

Coming Events and Present Duties Being Plain Papers on Prophecy

J.C. Ryle, 1879

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Preface to Second Edition

In sending forth a new and enlarged edition of this volume, I have nothing to add or withdraw. I see nothing in the state of the *Church* or the *world* to make me alter the opinions on prophecy which I expressed twelve years ago. I can only say, that I am more and more convinced, as I grow older — that to keep our eyes steadily fixed on the second coming of Christ is one great secret of Christian peace. If this volume helps any one reader to cultivate the habit of looking at Christ's coming again, as well as Christ crucified, and Christ interceding, I shall be satisfied.

J. C. Ryle, October, 1879

PREFACE

The volume now in the reader's hands requires a few *introductory words of explanation*. It contains little that is entirely new. It consists of *eight sermons*, delivered on public occasions, at various intervals during my ministry, and afterwards published in the form of tracts. Of these sermons, one or two have perhaps obtained a greater circulation than they deserved, while one or two, in my humble judgment of more real worth — have received comparatively little notice. They are now brought together in their present form, for the convenience of those who wish to have a *manual of my views of prophecy*, in a compact state.

At the very outset I warn the reader of these pages that he will find here nothing deep or abstruse. I have purposely avoided everything that can be called *speculative* or *conjectural*. I have strictly confined myself to a *few great prophetic principles*, which appear to me written as it were with a sunbeam. I have not attempted to expound such portions of God's Word as Ezekiel's temple, or the symbolic visions of Revelation. *I have not ventured to fix any dates*. I have not tried to settle the *precise order or manner* in which predictions of things to come are to be fulfilled. There is nothing I dislike so much in prophetic inquiry, as dogmatism or positiveness. Much of the discredit which has fallen on prophetic study has arisen from the fact that many students instead of *expounding* prophecy — have turned prophets themselves!

If anyone asks me what my prophetic opinions are, I am quite ready to give him an answer. As cautious and doubtful as I feel on some points, there are *certain great*

principles about which I have fully made up my mind. I have held by them firmly for many years, and have never had my opinion shaken about them. I have lived in the belief of them for more than a third of a century, and in the belief of them I hope to die. The older I grow, the more do I feel convinced of their truth, and the more satisfied am I that no other principles can explain the state of the Church and the world.

One thing only I wish to premise, before making my statement. The reader must distinctly understand that I do not put forth my prophetic views as *articles of faith* — but only as my private opinions. I do not say that nobody can be saved, who does not agree with me about prophecy. I am not infallible. I am very sensible that holier and better men than myself, do not see these subjects with my eyes, and think me utterly mistaken. I condemn nobody. I judge nobody. I only ask liberty to hold and state distinctly my own views. The day will decide who is right. It is the new heart, and faith in Christ's blood — which are absolutely necessary to salvation. The man who knows these two things *experimentally*, may be wrong about prophecy — but he will not miss Heaven.

The following, then, are the chief articles of my prophetic creed:

1. I believe that the world will never be completely converted to Christianity by any existing agency, before the end comes. In spite of all that can be done by ministers, churches, schools, and missions — the wheat and the tares will grow together until the harvest; and when the end comes, it will find the earth in much the same state that it was when the flood came in the days of Noah. (Matthew 13:24-30; 24:37-39.)
2. I believe that the wide-spread unbelief, indifference, formalism, and wickedness, which are to be seen throughout Christendom — are only what we are taught to expect in God's Word. Troublous times, departures from the faith, evil men waxing worse and worse, love waxing cold — are things distinctly predicted. So far from making me doubt the truth of Christianity, they help to confirm my faith. Melancholy and sorrowful as the sight is, if I did not see it — I would think the Bible was not true. (Matthew 24:12; 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 Timothy 3:1, 4, 13.)
3. I believe that the grand purpose of the present dispensation is to gather out of the world an *elect* people — and not to convert all mankind. It does not surprise me at all to hear that the heathen are not all converted when missionaries preach, and that believers are but a little flock in any congregation in my own land. It is precisely the state of things which I expect to find. The Gospel is to be preached "as a witness," and then shall the end come. This is the dispensation of election, and not of universal conversion. (Acts 15:14; Matthew 24. 14.)
4. I believe that the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is the great event which will wind up the present dispensation, and for which we ought daily to long and pray. "May Your kingdom come!" "Come, Lord Jesus!" should be our daily prayer. We look *backward*, if we have faith, to Christ dying on the cross; and we ought to look *forward* no less, if we have hope, to Christ coming again. (John 14:3; 2 Timothy 4:8; 2 Peter 3:12.)

5. I believe that the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ will be a real, literal, personal, bodily coming; and that as He went away in the clouds of Heaven with His body, before the eyes of men — so in like manner He will return. (Acts 1:11.)

6. I believe that after our Lord Jesus Christ comes again, the earth shall be renewed, and the curse removed; the devil shall be bound, the godly shall be rewarded, the wicked shall be punished; and that before He comes, there shall be neither resurrection, judgment, nor millennium, and that not until after He comes, shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. (Acts 3:21; Isaiah 25:6-9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Revelation 20:1, etc.)

7. I believe that the Jews shall ultimately be gathered again as a separate nation, restored to their own land, and converted to the faith of Christ, after going through great tribulation. (Jeremiah 30:10, 11; 31:10; Romans 11:25, 26; Daniel 12:1; Zech. 13. 8, 9.)

8. I believe that the *literal* sense of Old Testament prophecies has been far too much neglected by the Churches, and is far too much neglected at the present day, and that under the mistaken system of *spiritualizing* and accommodating Bible language, Christians have too often completely missed its meaning. (Luke 24:25, 26.)

9. I do not believe that the *preterist* scheme of interpreting the Apocalypse, which regards the book as almost entirely fulfilled; or the *futurist* scheme, which regards it as almost entirely unfulfilled — are either of them to be implicitly followed. The truth, I expect, will be found to lie between the two.

10. I believe that the *Roman Catholic Church* is the great predicted apostasy from the faith, and is Babylon and Antichrist; although I think it highly probable that a more complete development of Antichrist will yet be exhibited to the world. (2 Thessalonians 2:3-11; 1 Timothy 4:1-3.)

11. Finally, I believe that it is for the safety, happiness, and comfort of all true Christians, to expect as little as possible from *Churches* or *Governments* under the present dispensation — to hold themselves ready for tremendous convulsions and changes of all things established — and to expect their good things only from Christ's second advent.

The student of prophecy will see at a glance that there are many subjects on which I abstain from giving an opinion.

About the precise time when the present dispensation will end;
about the manner in which the heathen will be converted;
about the mode in which the Jews will be restored to their own land;
about the burning up of the earth;
about the first resurrection;
about the rapture of the saints;
about the distinction between the appearing and the coming of Christ;
about the future siege of Jerusalem and the last tribulation of the Jews;

about the binding of Satan before the millennium begins;
about the duration of the millennium;
about the loosing of Satan at the end of the thousand years;
about the destruction of Gog and Magog;
about the precise nature and position of the new Jerusalem —
about all these things, I purposely decline expressing any opinion. I could say something about them all — but it would be little better than *conjecture*. I am thankful that others have more light about them than I have. For myself, I feel unable at present to speak *positively*. If I have learned anything in studying prophecy, I think I have learned the wisdom of not "making haste" to decide what is true.

I am well aware that the views I have laid down appear to many persons very gloomy and discouraging. The only answer I make to that charge is this — Are they *Scriptural*? Are they in accordance with the lessons of history and experience? To my mind they certainly are. I see human failure and human corruption stamped on the conclusion of all dispensations preceding our own. I see much in the present state of the world to make me expect that the present dispensation will not end better than those which have gone before.

In short, there seems an *inherent tendency to decay* in everything that *man* touches! There is no such thing as *creature perfection*. God is teaching that lesson by all His successive modes of dealing with mankind. There will be *no perfection until the Lord comes*. The Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian dispensations all tend to prove this. Those words of Scripture shall yet be verified, "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until He comes whose right it is; and I will give it to Him." (Ezekiel 21:27.)

When the Lord Jesus comes back to earth, and the tabernacle of God is with men, *then* will there be perfection — but not until then. God will have all the glory at last, and all the world shall confess that without God, man can do nothing. God shall be "all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:28.)

The one point on which I desire to fix the *eyes of my own soul* — is the second personal coming of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To that "blessed hope and glorious appearing," I wish, by God's help, to direct all who read this volume. God forbid that anyone should *neglect present duties!* To sit idly waiting for Christ, and not to attend to the business of our respective positions, is not Christianity — but fanaticism! Let us only remember in all our daily employments, that *we serve a Master who is coming again*. If I can only stir up one Christian to think more of that second coming, and to keep it more prominently before his mind — I feel that the volume will not have been published in vain.

If anyone asks me why I have chosen this particular period for the republication of these prophetic tracts, I think it is sufficient answer to point to the *times* in which we live. I do not forget that we are poor judges of our own days, and are very apt to exaggerate their importance. But I doubt much whether there ever was a time in the history of our country, when the horizon on all sides, both political and ecclesiastical — was so

thoroughly black and lowering. In every direction, we see men's hearts "failing for fear, and for looking for those things that seem coming on the earth." Everything around us seems unscrewed, loosened, and out of joint! The fountains of the great deep appear to be breaking up. Ancient institutions are tottering, and ready to fall. Social and ecclesiastical systems are failing, and crumbling away. Church and State seem alike convulsed to their very foundations — and what the end of this convulsion may be, no man can tell.

Whether the last days of old England have really come — whether her political greatness is about to pass away — whether her Protestant Church is about to have her candlestick removed — whether in the coming crash of nations, England is to perish like Amalek, or at length to be saved, and escape "so as by fire," — all these are points which I dare not attempt to settle: a very few years will decide them. But I am sure there never was a time when it was more imperatively needful to summon believers to "cease from man," to stand on their watch-towers, and to build all their hopes on the second coming of the Lord! Happy is he who has learned to expect *little* from Parliaments or Convocations, from Statesmen or from Bishops — and to look steadily for Christ's appearing! He is the man who will not be disappointed.

J. C. Ryle, Stradbroke Vicarage, August, 1867.

P.S. The reader of this volume will probably observe that some of the thoughts and ideas are occasionally repeated. They will kindly remember that this arises from the sermons which comprise it having been delivered at different places, and at long intervals. I have thought it best and wisest, for many reasons, to reprint them without alteration.

WATCH!

"At that time the kingdom of Heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'

Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'

'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'

But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.

Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!'

But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'

Therefore keep **watch**, because you do not know the day or the hour!" *Matthew 25:1-13*

The passage of Scripture before our eyes, is one that deserves the close attention of all professing Christians. We ought to read it again and again, until we are thoroughly familiar with every sentence that it contains. It is a passage that concerns us all, whether ministers or people, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, old or young. It is a passage that can never be known too well.

These thirteen verses make up one of the most *solemn parables* that our Lord Christ ever spoke; partly because of the *time* at which it was spoken, partly because of the *matter* which it contains.

As to the *time* — it was but a few days before our Lord's crucifixion. It was spoken within view of Gethsemane and Calvary, of the cross and the grave.

As to the *matter* — it stands as a beacon to the Church of Christ in all ages. It is a witness against *carelessness* and *slothfulness* — against *apathy* and *indifference* about religion — and a witness of no uncertain sound. It cries to thoughtless sinners, "*Awake!*" It cries to true servants of Christ, "*Watch!*"

There are many trains of thought which this parable opens up, that I must of necessity leave alone. It would be foreign to my purpose to follow them out. I do not sit down to compose a learned commentary — but to write a *simple practical address*. I shall only clear my way by *explaining two things*, which otherwise might not be understood. And when I have done that, I shall keep to those main truths which it is most useful for us to know.

The *marriage customs* of the country where the parable was spoken, call for a few words of explanation. Marriages there generally took place in the evening. The bridegroom and his friends came in procession to the bride's house after nightfall. The young women who were the bride's friends were all assembled there, waiting for him. As soon as the lamps and torches, carried by the bridegroom's party, were seen coming in the distance — these young women lighted their lamps, and went forth to meet him. Then, having formed one united party, they all returned together to the bride's home. As soon as they arrived there, they entered in, the doors were shut, the marriage ceremony went forward, and no one else was admitted. All these were familiar things to those who heard the Lord Jesus speak; and it is right and proper that you should have them in your *mind's eye* while you read this parable.

The *figures* and *emblems* used in the parable also call for some explanation. I will give you my own view of their meaning. I may be wrong. I freely admit that they are not always interpreted exactly in the same way. But you have a right to have my opinion, and I will give it you shortly and decidedly.

I believe the parable to be a *prophecy* all the way through.

I believe the *time* spoken of in the parable, is the time when Christ shall return in person to this world, and a time yet to come. The very first word, the word "then," compared with the end of the twenty-fourth chapter, appears to me to settle that question.

I believe the *ten virgins* carrying lamps represent the whole body of professing Christians — the visible Church of Christ.

I believe the *Bridegroom* represents our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

I take the *wise virgins* to be the true believers, the real disciples of Christ, the converted part of the visible Church.

I take the *foolish virgins* to be the mere nominal Christians, the unconverted, the whole company of those who have no vital godliness.

I take the *lamps*, which all alike carried, to be that *mere outward profession* of Christianity which everyone possesses, who has been baptized and has never formally renounced his baptism.

I take the *oil*, which some virgins had with their lamps, and others had not, to be the *grace of the Holy Spirit* — that "unction of the Holy One" which is the mark of all true Christians.

I consider the *coming of the Bridegroom* to mean the second personal coming or advent of the Lord Christ, when He shall return in the clouds with glory.

I consider the *going into the wedding banquet* by the wise virgins, to mean the believer's entrance into his full reward in the day of Christ's appearing.

I consider the *shutting out of the foolish virgins*, to mean the exclusion from Christ's kingdom and glory of every soul whom He shall find unconverted at His second advent.

I offer these short explanations to your attention. I am not going to enter into any unprofitable discussion about them. And without saying another word in the way of *preface*, I will at once go on to point out the *great practical lessons* which the parable of the ten virgins is meant to teach us.

I. Learn, first of all, that the visible Church of Christ will always be a *mixed body* until Christ comes again.

II. Learn, secondly, that the visible Church is always in danger of neglecting the doctrine of Christ's second advent.

III. Learn, thirdly, that whenever Christ does come again, it will be a very *sudden* event.

IV. Learn, fourthly, that Christ's second advent will make an *immense change* to all the members of the visible Church, both good and bad.

Reader, let me try to set each of these four truths plainly before you. If I can bring you, by God's help, to see their vast importance, I believe I shall have done your soul an essential service.

I. Learn, first of all, that the visible Church of Christ will always be a *mixed body*, until Christ comes again.

I can gather no other meaning from the beginning of the parable we are now considering. I there see wise and foolish virgins *mingled* together in one company — virgins with oil, and virgins with no oil, all side by side. And I see this state of things going on *until* the very moment the Bridegroom appears. I see all this, and I cannot avoid the conclusion that *the visible Church will always be a mixed body until Jesus comes again*. Its members will never be all *unbelievers* — Christ will always have His witnesses. Its members will never be all *believers* — there will always be a vast proportion of formality, unbelief, hypocrisy, and false profession.

I frankly say, that I can find no standing ground for the common opinion that the *visible Church* will gradually advance to a state of perfection — that it will become better and better, holier and holier, up to the very end — and that *little by little* the whole body shall become full of light. I see no warrant of Scripture for believing that *sin* will gradually dwindle away in the earth, consume, melt, and disappear by inches, like the last snow-drift in spring. Nor yet do I see warrant for believing that holiness will gradually increase, like the banyan tree of the East, until it blossoms, blooms, and fills the face of the world with fruit. I know that thousands think in this way. All I say is, that I cannot see it in God's Word.

I fully admit that the Gospel appears sometimes to make rapid progress in some countries; but that it ever does more than call out an *elect* people — I utterly deny. It never did more in the days of the Apostles. Out of all the cities that Paul visited, there is not the slightest proof that in any one city — the whole population became believers. It never has done more in any country, from the time of the Apostle down to the present day. There never yet was a parish or congregation in any part of the world — however favored in the ministry it enjoyed — there never was one, I believe, in which *all* the people were converted. At all events, I never read or heard of it — and my belief is the thing never has been, and never will. I believe that now is the time of *election*, not of *universal conversion*. Now is the time for the *gathering out* of Christ's little flock. The time of *general obedience* is yet to come.

I fully admit that *missions* are doing a great work among the heathen, and that schools and district-visiting are rescuing thousands from the devil *at home*. I do not undervalue these things. I would to God that all professing Christians would value them more. But men appear to me to forget that Gospel religion is often withering in one place — while it is flourishing in another. They look at the progress of Christianity in the West of Europe.

They forget how fearfully it has lost ground in the East. They point to the little flood-tide of India. They forget the tremendous *ebb* in Africa and Asia Minor.

And as for any *signs* that all the ends of the earth shall turn to the Lord, under the present order of things — there are none. God's work is going forward, as it always has done. The Gospel is being preached, for a witness to every quarter of the globe. The elect are being brought to Christ *one by one*, and there is everything to encourage us to persevere. But more than this, no missionary can report in any station in the world.

I long for the *conversion of all mankind* as much as anyone. But I believe it is utterly beyond the reach of any instrumentality that man possesses. I quite expect that the earth will one day be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. But I believe that day will be in an entirely new dispensation — it will not be until *after* the Lord's return. I would not hesitate to preach the Gospel, and offer Christ's salvation to every man and woman alive; but that there always will be a vast amount of unbelief and wickedness until the second advent, I am fully persuaded.

The *Gospel-net* may perhaps be spread far more *widely* than it has been hitherto — but the angels shall find abundance of *bad* fish in it as well as good fish, in the last day. The Gospel laborers may possibly be multiplied a thousand-fold, and I pray God it may be so; but however faithfully they may sow — a large proportion of *tares* will be found growing together with the wheat, at the time of harvest.

Reader, how is it with your own soul? Remember, that until the Lord Jesus Christ comes again, there always will be both *wise* and *foolish* in the Church. Now, which are you?

The *wise* are they who have that *wisdom* which the Holy Spirit alone can give. They know their own *sinfulness*. They know *Christ* as their own precious Savior. They know how to *walk* and please God, and they act upon their knowledge. They look on *life* as a season of preparation for eternity:
not as an end — but as a way;
not as a harbor — but as a voyage;
not as a home — but as a journey;
not as their mature age — but their time of schooling.

Happy are they who know these things! The world may despise them — but they are the *wise*.

The *foolish* are they who are without spiritual knowledge. They neither know God, nor Christ, nor sin, nor their own hearts, nor the world, nor Heaven, nor Hell, nor the value of their souls — as they ought! There is no folly like this. To expect *wages* after doing no work — or *prosperity* after taking no pains — or *learning* after neglecting books — this is rank folly! But to expect *Heaven* without faith in Christ — or the *kingdom of God* without being born again — or the *crown of glory* without the cross and a holy walk — all this is greater folly still, and yet more common. Alas! for the folly of the world!

Reader, until the Lord Jesus Christ comes, there always will be some who have grace, and some who have not grace — in the visible Church. Now which are you? How is it with your own soul?

Some have nothing but the *name* of Christian — others have the *reality*. Some have only the *outward profession* of religion — others have the *possession* also. Some are content if they belong to the *Church* — others are never content, unless they are also united by faith to *Christ*. Some are satisfied if they have only the baptism of *water* — others are never satisfied unless they also feel within the baptism of the *Spirit*, and the sprinkling of the blood of atonement. Some stop short in the *form* of Christianity — others never rest until they have also the *substance*.

Reader, the visible Church of Christ is made up of these *two classes*. There always have been such. There always will be such until the end. There must, no doubt, be *borderers* and *waverers* — whom *man's* eye cannot make out, though *God's* eye can. But gracious and graceless, wise and foolish — make up the whole visible Church of Christ.

You *yourself* are described and written down in this parable. You are either one of the *wise* virgins — or one of the *foolish* virgins. You have either got the *oil of grace* — or you have got none. You are either a member of Christ — or a child of the devil. You are either traveling towards Heaven — or towards Hell. Never for a moment forget this. This is the point that concerns your eternal soul. Whatever your opinion may be on other points — this is the one that you should never lose sight of. Let not the devil divert your attention from it. Say to yourself, as you read this parable, "I am spoken of here!"

II. Learn, secondly, that the visible Church is always in danger of neglecting the doctrine of Christ's second advent.

I draw this truth from that solemn verse in the parable, "While the bridegroom tarried, *they all slumbered and slept*." I am quite aware that many good men explain these words in a different way. But I dare not call any man master. I feel that I am set for the proclamation of that which my own conscience tells me is true, and I cannot be *bound* by the opinions of others. There are such things as erroneous interpretations received by tradition, as well as false doctrines received by tradition — and against both I think we ought to be on our guard.

I do not believe that the words, "they all slumbered and slept," mean the death of all, though many think so. To my mind such an interpretation is contrary to plain facts. All the professing Church will not be sleeping the sleep of *death*, when Jesus comes again. Paul himself says in one place, "We shall not all sleep — but we shall all be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51) — and in another place, "We who are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air." (1 Thessalonians 4:17) Now the interpretation of which I speak, involves a most awkward contradiction to these two plain texts.

I do not believe that the words were meant to teach us that the *whole* professing Church will get into a slumbering and sleeping state of soul, though many think so. I would not

be misunderstood in saying this. I do not for a moment deny that the love of even the brightest Christians is very cold — and that neither their *faith* nor *works* are what they ought to be. All I mean to say is, that this is not the truth which appears to me to be taught here. Such a view of the text seems to me to wipe away that broad line of distinction between believers and unbelievers, which, with all the short-comings of believers, undoubtedly does exist.

Sleep is one of those very emblems which the Spirit has chosen to represent the state of the unconverted man. "Awake, you that sleep," He says, "and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light" (Ephesians 5:14.)

But what does the verse mean? I believe that the words "*all slumbered and slept*," are to be interpreted with a special regard to the great event on which the whole parable hinges — even the second advent of Christ. And I believe our Lord's meaning was simply this, that during the interval between His first and second advent, the whole Church, both believers and unbelievers, would get into a dull and dim-sighted state of soul about the blessed doctrine of His own personal return to earth.

And, reader, I say deliberately, that so far as my own judgment goes, there never was a saying of our Lord's more thoroughly verified by the event. I say that of all doctrines of the Gospel, the one about which Christians have become most unlike the first Christians, in their sense of its true value — is the doctrine of Christ's second advent. I am obliged to say this of all denominations of Protestants. I know not of any exception.

In our view of *man's corruption*, of *justification by faith*, of our need of the sanctifying work of the *Spirit*, of the sufficiency of Scripture — upon these points I believe we would find that English believers were much of one mind with believers at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, or Rome, in former times. But in our view of the second advent of Christ, I fear we would find there was a mighty difference between us and them, if our experience could be compared. I am afraid we would find that we fall woefully short of them in our estimate of its importance; that in our system of doctrine, it is a star of the fifteenth magnitude, while in their's it was one of the first. In one word, we would discover, that compared to them in this matter — we slumber and sleep.

I must speak my mind on this subject, now that I am upon it. I do so most unwillingly. I do so at the risk of giving offence, and of rubbing against the *prejudices* of many whom I love. But it is a *cross* I feel it a duty to take up. And speak I must.

