic hypocrisy.

Still this difficult passage needs further explanation. What is the meaning of the next clause—“bring to naught by the manifestation of his coming?” Dean Alford’s rendering is very expressive—“annihilate by the appearance of his coming.” After all, is there not here a difficulty for pre-millennialists? Is Romanism to be destroyed by two agencies, namely, the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming? How explain this? You cannot do it satisfactorily except on the post-millennial theory, which theory teaches that there will be a world-wide preaching of the Gospel, and that the sword of his mouth shall slay this dragon and inaugurate the millennium. Then after the thousand years of peace and righteousness

there will be the “little season” of apostasy when loosened Satan will revive the spirit of antichrist; and then the Lord will forever annihilate that resuscitated “man of sin” by his glorious coming. This seems to be the proper exegesis. It gives full significance to the whole passage and brings it into perfect harmony with other portions of Scripture. Our premature brethren err badly in ignoring the first clause, which shows that the “son of perdition” is to be slain not by the coming, but by the preaching of the Word. Some good people seem to overlook everything but the *parousia*, and in consequence fall into grievous mistakes.

There remains another passage to which pre-millennialists always refer with much confidence. Turn to Rev. xx, 1-8: “And I; saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years should be finished: after this he must be loosed for a little time.”

“And I saw thrones, and they that sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshiped not the beast, neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they lived, and reigned with Christ a thousand years. The rest of the dead lived not until the thousand years should be finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: over these the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

“And when the thousand years are finished, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall come forth to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to the war: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.”

Will pre-millennialists kindly answer a few questions that are naturally suggested by this extended passage?

1. What sort of persons will be those raised-up saints and those raised-up sinners?

2. What intercourse will the glorified saints have with these resurrected sinners?

3. How does Satan deceive the nations?

(a) If they are glorified saints how can he deceive them?

(b) If they are raised-up sinners why need he deceive them?

It must be confessed that the literal interpretation of this passage presents manifold difficulties, and really violates both human reason and Scripture usage. In this Book of Revelation especially does one expect to find glorious truth veiled in mystic metaphor. In no other literature of earth are found such elaborate symbols and such stupendous figures of speech. Why attempt to literalize this *one* passage and thereby contradict many plain passages and run into inextricable difficulties?

But how naturally these declarations disclose their divine meaning to a spiritual interpretation. Call this first resurrection the happy change which God works in man when he raises him from a death of sin to a life of righteousness. Is not the preacher orthodox when he proclaims: "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light?" The whole host of the Church Militant has already "passed from death unto life." All believers must yield themselves "unto God as those that are alive from the dead." The forgiving father said truly, "Thy brother was dead and is alive again." The Saviour is resurrection and life to both soul and body.

Is it not highly scriptural to say that this first resurrection is the raising of the soul from death to life? Truly blessed and holy is he that hath part in this first resurrection. Verily, on him the second death, which is separation from God and heaven, has no power. Thus beautifully revealed is the gracious mind of the Spirit, and we

are enabled to understand these resurrections and deaths. There are two resurrections, one of the soul and one of the body; as there are two deaths, one of the body and one of the soul.

Thus far all is plain. But there is another difficulty in this passage. What is meant by the martyrs and confessors living and reigning with Christ a thousand years?

On a certain occasion Pope Adrian used this language: "The heretics Huss and Jerome are alive again in the person of Martin Luther." A similar use of speech is found in the case of Elijah, concerning whom Malachi made a prediction: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord come."—Mal. iv, 5. Jesus explained this when in speaking of John the Baptist he said, "This is Elijah which is to come." These are not orientalisms, but common figures of speech.

Here, then, is the explanation of this much-misunderstood passage. The martyrs and confessors will live again in their godly successors, and in the doctrines for which they suffered. The glorious company of the reformers, like their ascended Lord, will live through all ages in the grateful memory of a saved world. In the same way the wicked will live after the millennium. The Neros and the Borgias will be reproduced in the Gogs and the Magogs.

It does appear that this very imperfect outline gives somewhat of the content of this marvelously graphic vision. After all, these dark passages are luminous, and inspire the Church of Christ with faith and hope. The future has blessed days in store. We believe with the Chiliasts in a period of about ten centuries when the Gospel will hold benign sway over the nations: for the Word of God proves that the present dispensation of the Holy Spirit will produce the millennium. Zion is putting on her beautiful garments, and upon her is resting the glory of God. Of the coming splendors of the Church wise Solomon caught a glimpse and uttered his welcome. "Who is this that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"—Song vi, 10.

Summing up the foregoing, it may safely be concluded that the

great coming events of human history will be in the following order:

1. The millennium, a period of divine blessing and material prosperity, brought about by the present ministries of the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Gospel.
2. The little season of apostasy when Satan shall be allowed for a short time to deceive men.
3. The Second Advent of our Lord in indescribable glory.
4. The resurrection of all the dead, good and bad.
5. The end of the world, which will be consumed by fire.
6. The general judgment of all mankind.
7. The eternal states of happiness and misery.

In all plainness and fullness, and repeatedly, we think that the Scriptures have answered our question. The Church may expect the Second Coming of Christ after the "little season" of apostasy which will follow the millennium.

We would most earnestly entreat all Christians not to be disturbed in mind by any predictions declaring that the world is getting worse and worse, that the Gospel will not save the nations, and that our principal duty is to look for the speedy coming of Christ.

By misplacing the predictions concerning the apostasy that will follow the millennium, certain would-be prophets, imagining that the present time is the "little season," are loud in their outcry about the decadence of Christianity and the prevalence of evil. This is one of Satan's mighty deceptions. He is doing his utmost to discourage the righteous, knowing that disheartened men are easily defeated. Let the Church therefore shake off this dejected and doleful spirit. The signs of the times are most hopeful and inspiring. The Sacramental Host of God is moving forward everywhere. To prove this the reader has merely to compare the missionary reports of last year with those published fifty years ago. Beware, then, of this nightmare of pre-millennial pessimism which is utterly

ruinous to individual believers and highly inimical to missionary zeal.

For a long time the wicked one has predicted that the Gospel would be a failure, and even some good people have fallen into the snare, and have become very faint-hearted about missions. This cannot be denied. All know that the great Protestant organizations, whose Creeds and confessions are post-millennial, are doing nearly all the missionary work of the Church Militant. In Japan, China, India, and South America you find hundreds and thousands of godly men and women who are working and believing that the Gospel will convert the world. But where are the missions of the so-called Second Adventists? Of course there are some missionaries and some societies that are infected with Pre-millenarianism. But the believers in this doctrine are doing very little to save the world. And this is natural; for who would wish to be a witness against men and to represent a dying cause?

At present our chief duty is not to indulge in fanciful expectations about the *parousia*; but to obey our Lord's command, "Occupy till I come."—Luke xix, 13. Let our motto be like that of the Salvation Army, "The World for God," and let our faith be as large as the Abrahamic covenant and embrace "all families." How the deceiver tries to circumscribe the promises! He would fain limit the Lord's predictions to the Roman Empire, or to the world as known by the Apostles. Emphatically repudiate all such God-dishonoring minimizings of heaven's gracious and comprehensive announcements. Surely, our Lord's great heart and thought included America as well as Europe, the islands of the sea as well as the cradle of humanity, in the Gospel provisions.

It may be well to give the genesis of the pre-millennial notion. This is the same error that troubled scribes and Pharisees, and caused them to reject the Nazarene. The unconverted Jew has for a long time been looking for an earthly material kingdom over which the Messiah in Solomon-like splendor should reign. Even the disciples were troubled with expectations of pomp and state, and the Saviour found it necessary to correct their ideas. He told them

plainly, "My kingdom is not of this world."—John xviii, 36. Again, he said, "The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation."—Luke xvii, 20. Is it not a pity that to-day we are troubled with this leaven of the Pharisees? When will people cease this desire for some visible, imposing imperialism? How wicked to reject the manna of the Gospel and seek after some ill-defined wonderful display at Jerusalem.

We must never allow Satan to destroy our faith in Christianity. Do we want a better book than God's inspired Word for the instruction of men? Can any atoning sacrifice be more precious than the blood of Jesus? Can there be a more glorious ministry than that of the Holy Spirit for the sanctification of men? You may rest assured that any teaching which undervalues or sets aside this infinitely glorious salvation is not of God. In the sacrifice of Christ and in the Holy Spirit heaven has done the utmost for mankind. Thus we see that Pre-millenarianism offers a most serious affront to our blessed Lord and to the Holy Spirit. Indeed, this error is one of the most subtle and therefore one of the most dangerous of the present day. It becomes all good Christian people to renounce it, and to pray, work, and believe for the conversion of the world.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Amen.

CHAPTER 5
A POSTMILLENNIAL SERMON BY
BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD, LUKE
13:23



Are They Few that be Saved?

by

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD,
D. D., LL. D., LITT. D.