I submit, then, that in the matter of Christ's second coming and kingdom, the Church of Christ has not dealt fairly with the prophecies of the Old Testament. We have gone on far too long refusing to see that there are *two personal advents of Christ* spoken of in those prophecies:

an advent in *humiliation* — and an advent in *glory*;

an advent to *suffer* — and an advent to *reign*;

a personal advent to carry the *cross* — and a personal advent to wear the *crown*.

We have been "slow of heart to believe *ALL* that the Prophets have written." (Luke 24:25.) The Apostles went into one extreme — they stumbled at Christ's *sufferings*. We have gone into the other extreme — we have stumbled at Christ's *glory*. We have got into a confused habit of speaking of the kingdom of Christ as *already* set up among us, and have shut our eyes to the fact that the devil is still prince of this world, and served by the vast majority; and that our Lord, like David in Adullam, though anointed — is not yet set upon His throne.

We have got into a wicked habit of *taking all the promises spiritually* — and all the denunciations and threats literally! The denunciations against Babylon, and Nineveh, and Edom, and Tyre, and Egypt, and the rebellious Jews, we have been content to take literally and hand over to our *neighbors*. The blessings and promises of glory to Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, and Israel — we have taken spiritually, and comfortably applied them to ourselves and the Church of Christ. To bring forward proofs of this, would be waste of time. No man can hear many sermons, and read many commentaries, without being aware that it is a fact.

Now I believe this to have been an unfair system of *interpreting Scripture*. I hold that the first and primary sense of every Old Testament *promise* as well as *threat*, is the literal one — and that Jacob means *Jacob*, Jerusalem means *Jerusalem*, Zion means *Zion*, and Israel means *Israel* — as much as Egypt means Egypt, and Babylon means Babylon. That primary sense, I believe, we have sadly lost sight of. We have adapted and accommodated to the Church of Christ — the promises that were spoken by God to Israel and Zion. I do not mean to say that this accommodation is in no sense allowable. But I do mean to say that the primary sense of every prophecy and promise in Old Testament prophecy — was intended to have a literal fulfillment, and that this literal fulfillment has been far too much put aside and thrust into a corner. And by so doing, I think we have exactly fulfilled our Lord's words in the parable of the ten virgins — we have proved that we are *slumbering* and *sleeping* about the second advent of Christ!

But I submit further, that in the interpretation of the *New Testament*, the Church of Christ has dealt almost as unfairly with our Lord's second advent, as she has done in the interpretation of the *Old*. Men have got into the habit of putting a *strange sense* upon many of those passages which speak of "the coming of the Son of Man," or of the Lord's "appearing." And this habit has been far too readily submitted to.

Some tell us that the coming of the Son of Man often means *death*. No one can read the thousands of epitaphs in churchyards, in which some text about the coming of Christ is thrust in, and not perceive how widespread this view is.

Some tell us that our Lord's coming means the *destruction of Jerusalem*. This is a very common way of interpreting the expression. Many find the literal Jerusalem everywhere in New Testament prophecies — though, oddly enough, they refuse to see it in the Old Testament prophecies, and, like Aaron's rod, they make it swallow up everything else.

Some tell us that our Lord's coming means the *general judgment*, and the end of all things. This is their one answer to all inquiries about things to come.

Now I believe that all these interpretations are entirely beside the mark. I have not the least desire to underrate the importance of such subjects as death and judgment. I willingly concede that the destruction of Jerusalem is typical of many things connected with our Lord's second advent, and is spoken of in chapters where that mighty event is foretold. But I must express my own firm belief that the coming of Christ is one distinct thing — and that death, judgment, and the destruction of Jerusalem — are three other distinct things. And the wide acceptance which these strange interpretations have met with, I hold to be one more proof that in the matter of Christ's second advent the Church has long slumbered and slept.

The plain truth of Scripture I believe to be as follows. When the number of the elect is accomplished, Christ will come again to this world with power and great glory. He will raise His saints, and gather them to Himself. He will punish with fearful judgments all who are found His enemies, and reward with glorious rewards all His believing people. He will take to Himself His great power, and reign, and establish an universal kingdom. He will gather the scattered tribes of Israel, and place them once more in their own land. As He came the first time in person — so He will come the second time in person. As He *went* away from earth visibly — so He will *return* visibly. As He literally rode upon a donkey — was literally sold for thirty pieces of silver — had His hands and feet literally pierced — was numbered literally with the transgressors — and had lots literally cast upon His raiment — and all that Scripture might be fulfilled; so also will He literally come, literally set up a kingdom, and literally reign over the earth, because the very same Scripture has said it shall be so.

The words of the angels, in the first of Acts, are plain and unmistakable: "This same Jesus who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." (Acts 1:11.) So also the words of the Apostle Peter: "The times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and He shall send Jesus Christ, who before was preached unto you — whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:19–21.) So also the words of the Psalmist: "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory." (Psalm 102:16.) So also the words of Zechariah: "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with you." (Zech. 14:5.) So also the words of Isaiah: "The Lord Almighty shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." (Isaiah. 24:23.) So also the words of Jeremiah: "I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, says the Lord, and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it." "I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-place; and the city shall be built on her own heap." (Jeremiah 30:3, 18.) So also the words of Daniel: "Behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away;

and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Daniel 7. 13, 14.) All these texts are to my mind *plain prophecies of Christ's second coming and kingdom*. All are yet without their accomplishment — and all shall yet be literally and exactly fulfilled.

I say "literally and exactly fulfilled," and I say so advisedly. From the first day that I began to read the Bible with my heart, I have never been able to see these texts, and hundreds like them, in any other light. It always seemed to me that as we take *literally* the texts foretelling that the walls of Babylon shall be cast down — so we ought to take literally the texts foretelling that the walls of Zion shall be built up; that as according to prophecy the Jews were literally *scattered* — so according to prophecy the Jews will be literally *gathered*; and that as the least and minutest predictions were made good on the subject of our Lord's coming to *suffer* — so the minutest predictions shall be made good which describe our Lord's coming to *reign*.

And I have long felt that it is one of the greatest shortcomings of the Church of Christ, that we ministers do not preach enough about this advent of Christ, and that private believers do not think enough about it. A few of us here and there receive the doctrine, and profess to love it; but the number of such people is comparatively very small. And, after all, we none of us *live* on it, *feed* on it, *act* on it, *work* from it, take *comfort* in it — as much as God intended us to do. In short, the Bridegroom tarries — and we all slumber and sleep!

It proves nothing against the doctrine of Christ's second coming and kingdom, that it has sometimes been fearfully abused. I would like to know what doctrine of the Gospel has not been abused. Salvation by grace, has been made a pretext for licentiousness; election, has been made an excuse for all manner of unclean living; and justification by faith, has been made a warrant for Antinomianism. But if men will draw *wrong conclusions* — we are not therefore obliged to throw aside *good principles*. We do not give up the Gospel because of the outrageous conduct of the Anabaptists of Munster, or the extravagant assertions of Saltmarsh and William Huntingdon, or the strange proceedings of *Jumpers* and *Shakers*. And where is the fairness of telling us that we ought to reject the second advent of Christ, because there are *Irvingites* and *Millerites* in our own time. Alas, men must be hard pressed for an argument, when they have no better reasons than this!

It proves nothing against the second advent of Christ, that those who hold the doctrine differ among themselves on many particular points in prophecy. Such differences need never stumble anyone who recollects that *unity* on great points — is perfectly consistent with disagreement on small ones. Luther and Zwingli differed widely in their views of the Lord's Supper: yet who would think of saying that therefore Protestantism is all false? Fletcher and Toplady were both clergymen in the Church of England — but differed widely about Calvinism: yet where would be the sense of saying that all Evangelical religion was therefore untrue? In common fairness, this ought to be remembered when people talk of the differences among those who study prophecy. It is possible for men to differ much as to the meaning they place on the symbols in the book of Revelation, and yet on the matter of Christ's coming and kingdom they may be entirely and substantially agreed.

It proves nothing against the doctrine that it is *encompassed with many difficulties*. This I fully concede. The *order* of events connected with our Lord's coming, and the *manner* of His kingdom when it is set up — are both deep subjects, and hard to be understood. But I firmly believe that the difficulties connected with any other system of interpreting unfulfilled prophecy, are just twice as many as those which are said to stand in our way. I believe too that the difficulties connected with our Lord's *second* coming, are not half so many as those connected with His *first* coming, and that it was a far more improbable thing, that the Son of God should come to *suffer*, than it is that He should come to *reign*. And, after all, what have we to do with the "how," and "in what manner" prophecies are to be fulfilled? Is our miserable understanding of what is *possible*, to be the measure and limit of God's dealings? The only question we have to do with is, "Has God said a thing?" If He has, we ought not to doubt it shall be done.

For myself, I can only give my own individual testimony; but the little I know *experimentally* of the doctrine of Christ's second coming, makes me regard it as most practical and precious, and makes me long to see it more generally received.

I find Christ's second coming to be a *powerful spring and stimulus to holy living* — a motive for patience, for moderation, for spiritual-mindedness — a test for the employment of time, and a gauge for all my actions: "Would I like my Lord to find me in this place? Would I like Him to find me so doing?"

I find Christ's second coming to be the *strongest argument for missionary work*. The time is short. The Lord is at hand. The gathering out from all nations will soon be accomplished. The heralds and forerunners of the King will soon have proclaimed the Gospel in every nation. The night is far spent. The King will soon be here!

I find Christ's second coming to be the *best answer to the infidel*. He sneers at our churches and chapels, at our sermons and services, at our tracts and our schools. He points to the millions who care nothing for Christianity, after 1800 years of preaching. He asks me how I can account for it — if Christianity be true? I answer: It was never said that all the world would believe, and serve Christ under the present dispensation. I tell him the state of things he ridicules was actually foreseen, and the number of true Christians, it was predicted, would be few. But I tell him that Christ's kingdom is yet to come; and that though we see not yet all things put under Him, they will be so one day.

I find Christ's second coming to be the *best argument with the Jew*. If I do not take all the prophecy of Isaiah literally, I know not how I can persuade him that the fifty-third chapter is literally fulfilled. But if I do, I have a resting-place for my lever, which I know he cannot shake. How men can expect the Jews to see a Messiah coming to *suffer* in Old Testament prophecies, if they do not themselves see in them a Messiah coming to reign — is past my understanding.

And now, is there any one among the readers of this address who cannot receive the doctrine of Christ's second advent and kingdom? I invite that man to consider the subject calmly and dispassionately. Dismiss from your mind *traditional* interpretations. Separate

the *doctrine* from the *mistakes* and *blunders* of many who hold it. Do not reject the *foundation* — because of the wood, hay, and stubble which some have built upon it. Do not condemn it and cast it aside — because of injudicious friends. Only examine the texts which speak of it, as calmly and fairly as you weigh texts in the Romish, Arian, or Socinian controversies — and I am hopeful as to the result on your mind. Alas, if texts of Scripture were always treated as unceremoniously as I have known texts to be treated by those who dislike the doctrine of Christ's second advent, I would indeed tremble for the cause of truth!

Is there any one among the readers of this address who agrees with the principles I have tried to advocate? I beseech that man to *endeavor to realize the second coming of Christ more and more*. Truly we feel it but little, compared to what we ought to do, at the very best.

Be gentle in argument with those that differ from you. Remember that a man may be mistaken on this subject, and yet be a holy child of God. It is not the slumbering on this subject that ruins souls — but the lack of grace! Above all, avoid dogmatism and positiveness, and specially about symbolic prophecy. It is a sad truth — but a truth never to be forgotten, that none have injured the doctrine of the second coming so much, as its over-zealous friends.

III. Learn, in the third place, that whenever Christ does come again, it will be a very sudden event.

I draw that truth from the verse in the parable which says, "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes, go out to meet him."

I do not know *when* Christ will come again. I would think it most presumptuous if I said that I did. I am no prophet, though I love the subject of prophecy. I dislike all fixing of dates, and naming of years, and I believe it has done great harm. I only assert positively, that Christ will come again one day to set up His kingdom on earth, and that whether the day be near, or whether it be far off — it will take the Church and the world exceedingly by surprise!

It will come on men suddenly. It will break on the world all at once. It will not have been talked over, prepared for, and looked forward to by everybody. It will awaken men's minds like the cry of fire at midnight. It will startle men's hearts like a *trumpet* blown at their bedside in their sleep. Like Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, they will know nothing until the very waters are upon them. Like Dathan, and Abiram, and their company, when the earth opened under them, the moment of their hearing the report of the visitation, will be the same moment when they will see it with their eyes. Before they can recover their breath and know where they are — they shall find that the Lord is come!

I suspect there is a vague notion floating in men's minds that the present order of things will not end quite so *suddenly*. I suspect men cling to the idea that there will be a time

when all will know the day of the Lord is near; a time when all will be able to cleanse their consciences, make out their wedding garments, shake off their earthly business, and *prepare* to meet their God. If any reader of this address has got such a notion into his head, I charge him to give it up forever! If anything is clear in unfulfilled prophecy, this one fact seems clear — that the Lord's coming will be *sudden*, and take men by *surprise*. And any view of prophecy which destroys the possibility of its being sudden — whether by interposing a vast number of events as yet to happen, or by placing the millennium between ourselves and the advent — any such view appears to my mind to carry with it a fatal defect.

Everything which is written in Scripture on this point confirms the truth, that Christ's second coming will be *sudden*. "As a *snare* shall it come," says one place. "As a *thief* in the night," says another. "As the *lightning*," says a third. "In such an hour as you think not," says a fourth. "When they shall say, Peace and safety," says a fifth. (Luke 21:35; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; Luke 17:24; Matthew 24:44; 1 Thessalonians 5:3.)

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself uses two most striking comparisons, when dwelling on this subject. Both are most instructive, and both ought to raise in us solemn thoughts.

In one, He compares His coming to the days of *Lot*. In the days when Lot fled from Sodom, the men of Sodom were buying and selling, eating and drinking, planting and building. They thought of nothing but earthly things — they were entirely absorbed in them. They despised Lot's warning. They mocked at his counsel. The sun rose on the earth as usual. All things were going on as they had done for hundreds of years. They saw no sign of danger. But now mark what our Lord says: "The same day that Lot went out of Sodom — it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." (Luke 17:28–30.)

In the other passage I allude to, our Lord compares His coming to the days of *Noah*. Do you remember how it was in Noah's day? Stay a little, and let me remind you. When the flood came on the earth in Noah's time, there was no appearance beforehand of anything so awful being near. The days and nights were following each other in regular succession. The grass, and trees, and crops were growing as usual. The business of the world was going on. And though Noah preached continually of coming danger, and *warned* men to repent — no one believed what he said.

But at last, one day the rain began and did not cease; the waters rose and did not stop; the flood came, and swelled, and went on, and covered one thing after another; and all who were not in the ark were drowned! Now mark what our Lord says: "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be in the days of the Son of Man. They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark — and the flood came and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:26, 27.) The flood took the world by surprise — so also will the coming of the Son of Man. In the midst of the world's business, when everything is going on just as usual — in such an hour as this, the Lord Jesus Christ will return!

Reader, the *suddenness* of the Lord's second advent is a truth that should lead every professing Christian to great searchings of heart. It should lead him to serious thought, both about himself and about the world.

Think for a moment, how little the world is prepared for such an event. Look at the towns and cities of the earth, and think of them. Mark how most men are *entirely absorbed in the things of time*, and utterly engrossed with the business of their callings. Banks, counting-houses, shops, politics, law, medicine, commerce, railways, banquets, balls, theaters — each and all are drinking up the hearts and souls of thousands, and thrusting out the things of God! Think what a fearful shock the sudden stoppage of all these things would be — the sudden stoppage which will be in the day of Christ's appearing.

If only one great house of business stops payment now, it makes a great sensation. What then shall be the crash when the *whole machine of worldly affairs* shall stand still at once? From money-counting and earthly scheming, from racing after riches and wrangling about trifles — to be hurried away to meet the King of kings — how tremendous the change! From dancing and dressing, from opera-going and novel-reading — to be summoned away by the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God — how awful the transition! Yet remember, all this shall one day be!

Look at the rural parishes of such a land as ours, and think of them. See how the minds of the vast majority of their inhabitants are buried in farms and businesses, in cattle and corn, in rent and wages, in digging and sowing, in buying and selling, in planting and building. See how many there are who evidently care for nothing, and feel nothing, excepting the things of this world; who care nothing whether their minister preaches law or gospel, Christ or Antichrist, and would be utterly unconcerned if the Archbishop of Canterbury was turned out of Lambeth Palace, and the Pope of Rome put in his place.

See how many there are of whom it can only be said that their *bellies* and their *pockets* are their *gods*. And then imagine the awful effect of a sudden call to meet the Lord Christ — a call to a day of reckoning, in which the price of wheat and the rate of wages shall be nothing, and the Bible shall be the only rule of trial! And yet remember, all this shall one day be!

Reader, picture these things to your mind's eye. Picture your own house, your own family, your own fire-side. What will be found there? Picture, above all, your own feelings, your own state of mind. And then, remember, that this is the end towards which the world is hastening. This is the way in which the world's affairs will be wound up. This is an event which may possibly happen in our own time. And surely you cannot avoid the conclusion that the second coming of Christ is no mere curious speculation. It is an event of vast practical importance to your own soul.

"Ah!" I can imagine some reader saying, "This is all foolishness, raving, and nonsense! This writer is beside himself. This is all extravagant fanaticism. Where is the likelihood, where is the probability of all this? The world is going on as it always did. The world will last for my time." Do not say so. Do not drive away the subject by such language as this.

This is the way that men talked in the days of Noah and Lot — but what happened? They found to their cost that Noah and Lot were right. Do not say so. The Apostle Peter foretold, eighteen hundred years ago, that men would talk in this way. "There shall come in the last day scoffers," he tells us, "saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Peter 3:3, 4.) Oh, do not fulfill this prophecy by your unbelief!

Where is the raving and fanaticism of the things which I have been saying? Show it to me if you can. I calmly assert that the present order of things will come to an end one day. Will any one deny that? Will anyone tell me we are to go on as we do now forever? I calmly say that Christ's second coming will be the end of the present order of things. I have said so because the Bible says it. I have calmly said that Christ's second coming will be a *sudden* event, whenever it may be, and may possibly be in *our own time*. I have said so, because this and thus I find it written in the Word of God. If you do not like it, I am sorry for it. One thing only you must remember, you are finding fault with the Bible, not with me.

IV. Learn, in the last place, that Christ's second coming will make an *immense change* to all members of the visible Church, both good and bad.

I draw this truth from the concluding portion of the parable — from the discovery of the foolish virgins that their lamps were gone out — from their anxious address to the wise virgins, "Give us some of your oil," — from their vain knocking at the door when too late, crying, "Lord, Lord, open to us," — from the happy admission of the wise who were found ready, in company with the bridegroom.

Each and all of these points are full of *food for thought*. But I have neither time nor space to dwell upon them particularly. I can only take one single broad view of all. To all who have been baptized in the name of Christ . . .
converted, or unconverted;
believers, or unbelievers;
holy, or unholy;
godly, or ungodly;
wise, or foolish;
gracious, or graceless —
to all, the second advent of Christ will be an immense change!

It will be an immense change to the **ungodly** — to all who are found mere *nominal Christians* — a change both in their opinions and position. All such people, when Christ comes again, will see the value of real spiritual religion, if they never saw it before. They will do in effect what the parable describes under a figure — they will cry to the godly, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out!"

Who does not know, that, as things are now, spiritual religion never brings a man the world's praise? It never has done, and it never does at this day. It entails on a man . . . the world's disapprobation,

the world's persecution,
the world's mockery,
the world's opposition,
the world's ridicule,
the world's sneers.

The world will let a man serve the devil and go to Hell quietly, and no one lifts a little finger to stop him, or says, "Be merciful to your soul." The world will *never* let a man serve Christ and go to Heaven quietly, and does everything that can be done to keep him back.

Who has not heard of nicknames in plenty, bestowed on those who follow Christ, and try to be saved — Pietists, Puritans, Methodists, Fanatics, Enthusiasts, Calvinists, Ultra-religionists, the Saints, the Righteous overmuch, the Very Good People — and many more? Who does not know the petty family persecutions which often go on in private society in our day?

Let a young person go to every ball, and opera, and race-course, and worldly party, and utterly neglect his soul — and no one interferes; no one says "Spare yourself!" No one says, "Take care! Remember God, judgment, and eternity!" But let him only begin to read his Bible, and be diligent in prayer — let him decline worldly amusements, and become particular in his employment of time, let him seek an evangelical ministry, and live like an immortal being — let him do this, I say, and all his friends and relations will probably be up in arms! "You are going too far! You need not be so religious. You are taking up extreme views." This, in all probability, is the very least that such a person will hear. If a young *woman*, she will be marked and avoided by all her equals. If a young *man*, he will be set down by all who know him, as weak, silly, and religious. In short, such a person will soon discover that there is no help from the world in the way to Heaven — but plenty of help in the way to Hell! Alas, that it should be so — but so it is!

These are ancient things. As it was in the days of Cain and Abel — as it was in the days of Isaac and Ishmael, even so it is now. "Those who are born after the flesh will persecute those that are born after the Spirit." (Galatians 4:29.) *The Cross of Christ will always bring reproach with it!* As the Jews hated Christ — so the world hates Christians. As the Head was bruised — so also the members will be. As contempt was poured on the Master — so it will be also on the disciples. In short, if a man will become a decided evangelical Christian, he must "count the cost" — and make up his mind to lose the world's favor. In a word, he must be content to be thought by many little better than a fool!

Reader, there will be an end of all this, when Christ returns to this world. The light of that day will at length show everything in its true colors. The *scales* will fall from the poor worldling's eyes. The value of the *soul* will flash on his astonished mind. The utter uselessness of a *mere nominal Christianity* will burst upon him like a thunder-storm. The blessedness of regeneration and faith in Christ, and a holy walk, will shine before him like the handwriting on the wall of the Babylonian palace. The *veil* will fall from his face. He will discover that the godly have been the wise, and that he has *played the fool*

exceedingly. And just as Saul wanted Samuel when it was too late, and Belshazzar sent for Daniel when the kingdom was about to be taken from him — so will the ungodly turn to the very men they once mocked and despised, and cry to them, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out!"

But as there will be a complete change in the **feelings** of the ungodly, in the day of Christ's second advent — so will there also be a complete change in their **position**. *Hope*, the *plank* to which they now cling, and on which they generally depend to the very last — hope will be entirely taken away in that dreadful day. They will seek salvation with earnestness — but shall not be able to find it. They will run hither and there in a vain search for the *oil of grace*. They will knock loudly at the *door of mercy*, and get no answer. They will cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" but all to no purpose. They will discover to their sorrow, that opportunities once let slip — can never be regained; and that the notion of *universal mercy* always to be obtained — is a mere delusion of the devil!

Who does not know that thousands are urged to pray and repent now — who never attempt it? They mean to *try* one day perhaps. Like Felix, *they hope for a convenient season*. They imagine it will never be *too late* to seek the Lord. But there is a time coming when prayer shall be heard no longer, and repentance shall be unavailing. There is a time when the *door* by which Manasseh and Saul the persecutor entered — shall be shut and opened no more. There is a time when the *fountain* in which Magdalene, and John Newton, and thousands of others were washed and made clean — shall be sealed forever. There is a time when men shall know the folly of sin — but like *Judas*, too late for repentance; when they shall desire to enter the promised land — but like Israel at Kadesh not be able; when they shall see the value of God's favor and covenant blessing — but like Esau when they can no longer possess it; when they shall believe every jot and tittle of God's revealed Word — but like the miserable devils, only to tremble!

Yes, reader, men may come to this, and many will come to this in the day of Christ's appearing. They will *ask* — and not receive! They will *seek* — and not find. They will *knock* — and the door shall not be opened to them. Alas, indeed, that so it should be! Woe to the man who puts off seeking his *manna*, until the Lord's day of return. Like Israel of old, he will find none. Woe to the man who goes to *buy* oil — when he ought to be *burning* it! Like the foolish virgins, he will find himself shut out from the marriage supper of the Lamb!

Oh, that professing Christians would consider these things! Oh, that they would remember the words of our Lord have yet to be fulfilled, "Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'" (Luke 13:25–27.)

But as Christ's second coming will be a mighty change to the ungodly — so will it also be a mighty change to the **godly**.

They shall at length be freed from everything which now mars their comfort. "The door shall be shut" . . .
against the fiery darts of *Satan*,
against the loathsome weakness of the *flesh* which now clings to them,
against the unkind *world* which now misrepresents and misunderstands them,
against the *doubts* and fears which now so often darken their path,
against the *weariness* which now clogs their best efforts to serve the Lord,
against all coldness and deadness,
against all shortcomings and backslidings —
against all these the door shall be shut forever! Not one single *Canaanite* shall be found in the land.

They shall no longer be . . .
vexed by temptation,
persecuted by the world,
warred against by the devil.

Their conflict shall all be over.

Their strife with the flesh shall forever cease.

The *armor of God*, which they have so long worn, shall at length be laid aside.

They shall be where there is . . .
no Satan,
no sorrow,
and no sin!

Ah, reader, the second Eden shall be far better than the first. In the first Eden, the door was not shut; our joy was but for a moment. But, blessed be God, in the second Eden, the Lord shall "*shut us in.*"

And as the godly shall enjoy a *freedom from all evil* in the day of Christ's appearing — so shall they also enjoy the *presence of all good*. They shall go in with the Bridegroom to the marriage. They shall be forever in the company of Christ, to go out no more.

Faith shall then be swallowed up in *sight*.

Hope shall become *certainty*.

Knowledge shall at length be perfect.

Prayer shall be turned into *praise*.

Desires shall receive their full accomplishment.

Hunger and thirst after conformity to Christ's image shall at length be satisfied.

The thought of parting shall not spoil the pleasure of meeting.

The company of saints shall be enjoyed without hurry and distraction.

The family of *Abraham* shall no more feel temptations;
nor the family of *Job*, afflictions;
nor the family of *David*, household bereavements;
nor the family of *Paul*, thorns in the flesh;
nor the family of *Lazarus*, poverty and sores!

Every tear shall be wiped away in that day! It is the time when the Lord shall say, "I make all things new."

Oh, reader, if God's children find joy and peace in believing even now — what tongue shall tell their feelings when they *behold the King in His beauty!* If the report of the *land that is far off* has been sweet to them in the wilderness — what pen shall describe their happiness, when they see it with their own eyes? If it has cheered them now and then to meet two or three like-minded in this evil world — how their hearts will burn within them when they see a multitude that no man can number, the least defects of each purged away, and not one false brother in the list! If the *narrow way* has been a way of *pleasantness* to the scattered few who have traveled it with their poor frail bodies — how precious shall their *rest* seem in the day of gathering together, when they shall have a glorious body like their Lord's!

Then shall we understand the meaning of the text, "In Your presence is fullness of joy, and at Your right hand are pleasures for evermore!" (Psalm 16:11.) Then shall we experience the truth of that beautiful hymn, which says —

"Let me be with You where You are,
My Savior, my eternal rest;
Then only shall this longing heart
Be fully and forever blessed!

Let me be with You where You are,
Your unveiled glory to behold;
Then only shall this wandering heart
Cease to be false to You, and cold!

Let me be with You where You are,
Where none can die, where none remove;
There neither death nor life shall part
Me from Your presence and Your love!"

Is there a man or woman among the readers of this address who ever *laughs* at true religion? Is there one who persecutes and *ridicules* vital godliness in others, and dares to

talk of people being over-particular, and righteous over-much? Oh, beware what you are doing! Again I say, beware! You may live to think very differently! You may live to alter your opinion — but perhaps too late!

Ah, reader, there is a day before us all when there will be no infidels! No, not one! There is a day when the disciples of Paine, and Voltaire, and Emerson, shall call on the *rocks* to fall on them, and on the *hills* to cover them! Before the throne of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is the Lord. Remember that day, and beware!

Is there among the readers of this address some dear child of God, who is mocked and despised for the Gospel's sake, and feels as if he stood alone? Take comfort. Be patient. "Wait a little longer!" Your turn shall yet come. When the spies returned from searching Canaan, men talked of stoning *Caleb* and *Joshua*, because they brought a good report of the land. A few days passed away, and then all the assembly confessed that they alone had been right. Strive to be like them. *Follow the Lord fully*, as they did — and sooner or later all men shall confess that you did well. Never, never be afraid of *going too far*. Never, never be afraid of *being too holy*. Never, never be ashamed of desiring to go to Heaven, and of seeking to have a great crown. Millions will lament in the day of Christ's return, because they have not enough religion: not one will be heard to say that he has got too much. Take comfort. Press on.

And now, reader, it only remains for me to close this paper by three words of **APPLICATION**, which seem to me to arise naturally out of the parable of which I have been writing. I heartily pray God to bless them to your soul, and to make them words in season.

1. My first word of application shall be a question. I take the parable of the ten virgins as my warrant, and I address that question to every one of my readers. I ask you, "*Are you ready?*" Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "Those who were ready went in with the bridegroom to the wedding banquet" — they who were ready, and no others. Now here, in the sight of God, I ask each and every reader, Is this your case? *Are you ready?*

I do not ask whether you are a Churchman, and make a profession of religion. I do not ask whether you attend an evangelical ministry, and like evangelical people, and can talk of evangelical subjects, and read evangelical tracts and books. All this is the *surface* of Christianity. All this costs little, and may be easily attained. I want to search your heart more thoroughly, and probe your conscience more deeply. I want to know whether you have been born again, and whether you have the *Holy Spirit* dwelling in your soul. I want to know whether you have any *oil* in your vessel while you carry the lamp of profession, and whether you are ready to meet the bridegroom — ready for Christ's return to the earth. I want to know, if the Lord would come this week — whether you could lift up your head with joy, and say, "This is our God; we have waited for Him; let us be glad, and rejoice in His salvation." These things I want to know, and this is what I mean when I say, "Are you ready?"

"Ah!" I can imagine some saying, "this is asking far too much. To be ready for Christ's appearing! This is far too high a standard. This is fanaticism. There would be no living in the world at this rate. This is a hard saying. Who can hear it?" I cannot help it. I believe this is the standard of the Bible. I believe this is the standard Paul sets before us when he says the Thessalonians were "waiting for the Son of God from Heaven," and the Corinthians "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 1:7.) And surely this is the standard Peter sets before us, when he speaks of "looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God." (2 Peter 3:12.) I believe it is a *mark*, that every true believer should be continually aiming at — *to live so as to be ever ready to meet Christ*. God forbid that I should place the standard of Christian practice a hair's breadth higher than the level at which the Bible places it. But God forbid that I should ever put it a hair's breadth lower. If I do, what right have I to say that the Bible is my rule of faith?

I want to disqualify no man for usefulness upon earth. I require no man to become a *hermit*, and cease to serve his generation. I call on no man to leave his lawful calling, and neglect his earthly affairs. But I do call on every one to *live like one who expects Christ to return* — to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world — to live like a pilgrim and a stranger, ever looking unto Jesus — to live like a good servant, with his loins girded, and his lamp burning — to live like one whose treasure is in Heaven, with his heart packed up and ready to be gone! This is *readiness*. This is *preparation*. And is this too much to ask? I say unhesitatingly that it is not.

Now, reader, are, you ready in this way? If not, I would like to know what good your religion does you. What is it all, but a burdensome form? What is it, but a mere temporary cloak that will not wear beyond this world? Truly a religion that does not make a man ready for everything — for death, for judgment, for the second advent, for the resurrection — such a religion may well be looked on with suspicion. Reader, if your religion does not make you ready for anything — the sooner it is changed, the better!

2. My second word of application shall be an invitation. I address it to everyone who feels in his conscience that he has no grace in his heart — to everyone who feels that the character of the *foolish virgins* is his own. To every such person, I give an invitation this day, in my Master's name. I invite you "to awake and flee to Christ."

Reader, if you are a man of this sort, you know that all within you is *wrong* in the sight of God. Nothing can be said more true about you, than that you are asleep — asleep not merely about the doctrine of Christ's second advent — but about everything that concerns your soul. You are wide awake perhaps about *temporal* things. You read the newspapers, it may be, and are mighty in "*the Times*." You have your head stored with *earthly* wisdom and useful knowledge. But you have. . .

no heartfelt sense of sin,
no peace or friendship with God,
no experimental acquaintance with Christ,
no delight in the Bible and prayer.

And yet you are a *sinner*, a *dying* sinner, an *immortal* sinner, a sinner going to meet Christ, a sinner going to be *judged*. What, I would put it to your conscience as an honest man — what is all this, but being asleep?

How long is this to go on? When do you mean to arise and live as if you had a soul? When will you cease to hear as one who hears not? When will you give up *running after shadows* — and begin to seek something substantial? When will you throw off the mockery of a religion which . . .

cannot satisfy,
cannot comfort,
cannot sanctify,
cannot save, and
will not bear a calm examination?

When will you give up . . .
having a *faith* which does not *influence* your practice;
having a *book* which you say is God's Word — but treat as if it was not;
having the *name* of Christian — but knowing nothing of Christ?

Oh! reader, when, when shall it be?

Why not this very year? Why not this very day? Why not at once awake and call upon your God, and resolve that you will sleep no longer? I set before you an *open door*. I set before you Jesus Christ the Savior, who died to make atonement for sinners — Jesus who is able to save to the uttermost — Jesus willing to receive. *The hand that was nailed to the cross* — is held out to you in mercy! *The eye that wept over Jerusalem* — is looking on you with pity. *The voice* that has said to many wanderers, "Your sins are forgiven," is saying to you, "Come to Me!"

Go to Jesus first and foremost, if you would know what step to take. Think not to wait for repentance, and faith, and a new heart — but go to Him just as you are. Go to Him in prayer, and cry, "Lord save me — or I perish. I am weary of sleeping — I would sleep no longer." Oh! awake, you that sleep, and Christ shall give you light.

Sun, moon, and stars are all witnessing against you — they continue according to God's ordinances, and you are ever transgressing them. The grass, the birds, the very worms of the earth are all witnessing against you — they fill their place in creation, and you do not. Sabbaths and ordinances are continually witnessing against you — they are ever proclaiming that there is a God and a judgment, and you are living as if there were none. The tears and prayers of godly relations are witnessing against you — others are sorrowfully thinking you have a soul, though you seem to forget it. The very grave-stones that you see every week are witnessing against you — they are silently witnessing that life is uncertain, time is short, the resurrection is yet to come, the Lord is at hand!

All, all are saying, Awake, awake, awake! Oh! reader, the time past may surely suffice you to have slept! Awake to be wise! Awake to be safe. Awake to be happy! Awake, and sleep no more!

3. My last word of application shall be an *exhortation* to all true believers — to all who have the oil of grace in their hearts, and have fled for pardon to the blood of the Lamb. I draw it from the words of the Lord Jesus at the end of the parable. I exhort you earnestly "to **watch**."

I exhort you to watch against everything which might interfere with a readiness for Christ's appearing. Search your own hearts. Find out the things which most frequently interrupt your communion with Christ, and cause *fogs* to rise between you and the sun. Mark these things, and know them, and against them ever watch and be on your guard.

Watch against *SIN* of every kind and description. Think not to say of any sin whatever, "Ah! that is one of the things that I shall never do." I tell you there is no possible sin too abominable, for the very best of us all to commit! Remember David and Uriah. The spirit may be sometimes very willing — but the flesh is always very weak. You are yet in the body. Watch and pray!

Watch against *doubts* and *unbelief* as to the complete acceptance of your soul, if you are a believer in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus finished the work He came to do — do not tell Him that He did not. The Lord Jesus paid your debts in full — do not tell Him that you think He left you to pay part. The Lord Jesus promises eternal life to every sinner that comes to Him — do not tell Him, even while you are coming, that you think He lies. Alas, for our unbelief! In Christ you are like *Noah* in the ark, and *Lot* in Zoar — nothing can harm you. The earth may be burned up with fire at the Lord's appearing — but not a hair of your head shall perish. Doubt it not. Pray for more faith. Watch and pray!

Watch against *inconsistency of walk* — and *conformity to the world*. Watch against sins of temper and of tongue. These are the kind of things that grieve the Spirit of God, and make His witness within us faint and low. Watch and pray!

Watch against the *leaven of false doctrine*. Remember that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light. Remember that bad money is never marked *bad* — or else it would never pass. Be very jealous for the whole truth as it is in Jesus. Do not put up with a *grain* of error — merely for the sake of a pound of truth. Do not tolerate a little false doctrine — one bit more than you would a little sin. Oh, reader, remember this caution! Watch and pray!

Watch against *slothfulness* about the Bible and private prayer. There is nothing so spiritual, but we may at last do it formally. Most *backslidings* begin in the *closet*. When a tree is snapped in two by a high wind, we generally find there had been some *long hidden decay*. Oh, watch and pray!

Watch against *bitterness* and *uncharitableness* towards others. A little love is more valuable than many gifts. Be *eagle-eyed* in seeing the *good* that is in your brethren — and *dim-sighted* as the mole about the *evil*. Let your memory be a *strong-box* for their graces — but a *sieve* for their faults. Watch and pray!

Watch against *pride* and *self-conceit*. Peter said at first, "Though all men deny You — yet I never will." And presently he fell. *Pride is the high road to a fall*. Watch and pray!

Watch against the sins of Galatia, Ephesus, and Laodicea. Believers may run well for a season, then *lose their first love*, and then become lukewarm. Watch and pray!

Watch not least against the *sin of Jehu*. A man may have *great zeal* to all appearance — and yet have *very bad motives*. It is a much easier thing to oppose Antichrist — than to follow Christ. It is one thing to protest against error — it is quite another thing to love the truth. So watch and pray!

Oh, my believing readers, let us all watch more than we have done! Let us watch more every year that we live. Let us watch, that we may not be surprised when the Lord appears.

Let us watch for the *world's* sake. We are the *books* they chiefly read. They mark our *ways*, far more than we think. Let us aim to be plainly-written epistles of Christ!

Let us watch for our *own* sakes. As our walk is — so will be our peace. As our conformity to Christ's mind — so will be our sense of Christ's atoning blood. If a man will not walk in the full light of the sun, how can he expect to be warm?

And, above all, let us watch for our *Lord Jesus Christ's* sake. Let us live as if His glory was concerned in our behavior. Let us live as if every slip and fall was a reflection on the honor of our King. Let us live as if every allowed *sin*, was . . .
one more *thorn* in His head,
one more *nail* in His feet,
one more *spear* in His side!

Oh, let us exercise a godly jealousy over *thoughts*, *words*, and *actions* — over motives, manners, and walk! Never, never let us fear being too strict. Never, never let us think we can watch too much.

Leigh Richmond's dying words were very solemn. Few believers were ever more useful in their day and generation. Of few can it be said so truly, that he "being dead yet speaks." But what did he say to one who stood by, while he lay dying? "*Brother, brother, we are none of us more than half awake!*"

What Time Is It?

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light." Romans 13:12

Reader, you and I are in a world which is rapidly rolling on towards the day of judgment. There is an hour before us all when the earth and its works shall be burned up, and the inhabitants thereof shall all stand before the bar of Christ. There is a day to come whose issues are of greatest importance. Surely it befits us to think of that day. Are we ready for it? Is it possible that we may live to see it? Is it near, or is it far off? *What time is it?*

Come with me this day and consider the thoughts of an inspired Apostle on this solemn subject. He says, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on us the armor of light." These words ought to come home to our consciences like the blast of a trumpet. They ought to rouse our sleeping minds to a sense of the *eternal realities* which are before us. They call upon us to lay aside all trifling, lingering, and carelessness about our Christianity. They summon us to a close walk with God.

There are four things brought before my mind by the words just quoted:

1. You have here the present condition of the world. It is night.
2. You have the condition of the world which is yet to come. It will be day.
3. You have the particular time in which our lot is cast. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand.
4. You have the duty of all believers who know the time. They ought to cast off the works of darkness and to put on the armor of light.

Upon each of these four points I have something to say.

First of all, let us consider the present condition of the world. The Apostle Paul calls it "night." "The night," he says, "is far spent." I have no doubt, that word seems strange to some people. They think it surprising that our present time should be called "night." They are living in days of learning, science, civilization, commerce, freedom, and knowledge. They see around them things which their forefathers never dreamed of — railways, manufacturing plants, gas, electricity, steam engines, education for all, and inexpensive books. I know it all, and am thankful for it.

Nevertheless I say that in the things of God, the world is still in a state of "night." I believe that God looks down on this globe of ours as it rolls round the sun, and as He looks upon it, He pronounces it "very dark!" I believe that the angels go to and fro, and make report of all they see on our earth, and their constant report is, "very dark!" And I

am sure that believers in the Lord Jesus in every land are of one mind on this subject. They cry and sigh because of the *abominations* they see around them. To them the world appears "very dark!"

Is it not dark in *heathen lands*? There are two-thirds of the whole world in open rebellion against God and His Christ. Two out of every three inhabitants of the globe have no Bible, no Gospel, no knowledge, no faith, no hope! They are cruel, deceitful, immoral, earthly sensual, devilish, idolatrous, superstitious! Surely that is night!

Is it not dark in many *professedly Christian countries*? There are two-thirds of all the *professing* Christians on earth who are *unsound* in the faith. Their religion simply is not Scriptural. They have added to it many things which are not to be found in the Bible. They have left out of it many things which the Bible has plainly commanded. There are millions who give honor to the *Virgin Mary* and *dead saints* — instead of Christ. There are millions of baptized people who know nothing of the Bible, and have not the slightest idea of the salvation contained in the Gospel. Surely that is night!

Is it not dark in *our own country* at this present day? How much of sin there is in Protestant Britain — and how little of God! How much of open infidelity, heathenish ignorance, drunkenness, swearing, cheating, lying, covetousness — is weekly crying against us before the Lord Almighty! How many people in Great Britain go to no place of worship at all! How many go to church and chapel merely as a matter of *form*! How few are really in earnest about the salvation of their souls! How few have any *evidence* to show of a saving faith in Christ and a real work of the Spirit in their hearts! Surely even among ourselves it is night.

Is there not much darkness under the eyes of every *true believer*? Go to the most godly, quiet, and orderly *parish* in our land at this moment. Ask any well-informed child of God residing in it how many true Christians it contains, and what is the proportion of the converted to the unconverted. Mark well the answer he will give. *I doubt if you will find a parish in Great Britain where one third of the people are converted!* And if such be the report of parishes which are like the green tree, what must be the state of things in the dry? Surely it is night!

Reader, it is useless to deny these things. As humbling as it may be to the pride of human nature, the word of the Apostle is strictly true — the time present is night! An *unconverted* man may not perceive it. A *graceless* man may not comprehend it. The *blind eye* sees no difference between noon and midnight. The *deaf ear* makes no distinction between discord and sweet music. The *mortified limb* has no feeling either of heat or cold.

But I do believe that *God's children* can enter into the meaning of the expression. The people of the Lord Jesus Christ find by experience, that it is *night*.

It is a **cold** time to believers. They meet with much to chill and dampen their zeal — and little to cheer and warm their hearts. They have to put up with many *crosses* and

disappointments. They see *iniquity abounding*, and their own love is apt to become cold. And why? It is night!

It is a **lonely** time to believers. They find *little company* on the way that leads to Heaven. Here and there they fall in with one who loves the Lord Jesus and lives by faith. A few of God's children may be found in one town, and a few in another. But on the whole, the children of the *world* seem like the Syrian army, which filled and country — and the children of *God* are like a few scattered sheep in a wilderness! And why? It is night.

It is a **dangerous** time to believers. They often *stumble* and scarcely discern their path. They often stand in doubt and know not which way to turn. They sometimes are unable to see their *tokens* and lose sight of their *landmarks*. At best they travel on in continual fear of enemies. And why? It is night.

Reader, I ask you to *ponder* these things. If time present be night, you will not wonder if we ministers warn Christians to *watch* and *pray*. You will count it no strange thing if we tell you to *live like soldiers in an enemy's country*, and to be always on your guard.

Reader, sit down and ask yourself whether you find this world in which you live to be night or day. Is time present, a time of *conflict* — or a time of ease? Do you feel that your best things are here in this life — or that your best things are yet to come? I offer these questions to you as a test of your spiritual state. I place them before you as a *gauge* and *measure* of your soul's condition. I tell you plainly, if you *never* found this world a wilderness and place of darkness — it is a bad sign of your state in the sight of God!

The true believer will find the words of his crucified Lord to be strictly true, "In the world you shall have tribulation" (John 16:33). The true believer, like his Lord and Master, will be made "perfect through sufferings." The true believer will *mourn* over the world he lives in, as a world in rebellion against its rightful king. *Sin* will grieve him. *Ungodliness* will make him heavy of heart. Like Lot in Sodom, his righteous soul will be *daily vexed* with much that he sees and hears. He will long for the time when the *day* shall dawn, and the shadows flee away. For the present he will feel it is night.

Reader, is it your night or day?

Let us consider, in the second place, the condition of the world which is yet to come.

The Apostle Paul calls it "day." "The day is at hand." The time here spoken of is the time to which every true Christian ought to look forward it is the time when the Lord Jesus Christ shall come again. The present state of things in the Church of Christ shall undergo a mighty change — a change so great that it shall be like the turning of night into day.

The world we live in is not to go on always as it does now. The darkness of sin, ignorance, and superstition is not always to cover the earth. The sun of righteousness shall one day rise with healing in his wings. The Lord Jesus shall come again with power and great glory. He shall return as a *morning without clouds*, and then it shall be "day." There is a time coming when the *devil* shall be bound and shall no longer rule in this

world (Rev. 20:1, etc.). *Sin* and all its consequences shall be cast out. The *groaning creation* shall at length be refreshed (Acts 3:19). The *wicked* shall be shut up forever in their own place, Hell. The saints of the Most High shall at length possess Heaven. There shall be a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness. Surely that will be "day."

There is a time coming, when believers shall have joy and gladness — and sorrow and sighing shall flee far away.

Every tear shall be wiped away,
every cross laid down,
every anxiety removed,
every bitter cup taken away!

Persecution, temptation, sickness, mourning, parting, separation, and death — shall be at end! Surely that will be sunshine. It will be "day."