Professor in Princeton Theological Seminary

ARE THEY FEW THAT BE SAVED? THE *PAUCITAS salvandorum* has long ranked among a wide circle of theologians as an established dogma. To cite only a couple of examples from the great Lutheran systematists of the seventeenth century, John Gerhard (1621) and John Andrew Quenstedt (1685), uncle and nephew, both teach it without misgiving. Speaking of what he calls “the object of eternal life,” “Gerhard remarks, [*Loci Communes*, Ed. Cotta, 1781, Vol. XX, p. 518.] that so far as sinners of the human race are concerned, they are first of all “few.” “No doubt,” he adds in the wish to do justice to the whole subject, “if the elect are considered in themselves and absolutely, their number is sufficiently large (Rev. 7:9: ‘After these things I saw and behold a great multitude

which no man could number out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the lamb, in white robes and palms in their hands'). But if they are considered comparatively, that is in comparison with the company of the lost, they are and are said to be few. Without any contradiction, therefore, the Scriptures assert that 'many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven' (Matt. 18:11), and that 'there are few that be saved' (Lk. 13:23), that 'the gate is narrow and the way straitened that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it' (Mat. 7:14; Lk. 13:24), that 'many are called but few chosen' (Mat. 20:16; 22:14)." Similarly, Quenstedt, in enumerating the "attributes" of the elect and of the reprobate—synonyms of the saved and the lost—gives the primary place in the two instances respectively to 'fewness' and "multitudinousness." "The attributes of the elect," says he, [*Theologia Didactica-Polemica*, 1715, tom. II. col. 30.] "are (1). Fewness, as is taught in Mat. 20:16; 22:14 and elsewhere. 'Many are called but few chosen.' Here ὀλίγοι 'few' are opposed to τοῖς πολλοῖς, 'many,' or πασῶν, 'all,' as is shown by the lucid contrast made by Christ. But Christ contrasts, not election and vocation, but the number of the elect and of the called. If it be asked why the lesser part of men are elected and the larger part reprobated, the answer is that, according to the counsel of God, believers who are few are the elect, and unbelievers who are many are the reprobate. Because there are few that believe, there are also few who are elected." And again [Col. 34.]: "The attributes of the reprobate are (1) multitudinousness. For, because many are unbelieving, therefore also many are reprobated. It is therefore said, 'Few are chosen' (Mat. 20:16), in comparison, that is, with the far greater multitude of the reprobate. The Saviour intimates the same thing in Mat. 7:13f, saying: 'Enter in by the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction; and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate and straitened the way that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it.' Observe, the gates are wide and narrow, and the two ways are broad and strait.

The broad way leads to death, the strait to life; the former is trodden by many, the latter is found by few.”[1.]

The firmness with which this dogma is held could scarcely receive a more striking illustration than is afforded by the necessity under which Abraham Kuyper seems to feel that he rests, of bringing into harmony with it the great fact on which he has repeatedly and very fruitfully insisted, that it is “mankind as an organic whole which is saved” and the lost are accordingly only individuals who have been cut off from the stem of humanity. [2.] “Ask,” he finely says, on one occasion, [3.] “whether God has deserted since the fall this, His splendid creation, this human race with all its treasure of His image,—in a word, this His world, in order that, casting it aside, He may create an entirely new somewhat out of and for the elect. And the answer of the Scriptures is a decided negative.... If we liken mankind, thus, as it has grown up out of Adam, to a tree, then the elect are not leaves which have been plucked off from the tree, that there may be braided from them a wreath for God’s glory, while the tree itself is to be felled, rooted up and cast into the fire; but precisely the contrary, the lost are the branches, twigs and leaves which have fallen away from the stem of mankind, while the elect alone remain attached to it. Not the stem itself goes to destruction, leaving only a few golden leaflets strewn on the fields of eternal light, but, on the contrary, the stem, the tree, the race abides, and what is lost is broken from the stem and loses its organic connection.” Nevertheless he conceives himself bound to explain that the tree of humanity which abides may be, and in point of fact is, less in actual mass than the branches which are broken off for the burning. It is of the very nature of an organic as distinguished from a mechanical object, he argues, that it can suffer changes—even such as contract and curtail it—without losing its identity. “The human race,” he explains, [4.] “is thus to be compared to a tree which has been pruned and now again shoots up in a smaller size. The ruin of the genus humanum is not restored in its entirety; it becomes in its reconstitution an organism of smaller proportions. The Church, thus, conceived as

the reconstitution of the human race, forms an organism of smaller compass, but the organism itself undergoes no change from this. Taken thus relatively, in comparison with the compass which the organism had earlier, the Church is a little flock. Taken absolutely, on the other hand, it is a great host which no man can number. The idea of some Christians that the whole of Europe is sometime to be Christianized, and after a while the entirety of the human race is to bow the knee to Jesus, cannot be maintained. The Holy Scriptures contradict this erroneous idea: Mat. 20:16, 'For many are called, but few chosen,' Mat. 7:14; Lk. 13:23."

The *dicta probantia*, relied upon for the establishment of this dogma of the fewness of the saved, are, as will have been observed from the instances cited, ordinarily [5.] these four: Mat. 7:14f; Luke 13:23f; Mat. 20:16; 22:14. As Mat. 20:13, a mere repetition in any event of Mat. 22:14, is spurious, the proof texts reduce to the three following, which we reproduce from the American Revised Version. "And one said unto him, Lord, are they few that are saved? And He said unto them, Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." (Luke 13:23f.) "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate and straitened the way that leadeth into life, and few are they that find it." (Mat. 7:13f.) "For many are called, but few chosen." (Mat. 22:14.)

A scrutiny of these passages will make it sufficiently apparent that they do not form an adequate basis for the tremendous conclusion which has been founded on them. In all of them alike our Lord's purpose is rather ethical impression than prophetic disclosure. Spoken out of the immediate circumstances of the time to the immediate needs of those about Him, His words supply valid motives to action to all who find themselves with similar needs in like circumstances; but they cannot be read as assurances that the circumstances intimated or implied are necessarily constant and must remain forever unchanged. What He says is directed to inciting His hearers to strenuous effort to make their calling and

election sure, rather than to revealing to them the final issue of His saving work in the world. When we read His words in the latter sense, we, therefore, do a certain violence to them; in deflecting them from their purpose we distort also their meaning and confuse their implications. We can always learn from these passages that salvation is difficult and that it is our duty to address ourselves to obtaining it with diligence and earnest effort. We can never learn from them how many are saved.

With respect to Luke 13:23, 24, this is obvious on the face of it. [6.] The mere fact that Luke has introduced this question and its answer immediately after his record of the two parables of the mustard seed and the leaven in the meal (13:18-21) is evidence enough that he at least saw no intimation in our Lord's declaration that the number of the saved would be few. Theodor Zahn even goes the length of supposing that Luke was led to introduce this question and answer at this point, precisely by his record of these parables. The recognition in them that the Kingdom of God was in its beginnings small and insignificant suggested to him to record the question which these small and insignificant beginnings raised in the mind of one of Jesus' followers and Jesus' response to it. [7.] However that may be, it surely would in any event have been impossible for Luke thus to bring simply into immediate conjunction words of our Lord which announce the complete conquest of the world by His Kingdom and words of our Lord which declare that only a few shall be saved.

Meanwhile it is clear that the questioner in our passage spoke under the oppression of the pitiful weakness of the Kingdom as it presented itself to his observation. Certainly Jesus had attracted to His person only a "little flock," and to them He had distinctly promised the Kingdom (12:32). He had been intimating, moreover, ever more and more clearly of late, the exclusion from the Kingdom of the great mass of the people. And His face was now set towards Jerusalem (verse 22). [8.] We may fancy the questioner either as deeply troubled by the puzzling situation, [So apparently Zahn.] or as rather pluming himself on belonging to so exclusive a

circle. [So Hahn.] But whether speaking out of a heavy heart or out of a light head, [Zahn's language.] the question he put was a natural one in the circumstances.

Our Lord, however, gives no direct response to the question put to Him. He only makes it the occasion of addressing to those about Him [Contrast: "And one said unto Him" with "And He said unto them."] (among whom the questioner is, of course, included) an exhortation and a warning. They are to "strive to go in by the narrow door"—that is the exhortation. And the warning is: "Because many shall try to go in and shall not have the power." The important thing for them is not, to know whether few or many are saved, but, to address themselves strenuously to their own salvation. There is no revelation here accordingly that only a few are saved; there is a solemn declaration that many of those who seek to be saved fail. It is, in other words, not the number of the saved that is announced, but the difficulty of salvation. The point of the remark is that salvation is not to be assumed by any one as a matter of course, but is to be sought with earnest and persistent effort. [A. B. Bruce in loc.: "In the interpretation, the one point to be insisted on is: be in earnest."] We must fight [$\alpha\gamma\omega\nu\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\sigma\theta\epsilon$.] if we would win; it is in its due application true of all, everywhere and always, that they must enter into the Kingdom of God through many tribulations (Acts 14:22).

The meaning of Mat. 7:13-14, though somewhat more complicated, is scarcely less clear [9.] than that of Luke 13:23, 24. The chief formal difference between the two passages is that what is only implied in Luke—the wide door contrasting with the narrow, the two ways leading respectively to the two doors—is brought into open view in Matthew, and the whole scene is painted in detail for us. The characteristic of Matthew's account is, indeed, picturesque vividness, and we shall understand it best if we will visualize it as a picture; if we will summon up in our imagination the broad and roomy road running off on the one side, crowded with passengers, and the hemmed in and constricted pathway passing through its narrow gate on the other, with only a sparse traveller on it here and

there; and hear our Lord say as He points the two out, This leads off to destruction, that to life: go in by the narrow gate! It is nevertheless just Luke's "Strive to go in by the narrow door" over again, presented more vividly and drawn out more fully. The lesson is the same; the exhortation is the same; and though the motive adduced is less explicit than in Luke, it, too, is the same. The specialty of Luke's account is the emphasis with which it throws up the difficulty of the task: the exhortation is to strenuous endeavor, "strive"; and the motive adduced is the failure of many to compass the task, "for many, I say to you, shall try to go in and shall not prevail." In Matthew's account, the difficulty of the task is no less the underlying motive of the exhortation, but it is not so openly asserted. It is left to be implied by the contrast between the wideness and roominess of the road that leads off to destruction, and the narrowness of the gate and the constriction of the way that lead off to life; and the consequent populousness of the one road and the fewness of those by whom the other is discovered. [10.] A. B. Bruce says, quite erroneously: "The passage itself contains no clue to the right way except that it is the way of the few." The mark of the right way, on the contrary, is presented as that, in contrast with the broad, ample and smooth road which leads to destruction, it is narrow and constricted and hard to travel. [11.] That there are many who enter in by the one road and few who find the other is presented as merely the result of the difference in the roads themselves,—that the one is inviting and easy, the other repellent and difficult. The lesson that is taught, therefore, is not that there are few that are saved but that the way of life is hard. It is, therefore, that the fundamental exhortation was not "Go with the few!" but "Go in by the narrow gate!" [12.]

No doubt in the picture presented to our gaze the broad and roomy road is represented as crowded with journeyers and the straitened way as followed only by a few. A contrast is thus drawn between those who enter through the broad and roomy road as many, and those who find the narrow gate and straitened way as few. It is not unnatural to read this as intended to teach that the

number of the saved in general is inconsiderable, at least in comparison with the number of the lost. Nevertheless it would be wrong thus to transmute this vivid transcript of a phase of life into a didactic assertion of the ultimate proportions of the saved and lost. We should be warned against such mechanical dealings with our Lord's similitudes by a remembrance of parallel instances. There is no more reason to suppose that this similitude teaches that the saved shall be fewer than the lost than there is to suppose that the parable of the Ten Virgins (Mat. 25:1ff) teaches that they shall be precisely equal in number: and there is far less reason to suppose that this similitude teaches that the saved shall be few comparatively to the lost than there is to suppose that the parable of the Tares in the Corn (Mat. 13:24ff) teaches that the lost shall be inconsiderable in number in comparison with the saved—for that, indeed, is an important part of the teaching of that parable. What we have in our present similitude is merely a vivid picture of life, true to the life that lay before the eyes of those our Saviour was addressing; true, no doubt, too, to the life that lies still before our eyes after two thousand years have passed; and therefore carrying home to their consciences and to ours with poignancy and effect the fundamental teaching of the similitude—that the way of life is hard and it is our first duty to address ourselves with vigor to walking firmly in it. But why must we say that this similitude must be equally true to life always and everywhere? Can there be no community—has there never been a community, is there no community to-day—however small, in which, happily, the majority of the inhabitants have deserted the broad and ample road that leads to destruction and are pursuing the straitened way through the narrow gate that leads to life? And as the years and centuries and ages flow on, can it never be—is it not to be—that the proportions following “the two ways” shall be reversed? There is nothing in this vivid picture of the life of man as falling under the observation of our Lord's hearers—and our own—to forbid the hope—or expectation—of such a reversal. [13.] That could be only if it were didactically asserted that in the ultimate distribution of the awards

of human life, few are to be found among the saved, many among the lost. That is so far from the case here, however, that the proportions of travellers on the two ways are introduced only incidentally and for the purpose of giving point to another lesson,—the difficulty of salvation and the consequent duty of effort in seeking it. If there be any intimation elsewhere in the Scriptures that the proportions of the travellers on the two roads may be altered as time goes on, there is no reason why we should insist, on the basis of this passage, that there must always be few following the narrow way and many the wide—with the result that the sum in the one case shall to the end remain small and in the other shall by the end become enormous. And when we have said that we have already said that the passage supplies in no case any real ground for such an assumption.

There is no more reason to suppose that our Lord intends to sum up the whole history of redemption in the words of Matt. 22:14. [14.] The parable of which these words form the concluding clause is no doubt historical in its teaching; it pictures the offering of the Kingdom of God to the Jews by the prophets and the apostles and their rejection of it; and then the turning to the Gentiles and the gathering of the mixed body of the external church. It is with His eye on the rejection of the invitation of the Kingdom by the Jews and the sifting out of the unworthy among the Gentiles, symbolized by the single figure of verses 12 and 13, that our Lord sums up the results of this history in the words rendered in our English versions, "For many are called but few chosen." [15.] For a right estimate of the meaning of these words it is important to determine whether they form part of the parable itself, the closing words of the king, or (cf. Matt. 18:35) are an addition by our Lord in His own person, summing up the teaching of the parable. [16.] In the latter case the terms employed in the saying need not be and probably are not, but in the former case—which seems assuredly the true case [So *e.g.*, James Moffat.]—they cannot be and certainly are not, technical theological terms, analogous to, though not identical in signification with, the terms "called," "elect," which meet us

in the didactic portions of the New Testament; but must find their explanation in the foregoing narrative. As this narrative is told, there had been many bidden to the marriage feast, and comparatively few, perhaps, approved; and it must be presumed that it is this experience which the king sums up in his closing words—if they be his. If they be, on the other hand, our Lord's own words summing up the teaching of His parable, it is still most natural to suppose that He confines Himself in His summing up to the bit of history which He had recited and speaks from the standpoint of the moment rather than that of the distant Judgment Day. The bit of history which the parable portrays, however, relates only the contemptuous and ultimately violent rejection of the Kingdom of God by the Jews and the consequent turning to the Gentiles with the result of attracting to it a mixed multitude. This situation is very fairly summarized in the words: "Many are bidden, but few accepted." It would in any event be incredibly harsh to take the word "called" here with any other reference than that in which "call," "called" are repeatedly used in the earlier portion of the parable. Whether, then, we assign the words to the king or to Jesus Himself, speaking outside the limits of the parable, their reference seems confined to the historical experience related in the parable, and that is as much as to say to the days of the founding of the Church. [17.]

It is therefore that Calvin in his comment on the passage contents himself with saying: "I do not enter into a searching discussion here of the eternal election of God, because the words of Christ have no other meaning than that an external profession of faith is not at all a sufficient proof that God will acknowledge as His own all who appear to have accepted His invitation." [Calvini *Opera*. Ed. Baum, Cunitz and Reuss, Vol. XIV, p. 402; E. T. *Harmony of the Evangelists*, Vol. II, p. 175.] That, of course, is spoken on the supposition that the reference of the words is only to the immediately preceding verses, which describe the casting out of the man who had not on a wedding garment. If the reference be broadened, as it would seem that it should be, to the whole series of invitations

described in the parable and their results, [So Zahn.] the lesson must be correspondingly broadened to something like—if we may borrow Jülicher's words without attaching ourselves too closely to his meaning—"The enjoyment of the Kingdom of God is connected with quite other conditions than merely having been invited." [P. 427.] Perhaps we may say that the meaning is simply that there are many who have been invited to the gospel feast who do not really belong there; and that our Lord's ethical intention—always a foremost thing in our Lord's teaching—is, like that of Mat. 7:13f, Luke 13:23f, to incite His hearers to see to it that they both respond to the invitation of the Gospel and live according to it. This is finely brought out by Melancthon [*Corpus Operum*, Vol. IX, p. 951f.] in the intimation that the declaration contains for us a consolation and a warning: a consolation—by reminding us, when we see so many hypocrites in the church, that, after all, there is a true church within the church; and a warning, for ourselves to make our calling and election sure.

The weakness of the basis for a dogma of *paucitas salvandorum* supplied by these passages cannot be buttressed by the adduction of other passages of similar nature. Passages of similar nature are somewhat difficult to discover; and they naturally rest under similar disabilities. Perhaps the most notable of those which readily suggest themselves is 1 Peter 3:20. There we are told that "a few, that is eight souls," escaped in the ark through the water, and this is presented as a type of Christians passing through the water of baptism to safety. [In this mode of statement we are following Charles Bigg, *in loc.* It is more common to take "through the water" instrumentally.] The express mention of the fewness of those saved in the ark is certainly noticeable, and suggests that Peter was writing out of a keen sense of the fewness of those whom he saw typified by this escape. [18.] This being granted, however, we are scarcely justified in going on and seeing here an assertion of the fewness of the saved as the ultimate fact of all Christian development. Why may we not rather see here the reflection in Peter's consciousness of his own experience of the first proclamation of

Christianity? Unquestionably it was in very small beginnings that the Kingdom of God began; or, perhaps, the right form of statement is that the Kingdom of God has begun—for is not this church of the twentieth century still the primitive church?" [19.] To our Lord, to His apostles, to His followers up to to-day the Kingdom of God has been like the mustard seed, "which indeed is less than all seeds," or like a mere speck of leaven which is lost in the meal in which it is buried. (Mat. 13:31-35.) E. H. Plumptre is not without a measure of justification, therefore, when he writes: "The sad contrast between the many and the few runs through all our Lord's teaching. He came to 'save the world,' and yet those whom He chooses out of the world are but a 'little flock.' The picture is a dark one; and yet it represents but too faithfully the impression made—I do not say on Calvinist or even Christian, but on any ethical teacher—by the actual state of mankind around us." What saves the picture from being as dark as it is painted is that the contrast between the many and the few is not the only contrast which runs through our Lord's teaching and the teaching of His apostles. Side by side with it is the contrast between the present and the future. These small beginnings are to give way to great expansions. The grain of mustard seed when sowed in the field (which is the world) is not to remain less than all seeds: it is to become a tree in the branches of which the birds of heaven lodge. The speck of leaven is not to remain hidden in the mass of meal: it is to work through the meal until the whole [20.] of it is leavened. The presence of this class of representations side by side with those which speak of few being saved necessarily confines the reference of the latter to the initial stages of the kingdom, and opens out the widest prospect for the reach of the saving process as time flows on; so wide a prospect as quite to reverse the implications with respect to the ultimate proportions of the saved and the lost.