There is a time coming when the whole family of Christ shall be gathered together. They shall rise from their *narrow beds* and each put on a glorious body. They shall awake from their *long sleep* refreshed, strengthened, and far more beautiful than when they lay down. They shall leave behind them in their graves, every imperfection, and meet without spot or wrinkle, to part no more. Surely that will be a joyful morning. It will be "day."

There is a time coming when believers shall no longer see through a glass darkly — but face to face. They shall *see* as they have been seen, and *know* as they have been known. They shall cease to wrangle and dispute about outward matters, and shall think of nothing but eternal realities. They shall behold their crucified Lord and Savior with the eye of *sense* — and no longer follow Him by *faith*. They shall see one another free from all corruption, and misunderstand one another's motives and conduct no more. Surely that will be "day."

I see here *great comfort* for every believer in Christ who reads these pages. There is a day before you — a glorious day. You sometimes feel now as if you walked in darkness and had no light. You have often a *hard battle* to fight with the world, the flesh, and the devil. You sometimes imagine that you will never win your way home, and must faint along the way. Your flesh and heart are ready to fail. You are sorely tempted to give up and to sit down in despair. But take comfort in the thought of *things yet to come*. There is a good time before you. Your *day* has yet to dawn.

I see here great reason why many *professing* Christians should *tremble and be afraid*. There are many, too many I fear, to whom the time to come will be anything but day.

There are many . . .

whose happiness is evidently all below,
whose treasure is all on earth,
whose brightest time is now, and
whose gloomiest prospects are hereafter.

The further they look onward — the darker everything appears!
Old age looks dark;
sickness looks darker still;
death and judgment look darkest of all!

Beloved reader, if this is your case, I warn you plainly there must be a change. Your views, your tastes, your inclinations, your affections — must be renewed and transformed. You must learn to view the world that now is, and that which is to come — in a very different light. Go and sit at the feet of Jesus, and ask Him to teach you this lesson. Ask for the enlightening Spirit to anoint your eyes that you may see. Ask for the *veil* to be taken away, that you may behold everything in its true colors.

I know well that Satan labors hard to prevent men thinking of a better world than that in which we now live. He strives to turn away their eyes from the coming day. He would gladly persuade them that it is impossible to do their *duty* in this life — and at the same time to set their affections on things above. He whispers to people that we ministers want them to become gloomy hermits, or fanatical haters of mankind — and that if they listen to us they will become unfit for all the relations of life. Against all suggestions of Satan — I warn every reader to be on his guard. I bid no one neglect the duties of his station, or forsake the post which God has called him to fill. I encourage no one in moroseness and churlishness — as if there was nothing to be thankful for in this world. I praise no one who refuses his affections to those with whom he is united by love, friendship, and relationship.

I only ask that the believer in the New Testament should *live by a New Testament standard* — that he should look for the coming of the day of God, and wait for the Son of God from Heaven, and love his Lord's appearing.

Reader, I abhor all extravagance and fanaticism on the subject of *things to come*. I have no good opinion of any *religion* which makes a man neglect his business or cease to love wife, children, relatives, and friends. I only ask that we should take scriptural views of things as they *are* — and things as they *yet* will be. I ask that we should see our *present evils* — and mourn over them; that we should see our *future good things* — and long for them. Let us honestly confess that *sin* is around us — and long to be delivered from its presence. Let us honestly confess that *holiness* is one day to spread over the earth — and long for it to come. Let us never be ashamed to allow that it is "night" and that we want it to be "day."

Tell me, can that man really *hate sin* — who does not desire to see it swept away from the earth? Can that man *love holiness* — who does not long for the time when all shall know the Lord? Can that man be truly united to Christ by faith — who does not wish to see Christ and to be with Him? Can that man be a saint — who does not thirst after the unmixed company of just men made perfect? Can that man be in earnest who daily prays "May Your kingdom come" — and yet is content that the world should go on as it is without any change? Oh, no! no! These things are impossible! God's true children will want to be at *home*. They will wish for the *day*.

Reader, if you mean to be saved, you must learn to view time *present* as "night" — and time *to come* as "day." You must learn to regard the other side of Death — as the *home* of your soul; and this side — as a desert land. Time *present* must be your wilderness, your battlefield, your place of trial. Time *to come* must be your Canaan, your rest, your Father's house — or else you had better never have been born.

In the third place, let us consider the particular times in which our lot is cast. The Apostle Paul tells us, when he says, "*The night is far spent, and the day is at hand.*" I believe these words mean that the *last order of things has arrived* — the last stage in the history of the Church has come. The law and the prophets have done their work. The Messiah promised at the fall, has appeared and provided a complete salvation. The last revelation of God's will has been made. The way of *life* has been laid open to all mankind. No further message from Heaven to earth is to be expected before the end. No more books of Scripture are to be written. We have reached the last watch of the night. We have nothing to expect now, but the sunrise and the morning!

Reader, these words, which were true eighteen hundred years ago, are, if possible — more true at the present time. They are words which should come home with increasing power to the Church of Christ every year. "The night is far spent — the day is at hand."

I am one of those who think "the day" may not be so far off as some seem to suppose. I am unable to put away the idea of the Lord's return in glory, as an event which "of course" cannot be in our times, as some men say. I rather think I see tokens of the sun being near the horizon. At all events, I desire to keep in special remembrance James' words, "The Judge stands before the door!" "The coming of the Lord draws near!" And Peter's words, "The end of all things is at hand!" (James 5:8,9; 1 Peter 4:7).

I am no prophet, and may easily be mistaken. I may die, and you may die, before Christ comes and the day dawns. But I appeal to every thinking man, whether there are not "signs of the times" which deserve serious attention. I ask him to notice the things going on in the world, and to consider well what they are intended to teach.

Does any reader ask what I mean by "signs of the times"? Let him weigh well the following points, and he will see what I mean.

1. What shall we say to the *missions* to the heathen which have been set on foot in these latter days? Seventy years ago the Protestant Churches seemed thoroughly asleep on the subject of missions. There was hardly a single missionary sent forth to the heathen from the whole of Great Britain. The idea of preaching the Gospel to savages and idolaters was ridiculed. The first promoters of missions were treated coldly by many who ought to have known better. But now the feeling is completely changed. We are employing hundreds of missionaries in every quarter of the globe. And what says the Scripture? "The Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations — and then shall the end come" (Matthew 24:14).

2. What shall we say to the surprising interest taken in the *Jewish nation* in these latter days? Seventy years ago, to be a Jew was a taunt and a bye-word and a proverb. No man cared for the souls of the children of Abraham. They were a people despised, and scorned, and trampled underfoot. It might truly have been said, "This is Zion, whom no man seeks after" (Jeremiah 30:17). But now the feeling is completely changed. The *spiritual* interests of Jews are a subject of deep concern to true Christians. The civil rights of Jews are cared for even to an extreme. The very city of Jerusalem has weight in the councils of kings. And what says the Scripture? "You will arise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to show favor to her; the appointed time has come. For her stones are dear to your servants; her very dust moves them to pity. The nations will fear the name of the LORD, all the kings of the earth will revere your glory. For the LORD will rebuild Zion and appear in his glory!" (Psalm 102:13-16).

3. What shall we say to the wonderful spread of knowledge and communication between nations in these days? Seventy years ago, to find a poor man who could *read*, was rather an uncommon thing. In a few years a man who cannot read, will be a rare sight. Seventy years ago there were few who ever *traveled* beyond the bounds of their own county. Now everyone can move in every direction, and our population is like a swarm of bees disturbed. Steam navigation and railways have altered the character of society. Time and space are made nothing of. Seas, mountains, and rivers are no longer obstacles. God separated the nations in the day of Babel. Man is working hard to make them all one again. And what says the Scripture? "Close up and seal the words of the scroll, until the time of the end. Many will go here and there to increase knowledge!" (Daniel 12:4).

4. What shall we say to the *wars* and *shakings of nations* which we have seen in these last seventy years? The mightiest empires on earth have been shaken to their very foundations! Kings, and princes, and great men have been driven from their high position by scores, and been made wanderers on the face of the earth. There has been no accounting for it by any human reasoning. These movements have taken place in the face of increased knowledge, civilization, and desire of peace. And what says the Scripture? "Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:7,8).

5. What shall we say to the drying up of the *Mohammedan* power? Two hundred and fifty years ago, men doubted whether the Turks might not overrun all Europe! No army seemed able to resist them. Province after province fell into their hands. When Martin Luther in his sermons wanted an illustration of boundless worldly power, he would choose for his example "the Turkish empire!" But now all is changed. Without much outward violence, the Mohammedan strength has gradually dwindled away. There has been a collapse, a consumption, a worm at the heart of all their might. In spite of all the help of their allies, the Turkish empire is like a man sick of a sore disease. He may rally for a time by the help of strong remedies, and by the admission of new elements into his constitution — but he will never again be an exclusive, persecuting, purely Mohammedan power. The days of total, intolerant Mohammedanism seem past and gone forever.

And what says the Scripture? I quote symbolic prophecy with reverence, and readily allow I may be wrong in its application; but the passage I refer to is very remarkable: "The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." (Revelation 16:12-15).

6. What shall we say to the increased *attention to unfulfilled prophecy*, which has appeared in these latter days? Seventy years ago there were few who paid any attention to the subject. The passages in Scripture which speak of *things to come* were comparatively neglected, or perverted with curious ingenuity from their simple meaning. Now, on the contrary, the current of public feeling runs strongly in favor of *prophetic study*. *Books* on the subject are eagerly bought up. *Lectures* on the subject are listened to with increased attention. In spite of the divisions which *preterism* and *futurism* have created, in spite of the discredit which *Millerites* in America and *Irvingites* in England have brought upon the whole subject — the study of unfulfilled prophecy still holds its ground. (*Preterism* is the system of prophetic interpretation held by those who consider the greater part of the prophecies in Revelation as fulfilled and past already. *Futurism* is the system of those who consider the same prophecies to be as yet unfulfilled.)

But what says the Scripture? "The words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end" (Daniel 12:9). The words seem to be unfolding. The seal seems to be breaking. Can the *end* be far off?

Reader, I place these points before you and ask your serious attention to them. I know we are all poor judges of our own times. We are apt to *exaggerate* the importance of events that take place under our own eyes. I dare say if we had lived in Cromwell's days, or under the first French revolution — we would have thought the end of all things was close at hand. But still, after every allowance, I think the points I have mentioned deserve solemn consideration. I regard them as *signs of our times*.

I am far from saying that there may not be wonderful changes yet before the end. I think it possible there may be a time of trouble and conflict yet, "such as never was since there was a nation" (Daniel 12:1). I believe there may yet be tribulation for the people of God, "such as was not since the beginning of the world" (Matthew 24:21). But come what will, I see a deep meaning in the words, "*the night is far spent, and the day is at hand.*"

I see in these words, the **strongest motive for diligence** in the work of doing good to souls. Let us make more haste to spread the Gospel over the world. Let us take more pains in endeavoring to sow truth at home. Let us labor, if possible, to pluck more brands from the burning. The time is short. The night is far spent. The day is at hand.

I see in these words the **strongest consolation for the believer** in Christ Jesus. Oh, for the heart to lay hold on it more and more!

Yet a little while, and believers shall part forever with sickness and disease! The sick and wearied ones who have mourned over their *seeming uselessness* to the Church; the weak and infirm who have had the will to labor but not the power; the feeble and bedridden who have waited long-drawn years in quiet chambers until their eyes know every crack and speck on their walls — all, all shall be set free! They shall each have a glorious body like their Lord's.

Yet a little while, and mourning believers shall part forever with their tears! Every *wound in their heart* shall be completely healed. Every empty place and gap in their affections shall be entirely filled up. They shall find that those who have died in the Lord, were not lost but gone before. They shall see that infinite wisdom arranged every bereavement by which one was taken and another left. They shall magnify the Lord together with those who were once their companions in tribulation, and acknowledge that *He did all things well* and led them by a *right way*!

Yet a little while, and believers shall no more feel that they are *alone*. They shall no longer be scattered over the earth, a few in one place and a few in another. They shall no longer lament that they see so few to speak to, as a man speaks with his friend — so few who are of one mind and travel with them in the one narrow way. They shall be united to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn. They shall join the blessed company of all the believers of every name, and people, and tongue! Their eyes shall at length be satisfied with seeing. They shall see a multitude of saints that none can number — with not one *wicked* person among them!

Yet a little while, and working believers shall find that their labor was not in vain. The *ministers* who have preached and seemed to reap no fruit, the *missionaries* who testified of the Gospel and none seemed to believe, the *teachers* who poured into children's minds line upon line and none seemed to attend — all, all shall discover that they have not spent their strength for nothing! They shall find that the seed sown can spring up after many days, and that sooner or later in all labor there is profit.

Ah, reader, *when* shall these things be? Truly we may say, "Lord, God — you alone know." A thousand years in His sight are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. But we do know that yet in a little while, He who shall come, will come and will not tarry. Yet in a little while, and the last sermon shall be preached, the last congregation shall break up. Yet in a little while, and carelessness and infidelity shall cease, perish, and pass away. The believers among us will be with Christ — and the unbelievers will be in Hell. The *night* is far spent, and the *day* is at hand!

And now, in the last place, let me speak of the **particular duty** of all believers in connection with the truths we have just considered. Practical duty is put before us in plain words, "*Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.*"

Reader, the word "therefore" is often used by the Apostle Paul in a very striking and forcible way. Take a few examples and you will at once see what I mean. When he finishes the doctrinal part of the Epistle to the Romans and begins his practical exhortations, what is his language? "I beseech you *therefore* by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" (Romans 12:1). When he has preached the resurrection of the body to the Corinthians, how does he wind up his argument? "*Therefore*, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain!" (1 Corinthians 15:58). When he has laid a mighty foundation of doctrine for the Ephesian Church, how does he proceed to address them on practical duties? "*I therefore*, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation with which you are called" (Ephesians 4:1).

And here, as in other places, the word "therefore" comes in upon us in a very searching and forcible way. "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Let us *therefore* cast off the works of darkness."

Reader, I love to observe how closely the doctrine of Christ's second coming and kingdom is bound up with *personal holiness*. I marvel that any can regard the second advent and reign of the Lord Jesus as *merely speculative matters*, or denounce them as *unprofitable subjects*. To my own mind, they seem eminently practical — or else I have read my Bible to very little purpose. Does not the Apostle Paul say to the Philippians, "Let your moderation be known unto all men: the Lord is at hand!" (Philippians 4:5). Does he not say to the Colossians, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear — then shall you also appear with Him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth" (Colossians 3:25). Does not he bid the Hebrews to "Exhort one another, and so much the more as you see the *day* approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). Does not Peter say, "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. Therefore beloved, seeing that you look for such things — be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace without spot and blameless" (2 Peter 3:13, 14).

These texts appear to me to speak with no uncertain voice. I know not how their *force* can be evaded. They make the coming of Christ and the day of glory, into an argument for *increased holiness*. And it is just in the same way that Paul says, "Let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light."

Reader, how are you to "cast off the works of darkness?" Listen to me and I will tell you. You ought to lay aside everything in your life and habits, which will not bear the light of Christ's appearing. You ought to make it a principle of conscience, to do nothing you would not like to be found doing when Jesus comes again to gather His people together. This is a searching test indeed! The *application* of it must be left to every man's own heart. Each must judge for himself. Each must prove his own works. Each must set up an assize within him, and honestly bring his ways to a trial. Oh, for a will to deal fairly and justly with ourselves! Oh, for a daily readiness to *judge* ourselves that we be not judged of the Lord, and to *condemn* ourselves that we be not condemned at the last day!

I ask every reader of this address to bring the light of the day of Christ to bear upon his inner man. Set your years, and months, and weeks, and days, and hours in the full blaze of that day — and whatever thing you find within which is akin to "darkness" — pluck it out and cast it away! Keep up no *questionable habit*. Make no *compromise* with doubtful practices. Break down every *idol*, whether great or small. Cut down every *grove* and cleanse out every *chamber of imagery*. Cling to nothing which would cost you a *blush* under the eye of Christ. Away with it at once, lest He come suddenly and put you to shame! Oh, that He may never say of any reader's heart in that day, "this heart professed to be a temple of the Holy Spirit — but you have made it a den of thieves!"

Reader, try all your employment of **time** by the test of Christ's second coming. Place in this balance — your amusements, your books, your companions, your manner of conversation, your daily behavior in all the relations of life. Measure all by this measure, "The night is far spent and the day is at hand. Am I living as a child of the *night* — or as one who looks for the day?" Do this, and you will cast off the works of darkness.

But how are you to put on the armor of light? Listen to me once more and I will tell you. You ought to aim at every *grace* and *habit* which befits a believer in Christ, and a child of God, and a citizen of a heavenly kingdom. You ought not to leave *eminent holiness and spirituality* to a few, as if none but a few favored ones could be eminent saints. You ought to labor to wear the *armor of light* yourself — the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of hope, and the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:14-17).

Wherever you may *live* — and whatever may be your *trials*; however great your *difficulties* — and however small your *helps*; nothing should prevent your aiming at the highest standard — to behave like one who believes that Christ is coming again! You should resolve, by God's help, so to live that the day of Christ shall find you needing as little *change* as possible! You should seek to have . . .
your tastes so heavenly,
your affections so spiritual,
your will so subdued,
your mind so unworldly —
that when the Lord appears, you may be thoroughly in tune for His kingdom!

Ah, reader, I fear that some believers will be far less ready for the day of Christ than others. I suspect that some will have a far more *abundant entrance* into Heaven than their brethren — more *boldness*, more *confidence*, more *felt readiness* for the company of their Lord. Oh, that everyone into whose hands this address may fall, may so walk with God that, like *Enoch*, he may be only translated from a lower degree of communion with God — to a higher one; from walking by *faith* — to walking by *sight*. This would be putting on the armor of light.

Let there be light in your **heart** continually: Christ dwelling there by faith — felt, known, and experienced by your soul.

Let there be light in your **life** continually: Christ reflected there, followed, imitated, and copied. Seek to be a *light* in the world and nothing less — a *bright* light, a *clear* light, a light that men can see afar off. Do this and you will put on the armor of light.

Live as if you thought that Christ might come at any time. *Do* everything, as if you did it for the last time. *Say* everything, as if you said it for the last time. *Read* every chapter in the Bible, as if you did not know whether you would be allowed to read it again. *Pray* every prayer, as if you felt it might be your last opportunity. *Hear* every sermon, as if you were hearing once and forever. This is the way to be found ready. This is the way to turn Christ's second appearing to good account. This is the way to put on the armor of light.

1. And now perhaps this address has fallen into the hands of some careless, thoughtless, **unconverted** person. Reader, are you that man? Then, remember these words: "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." What are you doing? You eat, you drink, you sleep, you dress, you work, you buy, you sell, you laugh, you read — but you do nothing for your soul! Hell is opening its mouth for you — and you are careless! Christ is coming to judge the world — and you are unprepared! Time hurries on, and you are not ready for eternity. Oh, awake to a sense of your *danger* — and repent this day! Awake and call upon your God before it is too late to pray. Awake and seek the Lord Jesus Christ before the door is shut — and the day of wrath begins. Alas, you may be thought wise and clever in this world — but living as you do — you act the part of a madman!

2. But perhaps this address has fallen into the hands of one who is **undecided** and halting between two choices. Reader, are you that man? Then remember these words: "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand!" What are you doing? You hear, you listen, you wish, you desire, you mean to, you intend to, you hope, you resolve — but you go no further! You see the *ark* — but you will not go in. You see the *bread of life* — but you do not eat it. You wait. And yet times marches on. The devil is saying over you, "*I shall have this soul before long!*" Oh, come out from the world, and linger no more! Take up the cross. Cast away vain excuses. Confess Christ before men. Beware, I say, lest you make up your mind *too late*. Again I say, beware!

3. But perhaps this address has fallen into the hands of some **true believer**. Reader, are you that man? Then remember these words: "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." I ask you to live as if you believed the words we have been considering, and to show the world you think them true. The nearer you draw to *home* — the more *wakeful* you ought to be. The more you realize the second personal coming of the Lord Jesus — the more *lively* ought your Christianity to be.

Ah, reader, it is but too true, as Legh Richmond said on his deathbed, "*We are but half awake! We are but half awake!*" The best of us need to have our hearts stirred up by way of remembrance. Let us *rub the sleepy eyes of our mind* and look the speedy coming of our Master full in the face. Let the time past suffice us to have been *drowsy* and *lazy* servants! For the time to come, let us work like those who feel "The Master will soon be here!"

When I was a schoolboy, I remember that I would *wake up*, however tired with a long journey, when I began to draw near home. As soon as I saw the old hills, and trees, and chimneys — the sense of weariness was gone and I was all alive. The prospect of soon seeing much-loved faces, the joy of thinking of a family gathering — all this was able to drive sleep away. Surely it ought to be the same with us in the matter of our souls!

The night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Yet a little while and He who shall come will come and will not tarry. So then, let us cast off every work of darkness. Let us put on the whole armor of light. Let us be ashamed of our past drowsiness. Let us awake and sleep no more. "The night is nearly over — the day is almost here. Therefore let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light!" Romans 13:12

IDOLATRY!

"Flee from idolatry!" 1 Corinthians 10:14

The text which heads this page may seem at first sight to be hardly needed in England. In an age of education and intelligence like this, we might almost imagine it is waste of time to tell an Englishman to *"flee from idolatry."* I am bold to say that this is a great mistake. I believe that we have come to a time when the subject of idolatry demands a thorough and searching investigation. I believe that idolatry is *near* us, and *about* us, and in the *midst* of us — to a very fearful extent. The Second Commandment, in one word, is in peril. *The plague has begun!* Without further preface, I propose in this paper to consider the four following points:

I. The **definition** of idolatry. *What is it?*

II. The **cause** of idolatry. *Whence comes it?*

III. The **form** idolatry assumes in the visible Church of Christ. *Where is it?*

IV. The ultimate **abolition** of idolatry. *What will end it?*

I feel that the subject is encompassed with many difficulties. Our lot is cast in an age when *truth* is constantly in danger of being sacrificed to toleration, charity, and false. Nevertheless, I cannot forget, as a clergyman, that the Church of England is a Church which has "given no uncertain sound" on the subject of idolatry; and, unless I am greatly mistaken, truth about idolatry is, in the highest sense — truth for our times!

I. Let me, then, first of all, supply a DEFINITION of idolatry. Let me show *what it is.*

It is of the utmost importance that we should understand this. Unless I make this clear, I can do nothing with the subject. *Vagueness* and *indistinctness* prevail upon this point, as upon almost every other point in religion. The Christian who would not be continually

running aground in his spiritual voyage, must have his ship well buoyed, and his mind well stored with clear definitions.

I say, then, that "idolatry is a worship in which the honor due to God, and to Him alone — is given to some of His creatures, or to some invention of His creatures." It may vary exceedingly. It may assume exceedingly *different forms*, according to the ignorance or the knowledge, the civilization or the barbarism — of those who offer it. It may be grossly absurd and ludicrous — or it may closely border on truth, and admit of being most speciously defended. But whether in the adoration of the idol of *Juggernaut*, or in the adoration of the *Host* in St. Peter's at Rome, the *principle of idolatry* is in reality the same. In either case, the honor due to God is turned aside from Him, and bestowed on that which is not God. And whenever this is done, whether in *heathen* temples or in *professedly Christian* churches — there is an act of idolatry.