It does not fall within the scope of this discussion to adduce the positive evidence that the number of the saved shall in the end be not small but large, and not merely absolutely but comparatively large; that, to speak plainly, it shall embrace the immensely greater

part of the human race. Its purpose has been fulfilled if it has shown that the foundation on which has been erected the contrary opinion, that the number of the saved shall be comparatively few, far the smaller part of the race, crumbles when subjected to scrutiny. For the rest it will suffice simply to remark in passing that it is the constant teaching of Scripture that Christ must reign until He shall have put all His enemies under His feet—by which assuredly spiritual, not physical, conquest is intimated; that it is inherent in the very idea of the salvation of Christ, who came as Saviour of the world, in order to save the world, that nothing less than the world shall be saved by Him; and that redemption as a remedy for sin cannot be supposed to reach its final issue until the injury inflicted by sin on the creation of God is repaired, and mankind as such is brought to the destiny originally designed for it by its creator. We must judge, therefore, that those theologians have the right of it who not merely refuse to repeat the dogma that only a few are saved, but are ready to declare with Alvah Hovey, as he brings his little book on Biblical Eschatology [21.] to a close with a reference “to the vast preponderance of good over evil as the fruit of redemption,” that “not only will order be restored throughout the universe, but the good will far outnumber the bad; the saved will be many times more than the lost.”

These theologians include—to go no further afield—such honored names among prophets of our own as Charles Hodge, Robert L. Dabney and William G. T. Shedd. “We have reason to believe,” writes Charles Hodge, [22.]“... that the number finally lost in comparison with the whole number of the saved will be very inconsiderable. Our blessed Lord, when surrounded by the innumerable company of the redeemed, will be hailed as the ‘*Salvator Hominum*,’ the Saviour of men, as the Lamb that bore the sins of the world.” Robert L. Dabney, expressing regret that the fact has been “too little pressed” “that ultimately the vast majority of the whole mass of humanity, including all generations, will be actually

redeemed by Christ,” adds: [Syllabus and Notes, etc., 3d ed., 1885, p. 525.] “There is to be a time, blessed be God, when literally all the then world will be saved by Christ, when the world wall be finally, completely and wholly lifted by Christ out of the gulf, to sink no more. So that there is a sense, most legitimate, in which Christ is the prospective Saviour of the world.” “Two errors, therefore,” remarks W. G. T. Shedd, [23.] “are to be avoided: First, that all men are saved; secondly, that only a few men are saved.... Some ... have represented the number of the reprobated as greater than that of the elect, or equal to it. They found this upon the word of Christ, ‘Many are called, but few are chosen.’ But this describes the situation at the time when our Lord spake, and not the final result of His redemptive work. But when Christ shall have ‘seen of the travail of His soul’ and been ‘satisfied’ with what he has seen; when the whole course of the Gospel shall be complete, and shall be surveyed from beginning to end, it will be found that God’s elect, or church, is ‘a great multitude which no man can number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues,’ and that their voice is as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Hallelujah, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.’ Rev. 7:9; 19:6.”

FOOTNOTES:

[1.] We add in a note a parallel example from a Reformed divine of the same general standing. John Henry Heidegger, *Corpus Theologiae Christianae*, 1700, vol. I, p. 109 (Locus, V. §4), writes as follows: “Not only did God not elect all, but not even most, but a few. For, although the elect are, absolutely, sufficiently many, πολλοί. ‘Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of heaven’ (Mat. 8:11), ‘To the general assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven’ (Heb. 12:23), ‘A great multitude which no man can

number out of every nation and tribe, and people and tongue' (Rev. 7:9); yet, comparatively to those who are not elect, the elect are said to be few, 'Many are called, ὀλίγοι, few, are chosen' (Mat. 20:16), 'Narrow and straitened is the way which leads to life and ὀλίγοι, few, are those who find it' (Mat. 16:9), 'Fear not μικρὸν ποίμνιον, little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom' (Lu. 12:32)."

[2.] *Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology*, E. T., pp. 233-4. It is worth observing that Robert J. Breckinridge from an apparently opposite standpoint (verbally at least) would not feel it impossible to adjust himself to the view that the greater part of the race are saved. "The human race," he says (*The Knowledge of God, Objectively Considered*, 1869, p. 513), "is not a restored race, out of which a certain number are lost; but it is a fallen race out of which a certain number are saved. It is logically immaterial what the proportions of the lost and saved to the whole race, and to each other, may be; but the question as to the mode is vital as regards the possibility of any salvation at all.... The race is lost, with a portion of it—far the greater portion it may be—saved through the free, sovereign, efficacious, spiritual grace of God." So far as Dr. Breckinridge is contending that the human race as a whole has not been first redeemed, and out of the redeemed race subsequently some are lost, Dr. Kuyper would agree with him; and so far as he thinks that this is best expressed by saying that saved humanity (however large in number) is not the human race, but something else created out of the salvage of the human race, Dr. Kuyper would disagree with him.

[3.] *E Voto Dordraceno*, Vol. II, pp. 176-178; cf. *De Gemeene Gratie*, Vol. II, pp. 91-92; *Uit het Woord*, pp. 237ff; *College-Dictaat: De Peccato*, p. 130, and *De Ecclesia*, pp. 18 ff.

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[4.] *College-Dictaat, Locus De Ecclesia*, p. 36. Herman Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, Edition 2, Vol. IV, 1911, p. 84, thinks we can know nothing of the relative number of the saved and lost, but is sure that the organism is preserved. "Though many may fall away, however that may disturb us, nevertheless the communion, humanity, the world is saved by Christ. The organism of the creation is restored. Sinners are consumed out of the earth (Ps. 104:35), they are cast out (Jno. 12:31; 15:6; Rev. 22:15). But all things, in heaven and on earth, are summed up in Christ (Eph. 1:10). All things have been created through Him and unto Him (Col. 1:16)."

[5.] We may take it as a proof of the fixity of this tradition of proof-texts what a writer so far removed from the general current of orthodox tradition as S. Hoekstra, *Christelijke Geloofsleer*, 1898, Vol. II, p. 338, says simply: "According to the Gospels (Mat. 7:13; cf. 20:16; 22:14; Luk. 13:23) the greater number are lost." Jonathan Edwards, "Original Sin," I, i, 7 (four volumes ed. Works, New York, 1856, II, p. 343) appeals to the same four passages (to which some old Testament passages are added subsidiarily) for the more legitimate purpose of showing that the world is not full of good men,— "the exceeding smallness of the number of the saints compared with the whole world."

[6.] "But He said to them, Strive to go in by the narrow door, for many, I say to you, shall try to go in and shall not have power" (or "shall not prevail"). Note the plain directness of the language.

[7.] *Das Evangelium des Lucas ausgelegt*, 1913, p. 533: "Since a historical connection between the question directed to Jesus (verse 23), whether only a few are to be saved, and what precedes is indicated by nothing, Luke is led to annex the question with Jesus' response here by the connection between the idea expressed in the parables

(verses 18–20) and that expressed in the question of His adherent (verse 23). Jesus had fully recognized in these two parables the fact that the Kingdom of God was at the time a small and insignificant thing....”

[8.] Calvin, *Harmony of the Evangelists*. E. T., Vol. I, p. 358, already finds the occasion of the question in the small number of disciples that Jesus had as yet collected and the apparent rejection by Him of the whole nation. “A similar doubt steals upon us,” he adds, applying the matter, according to his wont, to ourselves, “when we look at the melancholy condition of the world.” Christ, he says, withdraws His people “from a foolish curiosity” “as if they were unwilling to be saved but in a crowd,” and bids believers “to give their earnest attention” to obtaining life for themselves.

[9.] “Go in by the narrow gate: for broad and roomy is the way that leads off to destruction, and many are those who go in by it; for narrow is the gate and straitened the way that leads off to life, and few are those who find it.” Note the fulness and vividness of the language.

[10.] Observe the “find,” as if it had to be looked for to be discovered. The Glossa Ordinaria says significantly of the broad road on the other hand: “This, though they do not seek it, all nevertheless find, because they are born in it.” This is certainly true, but perhaps not perfectly apposite to the similitude: say, rather, “because it appeals to their natural dispositions.”

[11.] Cf. Zahn, *Des Evangelium des Matthaeus ausgelegt*, 1903, p 310: “In verses 13ff a new mark is given by which the disciples may recognize whether they are in the right way. The emphasis lies.... as the reason

assigned shows, on the choice of the narrow gate ... We must go through the narrow gate, because only the gateway which leads to destruction is broad and roomy. As a natural consequence of this it appears that many choose this way....”

[12.] Certainly our Lord could not in any case be supposed to lay it down as a universal rule of life: “Go with the few!” There seems no reason, however, why we may not suppose that by the introduction of this mark of the way of life—that few travel it—He may have had the secondary purpose in view of (besides emphasizing the difficulty of the road) protecting His followers from the inference that their cause is bad because few embrace it.

[13.] Cf. A. Tholuck, *Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount*, E. T., p. 417: “Here He describes simply the actual facts of the case at the time when He spoke, and neither generally of the present αἰῶν nor of that which is to come (Mat. 12:32).” Also A. H. Strong (quoting Alvah Hovey, *Biblical Eschatology*, p. 167), *Systematic Theology*, ed. 2, p. 599; last ed., p. 1054: “It seems to be intended to describe the conduct of men then living, rather than to foreshadow the two opposite currents of human life to the end of time.”

[14.] James Moffat, *The New Testament*, etc., 1913, renders: “For many are invited, but few are chosen.” Perhaps we may even translate: “For many are bidden, but few accepted.” Crisp conciseness is the characteristic of the clause.

[15.] There is no doubt a difficulty in interpreting these words in their relation to the parable, arising from the circumstance that the parable itself does not obviously suggest that the proportion of the bidden and the accepted is that of many and few. If the whole body

of those first bidden scorned the invitation, their place seems to have been fully supplied by their successors: "The wedding was filled with guests." And only a single one of these guests was found without a wedding garment. A. Jülicher *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, Vol. II, 1899, p. 427, makes use of this circumstance to argue a composite origin for the parable as it stands. The final clause, for instance, though a genuine gnome of Jesus', does not belong to this parable, but has been attached to it by Matthew. We are at least warned not to put too much pressure on details of representation; and we may, as Jülicher indeed suggests, fairly suppose that the single man represented as without a wedding garment may be only a symbol of what might more numerous occur.

[16.] Jülicher considers this matter unimportant. The words mean the same thing in either case and it is indifferent whether they are represented as spoken by the King who stands for God or by Jesus who is the Son of God. But this seems scarcely to allow for the increased certainty in the former case that the terms employed are not technical terms.

[17.] Cf. A. Loisy, *Les Synoptiques*, Vol. II, p. 329: "It is difficult to say whether the sentence, 'Many are called but few chosen' which forms the conclusion of the parable is to be put on the lips of the King or on those of Jesus. It is self-evident that this sentence does not concern the theological question of predestination, and does not refer to the absolute relation of vocation to election ..." Cf. also Zahn *in loc.*, p. 631.

[18.] Cf. J. E. Huther *in loc.*: "The antithesis which exists between ὡς and the preceding ὀλίγοι indicates that the proportion saved by baptism to the unbelieving is but small. ὀλίγοι has accordingly a typical significance." Cf. also E. H. Plumptre, *in loc.*: "In the stress

laid upon the 'few' that were thus saved, we may legitimately recognize the impression made by our Lord's answer to the question: Are there few that be saved? (Lu. 13:23.) The apostle looked round him and saw that those who were in the way of salvation were few in number. He looked back upon the earliest records of the work of a preaching of repentance and found that there also few only were delivered." C. Bigg also thinks that ὀλίγοι may be a reminiscence of Lu. 13:23.

[19.] A truth much too often forgotten, which has its application to our subject, too, is enunciated by William Temple, *Foundations*, 1913, p. 340 note: "The earth will in all probability be habitable for myriads of years yet. If Christianity is the final religion, the church is still in its infancy. Two thousand years are as two days. The appeal to the 'primitive church' is misleading; we are the 'primitive church.' " Contrast the unhappy pessimism as to the future of the church of R. A. Knox, *Some Loose Stones*, 1913, pp. 111f. Cf. James Adderley, *The Hibbert Journal*, July, 1914 (XII: 4), p. 765: "But we must remember that Christianity is a very young religion, and that we are only at the beginning of Christian history even now."

[20.] Jülicher, as cited, p. 578: ὅλον totally (ganz und gar), viz., the three measures, cf. Lu. 11:34-36"—where ὅλον is defined as meaning without the omission of any part. Cf. R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables of our Lord*, New York, 1878, p. 119: "Nor can we consider these words. Till the whole is leavened,' as less than a promise of the final complete triumph of the Gospel—that it will diffuse itself through all complications and purify and ennoble all life."

[21.] Pp. 167ff. Dr. Hovey outlines a comprehensive argument for his position, throwing particular emphasis on such expressions as Eph.

1:10, 22, 23; Col. 1:11. He lays stress (with Dr. Hodge) on the salvation of all who die in infancy, and, though as less to the point (with Dr. Shedd), on the salvation of many heathen; he also (more tellingly) brings into view (like Dr. Dabney) “the duration and character” of the so-called “millennium”—which, however, he erroneously connects with Rev. 20.

[22.] *Systematic Theology*. Vol. III, 1876, pp. 879–880. Dr. Hodge interpreted Mat. 7:13, 14 as referring to adults only (Vol. I, p. 26, cf. Vol. II, p. 648) and was led to throw the weight of this doctrine too heavily on the salvation of those that die in infancy.

[23.] *Dogmatic Theology*, 1888, Vol. II, p. 712. We need not concern ourselves with Dr. Shedd’s connection of this true idea with the erroneous opinion that men may be saved apart from the Gospel.

CHAPTER 6
A SERMON BY C.H. SPURGEON ON
THE LATTER DAY GLORY, ISAIAH
2:2



A Vision of the Latter-Day Glories

Charles Haddon Spurgeon April 24, 1859

Scripture: Isaiah 2:2

From: New Park Street Pulpit Volume 5

"And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it."—Isaiah 2:2 & Micah 4:1



The prophets of God wore anciently called seers, for they had a supernatural sight which could pierce through the gloom of the future and behold the things which are not seen as yet, but which God hath ordained for the last times. They frequently described

what they saw with spiritual eyes after the form or fashion of something which could be seen by the eye of nature. The vision was so substantial that they could picture it in words, so that we also may behold in open vision, the glorious things which they beheld after a supernatural sort. Let us imagine Isaiah as he stood upon Mount Zion. He looked about him and there were "the mountains that are round about Jerusalem" far outvying it in height, but yielding to Zion in glory. Dearer to his soul than even the snow-capped glories of Lebanon which glittered afar off was that little hill of Zion, for there upon its summit stood the temple, the shrine of the living God. the place of his delight, the home of song, the house of sacrifice, the great gathering-place whither the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord. to serve Jehovah, the God of Abraham. Standing at the gate of that glorious temple which had been piled by the matchless art of Solomon, he looked into the future and he saw, with tearful eye, the structure burned with fire; he beheld it cast down and the plough driven over its foundations. He saw the people carried away into Babylon, and the nation cast off for a season. Looking once more through the glass he beheld the temple rising from its ashes, with glory outwardly diminished, but really increased. He saw on till he beheld Messiah himself in the form of a little babe carried into the second temple; he saw him there, and he rejoiced; but ere he had time for gladness his eye glanced onward to the cross; he saw Messias nailed to the tree; he beheld his back ploughed and mangled with the whip. "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," said the prophet, and he paused awhile to bemoan the bleeding Prince of the House of David. His eye was now doomed to a long and bitter weeping, for he saw the invading hosts of the Romans setting up the standard of desolation in the city. He saw the holy city burned with fire and utterly destroyed. His spirit was almost melted in him. But once more he flew through time with eagle wing, and scanned futurity with eagle eye; he soared aloft in imagination, and began to sing of the last days—the end of dispensations and of time. He saw Messias ones again on earth. He saw that little hill of Zion rising to the clouds—reaching to heaven

itself. He beheld the New Jerusalem descending from above, God dwelling among men, and all the nations flowing to the tabernacle of the Most High God, where they paid him holy worship.

We shall not, to-day, look through all the dim vista of Zion's tribulations. We will leave the avenue of troubles and of trials through which the church *has* passed and *is* to pass, and we will come, by faith, to the last days; and may God help us while we indulge in a glorious vision of that which is to be ere long, when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." The prophet saw two things in the vision. He saw *the mountain exalted*, and he beheld *the nations flowing to it*. Now will you use your imagination for a moment; for there is a picture here which I can scarcely compare to anything, except one of Martin's magnificent paintings, in which he throws together such masses of light and shade that the imagination is left at liberty to stretch her wings and fly to the utmost height. In the present instance, you will not be able to outstrip the reality, however high you may endeavor to soar; for that which is in our text will certainly be greater than that which the preacher can utter, or that which you may be able to conceive.