It is not necessary for a man *formally* to deny God and Christ, in order to be an idolator. Far from it. Professed reverence for the God of the Bible, and actual idolatry, are perfectly compatible! They have often gone side by side — and they still do so!

The children of Israel never thought of *renouncing* God when they persuaded Aaron to make the *golden calf*. "These are your gods," they said (your Elohim), "which brought you up out of the land of Egypt." And the feast in honor of the calf was kept as "a feast unto the Lord" (Jehovah). (Exodus 32:4, 5.)

Jeroboam, again, never pretended to ask the ten tribes to cast off their allegiance to the God of David and Solomon. When he set up the calves of gold in Dan and Bethel, he only said, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold your gods, O Israel (your Elohim), which brought you up out of the land of Egypt." (1 Kings 12:28.)

In both instances, we should observe, the idol was not set up as a *rival* to God — but under the *pretence* of being a help — a stepping-stone to His service. But, in both instances, a great sin was committed. The honor due to God — was given to a visible representation of Him. The majesty of Jehovah was offended. The second commandment was broken. There was, in the eyes of God, a flagrant act of idolatry.

Let us mark this well. It is high time to dismiss from our minds those loose ideas about idolatry, which are common in this day. We must not think, as many do, that there are only two kinds of idolatry — the *spiritual* idolatry of the man who loves his *job*, or *family*, or *lusts*, or *money* more than God; and the open, gross idolatry of the man who bows down to an image of wood, or metal, or stone, because he knows no better. We may rest assured that idolatry is a sin which occupies a far wider field than this. It is not merely a thing in India, that we may hear of, and pity at missionary meetings; nor yet is it a thing confined to our own hearts, that we may confess before the Mercy-seat upon our knees. It is a *pestilence* that walks in the Church of Christ to a much greater extent than many suppose. It is an *evil* that, like the *man of sin*, "sits in the very temple of God." (2 Thessalonians 2:4.)

Idolatry is a sin that we all need to watch and pray against continually. It creeps into our religious worship insensibly, and is upon us before we are aware. Those are tremendous words which Isaiah spoke to the formal Jew — not to the worshiper of Baal, remember — but to the man who actually came to the temple! (Isaiah 67:3): "But whoever sacrifices a bull is like one who kills a man, and whoever offers a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever makes a grain offering is like one who presents pig's blood, and whoever burns memorial incense, like one who worships an idol!"

Idolatry is that sin which God has especially denounced in His Word. One commandment out of ten is devoted to the prohibition of it. Not one of all the ten contains such a solemn declaration of God's *character*, and of His *judgments* against the disobedient: "I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of those who *hate* Me," (Exod. 20:5.) Not one, perhaps, of all the ten is so emphatically repeated and amplified, and especially in the fourth chapter of the book of Deuteronomy.

Idolatry is the sin, of all others, to which the Jews seem to have been most inclined before the destruction of Solomon's temple. What is the history of Israel under their judges and kings, but a melancholy record of repeated falling away into idolatry? Again and again we read of "high places" and false gods. Again and again we read of *captivities* and *chastisements* on account of idolatry. Again and again we read of a *return* to the old sin. It seems as if the love of idols among the Jews was naturally bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh.

The *besetting sin of the Old Testament Church*, in one word, was idolatry! In the face of the most elaborate ceremonial ordinances that God ever gave to His people, Israel was incessantly turning aside after idols, and worshiping the work of men's hands.

This is the sin, of all others, which has brought down the heaviest judgments on the *visible Church*. It brought on *Israel* the armies of Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. It scattered the ten tribes, burned up Jerusalem, and carried Judah and Benjamin into captivity! It brought on the Eastern Churches, in later days, the overwhelming flood of the Saracenic invasion, and turned many a spiritual garden into a wilderness. The *desolation* which reigns where Cyprian and Augustine once preached, the *living death* in which the Churches of Asia Minor and Syria are buried — are all attributable to this sin of idolatry. All testify to the same great truth which the Lord proclaims in Isaiah: "I not give My glory will to another!" (Isaiah 42:8.)

Let us gather up these things in our minds, and ponder them well. Idolatry is a subject which, in every Church of Christ that would keep herself pure — should be thoroughly examined, understood, and known. It is not for nothing that Paul lays down the stern command, "*Flee from idolatry!*"

II. Let me show, in the second place, the CAUSE to which idolatry may be traced.
Whence comes it?

To the man who takes an extravagant and exalted view of human intellect and reason — idolatry may seem absurd. He imagines it too irrational for any but weak minds to be endangered by it. To a mere superficial thinker about Christianity, the peril of idolatry may seem very small. Whatever commandments are broken, such a man will tell us, professing Christians are not very likely to transgress the *second*.

Now, both of these people manifest a woeful ignorance of human nature. They do not see that there are *secret roots of idolatry* within us all. The prevalence of idolatry in all ages among the heathen, must necessarily puzzle the one — the warnings of Protestant ministers against idolatry in the Church, must necessarily appear uncalled for to the other. Both are alike blind to its *cause*.

The cause of all idolatry is the *natural corruption of man's heart*. That great family disease, with which all the children of Adam are infected from their birth — shows itself in idolatry, as it does in a thousand other ways. Out of the same fountain from which "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit," and the like (Mark 7:21, 22) — out of that same fountain arise false views of God, and false views of the worship due to Him. And therefore, when the Apostle Paul tells the Galatians (Galatians 5:20) what are the "works of the flesh," he places prominently among them "idolatry."

A religion of some kind man will have. God has not left Himself without a *witness* in us all, as fallen as we are. Like old inscriptions hidden under mounds of rubbish — even so there is a *dim something* engraved at the bottom of man's heart, however faint and half-erased — a *something* which makes him feel he must have a *religion* and a *worship* of some kind. The proof of this is to be found in the history of voyages and travels in every part of the globe. The exceptions to the rule are so few, if indeed there are any — that they only confirm its truth. Man's worship in some dark corner of the earth, may rise no higher than a vague fear of an evil spirit, and a desire to propitiate him — but a worship of some kind, man will have.

But then comes in the effect of the fall. Ignorance of God, carnal and low conceptions of His nature and attributes, earthly and sensual notions of the service which is acceptable to Him — all characterize the *religion of the natural man*. There is a craving in his mind after something he can *see*, and *feel*, and *touch* in his Divinity. He would gladly bring his God down to his own crawling level. He would make his religion a thing of *sense* and *sight*. He has no idea of the religion of heart, and faith, and spirit.

In short, just as he is willing to live a fallen and degraded life on God's earth — so he has no objection to *worship after a fashion* — but it is always with a fallen worship. In one word, *idolatry is a natural product of man's heart*. It is a *weed* which, like the uncultivated earth — the heart is always ready to bring forth. And now does it surprise us, when we read of the constantly recurring idolatries of the Old Testament Church — of Peor, and Baal, and Moloch, and Chemosh, and Ashtareth — of *high places* and *hill altars*, and *groves* and *images* — and this in the full light of the Mosaic Law? Let us cease to be surprised. It can be accounted for. There is a cause.

Does it surprise us when we read in history how idolatry crept in by degrees into the Church of Christ — how *little by little* it thrust out Gospel truth, until, in Canterbury, men offered more at the shrine of Virgin Mary — than at that of Christ? Let us cease to be surprised. It is all intelligible. There is a cause.

Does it surprise us when we hear of men going over from Protestant Churches to the Church of Rome, in the present day? Do we think it unaccountable, and feel as if *we* ourselves could never forsake a pure form of worship — for one like that of the Pope? Let us cease to be surprised. There is a solution for the problem. There is a cause. That *cause* is nothing else but the *deep corruption of man's heart*.

There is a *natural proneness and tendency in us all* — to give God a sensual, carnal worship, and not that which is commanded in His Word. We are ever ready, by reason of our sloth and unbelief, to devise visible *helps* and *stepping-stones* in our approaches to Him — and ultimately to give these *inventions of our own* the honor due to Him.

In fact, idolatry is all natural, downhill, and easy — like the *broad way*. Spiritual worship is all grace — all uphill, and all against the grain. Any worship whatever is more pleasing to the natural heart, than worshipping God in the way which our Lord Christ describes, "in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23.)

I, for one, am not surprised at the quantity of idolatry existing, both in the world and in the visible Church. I believe it perfectly possible that we may yet live to see far more of it than some have ever dreamed of. It would never surprise me if some mighty *Antichrist* were to arise before the end — mighty in intellect, mighty in talents for government, yes, and mighty, perhaps, in miraculous gifts too. It would never surprise me to see such an one as him setting up himself in opposition to Christ, and forming an infidel conspiracy and combination against the Gospel. I believe that many would rejoice to do him honor, who now glory in saying, "We will not have this Christ to reign over us!" I believe that many would make a *god* of him, and reverence him as an incarnation of truth, and concentrate their idea of hero-worship on his person. I advance it as a possibility, and no more.

But of this at least I am certain — that no man is less safe from danger of idolatry, than the man who now sneers at every form of religion; and that from *infidelity* to *credulity* — from *atheism* to the grossest *idolatry* — there is but a single step!

Let us not think, at all events, that idolatry is an old-fashioned sin, into which we are never likely to fall. "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall." *We shall do well to look into our own hearts — the seeds of idolatry are all there!* We should remember the words of Paul: "Flee from idolatry!"

III. Let me show, in the third place, the FORMS which idolatry has assumed, and does assume, in the visible Church. Where is it?

I believe there never was a more baseless fabric, than the theory which obtains favor with many — that the promises of perpetuity and preservation from apostasy, belong to the visible Church of Christ. It is a theory supported neither by Scripture nor by facts. The Church against which "the gates of Hell shall never prevail," is not the *visible* Church — but the whole body of the elect, the company of true believers out of every nation and people.

The greater part of the *visible* Church has frequently maintained gross heresies. The particular branches of it are never secure against *deadly error* — both of faith and practice. A departure from the faith — a falling away — a leaving of first love in any branch of the visible Church, need never surprise a careful reader of the New Testament. That idolatry would arise, seems to have been the expectation of the Apostles, even before the canon of the New Testament was closed. It is remarkable to observe how Paul dwells on this subject in his Epistle to the Corinthians. If any Corinthian called a brother was an idolater, with such a one, the members of the Church "were not to eat." (1 Corinthians 5:11.) "Neither be idolaters, as were some of our fathers." (1 Corinthians 10:7.) He says again, in the text which heads this paper, "My dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." (1 Corinthians 10:14.) When he writes to the Colossians, he warns them against "worshiping of angels." (Colossians 2:18.) And John closes his first Epistle with the solemn injunction, "Little children, *keep yourselves from idols.*" (1 John 5:21.)

It is impossible not to feel that all these passages imply *an expectation that idolatry would arise*, and that soon, among professing Christians. The famous prophecy in the fourth chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy contains a passage which is even more directly to the point: "The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils!" (1 Timothy 4:1.)

The last passage I will call attention to, is the conclusion of the ninth chapter of Revelation. We there read, at the twentieth verse: "But the people who did not die in these plagues still refused to repent of their evil deeds and turn to God. They continued to worship demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that can neither see nor hear nor walk!" Now, I am not going to offer any comment on the chapter in which this verse occurs. I know well there is a difference of opinion as to the true interpretation of the plagues predicted in it. I only venture to assert that it is the highest probability these plagues are to fall upon the visible Church of Christ; and the highest improbability that John was here prophesying about the heathen, who never heard the Gospel. And this once conceded, the fact that idolatry is a predicted sin of the visible Church, does seem most conclusively and forever established.

And now, if we turn from the Bible to facts of history — what do we see? I reply unhesitatingly, that there is unmistakable proof that Scripture warnings and predictions were not spoken without cause, and that idolatry has actually *arisen* in the visible Church of Christ, and does *still* exist. The rise and progress of the evil in former days, we shall find well summed up in the Homily of the Church of England on "The Peril of Idolatry." To that Homily I beg to refer all Churchmen, reminding them once for all, that in the

judgment of the Thirty-nine Articles, the Book of Homilies "contains a godly and wholesome doctrine, and necessary for these times."

There we read, how, even in the *fourth century*, Jerome complains "that the errors of idols have come in, and passed to the Christians from the Gentiles!" And Eusebius says, "We do see that *images* of Peter and Paul, and of our Savior Himself, are made!" There we may read how "Pontius Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in the fifth century, caused the walls of the temples to be painted with stories taken out of the Old Testament; that the people beholding and considering these pictures, might the better abstain from too much surfeiting and riot. But from learning by painted stories, it came by little and little to idolatry." There we may read how Gregory the First, Bishop of *Rome*, in the beginning of the seventh century, allowed *images* in churches. There we may read how Irene, mother of Constantine the Sixth, in the eighth century, assembled a Council at Nicaea, and procured a decree that "*images* should be put up in all the churches of Greece, and that honor and worship should be given to the said images." And there we may read the conclusion with which the Homily winds up its historical summary, "that laity and clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sorts — have been at once drowned in abominable *idolatry*, of all other vices most detested of God, and most damnable to man, and that for the space of 800 years and more!"

This is a mournful account — but it is only too true. There can be little doubt the evil began even before the time just mentioned by the Homily writers. No man, I think, need wonder at the *rise of idolatry* in the Primitive Church, who calmly considers the excessive reverence which it paid, from the very first, to the *visible* parts of religion. I believe that no impartial man can read the language used by nearly all the Fathers about the Church, the bishops, the ministry, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the martyrs, the dead saints generally — no man can read it without being struck with the wide difference between their language and the language of Scripture on such subjects. You seem at once to be in a new atmosphere. You feel that you are no longer treading on holy ground. You find that things which in the Bible are evidently of *second-rate* importance — are here made of *first-rate* importance. You find the things of *sense* and *sight* — exalted to a position in which Paul, and Peter, and James, and John, speaking by the Holy Spirit — never for a moment placed them. It is not merely the weakness of uninspired writings that you have to complain of; it is something worse — it is a *new system of religion!*

And what is the explanation of all this? It is, in one word, that you have got into a region where the *malaria of idolatry* has begun to arise. You perceive the *first workings* of the mystery of iniquity. You detect the *buds* of that huge system of idolatry which, as the Homily describes, was afterwards formally acknowledged, and ultimately blossomed so luxuriantly in every part of Christendom.

But let us now turn from the *past* to the *present*. Let us examine the question which most concerns ourselves. Let us consider in what form idolatry presents itself to us as a sin of the visible Church of Christ in *our own time*. I find no difficulty in answering this question. I feel no hesitation in affirming that *idolatry* never yet assumed a more glaring form, than it does in the Church of Rome at this present day. And here I come to a subject

on which it is hard to speak, because of the times we live in. But the *whole truth* ought to be spoken by ministers of Christ, without respect of times and prejudices. And I could not lie down in peace, after writing on idolatry, if I did not declare my solemn conviction that *idolatry is one of the crying sins of which the Church of Rome is guilty!*

I say this in all sadness. I say it, acknowledging fully that we have our faults in the Protestant Church; and practically, perhaps, in some quarters, not a little idolatry. But from *formal, recognized, systematic idolatry* — I believe we are almost entirely free. While, as for the Church of Rome, if there is not in her worship an enormous quantity of systematic, organized idolatry — I frankly confess I do not know what idolatry is!

(a) To my mind, it is idolatry to have *images* and *pictures* of saints in churches, and to give them a *reverence* for which there is no warrant or precedent in Scripture. And if this is so — I say that there is idolatry in the Church of Rome!

(b) To my mind, it is idolatry to *invoke* the *Virgin Mary* and the *saints* in glory, and to address them in language never addressed in Scripture except to the Holy Trinity. And if this is so — I say that there is idolatry in the Church of Rome!

(c) To my mind, it is idolatry to *bow down to relics* — mere material things, and attribute to them a power and sanctity far exceeding that attached to the ark or altar of the Old Testament dispensation; and a power and sanctity, too, for which there is not a jot of foundation in the Word of God. And if this is so with the *holy coat* of Treves, and the wonderfully *multiplied wood* of the true cross, and a thousand other so-called *relics* in my mind's eye — I say that there is idolatry in the Church of Rome!

(d) To my mind, it is idolatry to worship that which man's hands have made — to call it God, and adore it when lifted up before our eyes. And if this be so, with the notorious doctrine of *transubstantiation*, and the elevation of the *Host* in my recollection — I say that there is idolatry in the Church of Rome!

(e) To my mind, it is idolatry to make ordained men *mediators* between ourselves and God, robbing, as it were, our Lord Christ of His office, and giving them an honor which even Apostles and angels in Scripture flatly repudiate. And if this be so, with the honor paid to *Popes* and *Priests* before my eyes — I say that there is idolatry in the Church of Rome!

I know well that language like this jars the minds of many. Men love to shut their eyes against evils which it is *disagreeable* to allow. They will not *see* things which involve *unpleasant consequences*. That the Church of Rome is an erring Church, they will acknowledge. That she is idolatrous, they will deny. They tell us that the reverence which the Romanish Church gives to saints and images, does not amount to idolatry. They inform us that there are distinctions between the worship of "latria" and "dulia;" between a mediation of redemption, and a mediation of intercession, which clear her of the charge. My answer is, that the Bible knows nothing of such distinctions; and that, in the actual practice of the great bulk of Roman Catholics, they have no existence at all.

They tell us, that it is a mistake to suppose that Roman Catholics really worship the images and pictures, before which they perform acts of adoration; that they only use them as *helps to devotion*, and in reality look far beyond them. My answer is, that many a heathen could say just as much for his idolatry; that it is notorious, in former days, that they did say so.

But the apology does not avail. The terms of the second commandment are too stringent. It prohibits *bowing down*, as well as *worshipping*. And the very concern which the Church of Rome has often displayed to *exclude that second commandment from her catechisms*, is of itself a great fact which speaks volumes to a candid observer! They tell us that we have no evidence for the assertions we make on this subject; that we found our charges on the *abuses* which prevail among the ignorant members of the Romish communion; and that it is absurd to say that a Church containing so many wise and learned men, is guilty of idolatry.

My answer is, that the devotional books in common use among Roman Catholics, supply us with unmistakable evidence. Let any one examine that notorious book, "The Garden of the Soul," if he doubts my assertion, and read the language there addressed to the Virgin Mary. Let him remember that this language is addressed to a woman who, though highly favored, and the mother of our Lord — was yet one of our fellow-sinners — to a woman who actually confesses her need of a Savior for herself. She says, "My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." (Luke 1:47.) Let him examine this language in the light of the New Testament, and then let him tell us fairly whether the charge of idolatry is not fully made out.

But I answer, beside this, that we need no better evidence than that which is supplied in the city of Rome itself. What do men and women do under the light of the Pope's own countenance? What is the religion that prevails around *St. Peter's* and under the walls of the Vatican? What is Romanism at *Rome*, unfettered, unshackled, and free to develop itself in full perfection? Let a man honestly answer these questions, and I ask no more.

Let him read such a book as Seymour's Pilgrimage to Rome, or Alfred's Letters, and ask any visitor to Rome if the picture is too highly colored. Let him do this, I say, and I believe he cannot avoid the conclusion that Romanism is a gigantic system of Church-worship, sacrament-worship, Mary-worship, saint-worship, image-worship, relic-worship, and priest-worship! In one word, Romanism is a huge organized idolatry!

I know how painful these things sound to many ears. To me it is no pleasure to dwell on the shortcomings of any who profess and call themselves Christians. I can say truly that I have said what I have said with pain and sorrow. I draw a wide distinction between the *accredited dogmas* of the Church of Rome and the *private opinions* of many of her members. I believe and hope that many a Roman Catholic is in *heart* inconsistent with his profession, and is better than the Church to which he belongs. I believe that many a poor Catholic at this day is worshipping with an idolatrous worship, simply because he knows no better. He has no Bible to instruct him. He has no faithful minister to teach him. He has the fear of the priest before his eyes, if he dares to think for himself. He has no

money to enable him to get away from the bondage he lives under, even if he feels a desire. I remember all this; and I say that the Catholic eminently deserves our sympathy and compassion. But all this must not prevent my saying that the Church of Rome is an idolatrous Church. I would not be faithful if I said less.

The Church of which I am a minister has spoken out most strongly on the subject. The Homily on "The Peril of Idolatry," and the solemn protest at the end of our Prayer-book Communion Service, which denounces the adoration of the sacramental bread and wine as "idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians," are plain evidence that I have said no more than the mind of my own Church. And in a day like this — when some are disposed to *secede* to the Church of Rome, and many are shutting their eyes to her real character, and wanting us to be reunited to her — in a day like this, *my own conscience would rebuke me if I did not warn men plainly that the Church of Rome is an idolatrous Church, and that if they will join her they are "joining themselves to idols."*

But I may not dwell longer on this part of my subject. The main point I wish to impress on men's minds is this — that idolatry has decidedly manifested itself in the visible Church of Christ — and nowhere so decidedly as in the Church of Rome.

IV. And now let me show, in the last place, the ultimate ABOLITION of all idolatry.

What will end it? I consider that man's soul must be in an unhealthy state, who does not long for the time when idolatry shall be no more. That heart can hardly be right with God, which can think of the millions who are sunk in *heathenism*, or honor the false prophet *Mahomet*, or daily offer up prayers to the *Virgin Mary*, and not cry, "O my God, what shall be the end of these things? How long, O Lord, how long?"

Here, as in other subjects, the *sure word of prophecy* comes in to our aid. The end of all idolatry shall one day come. Its doom is fixed. Its overthrow is certain. Whether in heathen temples, or in *so-called* Christian churches — idolatry shall be destroyed at the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then shall be fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, "The idols He shall utterly abolish!" (Isaiah 2:18.) Then shall be fulfilled the words of Micah 5:13, "I will destroy all your idols and sacred pillars, so you will never again worship the work of your own hands!" Then shall be fulfilled the prophecy of Zephaniah 2:11, "The LORD will terrify them as he destroys all the gods in the land. Then nations around the world will worship the LORD, each in their own land!" Then shall be fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 13:2, "It shall come to pass at that day, says the Lord Almighty, that I will cut off the names of the *idols* out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered."

In a word, the ninety-seventh Psalm shall then receive its full accomplishment: "The LORD is king! Let the earth rejoice! Let the farthest coastlands be glad. Dark clouds surround him. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. Fire spreads ahead of him and burns up all his foes. His lightning flashes out across the world. The earth sees and trembles. The mountains melt like wax before the LORD, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim his righteousness; every nation sees his glory!

Those who worship idols are disgraced—all who brag about their worthless gods—for every god must bow to Him!"

The second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is that *blessed hope* which should ever comfort the children of God under the present dispensation. It is the pole-star by which we must journey. It is the one point on which all our expectations should be concentrated. "Yet a little while, and He who shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Hebrews 10:37.) Our *David* shall no longer dwell in Adullam, followed by a despised few, and rejected by the many. He shall take to Himself His great power, and reign, and cause every knee to bow before Him.

Until then, our redemption is not perfectly enjoyed; as Paul tells the Ephesians, "We are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30.) Until then, our salvation is not completed; as Peter says, "We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1:5.) Until then, our knowledge is still defective; as Paul tells the Corinthians: "Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face. Now I know in part; then shall I know even also as I am known." (1 Corinthians 13:12.)