Transport yourselves for a moment to the foot of Mount Zion. As you stand there, you observe that it is but a very little hill. Bashan is far loftier, and Carmel and Sharon outvie it. As for Lebanon, Zion is but a little hillock compared with it. If you think for a moment of the Alps, or of the loftier Andes, or of the yet mightier Himalayas, this mount Zion seems to be a very little hill, a mere mole-hill insignificant, despicable, and obscure. Stand there for a moment, until the Spirit of God touches your eye, and you shall see this hill begin to grow. Up it mounts, with the temple on its summit, till it outreaches Tabor. Onward it grows, till Carmel, with its perpetual green, is left behind, and Salmon, with its everlasting snow sinks before it. Onward still it grows, till the snowy peaks of Lebanon are eclipsed. Still onward mounts the hill, drawing with its mighty roots other mountains and hills into its

fabric; and onward it rises, till piercing the clouds it reaches above the Alps; and onwards still, till the Himalayas seem to be sucked into its bowels, and the greatest mountains of the earth appear to be but as the roots that strike out from the side of the eternal hill; and there it rises till you can scarcely see the top, as infinitely above all the higher mountains of the world as they are above the valleys. Have you caught the idea, and do you see there afar off upon the lofty top, not everlasting snows, but a pure crystal table-land, crowned with a gorgeous city, the metropolis of God, the royal palace of Jesus the King. The sun is eclipsed by the light which shines from the top of this mountain; the moon ceases from her brightness, for there is now no night: but this one hill, lifted up on high, illuminates the atmosphere, and the nations of them that are saved are walking in the light thereof. The hill of Zion hath now outsoared all others, and all the mountains and hills of the earth are become as nothing before her. This is the magnificent picture of the text. I do not know that in all the compass of poetry there is an idea so massive and stupendous as this—a mountain heaving, expanding, swelling, growing, till all the high hills become absorbed, and that which was but a little rising ground before, becomes a hill the top whereof reacheth to the seventh heavens. Now we have here a picture of what the church is to be.

Of old, the church was like Mount Zion, a very little hill. What saw the nations of the earth when they looked upon it? —a humble man with twelve disciples. But that little hill grew, and some thousands were baptized in the name of Christ; it grew again and became mighty. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands began to break in pieces kingdoms, and now at this day the hill of Zion stands a lofty hill. But still, compared with the colossal systems of idolatry, she is but small. The Hindoo and the Chinese turn to our religion, and say, "It is an infant of yesterday; ours is the religion of ages." The Easterns compare Christianity to some miasma that creeps along the fenny lowlands, but their systems they imagine to be like the Alps, outsoaring the heavens in height. Ah, but we reply to this, "Your mountain crumbles and your hill

dissolves, but our hill of Zion has been growing, and strange to say, it has life within its bowels, and grow on it *shall*, grow on it *must*, till all the systems of idolatry shall become less than nothing before it, till false gods being cast down, mighty systems of idolatry being overthrown, this mountain shall rise above them all, and on, and on, and on, shall this Christian religion grow, until converting into its mass all the deluded followers of the heresies and idolatries of man, the hill shall reach to heaven, and God in Christ shall be all in all." Such is the destiny of our church, she is to be an all-conquering church, rising above every competitor.

We may more fully explain this in two or three ways. The church will be like a high mountain, for she will be *pre-eminently conspicuous*. I believe that at this period the thoughts of men are more engaged upon the religion of Christ than upon any other. It is true, and there be few that will deny it, that every other system is growing old: gray hairs are scattered here and there, although the followers of these religions know it. As for Mahomet, has he not become now effete with grey old age? And the sabre once so sharp to slay the unbeliever hath it not been blunted with time and rested into its scabbard? As for the old idolatries, the religion of Confucius, or of Budha, where are their missionaries, where the old activity that made minor idolatries bow before them? They are now content to be confined within their own limit, they feel that their hour is come that they can grow no further, for their strong man is declining into old age. But the Christian religion has become more conspicuous now than ever it was. In every part of the world all people are thinking of it; the very gates of Japan—once fast closed—are now open to it, and soon shall the trumpet voice of the gospel be heard there, and the name of Jesus the Son of the Highest shall there be proclaimed by the lips of his chosen servants. The hill is already growing, and mark you, it is to grow higher yet; it is to be so conspicuous, that in every hamlet of the world the name of Christ shall be known and feared. There shall not be a Bedouin in his tent, there shall not be a Hottentot in his kraal, there shall not be a Laplander in the midst of his

eternal snow, or an African in that great continent of thirst, that shall not have heard of Christ. Rising higher, and higher, and higher, from north to south, from east to west, this mountain shall be beheld; not like the star of the north which cannot be seen in the south, nor like the "cross" of the south which must give way before the "bear" of the north—this mountain, strange to say it, contrary to nature shall be visible from every land. Far-off islands of the sea shall behold it, and they that are near shall worship at the foot thereof. It shall be pre-eminently conspicuous in clear, cloudless radiance gladdening the people of the earth. This I think is one meaning of the text, when the prophet declares "that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains. and shall be exalted above the hills."

This, however, is but a small part of the meaning. He means that the church of Christ shall become *awful and venerable in her grandeur*. It has never been my privilege to be able to leave this country for any time, to stand at the foot of the loftier mountain" of Europe, but even the little hills of Scotland, where half way up the mist is slumbering, struck me with some degree of awe. These are some of God's old works, high and lofty, talking to the stars, lifting up their heads above the clouds as though they were ambassadors from earth ordained to speak to God in silence far aloft. But poets tell us—and travelers who have but little poetry say the same—that standing at the foot of some of the stupendous mountains of Europe, and of Asia, the soul is subdued with the grandeur of the scene. There, upon the father of mountains, lie the eternal snows glittering in the sun-light, and the spirit wonders to see such mighty things as these? such massive ramparts garrisoned with storms. We seem to be but as insects crawling at their base, while they appear to stand like cherubims before the throne of God, sometimes covering their face with clouds of mist, or at other times lifting up their white heads, and singing their silent and eternal hymn before the throne of the Most High. There is something awfully grand in a mountain, but how much more so in such a mountain as is

described in our text, which is to be exalted above all hills, and above all the highest mountains of the earth.

The church is to be awful in her grandeur. Ah! now she is despised; the infidel barketh at her, it is all he can do; the followers of old superstitions as yet pay her but little veneration. The religion of Christ, albeit that it has to us all the veneration of eternity about it—"For his goings forth were of old, even from everlasting"—yet to men who know him not Christianity seems to be but a young upstart, audaciously contending with hoary-headed systems of religion. Ay, but the day shall come when men shall bow before the name of Christ, when the cross shall command universal homage, when the name of Jesus shall stay the wandering Arab and make him prostrate his knee at the hour of prayer, when the voice of the minister of Christ shall be as mighty as that of a king, when the bishops of Christ's church shall be as princes in our midst, and when the sons and daughters of Zion shall be every man of them a prince, and every daughter a queen. The hour cometh, yea, and now draweth nigh, when the mountain of the Lord's house in her awful grandeur shall be established on the top of the mountains.

There is yet, however, a deeper and larger meaning. It is just this—that the day is coming when the church of God shall have *absolute supremacy*. The church of Christ now has to fight for her existence. She hath many foes, and mighty ones too, who would snatch the chaplet from her brow, blunt her sword, and stain her banners in the dust; but the day shall come when all her enemies shall die; there shall not be a dog to move his tongue against her. she shall be so mighty that there shall be nought left to compete with her. As for Rome, you shall seek but find it not. It shall be hurled like a millstone in the flood. As for Mahomed's lustful superstition, they shall ask for it, but the imposter shall not be found. As for false gods, talk to the bittern and the owl, to the mole, and to the bat, and they shall tell you where they shall be discovered. The church of Christ at that time shall not have kings of the earth to bind her, and to control her, as if she were but a puny thing, nor shall she have them to persecute her and lift up their iron arm to

crush her; but she, then, shall be the queen and empress of all nations; she shall reign over all kings; they shall bow down and lick the dust of her feet; her golden sandals shall tread upon their necks; she, with her scepter, with her rod of iron, shall break empires in pieces like earthen vessels. She shall say, "Overturn! overturn! overturn! until he come, whose right it is; and I will give it HIM" The destiny of the church is universal monarchy. What Alexander fought for, what Caesar died to obtain, what Napoleon wasted all his life to achieve, that Christ shall have: —the universal monarchy of the broad acres of the earth. "The sea is his, and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land." The whole earth shall come, and worship, and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker; for every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

You have now, I think, the meaning of the text, —the church growing and rising up till she becomes conspicuous, venerable, and supreme. And now let me pause here a moment, to ask how this is to be done.

How is this to be done? I reply, there are three things which will ensure the growth of the church. The first is the individual exertion of every Christian. I do not think that all the exertions of the church of Christ will ever be able to reach the climax of our text. I think we shall see something more than natural agency, even though employed by the Spirit, before the church of Christ shall be exalted to that supremacy of which I have spoken; but, nevertheless, this is to contribute to it. In the olden times, when men raised cairns to the memory of departed kings, it was usual to put a heap of stones over the tomb, and every passer-by threw another stone. In course of age. those mounds grew into small hills. Now the church of Christ in the present day is growing something in that way. Each Christian converted to Christ throws his stone; we each do our measure. By the grace of God let us each make sure of one stone being deposited there, and strive to add another by laboring to be the instruments of bringing someone else to Christ; in this way the church will grow; and as year after year rolls on, each Chris-

tian serving his Master, the church will increase; and it shall come to pass in the last times, that even by the efforts of Christ's people, owned by God the Holy Spirit, this mountain shall be highly exalted in the midst of the hills.