In short, our best things are yet to come. But in the day of our Lord's return every desire shall receive its full accomplishment. We shall no more be pressed down and worn out with the sense of constant failure, feebleness, and disappointment. In His presence, we shall find there is a fullness of joy, if nowhere else; and when we awake up after His likeness we shall be satisfied, if we never were before. (Psalm 16:11; 17:15.)

There are many *abominations* now in the visible Church, over which we can only sigh and cry, like the faithful in Ezekiel's day. (Ezekiel 9:4.) We cannot remove them. The wheat and the tares will grow together until the harvest. But a day comes when the Lord Jesus shall once more purify His temple, and cast forth everything that defiles. He shall do that work of which the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah were a *faint type* long ago. He shall cast forth the *images*, and purge out *idolatry* in every shape.

Who is there now that longs for the conversion of the heathen? You will not see it in its fullness until the Lord's appearing. Then, and not until then, will that often-misapplied text be fulfilled: "A man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats." (Isaiah 2:20.)

Who is there now that longs for the redemption of Israel? You will never see it in its perfection until the Redeemer comes to Zion. Idolatry in the professing Church of Christ has been one of the mightiest stumbling-blocks in the Jew's way. When it begins to fall, the *veil* over the heart of Israel shall begin to be taken away. (Psalm 102:16.)

Who is there now that longs for the fall of *Antichrist*, and the purification of the Church of Rome? I believe that will never be until the winding up of this dispensation. That vast system of idolatry may be consumed and wasted by the Spirit of the Lord's mouth — but

it shall never be destroyed excepting by the brightness of His coming. (2 Thessalonians 2:8.)

Who is there now that longs for a perfect Church — a Church in which there shall not be the slightest taint of idolatry? You must wait for the Lord's return. Then, and not until then, shall we see a *perfect* Church — a Church having neither spot nor wrinkle, nor any such thing (Ephesians 5:27), a Church of which all the members shall be regenerate, and every one a child of God.

If these things are so, men need not wonder that we urge on them the study of prophecy, and that we charge them above all to grasp firmly the glorious doctrine of Christ's second appearing and kingdom. This is the "light shining in a dark place," to which we shall do well to take heed. Let others indulge their imagination if they will, with the vision of an imaginary "Church of the future." Let the children of this world dream of some "coming man," who is to understand everything, and set everything right. They are only sowing to themselves bitter disappointment. They will awake to find their visions as baseless and empty as a dream. It is to such as these, that the Prophet's words may be well applied: "But watch out, you who live in your own light and warm yourselves by your own fires. This is the reward you will receive from me: You will soon fall down in great torment!" (Isaiah 50:11.)

But let our eyes look right onward to the day of Christ's second advent. That is the only day when every *abuse* shall be rectified, and every *corruption* and source of *sorrow* completely purged away. Waiting for that day, let us each *work* on and *serve* our generation; not idle, as if nothing could be done to check evil — but not disheartened because we see not yet all things put under our Lord. After all, the night is far spent, and the day is at hand. Let us wait, I say, on the Lord.

If these things are so, men need not wonder that we warn them to beware of all *leanings towards the Church of Rome*. Surely, when the mind of God about idolatry is so plainly revealed to us in His Word, it seems the height of infatuation in anyone to join a Church so steeped in idolatries, as the Church of Rome. To enter into communion with her, when God is saying, "Come out of her, that you be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4) to seek her, when the Lord is warning us to leave her; to become her subjects, when the Lord's voice is crying, "Escape for your life, flee from the wrath to come!" All this is mental blindness indeed — a blindness like that of him who, though fore-warned, embarks in a sinking ship — a blindness which would be almost incredible, if our own eyes did not see examples of it continually.

We must all be on our guard. We must take nothing for granted. We must not hastily suppose that we are too wise to be ensnared, and say, like Hazael, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" Those who *preach*, must cry aloud and spare not, and allow no *false tenderness* to make them hold their peace about the heresies of the day. Those who *hear*, must have their loins girt about with truth, and their minds stored with clear prophetic views of the end to which all idol-worshippers must come.

Let us all try to realize that the latter ends of the world are upon us, and that the abolition of all idolatry is hastening on. Is this a time for a man to draw nearer to Rome? Is it not rather a time to draw further back and stand clear, lest we be involved in her downfall? Is this a time to extenuate and palliate Rome's manifold corruptions, and refuse to see the reality of her sins? Surely we ought rather to be doubly jealous of everything of a *Romish tendency* in religion — doubly careful that we do not connive at any treason against our Lord Christ — and doubly ready to protest against unscriptural worship of every description.

Once more, then, I say, let us remember that the destruction of all idolatry is certain, and remembering that, beware of the Church of Rome! The subject I now touch upon is of deep and pressing importance, and demands the serious attention of all Protestant Churchmen. It is vain to deny that a large party of English clergy and laity in the present day, are moving Heaven and earth to reunite the Church of England with the idolatrous Church of Rome. The publication of that monstrous book, Dr. Pusey's *Eirenicon*, and the formation of a "Society for Promoting the Union of Christendom," are plain evidence of what I mean. He who runs may read. The existence of such a movement as this, will not surprise any one who has carefully watched the history of the Church of England during the last forty years. The tendency of *Tractarianism* and *Ritualism* has been steadily towards Rome. Hundreds of men and women have fairly honestly left our ranks, and become downright Papists! But many hundreds more have stayed behind, and are yet nominal Churchmen within our pale.

The pompous semi-Romish ceremonial which has been introduced into many churches, has prepared men's minds for changes. An extravagantly theatrical and idolatrous mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper has paved the way for *transubstantiation*. A regular process of unprotestantizing has been long and successfully at work. The poor old Church of England stands on a downward-sloping plane. Her very existence, as a Protestant Church, is in peril. I hold, for one, that this Romish movement ought to be steadily and firmly resisted. Notwithstanding the rank, the learning, and the devotedness of some of its advocates, I regard it as *a most mischievous, soul-ruining, and unscriptural movement*.

To say that reunion with Rome would be an insult to our martyred Reformers, is a very light thing; it is far more than this: *it would be a sin and an offence against God!* Rather than be reunited with the idolatrous Church of Rome, I would willingly see my own beloved Church perish and go to pieces. Rather than become Popish once more — she had better die!

Unity in the *abstract* is no doubt an excellent thing: but *unity without truth* is useless. Peace and uniformity are beautiful and valuable: but peace without the Gospel — peace not based on a common faith, is a worthless peace, not deserving of the name. When Rome has recanted her false and unscriptural doctrines — when Rome has formally renounced image-worship, Mary-worship, and transubstantiation — then, and not until then, it will be time to talk of reunion with her.

Until then, there is a wide gulf between us which cannot be honestly bridged. Until then, I call on all Churchmen to resist to the death this idea of *reunion* with Rome. Until then, let our watchwords be, "No peace with Rome! No communion with idolaters!"

Well says the admirable Bishop Jewel, in his Apology, "We do not decline concord and peace with men; but we will not continue in a state of war with God that we might have peace with men! If the Pope does indeed desire we should be reconciled to him — he ought first to reconcile himself to God." This witness is true! Well would it be for the Church of England, if all her bishops had been like Jewel!

I write these things with sorrow. But the circumstances of the times make it absolutely necessary to speak out. To whatever quarter of the horizon I turn, I see grave reason for alarm. For the *true* Church of Christ, I have no fears at all. But for the Established Church of England, and for all the Protestant Churches of Great Britain — I have very grave fears indeed. The tide of events seems running strongly against Protestantism, and in favor of Rome. It looks as if God had a controversy with us, as a nation, and was about to punish us for our sins.

I am no prophet. I know not where we are drifting. But at the rate we are going, I think it quite within the verge of possibility that in a few years the Church of England may be reunited to the idolatrous Church of Rome! The Crown of England may be once more on the head of a Papist! Protestantism may be formally repudiated. A Romish Archbishop may once more preside at Lambeth Palace. *Mass* may be once more said at Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's. And one result will be, that all Bible-reading Christians must either leave the Church of England — or else sanction idol-worship and become idolaters!

God grant we may never come to this state of things! But at the rate we are going, it seems to me quite possible.

And now it only remains for me to *conclude* what I have been saying, by mentioning some *safeguards* for the souls of all who read this paper. We live in a time when the Church of Rome is walking among us with renewed strength, and loudly boasting that she will soon win back the ground that she has lost. False doctrines of every kind are continually set before us in the most subtle and specious forms. It cannot be thought unseasonable if I offer some *practical safeguards against idolatry*. What it is, whence it comes, where it is, what will end it — all this we have seen. Let me point out how we may be safe from it, and I will say no more.

(1) Let us arm ourselves, then, for one thing, with a thorough knowledge of the Word of God. Let us read our Bibles more diligently than ever, and become familiar with every part of them. Let the Word dwell in us richly. Let us beware of anything which would make us give less time, and less heart — to the perusal of its sacred pages. The Bible is the *sword of the Spirit* — let it never be laid aside. The Bible is the true *lantern* for a dark and cloudy time — let us beware of traveling without its light.

I strongly suspect, if we did but know the secret history of the numerous secessions from our Church to that of Rome, which we deplore — I strongly suspect that in almost every case one of the most important steps in the *downward road* would be found to have been *a neglected Bible* — more attention to forms, sacraments, daily services, and so forth, and diminished attention to the written Word of God. The Bible is the King's highway. If we once leave that for any by-path, however beautiful, and old, and frequented it may seem — we must never be surprised if we end with worshiping images and relics, and going regularly to a confessional!

(2) Let us arm ourselves, in the second place, with a godly jealousy about the least portion of the Gospel. Let us beware of sanctioning the slightest attempt to keep back any jot or tittle of it, or to throw any part of it into the shade by exalting subordinate matters in religion. When Peter withdrew himself from eating with the Gentiles, it seemed but a little thing; yet Paul tells the Galatians, "I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." (Galatians 2:11.) Let us count nothing *little* which concerns our souls. Let us be very particular whom we hear, where we go, and what we do — in all the matters of our own particular worship. And let us care nothing for the imputation of squeamishness and excessive scrupulosity.

We live in days when great principles are involved in little acts; and things in religion, which fifty years ago were utterly indifferent, are now by circumstances rendered indifferent no longer. Let us beware of tampering with anything of a *Romanizing tendency*. *It is foolishness to play with fire*. I believe that many of our perverts and seceders began with thinking there could be no mighty harm in attaching a little more importance to certain outward things than they once did. But once launched on the *downward course*, they went on from one thing to another. They provoked God — and He left them to themselves! They were given over to strong delusion, and allowed to believe a lie. (2 Thessalonians 2:11.) They tempted the devil — and he came to them! They started with *trifles*, as many foolishly call them. They have ended with *downright idolatry!*

(3) Let us arm ourselves, last of all, with clear sound views of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the salvation that is in Him. He is the "image of the invisible God," — the express "image of His person," — and the true preservative against all idolatry, when truly known. Let us build ourselves deep down on the strong foundation of His *finished work upon the cross*. Let us settle it firmly in our minds, that Christ Jesus has done everything needful in order to present us without spot before the throne of God, and that simple childlike faith on our part, is the only thing required to give us a saving interest in the work of Christ. Let us not doubt that, having this faith, we are *completely justified* in the sight of God — will never be more justified if we live to the age of Methuselah and do the works of the Apostle Paul. We *can* add nothing to that complete justification by any acts, deeds, words, performances, fastings, prayers, alms-deeds, attendance on ordinances, or anything else of our own.

Above all, let us keep up *continual communion* with the Lord Jesus! Let us abide in Him daily, feed on Him daily, look to Him daily, lean on Him daily, live upon Him daily,

draw from His fullness daily. Let us realize this, and the idea of other mediators, other comforters, other intercessors — will seem utterly absurd. "What need is there?" we shall reply: "I have Christ, and in Him I have all. What have I to do with idols? I have Jesus in my heart, Jesus in the Bible, and Jesus in Heaven — and I want nothing more!"

Once let the Lord Christ have His rightful place in our hearts, and all other things in our religion will soon fall into their right places. Church, ministers, sacraments, ordinances, all will go down, and take the second place. Except Christ sits as Priest and King upon the throne of our hearts — that *little kingdom within* will be in perpetual confusion. But only let Him be "all in all" there — and all will be well. Before Him every *idol*, every *Dagon* shall fall down!

Christ rightly known, Christ truly believed, and Christ heartily loved — is the true preservative against ritualism, Romanism and every form of idolatry!

The Reading Which is Blessed

"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw — that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the one who *reads* the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who *hear* it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near!" Revelation 1:1-3

We live in "troublous" and "perilous" times. It is many years since there has been so much in the aspect of public affairs to raise anxious thoughts as there is in the present day. We are always apt to *exaggerate* the importance of events that happen in *our own* days. I do not forget that. But I cannot retract what I have just written. I look around me at the things now going on in the Church and in the world. I look forward to the possible future. And as I look, I feel that I am justified in speaking of our times as "perilous" and "troublous." I appeal to the judgment of all who observe the history of their own times. "Is there not a cause?"

There are *three heavy judgments* which God can send upon a nation — the *sword*, the *pestilence*, and the *famine*. All these three have fallen heavily upon our country within the last few years. The Irish famine, the Russian war, the cholera, the cattle plague — have left marks on this country which cannot be erased. Surely these signs of the times deserve no common notice. They should make us say with Habakkuk, "I will stand upon my watch, and set upon my tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me" (Hab. 2:1). They should make us cry with Daniel, "O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?" (Daniel 12:8.)

But one thing, at all events, is clear — and that is the duty incumbent on Christians to search more diligently than ever the prophetic Scriptures. Let us not be, like the Jews at the first advent, blind to the hand of God and the fulfillment of His purposes in all that is going on in the world. Let us rather remember that the word of prophecy is given to be "a

light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns, and the daystar arises" (2 Peter 1:19). Let us walk much in that light. Let us search "what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ in the Prophets did signify, when He testified before the *sufferings* of Christ, and the *glory* that should follow" (1 Peter 1:11). Let us compare prophecies *fulfilled*, with prophecies *unfulfilled* — and endeavor to make the one illustrate the other. Let us strive, above all, to obtain clear views of the things yet to be expected, both in the church and the world, before the end comes and time shall be no more.

With such feelings I now invite you to enter on the consideration of the verses of Scripture which stand at the head of this address. Those verses, I need hardly remind you, are the preface or opening words of the Book of Revelation. May the blessing which is specially promised to the readers and hearers of this book, be with all into whose hands this address may fall! Reader, there are three points to which I desire to call your attention:

1. The general character of the Book of Revelation.
2. The arguments commonly used to deter men from reading it.
3. The many useful lessons which the study of it is calculated to teach.

1. The GENERAL CHARACTER of the Book of Revelation. The Book of Revelation differs widely from any other book of the Old or New Testaments. In many respects, it is thoroughly unlike the rest of the Bible. There is a solemn and majestic peculiarity about it. It stands alone.

It is peculiar in the dignity with which it *begins*. The very first verse prepares the reader for something extraordinary, for a book even more directly from God, if possible, than one written under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is called, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John."

It is peculiar in the *subject matter* which it contains. It contains less of doctrinal and practical Christianity, in proportion to its length, than any book of the New Testament. With few exceptions its pages are filled with prophecies — prophecies of the widest range, extending, it seems to me, from the time of John to the very end of the world; prophecies embracing a vast number of events, spreading over the whole "times of the Gentiles" and covering the mighty interval between the destruction of the first Jerusalem, and the descent of the new Jerusalem from Heaven; prophecies of universal importance to all mankind, having reference not only to the condition and prospects of the believing Church, but also of the unconverted world.

It is peculiar in the *style and dress in which its subject matter is clothed*. With the exception of the 2nd and 3rd chapters, the greater part of the book is composed of *visions* which the Apostle John saw in the Spirit. In these visions the vast range of the Church's history was revealed to him under *emblems, figures, allegories, symbols, and similitudes*.

The meaning of the great majority of these symbols and emblems is not explained. The general characteristics of these visions are much alike. All are marked by a vastness, a grandeur, a majesty, a life, a force, a boldness, a sublimity entirely unparalleled in any human writings.

The door opened in Heaven,
the voice like a trumpet speaking,
the sea of glass like crystal,
the seven seals,
the seven trumpets,
the seven vials,
the four angels holding the four winds,
the mighty angel with a face like the sun, his right foot on the sea, his left on the earth,
the woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet,
the great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns,
the beast that rose out of the sea,
the mighty earthquake,
the destruction of Babylon,
the summoning of the fowls of Heaven to the supper of the great God,
the binding of Satan,
the great white throne,
the last judgment,
the descent of the New Jerusalem from Heaven,
the description of the glorious city —
who can read such things without being struck by them? Who can study them and avoid the conclusion, "*This is written with the finger of God!*"

Such is the general character of the Book of Revelation. Such is the book which you are emphatically told it is "blessed" to read. I will only offer *two general remarks on the symbolic style* in which the book is composed and then pass on.

1. One remark is, that you must not regard the use of symbolic language as entirely peculiar to the Book of Revelation. You will find it in other parts of Scripture. The very emblems and figures of the Apocalypse, whose meaning seems so obscure, are often employed by the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. You read, for example, of four living creatures in the fourth chapter. You read of four also in Ezekiel (1:5). You read of horses in the vision of the four first seals. You read of horses also in the vision of Zechariah (6:2,3). You read of a sealed company in the seventh chapter. You read also of a sealed and marked people in the vision of Ezekiel (chapter 9). You read of a plague of locusts under the fifth trumpet. You read of locusts also in the prophecy of Joel (chapter 2). You read of John eating the little book in the tenth chapter. You read also of Ezekiel eating the scroll in his vision (chapter 3). You read of olive trees and candlesticks in the vision of the two witnesses. You read of the same emblems in the prophecy of Zechariah (chapter 4). You read of a beast having seven heads and ten horns in the thirteenth chapter. You read of a similar beast in the Book of Daniel (chapter 7). You read of a wondrous celestial city in the twenty-first chapter. You have the description of a city scarcely less mysterious, though different, at the end of Ezekiel (chapter 40 etc.)

These things are worthy of remark. They show us that we must not be *stumbled by the symbols* of Revelation, as if they were altogether a new and strange thing. We must remember they are used in the Old Testament as well as here, though far more sparingly, in communicating the mind of God to man. The peculiarity of the Apocalypse is not so much the use of *symbols* and *emblems* — as the profuse abundance of them.

My other remark is, that a symbolic style of composition will always seem more strange to us — than it does to Oriental nations. Figures, parables, illustrations, and similitudes are infinitely better known in the countries around the Holy Land, than they are among ourselves. The *hieroglyphic* inscriptions, for example, which abound in Egypt and elsewhere in the East, are nothing more than *symbolic writings*. Who does not know that at first sight, these hieroglyphics seem uncouth, meaningless, dark, and obscure? The first step the student of them must take, is to become familiar with their appearance. By and by he may hope to become acquainted with the key to their meaning. Ultimately, that key being found, these very hieroglyphics are found full of interesting matter.

It is much the same with the Book of Revelation. It is *a book of sacred hieroglyphics*. Its very style is one to which our *matter of fact northern mind* is utterly unaccustomed. To us, therefore, its visions seem doubly strange — strange because we are not familiar with such a mode of conveying our ideas — stranger still, because in many cases we have no clue to their meaning. Our first step must be to read them and study them much, so as to become familiar with their outward garb, with the style of composition in which they are clothed. So studying in a *prayerful* spirit — we may hope that the meaning of their inward contents will be gradually made more plain to our minds.

One thing let us always remember in reading the visions of the Apocalypse. Whether we understand little or much, let us settle it in our minds as a fixed principle, that **every vision in the book has a real definite meaning**. The time is short. We hasten on towards a day when every page shall be unfolded and unsealed. Every *knot* shall be untied. Every *hard question* shall be solved. Then shall we see that the Revelation, like every other part of the inspired volume, was all "very good." Then shall we find that the blessing pronounced on its students was not given in vain, and that those readers whom God blesses, are blessed indeed.

2. Let us consider, in the next place, the OBJECTIONS commonly used to deter men from studying the Book of Revelation. There never have been lacking good men who have cried down the study of Revelation as unprofitable. They have spoken of it as a book too dark and mysterious for use. They have bid men to *respect* it as inspired — but not *touch* it; to reverence it at a distance, as part of the Bible — but not draw near to it or handle its contents. To this prejudice we probably owe the unhappy *omission* of the book from the daily calendar of lessons in the Liturgy of the Church of England. No place was found for a book to the reading of which a special blessing is promised. Truly we may say in this case, "*Great men are not always wise — neither do the aged understand judgment*" (Job 32:9).

Reader, when such prejudices have existed against the study of the Book of Revelation among good men — you will not wonder that the children of the world should have gone further. Men, more witty than wise, have launched sharp sayings, jests, and jibes at its students. They have not been ashamed to find a mark for witticism in its solemn and mysterious visions. Scaliger declared that one of Calvin's wisest acts was his abstaining from writing a commentary on the book. Dr. South, a clever writer, though an unsound theologian, said, that the study of Revelation either "*found* a man mad — or *made* him so."

But, after all, what is the real worth of the objections commonly made to the study of Revelation? Let us weigh them in the balances and see to what they amount. To my own mind they appear neither so serious nor so unanswerable as is commonly supposed.

One class of objectors dislike the book because it seems to point to a coming state of things in the world, which, to their minds, is monstrous, incredible, and improbable. That God should send plagues and judgments upon the nations of the earth because of their sins against Him; that the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the captains, and the rich, and the mighty, and the bond, and the free — should really flee to hide themselves from the wrath of the Lamb; that the kingdoms of this world should really become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ; that the saints of the Lord Jesus should ever reign upon the earth, and everything that defiles be cast out — all this is to their minds almost absurd.

"It is contrary to their common sense," they tell us. "It is a mark of a weak mind to believe it. It is extravagance. It is raving. It is enthusiasm. It cannot be! A book from which we draw such strange fanatical opinions can never be a profitable one to study."

I am not careful as to the answer to be given to such objectors. They would do well to remember that the great leading events yet to come, to which Revelation points, are in no way more astonishing than many which have already taken place in the world. The destruction of the old world by the flood — the wasting of Babylon, Nineveh, Tyre, and Egypt — the scattering of the Jews, and their perpetual preservation, notwithstanding, as a separate people — all these were things *utterly improbable* at the time when they were foretold. But we know that they all came to pass. *And as it has been in days gone by — so it shall be in days to come.*

Men, in their pride of heart, forget that in the eyes of an Eternal God, the movements of the nations of the earth are but as the struggles of a few ephemeral insects. Yet a little time, and despotic and constitutional governments, liberal and conservative parties — all, all shall be swept away. *God has said it, and with Him nothing is impossible.*

As to the *manner* in which the great events predicted in Revelation shall be brought about — we do not pretend to explain it. There are many things which we accept as facts, and yet would find it impossible to explain. We believe the creation of all things out of nothing. We believe the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity. We believe the fact of the Incarnation. But who would dare to offer an explanation of any of these great mysteries?

We have a right to regard unfulfilled prophecy in the same light. We claim belief for its facts, though the *mode* of their accomplishment is at present hid from our eyes.

I leave this first class of objectors here. I fear the secret spring of their arguments, in too many cases — is *the dislike of the natural heart to spiritual things*. The heart not taught by the Holy Spirit rebels against the idea of severe judgments against sin — a kingdom of Christ — a reign of the saints. And why? The plain truth is, that it is not so much the Book of Revelation that such a heart really objects to — as the whole Gospel of Christ and all the counsel of God.

Another class of objectors must next be noticed. These are they who deprecate the study of Revelation *because of the wide differences which prevail in the interpretation* of its contents, and the notorious mistakes into which interpreters have fallen. I do not for a moment pretend to deny the existence of these differences and mistakes.

1. Some good men tell us confidently that the whole book is *entirely unfulfilled*. They look for an accomplishment of its visions so clear and unmistakable, that there shall be no room left for doubt.

2. Other good men assure us, with no less confidence, that the whole book is *already fulfilled*, with the exception of a small portion at the end.

3. A third school of expositors maintains that the Revelation is *partly* fulfilled — and partly unfulfilled.

As to the *details* of the book, the meaning and application of the several visions it contains, the fulfillment of times and seasons, time would fail if I were to recount the various interpretations that have been put forth and the errors that have been committed.

Now, what shall we say to these things? What can the advocate for Apocalyptic study reply to these undeniable facts? My reply is, that the variations and mistakes in the views of interpreters, constitute no argument against the study of the book itself. Because others have missed the road in searching for truth — you and I are not to give up the search altogether and sit down in contented ignorance.

Who has not heard of the extravagant and contradictory theories which astronomers, geologists, and physicians have occasionally propounded in their respective sciences? Yet who would think of giving up astronomy, geology, or medicine in despair, because of the conflicting tenets and avowed mistakes of their professors? Luther and Zwingle differed widely about the Lord's Supper. Cranmer and Hooper differed widely about vestments. Wesley and Toplady differed widely on predestination. Yet no one in his senses would think of giving up the study of the Christian system because these good men could not agree.

My answer furthermore is, that the very mistakes and differences of Apocalyptic interpreters, are not without their use. They have cleared the field in many a direction and

shown us what the Revelation does *not* mean. Expositors have shown in many cases, the weakness of other men's interpretation — even if they have not succeeded in establishing their own. To know what an unfulfilled Scriptural prediction does *not* mean, is one step towards knowing what it does mean.

When Napoleon was overtaken by the rising tide in a dark evening on the sandy shore of the Red sea, he is said to have ordered his attendants to disperse and ride in different directions, charging each one to report as he proceeded whether the water grew shallower or deeper. There was great wisdom in that order. Each man's report was useful. The report of him who found the water deepening was in its way as useful as the report of the successful finder of the right path.

It is much the same with the widely varying *explanations* of Revelation. It is evident that many of them must be wrong. But all in their way have done good. There is hardly one, perhaps, which has not contributed some sparks of light.

My answer beside this is, that the differences of Apocalyptic interpreters, as great as they undoubtedly are, are often magnified and absurdly exaggerated. The common points of **agreement** among expositors are more in number and greater in importance, than men commonly suppose.

Whether the seals, trumpets, and vials are fulfilled or not — all students of the Revelation agree that there are judgments predicted in it on the unconverted and unbelieving. Whether days mean literal days, as some say, or years, as others say — all are agreed that the time of the wicked triumphing is defined, limited, and fixed by the counsels of God. Whether the beast with horns like a lamb is the Papal power or not, nearly all are agreed that Romish apostasy is foretold in the book, and doomed. Whether Christ shall come and reign visibly on earth or not, for 1000 or 365,000 years — all are agreed that He shall come again with power and great glory, that the kingdoms of this world shall sooner or later become the kingdoms of our God, and that all believers should look and long for their Lord's return.

I doubt much whether this point is as much considered by the opponents of Apocalyptic study as it deserves. I grant them freely that the divergences and contrarities of the paths drawn out by the expositors of the book are very many and very great. But, I bid them remember that the great *terminus* towards which all their lines lead is always one and the same. Oh, that men would remember that mighty terminus, and realize the tremendous importance of the end and breaking up of all things towards which they hasten! Then would they be more anxious to study any book which handles matters like those contained in Revelation. Then would they be less ready to catch at any excuse for declining Apocalyptic study.

The only remaining objection to the study of Revelation which I shall notice, is that which is drawn from the *mysterious character of a large portion of the book*. That the Revelation is full of dark and difficult things, it is of course impossible to deny. Some of its *symbols* and *emblems*, the Spirit of God has thought good to interpret and explain. The

seven stars, the seven candlesticks, the incense, the fine linen, the waters on which the woman sat, the woman herself — all these and a few more are expounded, perhaps as a *specimen* of the kind of meaning which should be attached to the symbols of the book generally.

But, after every deduction, there remain a very large number of visions and emblems which the Spirit has not thought fit to interpret. These symbols are unquestionably dark and mysterious. It is not, perhaps, saying too much to admit that after all the attempts of commentators, ancient and modern, preterist and futurist — there are many visions and symbols of Revelation which, we must confess, we do not understand! I do not say that elaborate and learned expositions of them have not been offered — but not expositions so manifestly satisfactory that we can demand a reader's assent to them.

If truth be spoken, we must allow that *all the expositions* of some parts of the Revelation are nothing better than *ingenious conjectures*. We admire them as we read. We are not prepared to say that they are not true, or to furnish a reason for refusing our assent. But still they fail to carry conviction with them. We somehow feel the *mark* is not yet hit, the *spring* of the lock is not yet touched, the *whole truth* is not yet discovered.

But I appeal to the common sense of men and their sense of fairness, and I ask them whether they have a right to expect that such a book as the book of Revelation can in the very nature of things — be anything but *dark* and *mysterious*. Here is a prophetic book which spans the mighty gulf between the end of the first century — and the day of judgment; a book which was given to show God's dealings with the Church and the world during a space of well nigh 2000 years; a book which points to the rise and fall of empires and kingdoms, with all the attendant wars and tumults over a third part of the habitable globe; a book, above all, which does not tell its story in simple, plain matter of fact narration, but clothes it in majestic visions, symbols, emblems, figures, and similitudes.

Here are we reading this book during a life of three score and ten years at most, with all the cares and anxieties of this world pressing upon us, with an *understanding* partaking in the corruption of the fall, with a *heart* naturally earthly and sensual, and, even after conversion, weak and deceitful, knowing little of ourselves, knowing little of contemporary history, finding constantly how hard it is to discover the real truth about events happening in our own day.

Is it likely, I ask, is it probable, is it agreeable to common sense — that such *students*, coming to such a *book* — should find it anything but mysterious and hard to understand? Can anyone doubt as to the reply? The plain truth is, that *we are like children watching some mighty building in process of erection*. They see a thousand operations which they are utterly unable to comprehend or explain. They see scaffolding and stones, and iron and brick, and mortar and timber, and rubbish. They hear noise, and hammering, and cutting, and chipping. It seems to their eyes, to be *a vast scene of hopeless confusion*. And yet to the eye of the architect — all is order, system, and progress. He sees the end from the beginning. He knows exactly what is going on.

It is much the same with us in trying to pass a judgment on the application of many of the Apocalyptic visions. We are like those who stand on the outward surface of a sphere. The range of our mental vision is exceedingly limited. We know so little and see so little beyond our own circle, the very pages of history are so often full of inaccuracies and lies — that we are really very poor judges of the question whether such and such visions have been fulfilled or not.

More light, I firmly believe, may yet be expected before the end come. Much may probably be yet unfolded and unsealed. But as to any *certainty* about the meaning of *all* parts of the Apocalypse — when I see how little certainty there is about anything 1000 *miles* from us in distance, or 100 *years* in time — I own I do not look for it until the Lord comes.

And here let me turn for a moment to those who secretly wonder *why* the Book of Revelation was not written more plainly, and why things of such vast interest to the Church have been *purposely clothed in the mysterious garb of symbol, allegory, and vision*. I might easily remind such people of Bishop Sherlock's remark on this very point: "To inquire why the ancient prophecies are not *clearer* is like inquiring why God has not given us more reason, or made us as wise as the angels."

But I have no wish to leave them there. I would rather use an argument which has often proved satisfactory to my own mind, and silenced the speculative questionings of a curious spirit. I ask you then, whether you cannot see wisdom and mercy in the *darkness* which it has pleased God to throw around the prophetic history of His Church? You wonder in your own heart, why the things to come were not more clearly revealed.

But, consider for a moment how fearfully deadening and depressing it would have been to the early Christians, if they had clearly seen the *long ages* of darkness and corruption which were to elapse before the Lord returned. Reflect for a moment how much unhappiness primitive believers were spared, by not knowing for certain, the events which were to take place. If humble saints in the days of imperial persecution could have dreamed of the eighteen weary centuries during which the saints were yet to wait for their Lord from Heaven — they might almost have sat down in flat despair.

If Polycarp had foreseen the present state of Asia Minor, or Ignatius that of Syria, or Chrysostom that of Constantinople, or Irenaeus that of France, or Athanasius that of Egypt, or Augustine that of Africa — their hands might well have trembled and their knees waxed faint. Count up, I say, the *dark and painful pages* of which there are so many in the annals of Church history. Set down in order the *heresies*, and *false doctrines*, and *apostasies* of which there has been such a rank growth, Arianism, and Romanism, and Socinianism, and Neologianism, and their kindred errors. Place before your mind's eye the centuries of *ignorance and superstition* before the Reformation, and of *coldness and formality* since Luther's generation passed away. Count up the *crimes* which have been perpetrated in the name of Christianity, the massacres, the burnings, the persecutions within the Church, not forgetting the Albigenes, the Spanish Inquisition, the slaughter of the Huguenots, and the fires of Smithfield.

Do all this faithfully, and I think you will hardly avoid the conclusion that it was *wise mercy which drew so thick a veil over things to come!* Wise mercy showed the early Christians a *light in the distance* — but did not tell them how far it was away. Wise mercy pointed out the far off harbor lights — but not the miles of stormy sea between. Wise mercy revealed enough to make them work, and hope, and wait. But wise mercy did not tell all that was yet to be fulfilled before the end.

Who thinks of telling his *little children*, in their early years, every trial and pain and misery which they may have to go through before they die? Who thinks of filling their tender ears with the particulars of every bodily disease they may have to endure, and every struggle for success in life in which they may have to engage? Who thinks of harrowing up their young souls by describing every bereavement they may have to submit to, or speaking at length on every deathbed they may have to watch? We do not do it, because they could not understand our meaning, and could not bear the thought of it if they did!

And just so, it seems to me, does the Lord Jesus deal with His people in the Apocalyptic vision. He keeps back the *full* revelation of all the way they must go through, until the time when He sees they can bear it. He considers our frame. He teaches and reveals, as we are able to bear.

In reply to those who object to the study of Revelation, there is, after all, no argument so powerful as the simple promise of the Word of God. The *predictions* of Revelation may seem to many *improbable* and *absurd*. The differences and mistakes of *interpreters* may fill others with disgust and dislike, to the very name of Apocalyptic study. The acknowledged *mysteriousness* and confessed *difficulties* of the book may incline many to shrink from perusing it.

But there the book stands — a part of those *Scriptures* which are all given by *inspiration* and all *profitable*. And there on the forefront of the book, stands a promise and an *encouragement* to the reader and hearer: "*Blessed* is he who *reads* — and they who *hear*." These words, no doubt, were spoken in foresight of the *objections* that men would raise against the study of the book. Give these words their full weight. Fall back on them when all other arguments fail. They are a reserve which will never give way. God has said it — and will make it good. "*Blessed* is he who *reads*, and they who *hear* the words of the prophecy of this book!"

3. The third and last thing which I now wish to consider is, the number of USEFUL LESSONS which the Book of Revelation is calculated to teach. I am anxious to impress this point on your attention. I want you to establish it in your mind as a settled thing, that *the Book of Revelation is an eminently profitable book for every reader of the Bible to study*. It is a *fountain* to which the poorest and most unlearned shall never go in vain.

I say, then, that there are *many blessed and comfortable truths scattered* up and down, all over the Book of Revelation, which are intelligible to the simplest comprehension — and

yet full of food for the most spiritual mind. God has mercifully so ordered the composition of the book, that there is hardly a chapter from which a man may not draw some striking and edifying thought. He may be unskilled in the interpretation of visions. He may have no idea of the meaning of seals, or trumpets, or vials, of the two witnesses, of the woman fleeing into the wilderness, of the first or second beasts. But still, if he perseveres in *humble, prayerful study* of the whole book — he shall find in almost every page, verses which shall richly repay his pains. They shall shine out on him like *stars* in the dark vault of Heaven in a moonless night. They shall refresh him like an *oasis* in the wilderness and make it impossible for him to say, "All is barren." They shall *sparkle* like precious stones on the shore as he walks by the deep waters of the mysterious book, and make him feel that his journey in search of treasure is not in vain.

"It is true, many things in the Book of Revelation are obscure, and it is likely that the full clearing of them is not to be expected until God in some singular way shall open them up. Yet there are many *clear, edifying, and comfortable* passages of God's mind in it, the Holy Spirit mixing them in to be fed upon, to sweeten those passages that are more obscure, and to encourage the reader to search for the meaning of them." — Durham on Revelation. 1658.

Let me select a few *examples* in order to show what I mean.

There is much about **the Lord Jesus Christ** in the book of Revelation. There are names, and titles, and expressions about Him there, which we find nowhere else. There is new light thrown on His *offices*, His *power*, His *care* for His people. Surely this alone is no small matter. To *know* Jesus, is life eternal. To *abide* in Jesus, is to be fruitful. If we are indeed born of the Spirit — we can never hear too much about our Savior, our Shepherd, our High Priest and Physician! If our hearts are right in the sight of God — we can never hear too much about our Savior-King! Like snow in summer and good news from a far country, so are any fresh tidings about Christ.

There is much about the **desperate corruption of human nature** in the book of Revelation. There is evidence on this subject in the Epistles to the Seven Churches, and the repeated accounts of the incorrigibleness and impenitence of the nations of the earth under judgments, which we shall all do well to lay to heart. We can never be too well acquainted with our own *sinfulness* and *weakness*. The spring of all humility, thankfulness, grateful love to Christ, and close walk with God — is real, thorough, scriptural knowledge of the wickedness of our own hearts. None will ever build high — who does not begin low. The soul that loves much — is the soul that feels its debt is great, and that much has been forgiven.

"When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them." Luke 7:37-38. "Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven — for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." Luke 7:47

There is much about **Hell** in the book of Revelation. There are many fearful expressions which show its *reality*, its *misery*, its *eternity*, its *certainty*. How deeply important is it to have clear views on this solemn subject in the present day! A disposition appears in some quarters, to shrink from asserting the eternity of punishment. A flood of that miserable heresy, *universalism*, seems coming in upon us. Amiable and well-meaning enthusiasts are speaking *smooth things* about the love of God being *lower* than Hell, and the mercy of God excluding the exercise of all His other attributes of justice and holiness. Tender-hearted women and intellectual men are catching at the theory that, after all, there is hope in the far distance for *everybody*, and that the devil's old delusion deserves credit, "*You shall not surely die!*" Oh, reader, beware of this damning delusion! Be not wise above that which is written. Believe me, it is a great thing to believe in the reality of Hell. Study the Apocalyptic visions well and you will find it hard to disbelieve it.

There is much about **Heaven** in the book of Revelation. I speak of Heaven in the common acceptance of the word. I mean the future abode of the people of God. And I say that no book in God's Word tells us so much about Heaven as the Apocalypse. If there was nothing else to be learned from the book beside this, we ought to be most thankful.

Where is there a believer in the Lord Jesus who does not frequently think on the world to come and the resurrection state? Who that has lost a dear friend or relative, who died in the Lord — can abstain from meditating on the life of glory and the place of meeting? Who among the people of God does not frequently reach forward in imagination into that unknown and unvisited abode and strive to picture to his mind's eye, the manner of the place and its employments? It is mysterious, no doubt. But nowhere is the *veil* so much lifted up, as it is in the book of Revelation.

There is much about the **prospects of the Church** of Christ in the book of Revelation. When I speak of the Church, I mean the Church of the elect, the living body of Christ, whose members are all holy. The pages of the Apocalypse show plainly that the *triumphs*, and *rest*, and *ease*, and *peace* of that Church, are not in this world.

Its members must make up their minds to battles and fightings, to trial and persecution, to cross and affliction. They must be content to be a *little* flock, a *poor* and *despised* people, until the advent of Christ. Their good things are *yet to come*.

Well would it be for believers if they would learn from Revelation, to moderate their expectations from missions, schools, and all other ecclesiastical machinery. Then would we not hear, as we now often do, of *disappointments* and *despondency* and *depression* among true Christians, and especially among ministers. We live in the time when God is taking out a people. These are the days of *election* — but not of universal conversion. We are yet in the wilderness. The bridegroom is not yet with us. The days of *absence* and *mourning* and *separation* are not yet past and gone.

There is much in Revelation to show **the folly of depending entirely on the powers of this world**, for the advancement of true religion. There is much to show that believers should not look to kings, and princes, and rich men, and great men — for the bringing in

and support of the kingdom of Christ. The times are not yet come when kings shall literally be "the nursing fathers" of the Churches.

It is striking to observe how often the Apocalypse speaks of them as the *enemies* of God's cause, and not the friends. We need this lesson here in England. With a settled conviction that the principle of an *Established Church* is scriptural and sound, I still feel we need reminding that alliance with the powers that be, has its disadvantages as well as its advantages to the visible Church of Christ. It is apt to engender indolence, apathy, and formality among professing Christians. I firmly believe that the Church of England would have exerted itself more and done more for the world, if its members had been more familiar with the Book of Revelation, and learned from it to expect little from the State.

There is much in the book of Revelation to show the **painful childishness of the vast majority of true Christians** all over the world. Here we are, the greater part of us, scrambling and wrangling about the merest *trifles*, contending about *forms*, and *ceremonies*, and outward matters of man's devising — as if they were the essentials of Christianity — while millions of heathen are perishing for lack of knowledge, and myriads of our countrymen are dying around our own doors, as ignorant as the heathen! And all this time the eternal purposes of God are rolling on to fulfillment — the kingdoms of this world are on the brink of dissolution — the day of judgment is at hand, and an hour draws near when Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, Establishments, and voluntary Churches — shall be clean swept out of the way, and nothing but grace, faith, and heart-holiness shall abide and stand the fire!

Never, never do I, for one, read the Apocalypse without feeling the *excessive littleness* of Christians. We are like *children* busy with our little houses of sand, at low water by the seaside. The tide is rising. Our houses will soon be gone. Happy shall we be if we ourselves escape with our lives!

There is much, in the last place, in the book of Revelation to show the **safety of all true believers** in Christ, whatever may come upon the world. Awful as are the woes of which the Apocalypse speaks, there is not a syllable to show that a hair shall fall from the head of any one of God's children.

Hidden, like Noah, in the ark;
plucked, like Lot, from the fiery judgment;
withdrawn, like Elijah, from the reach of their enemies;
rescued, like Rahab, from the ruin of all around —
they at least may read the Revelation without being afraid.

The book that looks dark and threatening to the world — speaks no terrors to true believers. Like the wondrous pillar of cloud (Exodus 14), it may fill the mind of an ungodly man with gloom — but, like the same cloud, it shall give light by night to the people of God.

Reader, what shall we say to these things? I have mentioned eight things which stand forth plainly and unmistakably in the Book of Revelation. There is *no mystery* about them. They require no deep learning to understand. A humble mind and a prayerful heart will not fail to discover them. These are the kind of things which we can never know too well.

The person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the corruption of man,
the reality of Hell,
the nature of Heaven,
the prospects of the Church,
the folly of trusting in princes,
the childishness of God's people,
the safety of believers in the day of wrath —
these are the kind of subjects with which we cannot be too familiar. These are the *plain lessons* which, with all its many difficulties, the book of Revelation will unfold. Truly if these things are engraved deeply on our minds, our reading the Apocalypse will be blessed indeed!

These are the kind of things which Satan labors hard to keep us from. Well may that old enemy fill men's minds with prejudice against Apocalyptic study. Well may he suggest the evil thought, "it is all mysterious, it is all too deep — we need not read it." Let us resist him in this matter. Let us cleave to Revelation more closely every year. Let us never doubt that it is a profitable study for our souls.

It only remains now to **CONCLUDE** this address with **three practical remarks**.

1. For one thing, let us thank God that the things needful to salvation are all clear, plain, and devoid of mystery to a humble mind. Whatever *difficulties* there may be in the visions of the Apocalypse — the most unlearned reader of the Bible shall never miss the way to Heaven if he seek to find it in a childlike and prayerful spirit. The guilt, and corruption, and weakness of man is not a hidden thing, like a seal, a trumpet, or a vial. Christ's power and willingness to save, and justification by faith in Him — are not a dark thing, like the number 666. The absolute necessity of a new birth and a thorough change of heart is not an uncertainty, like the meaning of the two witnesses. The impossibility of salvation without fitness for Heaven is not a mystery, like the interpretation of the vision of the four living creatures.

But, reader, remember while you thank God for this clear teaching in the things essential to salvation — that this very clearness increases your personal responsibility. Take heed, lest an open door being set before you, any of you should fail to enter in by it and be saved.

Hearken, everyone into whose hands this address may come, and understand. I give you a plain warning this day. Do not forget it. You may reach Heaven without knowing much about the deep things of the Apocalypse — but you will never get their without the

saving knowledge of Christ and a new heart. You must be born again. You must renounce your own righteousness and acknowledge yourself to be a sinner. You must wash in the fountain of Christ's blood. You must be clothed in the garment of Christ's righteousness. You must take up the cross of Christ and follow Him. These are the things absolutely needful. These are the things without which no man, learned or unlearned, high or low — can ever be saved. Rest not, rest not until you know these things by experience. Without them you may know the whole list of Apocalyptic commentaries, be familiar with all that they have written on the subject — and yet rise at the last day a lost soul — knowing much intellectually, like the devils — but, like the devils, ruined forever!

2. For another thing, let me entreat all students of the Book of Revelation, to beware of dogmatism and positiveness in expressing and maintaining their views of the meaning of its more mysterious portions. Nothing, I firmly believe, has brought more discredit on the study of prophecy, than the excessive rashness and overweening confidence with which many of its advocates have asserted the correctness of their own interpretations and impugned the expositions of others. Too many have written and talked as if they had a *special revelation* from Heaven, and as if it was impossible for anyone to maintain a character for common sense — if he did not see with their eyes! Let us all watch our hearts and be on our guard against this spirit.

Dogmatism is a great trap which Satan lays in men's way when he cannot prevent them studying the Apocalypse. Let us not fall into it. Let us rather pray for a spirit of *modesty* and *humility* in offering our solutions of the deep things of symbolic prediction. Let us allow that *we* may possibly be wrong — and that *others* may possibly be right.

Believe me, we all need this caution. We are unhappily prone to be most positive — when we have least warrant for our assertions, simply because our pride whispers that our reputation for *discernment* is at stake, and that having made statements mainly on the authority of our own judgment, we are specially bound to defend them. Happy is that student of prophecy, who is willing to confess that there are many things of which he is yet ignorant. Happier still, and more uncommon too — is he who is able to use those *three hardest words* in the English language, "*I was mistaken.*"

3. Finally, let all believers take comfort in the thought that the end to which all things are coming is clear, plain, and unmistakable. There may yet be judgments in store for the world, of which we know nothing. There may be "distress of nations with perplexity" far exceeding anything we have yet heard of, read, or seen. There may be more grievous wars, and famines, and pestilences, and persecutions yet to come. But the *end* is sure! Yet a little while, and He who shall come, will come, and will not tarry.