This, however, although all that we can do, is not, I think, all that we have to expect. We can *do* no more, but we may *expect* more. Besides, the church of Christ differs from all other mountains in this: —that she has within her a living influence. The ancients fabled that under Mount Etna, Vulcan was buried. Some great giant, they thought, lay there entombed; and when he rolled over and over, the earth began to tremble, and the mountains shook, and fire poured forth. We believe not the fable, but the church of God, verily, is like this living mountain. Christ seems to be buried within her; and when he moves himself his church rises with him. Once he was prostrate in the garden; then Zion was but a little hill; then he rose, and day-by-day as he is lifted up his church rises with him; and in the day when he shall stand on Mount Zion, then shall his church be elevated to her utmost height. The fact is, that the church, though a mountain, is a volcano—not one that spouts fire, but that hath fire within her; and this inward fire of living truth, and living grace, makes her bulge out, expands her side, and lifts her crest, and onwards she must tower, for truth is mighty, and it must prevail—grace is mighty, and must conquer—Christ is mighty, and he must be King of kings. Thus you see that there is something more than the individual exertions of the church; there is a something within her that must make her expand and grow, till she overtops the highest mountains,

But mark you, the great hope of the church, although it is reckoned madness by some to say it, is the second advent of Christ. When he shall come, then shall the mountain of the Lord's house be exalted above the hills. We know not when Jesus may come. All the prophets of modern times have only been prophets from the fact that they have made profit by their speculations; but with the solitary exception of that pun upon the word, I believe they have not the slightest claim upon your credit; not even men who are

doctors of divinity, who can spoil an abundance of paper with their prophecies of second Adventism; "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of God." Christ may come this morning; while I am addressing you Christ may suddenly appear in the clouds of heaven. he may not come for many a weary age. but come he must; in the last days he must appear; and when Christ shall come he will make short work of that which is so long a labor to his church. His appearance will immediately convert the Jews. They have looked for Messias a king. there he is, in more than regal splendor. They shall see him. they shall believe on him; he will then tell them that he is the Messiah whom their fathers crucified. Then will they look on him whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for their sin, and gathering round their great Messiah in glorious march they shall enter and be settled in their own land. They shall once more become a great and mighty nation, nay, a Jew shall become a very prince among men, firstborn in the church of God. Then shall the fullness of the Gentiles be converted and all kindreds and people shall serve the Son of David. Mark, the church is to rise first, and when the church has risen to eminence and greatness, the nations will flow unto her. Her rising will not be owing to the nations, but to the advent of Christ, and after she has become great, conspicuous, and supreme, then will the nations flow to her. I am looking for the advent of Christ, it is this that cheers me in the battle of life—the battle and cause of Christ. I look for Christ to come, somewhat as John Bunyan described the battle of Captain Credence with Diabolus. The inhabitants of the town of Mansoul fought hard to protect their city from the prince of darkness, and at last a pitch battle was fought outside the walls. The captains and the brave men of arms fought all day till their swords were knitted to their hands with blood; many and many a weary hour did they seek to drive back the Diabolians. The battle seemed to waver in the balance, sometimes victory was on the side of faith, and anon, triumph seemed to hover over the crest of the prince of hell; but just as the sun was setting, trumpets were heard in the distance, Prince Emmanuel was coming, with trumpets sounding,

and with banners flying, and while the men of Mansoul passed onwards sword in hand, Emmanuel attacked their foes in the rear, and getting the enemy between them twain, they went on, driving their enemies at the swords point, till at last, trampling over their dead bodies, they met, and hand to hand the victorious church saluted its victorious Lord. Even so must it be. We must fight on day-by-day and hour-by-hour; and when we think the battle is almost decided against us, we shall hear the trump of the archangel, and the voice of God, and he shall come, the Prince of the kings of the earth: at his name, with terror they shall melt, and like snow driven before the wind from the bare side of Salmon shall they fly away; and we, the church militant, trampling over them, shall salute our Lord, shouting, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." Thus then, have I explained the first part of the text.

II. The second part of the text we have to consider, is this sentence—"AND ALL NATIONS SHALL FLOW UNTO IT." Here is a figure, perhaps not so sublime, but quite as beautiful as the first. Still endeavor to retain in your minds the picture of this stupendous mountain, reaching above the clouds, seen by all mankind, in either hemisphere, a wonder of nature which could not be accomplished by the ordinary rules of art, but which divine wisdom will be able to perform. Well, wonder of wonders, you see all the nations of the earth converging to this great mountain, as to a common center. Once in the year all the people of Israel were wont to go to the little hill of Zion; and now, once for all, you see, not Israel, but all the nations of the earth coming to this great hill of Zion, to worship the Most High God. The white sails are on the Atlantic, and the ships are 'dying before the wind, even as the bird flitteth through the sky. What bear they? What is their noble cargo? Lo! they come from far, bringing the sons and daughters of Zion from the ends of the earth. See you there the camel and the dromedary, the great caravan passing over the pathless desert?

What are these and what is their costly freight? Lo they are bringing the daughters of God, and the sons of Zion up to the Most High God, to worship him. From all parts of the earth you see them coming—from the freezing cold and from the burning heat, from the far-off islands of the sea, and from the barren sands they come; they come, all converging towards the great center of their high and holy worship. This we are not to understand of course, literally, but as a figure of the great spiritual fact that all the souls of men shall tend to Christ, and to union with his church.

Again, I beg you carefully to observe the figure. It does not say they shall come to it, but they shall "*flow* unto it." Understand the metaphor. It implies first their number. *Now* our churches are increased, converts drop into the churches; drop after drop the pool is filled. But in those days they shall flow into it; now it is but the pouring out of water from the bucket; then it shall be as the rolling of the cataract from the hillside, it shall flow into it. Now our converts, however numerous, are comparatively few, but then a nation shall be born in a day. The people shall renounce their gods at once. Whole nations shall of a sudden by an irresistible impulse flow into the church, not one by one, but in one vast mass. The power of God shall be seen in bringing whole nations into the church of God. You have seen the river flowing onward to the sea, with its banks all swollen, bearing its enormous contribution to the boundless ocean. So shall it be in the last days; each nation shall be like a river, rolling towards the foot of this great mountain, the church of the living God. Happy, happy, happy day, when India and China with their teeming myriads, and all the nations of the earth, with their multitude of tongues, shall flow into the mountain of God!

But the text conveys the idea not only of numbers, but of—(I know the exact word, but then I do not like to use it, for fear some should not know the meaning of it, it means that the nations of the earth shall come willingly to it)—*spontaneity*. That was the word I wanted to use; but wherefore should we use big words; when we might find little ones. They are to come willingly to Christ; not

to be driven, not to be pumped up, not to be forced to it, but to be brought up by the word of the Lord, to pay him willing homage; they are to flow to it. Just as the river naturally flows down-hill by no other force than that which is its nature, so shall the grace of God be so mightily given to the sons of men, that no acts of parliament, no state churches, no armies will be used to make a forced conversion. "The nations shall flow unto it." Of themselves, made willing in the day of God's power, they shall flow to it. Whenever the church of God is increased by unwilling converts it loses strength; whenever men join the church because of oppression, which would drive them to make a profession of religion, they do not flow, the church is weakened, end not strengthened, but in those days the converts shall be voluntarily won—shall come in willingly by divine grace; they shall flow unto it.

But yet again, this represents the *power* of the work of conversion. They "shall flow to it." Imagine an idiot endeavoring to stop the river Thames. He gets for himself a boat, and there he stands, endeavoring to push back the stream. He objects to it flowing towards the sea. and with his hands he tries to put it back. Would you not soon hear laughter along the banks? Ah, fool, to attempt to stop the stream! Now, the word "flow," here conveys just the idea. "The nations shall flow unto it." The Secularist may rise up and say, "Oh, why be converted to this fanatical religion? Look to the things of time." The false priests may rouse themselves with all their anger to defy Christ, and endeavor to keep their slaves; but all their attempts to stop conversion will be like an idiot seeking to drive back a mighty stream with his puny hands. "All nations shall flow unto it." What an idea it is! Oh, take your stand to-day, like prophets of the Lord, and look into the future. To-day the church appears like the dry bed of a torrent; here I stand, and I see a little water flowing in a secret and thread-like stream, amongst the stones. So little is it that I can scarcely detect it, but I take the glass of prophecy, I look far onward, and I see a rolling mass of water, such as is sometimes seen in the rapid rivers of Africa; and there it is, coming with thundering sound. Wait for a few more years, and

that torrent, like Kishon's mighty river, sweeping all before it, shall fill this dry bed, and swell on, and on, and on, with tumultuous waves of joy, till it meets the ocean of Christ's universal reign, and loses itself in God. Here you see, then, you have more than your imagination can grasp. This stupendous mountain, and all the nations of the earth—vast numbers with immense force—spontaneously coming up to the house of the living God.

Now, I shall close by a practical address, very brief, and I trust very earnest. Is it not a great subject for praise that the nations of the earth *may flow* to the hill of God and to his house? If I were to tell you that all the nations of Europe were climbing the sides of the Alps, you would ask me, "And what benefit do they gain thereby? They must pass over the slippery fields of ice and they may lose their lives in the midst of the bottomless chasms that are overhung by the mighty precipices; they may suddenly be overwhelmed and buried in the all-destroying avalanche, and should they reach the summit they must fall down exhausted. What is there that men should covet in those barren heights; rarefied air and cold would soon destroy them, should they attempt to exist there." Ah, but it is not so with God's hill. There shall be no snow upon its summit, but the warmth and light of Jehovah's love, there shall be no chasms in its side wherein souls may be destroyed, for there shall be a way, and a highway, (the unclean shall not pass over it) a way so easy that the wayfaring man shall not err therein.

The mountains of which we read in Scripture were some of them such, that if they were accessible no one would desire to climb them. There were bounds set round about Sinai, but had there been no bounds who would have wished to ascend it? A mountain that burned with fire, and upon which there was a sound as of a trumpet waxing exceeding loud and long. No, brethren, we are not come to a mountain like Sinai with its supernatural thunders; we are not come to a hill bare, and barren, and bleak, and difficult to climb, like the mountains of earth; but the hill of God, though it is a high hill, is a hill up which on hands and knees the humble penitent may readily ascend. Ye are come to a mountain

which is not forbidden to you. there are no bounds set about it to keep you off, but you are freely bidden and freely invited to come to it. And the God who invited you will give you grace to come. If he has given you the will to come, he will give you grace to climb the sides of the hill, till you shall reach its upper glories, and stand on its summit transported with delight. While I am talking about the nations that will flow to Christ, might we not weep to think that there are so many in this congregation that are not flowing to Christ but are going *from* him? Ah! soul; what are the splendours of the Millennium to thee, if thou art his enemy? For when he tramples his foes in his hot displeasure, thy blood shall stain his garments, even as the garments of the wine-pressers are stained with the blood of the grape. Tremble, sinner, for the advent of Christ must be thy destruction though it shall be the church's Joy and comfort. Ye say, "Come quickly." Know ye not that to you the day of the Lord is darkness and not light, for that day burneth as an oven, and they that are proud and do wickedly shall be as stubble, and the fire shall consume them with burning heat. Oh! ye people that to-day hear the words of Jesus! ye are now this day invited to come to the mountain of his church, on which stands his cross and his throne. Ye weary, heavy laden, sin-destroyed sin-ruined souls, ye that know and feel your need of Jesus ye that weep because of sin, ye are bidden to come now to Christ's cross. to look to him who shed his blood for the ungodly, and looking to him, you shall find peace and rest; so that when he cometh with rainbow wreath, and robes of storm, you shall be able to see him, not with alarm and terror, but with joy and gladness. for you shall say, "Here he is, the man who died for me has come to claim me, he who bought me has come to receive me; my judge is my Redeemer, and I will rejoice in him." Oh! turn ye, ye English heathens—turn ye unto God! ye inhabitants of London, some of you as vile as the inhabitants of Sodom. turn ye, turn ye to God! O Lord Jesus! by thy grace turn every one of us to thyself! Bring in thine elect; let thy redeemed rejoice in thee; and then let the fullness of the nations flow unto then, and thine shall be the glory, for ever and ever.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION



I TRUST THAT THESE SERMONS ON POSTMILLENNIALISM HAVE BEEN a rich blessing to your soul. My prayer for all who read these sermons is that they will find in the Scriptures this blessed hope of a coming day when God's Kingdom on earth will fill all the world with His glory. This view has captured my imagination and has filled my heart with joy and anticipation for the coming advancement of God's Kingdom on earth. Even so, come Lord Jesus!

I learned many years ago that the Bible teaches that God is going to conquer the nations of the earth, overcome all of His enemies, and fill the earth with His glory as the waters cover the sea. The Bible, and not current events, became the source of my faith. This idea of having a positive view of the future is closely related to the study of eschatology. Eschatology is the doctrine of last things. Every religion and worldview has a doctrine of last things. It is not hard to figure out that those religions or worldviews that are defeatist and pessimistic are at a great disadvantage to those who hold a positive world-view. An analogy would be how two coaches inspire their teams in a pre-game talk to get their players ready to compete in the game. If a coach tells his team that they have no chance to win, that they will get beat, and that no

matter how hard they try they are sure to lose, that team will surely be at a disadvantage to the team whose coach tells them they are destined to win. If a coach tells his team that they have the best offense and defense and that there is no way they can lose, that team will be hard to beat. Which team would you think would have the advantage in such a game? The team whose coach gave them no hope or the team whose coach gave them a stirring message of hope and confidence? I think the answer is obvious. So too, in the Christian life, we need to have a positive view of the future of the church. It is of no use, however, to have an optimistic view of the future if the Scriptures do not, in fact, teach such a view. First, we need to see what the Scriptures teach about the future. Second, we need to understand what impact this should have on our plans for building God's Kingdom on earth. One biblical scholar framed the question about the future of God's Kingdom on earth perfectly when he said:

*"Even the most pessimistic of Christians would grant that Christ will eventually conquer all aspects of creation, since they affirm the sinlessness of heaven. The crucial point to establish, therefore, is whether God promises in His Word vast salvation prior to Christ's second coming. The question to be settled is whether He promises great success for His church on earth and in history. As it turns out, this is prophesied a number of times in Scripture."*¹

What Do the Scriptures Teach Concerning the Future of the Church?

There are many verses in the Old and New Testaments that speak to this subject. The point I want to make is that the Scriptures do indeed teach that God's Kingdom on earth will spread and advance with great victory until "*the glory of God fills the earth as the waters cover the sea.*" Habakkuk 2:14.

If I had to choose several passages from each Testament that greatly impacted my thinking on this issue, I can think of a number

of passages. In the O.T. I think of that wonderful Psalm 2:8 where the Father asks the Son, "Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession." The Father is pleased to grant His Son this great request. "Ask of Me! Just ask Me! I would give you all the nations of the earth for Your inheritance." Now try to imagine the Lord Jesus saying in response to His Father, "O I cannot ask for too much. I cannot take advantage of Your generosity. I am just content to have a few souls here and there. I would be pleased with just a few." I cannot imagine Jesus responding like that. I hear Him in my mind shouting, "Give Me my Father, give Me the nations, the people groups, the souls of all those who dwell on this planet. Let all the earth come to Me for this Thy great salvation!" This verse speaks to me. Psalm 46 also speaks to me. The Psalmist sees that trouble and great upheavals take place in the earth from time to time. But God has a plan, and He will be exalted in the earth. The Lord says, "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." In Psalm 72:8 we read that Christ will reign "from the River to the ends of the earth." Furthermore, this will happen before the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. Why? Because the Psalmist tells us that Christ will reign "till the moon is no more." Psalm 72:7. Finally, in the Old Testament I cannot escape what Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 2:2. "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it."

In the New Testament there are a number of verses that I just cannot explain any other way than by the Postmill point of view. In Matthew 16 when Jesus came with His disciples to Ceasarea Philippi Jesus asks His disciples, "Who do people say that I the Son of Man am?" After a few preliminary answers, Jesus presses the question even further and asks, "but who do you say that I am?" Peter blurts out, "I believe that You are the Christ the Son of the Living God." Jesus responds to Peter's answer by saying first of all that he did not come to this conclusion on his own but the Father

revealed this to him. This is a powerful argument for the sovereignty of God in salvation. God the Father must reveal the Son of God to each of us. Secondly, Jesus told Peter, "Upon this rock (the rock is the statement made by Peter, not Peter himself), I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." I always interpreted this passage to mean that the church was on the defensive and that the church would withstand all the attacks of Satan. But then, it dawned on me that I was interpreting this completely wrong. It is the church that is on the offensive. Gates are not offensive weapons. You don't go to war and throw gates at the enemy. Gates are designed to keep people locked in or out. The picture that Jesus gives us here is one where the church is on the offensive and is attacking the kingdom of darkness. The gospel smashes through the gates of hell, sacks the city, captures many prisoners and is completely victorious. Jesus is predicting in this text the ultimate success of the gospel ministry in the world. In another passage in Matthew 13 we have what is called the Kingdom Parables. The parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven give us two powerful pictures of the Postmillennial viewpoint. The mustard seed is very tiny but grows enormously large so that all the birds of the air can nest in its branches. This is a picture of the gradual growth of the kingdom of God and the gathering in of all the nations. The parable of the leaven tells us that a little leaven leavens the entire lump. Again we are given a picture of the gospel permeating the entire world and leavening it with its gracious gospel influence. These parables teach us that the Kingdom Of God will grow incrementally until it fills the entire world with the glory of God's grace and salvation.

END NOTES

7. CONCLUSION

1. Nil Desperendum, (Never Despair), The Case For Postmillennialism, Part 3, Dec. 19, 2011.

ALSO BY ROBERT L. DICKIE

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