The kings of the earth may struggle and contend for their own worldly interests; but sooner or later the kingdoms of their world shall become the kingdoms of our God, and of His Christ. There shall be an eternal peace. He shall come and take possession, "whose right it is." The dominion and power shall be given to the saints of the Most High, and of the increase of their peace shall be no end. Oh, that we may all remember this! In

patience let us possess our souls, and in every trying time do as Luther did, repeat the forty-sixth Psalm:

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

Occupy Until I Come!

"And as they heard these things, he added and spoke a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God would immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.

And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, OCCUPY UNTIL I COME!" *Luke 19:11-13*

Reader,

The words before your eyes form an introduction to the parable, which is commonly called the "*Parable of the Pounds*." They contain matter which deserves the prayerful consideration of every true Christian in the present day.

There are some parables of which Matthew Henry says, with equal quaintness and truth, "*The key hangs beside the door*." The Holy Spirit himself interprets them. There is no room left for doubt as to the purpose for which they were spoken. Of such parables the *parable of the Pounds* is an example.

Luke tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ "added and spoke a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God would immediately appear."

These words reveal to us the secret thoughts of our Lord's disciples at this period of His ministry. They were drawing near to Jerusalem. They gathered from many of their Master's sayings, that something remarkable was about to happen; they had a strong impression that one great end of His coming into the world was about to be accomplished — so far they were quite right. As to the precise nature of the event about to happen, they were quite wrong.

Reader, there are *three subjects* opened up in the passage of Scripture, which appear to me to be of the deepest importance. Upon each of these I wish to offer a few thoughts for your private meditation. I purposely abstain from touching any part of the parable except the beginning. I want to direct your attention to the three following points.

I. I will speak of *the mistake of the disciples*, referred to in the verses before us.

II. I will speak of the *present position of the Lord Jesus Christ*.

3: I will speak of the *present duty of all who profess to be Jesus Christ's disciples*.

May God bless the reading of this tract to every one into whose hands it may fall. May every reader pray that the Spirit will guide him into all truth.

I. I will first speak of the *mistake into which the disciples had fallen*.

What was this mistake? Let us try to understand this point clearly. With what feelings ought Christians in the present day to regard this mistake? Let us try to understand this clearly also.

Our Lord's disciples seem to have thought that the Old Testament promises of Messiah's visible kingdom and glory, were about to be *immediately* fulfilled. They believed rightly that He was indeed the Messiah — the Christ of God. But they blindly supposed that He was going at *once* to take to Himself His great power, and reign gloriously over the earth. This was the sum and substance of their error.

They appear to have concluded that now was the day and now the hour when the Redeemer would build up Zion, and appear in His glory (Psalm 102:16) — when He would smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips slay the wicked — when He would assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah (Isaiah 11:4, 12) — when He would take the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession — when He would break His enemies with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Psalm 2:8, 9) — when He would reign in mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously (Isaiah 24:23) — when the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole Heaven would be given to the saints of the Most High. (Daniel 7. 27.) Such appears to have been the mistake into which our Lord's disciples had fallen, at the time when He spoke the parable of the Pounds.

It was a great mistake unquestionably. They did not realize that before all these prophecies could be fulfilled, "it behooved Christ to suffer." (Luke 24:46.) Their optimistic expectations overleaped the crucifixion and the long parenthesis of time to follow, and bounded onward to the final glory. They did not see that there was to be a first advent of Messiah "to be cut off," before the second advent of Messiah to reign. They did not perceive that the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law of Moses were first to receive their fulfillment in a better *sacrifice* and a better *high priest*, and the shedding of

blood more precious than that of bulls and goats. They did not comprehend that before the *glory* — Christ must be crucified, and an elect people gathered out from among the Gentiles by the preaching of the Gospel.

All these were dark things to them. They grasped *part* of the prophetic word — but not all. They saw that Christ was to have a kingdom — but they did not see that He was to be wounded and bruised, and be an offering for sin. They understood the end of the second Psalm, and the whole of the ninety-seventh and ninety-eighth — but not the beginning of the twenty-second. They understood the eleventh chapter of Isaiah — but not the fifty-third. They understood the dispensation of the *crown* and the *glory* — but not the dispensation of the *cross* and the *shame*. Such was their mistake.

It was a mistake which you will find partially clinging to the disciples even *after* the crucifixion. You see it creeping forth in the first days of the Church between the resurrection and the ascension. They said, "Lord, will You at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6.) You have it referred to by Paul: "Be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there be a falling away first." (2 Thessalonians 2:2.) In both these instances, the *old Jewish leaven* peeps out. In both you see the same tendency to *misunderstand God's purposes* — to overlook the dispensation of the *crucifixion*, and to concentrate all thought on the dispensation of the *kingdom*. In both you see the same disposition to neglect the *duties* of the present order of things. Those duties are . . .

to bear the cross after Christ,
to take part in the afflictions of the Gospel,
to work,
to witness,
to preach, and
to help to gather out a people for the Lord.

It was a mistake, however, which I frankly say, I think we Gentile believers are bound to regard with much tenderness and consideration. It will not do to run down our Jewish brethren as "carnal" and earthly-minded in their interpretation of prophecy, as if we Gentiles had never made any mistake at all. I think we have made great mistakes, and it is high time that we should confess it.

I believe we have fallen into an error parallel with that of our Jewish brethren — an error *less fatal* in its consequences than theirs — but an error far *more inexcusable*, because we have had more light. If the Jew thought too exclusively of Christ *reigning* — has not the Gentile thought too exclusively of Christ *suffering*? If the Jew could see nothing in Old Testament prophecy but Christ's *exaltation* and final power — has not the Gentile often seen nothing but Christ's *humiliation* and the preaching of the Gospel? If the Jew dwelt too much on Christ's *second* advent — has not the Gentile dwelt too exclusively on the *first*? If the Jew ignored the *cross* — has not the Gentile ignored the *crown*?

I believe there can be but one answer to these questions. I believe that we Gentiles until lately have been very guilty concerning a large portion of God's truth. I believe that we have cherished an arbitrary, reckless habit of interpreting *first* advent texts *literally* — and *second* advent texts *spiritually*. I believe we have not rightly understood "all that the prophets have spoken" about the second personal advent of Christ, any more than the Jews did about the first. And because we have done this, I say that we should speak of such mistakes as that referred to in our text, with much tenderness and compassion.

Reader, I earnestly invite your special attention to the point on which I am now dwelling. I know not what your opinions may be about the fulfillment of the prophetic parts of Scripture. I approach the subject with fear and trembling, lest I should hurt the feelings of any dear brother in the Lord. But I ask you in all affection to examine your own views about *prophecy*. I entreat you to consider calmly whether your opinions about Christ's second advent and kingdom are as sound and Scriptural as those of His first disciples. I entreat you to take heed, lest insensibly you commit as great error about Christ's second coming and glory — as they did about Christ's first coming and cross.

I beseech you not to dismiss the subject which I now press upon your attention, as a matter of curious speculation, and one of no practical importance. Believe me, it affects the whole question between yourself and the unconverted Jew. I warn you, that unless you interpret the prophetic portion of the Old Testament in the simple, literal meaning of its words — you will find it no easy matter to carry on an argument with an unconverted Jew.

You would probably tell the Jew that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. To those Scriptures you would refer him for proof. You would show him Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Daniel 9:26, Micah 5:2, Zechariah 9:9, and 11:13. You would tell him that in Jesus of Nazareth, those Scriptures were *literally* fulfilled. You would urge upon him that he ought to believe these Scriptures, and receive Christ as the Messiah. All this is very good. So far you would do well.

But suppose the Jew asks you if you take all the prophecies of the old Testament in their simple literal meaning? Suppose he asks you if you believe in a literal personal advent of Messiah to reign over the earth in glory — a literal restoration of Judah and Israel to Palestine — a literal rebuilding and restoration of Zion and Jerusalem? Suppose the unconverted Jew puts these questions to you, what answer are you prepared to make?

Will you dare to tell him that Old Testament prophecies of this kind are not to be taken in their plain literal sense? Will you dare to tell him that the words Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, Judah, Ephraim, Israel, do not mean what they seem to mean — but mean the *Church of Christ*? Will you dare to tell him that the glorious kingdom and future blessedness of Zion, so often dwelt upon in prophecy, mean nothing more than the *gradual Christianizing of the world* by missionaries and Gospel preaching? Will you dare to tell him that you think it "carnal" to take such Scriptures literally, "carnal" to expect a literal rebuilding of Jerusalem, "carnal" to expect a literal coming of Messiah to reign, "carnal"

to look for a literal gathering and restoration of Israel? Oh, reader, if you are a man of this mind, take care what you are doing? I say again, take care.

Do you not see that you are putting a weapon in the hand of the unconverted Jew, which he will probably use with irresistible power? Do you not see that you are cutting the ground from under your own feet, and supplying the Jew with a strong argument for not believing your own interpretation of Scripture? Do you not see that the Jew will reply, that it is "carnal" to tell him that the Messiah has come literally to *suffer*, if you tell him that it is "carnal" to expect Messiah to come literally to *reign*? Do you not see that the Jew will tell you that it is far more "carnal" in you to believe that Messiah could come into the world as a despised, crucified man of sorrows — than it is in him to believe that He will come into the world as a glorious King? Beyond doubt, he will do so, and you will find no answer to give.

Reader, I commend these things to your serious attention. I entreat you to throw aside all prejudice, and view the subject I am dwelling upon with calm and dispassionate thought. I beseech you to take up anew the prophetic Scriptures, and pray that you may not err in interpreting their meaning. Read them in the light of those two great pole-stars — the *first* and *second* advents of Jesus Christ. Bind up with the *first* advent — the rejection of the Jews, the calling of the Gentiles, the preaching of the Gospel as a witness to the world, and the gathering out of the election of grace. Bind up with the *second* advent — the restoration of the Jews, the pouring out of judgments on mere professing Christians, the conversion of the world, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom upon earth. Do this, and you will see a meaning and fullness in prophecy which perhaps you never yet discovered.

I am quite aware that many good men do not see the prophetic subject as I do. I am painfully sensible that I seem presumptuous in differing from them. But I dare not refuse anything which appears to me plainly written in Scripture. I consider *the best of men are not infallible*. I think we should dread *unscriptural Protestant traditions* — as much as the traditions of the Church of Rome!

I believe it is high time for the Church of Christ to awake out of its sleep about Old Testament prophecy. From the time of the old Father, Jerome, down to the present day, men have gone on in a pernicious habit of "spiritualizing" the words of the Prophets, until their true meaning has been well near buried! It is high time to lay aside *traditional methods of interpretation*, and to give up our blind obedience to the opinions of such writers as Poole, Henry, Scott, and Clarke, upon unfulfilled prophecy. It is high time to fall back on the good old principle that *Scripture generally means what it seems to mean*, and to beware of that semi-skeptical argument, "such and such an interpretation cannot be correct, because it seems to us carnal!"

It is high time for Christians to interpret *unfulfilled* prophecy by the light of prophecies already *fulfilled*. The *curses* on the Jews were brought to pass literally — so also will be the *blessings*. The *scattering* was literal — so also will be the *gathering*. The *pulling*

down of Zion was literal — so also will be the *building up*. The *rejection* of Israel was literal — so also will be the *restoration*.

It is high time to interpret the events that shall accompany Christ's second advent, by the light of those accompanying His first advent. The first advent was literal, visible, personal — so also will be His second. His first advent was with a literal body — so also will be His second. At His first advent, the least predictions were fulfilled to the very letter — so also will they be at His second. The *shame* was literal and visible — so also will be the *glory*.

It is high time to cease from explaining Old Testament prophecies in a way not warranted by the New Testament. What right have we to say that Judah, Zion, Israel, and Jerusalem, ever mean anything but literal Judah, literal Zion, literal Israel, and literal Jerusalem? What precedent shall we find in the New Testament? Hardly any, if indeed any at all. Well, says an admirable writer on this subject, "There are really only two or three places in the whole New Testament — Gospels, Epistles, and Revelation — where such names are used decidedly in what may be called a *spiritual* or *figurative* state."

The word "Jerusalem" occurs eighty times, and all of them unquestionably literal, except when the opposite is expressly pointed out by the epithets "heavenly," or "new", or "holy."

"Jew" occurs a hundred times, and only four are even ambiguous, as Romans 2:28.

"Israel" and "Israelite" occur forty times, and all literal.

"Judah" and "Judea" above twenty times, and all literal. (Bonar's "Prophetic Landmarks." page 300)

It is no answer to all this, to tell us that it is impossible to carry out the principle of a literal interpretation, and that Christ was not a literal "door," nor a literal "branch," nor the bread in the sacrament His literal "body." I reply that when I speak of *literal* interpretation, I require no man to deny the use of *figurative* language. I fully admit that *emblems*, *figures*, and *symbols* are used in foretelling Messiah's glory, as well as in foretelling Messiah's sufferings. I do not believe that Jesus was a literal "root out of dry ground," or a literal "lamb." (Isaiah 53.) All I maintain is, that prophecies about Christ's coming and kingdom do foretell *literal facts*, as truly as the prophecy about Christ being numbered with the transgressors. All I say is, that prophecies about the Jews being *gathered*, will be as really and literally made good — as those about the Jews being *scattered*.

It is no good argument to tell us that the principle of literal interpretation deprives the Church of the use and benefit of many parts of the Old Testament. I deny the justice of the charge altogether. I consider that all things written in the Prophets concerning the salvation of individual souls, may be used by Gentiles as freely as by Jews. The hearts of Jews and Gentiles are naturally just the same. The way to Heaven is but one. Both Jews

and Gentiles need justification, regeneration, sanctification. Whatever is written concerning such subjects — is just as much the property of the Gentile as the Jew.

Moreover, I hold *Israel* to be a people specially typical of the whole body of believers in Christ. I consider that believers now may take the comfort of every promise of pardon, comfort, and grace which is addressed to Israel. Such words I regard as the *common portion of all believers*. All I maintain is, that whenever God says He shall do or give certain things to Israel and Jerusalem in this world — we ought entirely to believe that to *literal* Israel and Jerusalem those things will be given and done.

It is no valid argument to say that many who think as I do about prophecy, have said and written very foolish things, and have often contradicted one another. All this may be very true, and yet the principles for which we contend may be scriptural, sound and correct. The infidel does not overturn the truth of Christianity — when he points to the existence of Antinomians, Jumpers, and Shakers. The worldly man does not overturn the truth of real evangelical religion — when he sneers at the differences of Calvinists and Arminians. Just in the same way, one writer on prophecy may interpret Revelation or Daniel in one way, and another in another. One man may take on him to fix dates, and prove at last to be quite wrong; another may apply prophecies to living individuals, and prove utterly mistaken. But all these things do not affect the main question. They do not in the least prove that the advent of Christ before the millennium is not a Scriptural truth, and that the principle of interpreting Old Testament prophecy *literally* is not a sound principle.

Reader, I say once more, we ought to regard the mistakes of our Lord's disciples with great tenderness and consideration. We Christians are the last who ought to condemn them strongly. Great as their mistakes were — our own have been almost as bad. We have been very quick in discovering the *beam* in our Jewish brother's eyes, and have forgotten a large *mote* in our own. We have been long putting a great stumbling-block in his way, by our arbitrary and inconsistent explanations of Old Testament prophecy.

Reader, let us do our part to remove that great stumbling-block. If we would help to remove the veil which prevents the Jews seeing the *cross* — let us also strip off the veil from our own eyes, and look steadily and unflinchingly at the second advent and the *crown*.

II. The second question I wish to consider is this — what is the present position of our Lord Jesus Christ?

The parable appears to me to answer that question distinctly in the twelfth verse. "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return." This nobleman represents the Lord Jesus Christ, and that in two respects.

Like the nobleman, the Lord Jesus is gone into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom. He has not received it yet in possession, though He has it in promise. He has a *spiritual* kingdom unquestionably: He is king over the *hearts* of His believing people, and

they are all His faithful subjects. He has a controlling power over the world, without controversy — He is King of kings and Lord of lords. "By Him all things are held together," and nothing can happen without His permission. But His real, literal, visible, complete kingdom — the Lord Jesus has not yet received. To use the words of Hebrews 2:8, "We see not yet, all things put under Him." To use the words of Psalm 110:1, "He sits on the right hand of the Father until His enemies are made His footstool."

The devil is the *prince of this world* during the present dispensation. (John 14:30.) The vast majority of the inhabitants of the earth choose the things that please the devil — far more than the things that please God. Little as they may think it, they are . . . doing the devil's will, behaving as the devil's subjects, and serving the devil far more than Christ.

This is the actual condition of Christendom, as well as of heathen countries. After 1900 years of Bibles and Gospel preaching, there is not a nation, or a country, or a town — where the devil has not more subjects than Christ. So fearfully true is it, that the world is not yet the kingdom of Christ.

The Lord Jesus during the present dispensation is like David between the time of His anointing and Saul's death. He has the promise of the kingdom — but He has not yet received the crown and throne. (1 Sam. 22:1, 2.)

He is followed by a few, and those often neither great nor wise — but they are a *faithful* people. He is persecuted by His enemies, and oftentimes driven into the wilderness — and yet His party is never quite destroyed. But He has none of the visible signs of the kingdom at present — no earthly glory, majesty, greatness, obedience. The vast majority of mankind see no beauty in Him — they will not have this man to reign over them. His people are not honored for their Master's sake: they walk the earth like *princes in disguise*. His *kingdom* is not yet come — His *will* is not yet done on earth excepting by a little flock. It is not the day of "His power." The Lord Jesus is biding His time.

Reader, I entreat you to grasp firmly this truth, for truth I believe it to be. Great delusion abounds on the subject of Christ's kingdom. Take heed lest any man deceive you by purely *traditional teachings about prophetic truth*. Hymns are composed and sung which darken God's counsel on this subject, by words without knowledge. Texts are wrested from their true meaning, and accommodated to the present order of things, which are not justly applicable to any but the period of the second advent. Beware of the mischievous infection of this habit of *text-twisting*. Beware of the sapping effect of beautiful poetry, in which unfulfilled promises of glory are twisted and adapted to the present dispensation. Settle it down in your mind, that Christ's kingdom is yet to come. His arrows are not yet sharp in the hearts of His enemies. The day of His power has not yet begun. He is gathering out a people to carry the cross and walk in His steps; but the time of His *coronation* has not yet arrived.

But just as the Lord Jesus, like the nobleman, "went to receive a kingdom," so, like the nobleman, the Lord Jesus intends one day "to return."

The words of the angels (Acts 1:11) shall have a complete fulfillment: "This same Jesus who was taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into Heaven." As His going away was a real literal going away — so His return shall be a real literal return. As He came personally the first time with a body — so He shall come personally the second time with a body. As He came visibly to this earth and visibly went away — so when He comes the second time He shall *visibly* return. And then, and not until then, the complete kingdom of Christ shall begin. He left His servants as "a nobleman," He returns to His servants as "a King."

Then He intends to cast out that old usurper the devil, to bind him for a thousand years, and strip him of his power. (Revelation 20:1.)

Then He intends to make a restitution of the face of creation. (Acts 3:21.) It shall be the world's jubilee day. Our earth shall at last bring forth her increase — the King shall at length have His own again. At last the ninety-seventh Psalm shall be fulfilled, and men shall say, "The Lord reigns — let the earth rejoice!"

Then He intends to fulfill the prophecies of Enoch, John the Baptist, and Paul: "to execute judgment upon all the ungodly," — "to burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire," — and "in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and obey not the Gospel." (Jude 15; Matthew 3:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:8.)

Then He intends to raise His dead saints and gather His living ones, to gather together the scattered tribes of Israel, and to set up an empire on earth in which every knee shall bow to Him, and every tongue confess that Christ is Lord.

When, how, where, in what manner, all these things shall be — we cannot say particularly! Enough for us to know that they shall be. The Lord Jesus has undertaken to do them — and they shall be performed: the Lord Jesus waits for the time appointed by the Father — and then they shall all come to pass. As surely as He was born of a pure virgin, and lived on earth thirty three years as a servant — so surely He shall come with clouds in glory, and reign on the earth as a king.

Reader, I charge you to establish in your mind among the great verities of your religion, that Christ is one day to have a complete kingdom in this world — that His kingdom is not yet set up — but that it will be set up in the day of His return. Know clearly *whose* kingdom it is *now*: not Christ's — but the usurper Satan's. Know clearly whose kingdom it is to be one day: not Satan the usurper's — but Jesus Christ's! Know clearly *when* the kingdom is to change hands, and the usurper to be cast out — when the Lord Jesus returns in person, and not before. Know clearly what the Lord Jesus is doing now: He is sitting at the right hand of the Father — interceding as a high priest in the holy of holies for His people — adding to their number such as shall be saved by the preaching of the Gospel — and waiting until the appointed "day of His power," when He shall come forth

to bless His people, and sit as a priest upon His throne. Know these things clearly — and you will do well.

Know these things clearly, and then you will not cherish *extravagant expectations* from any Church, minister, or religious machinery in this present dispensation. You will not marvel to see ministers and missionaries not converting all to whom they preach. You will not wonder to find that while some believe the Gospel, many believe not. You will not be depressed and cast down when you see the children of the world in every place many — and the children of God few. You will remember that "the days are evil," and that the time of general conversion is not yet arrived. You will thank God that *any* are converted at all, and that while the Gospel is hid to the wise and prudent, it is yet revealed to babes.

Alas, for the man who expects a millennium *before* the Lord Jesus returns! How can this possibly be, if the world in the day of His coming is to be found as it was in the days of Noah and Lot? (Luke 18:26-30.)

Know these things clearly, and then you will not be confounded and surprised by the *continuance of immense evils* in the world. Wars, and tumults, and oppression, and dishonesty, and selfishness, and covetousness, and superstition, and bad government, and abounding heresies — will not appear unusual to you. You will not sink down into a morbid, misanthropic condition of mind — when you see laws, and reforms, and education, not making mankind perfect. You will not relapse into a state of apathy and disgust — when you see Churches full of imperfections, and theologians making mistakes. You will say to yourself, "The time of Christ's power has *not yet* arrived. The devil is still working among his children, and sowing darkness and division broadcast among the saints — the true King is yet to come."

Know these things clearly, and then you will see why God delays the final glory, and allows things to go on as they do in this world. It is not that He is not able to prevent evil — it is not that He is slack in the fulfilling of His promises — but the Lord is taking out for Himself a people by the preaching of the Gospel. (Acts 16:14; 2 Peter 3:9.) He is longsuffering to unconverted Christians. The Lord is not willing that any should perish — but that all should come to repentance. Once let the number of the *elect* be gathered out of the world — once let the last elect sinner be brought to repentance — and then the kingdom of Christ shall be set up, and the throne of grace exchanged for the throne of glory.

Know these things clearly, and then you will work diligently to do good to souls. The time is short. "The night is far spent: the day is at hand." The *signs of the times* call loudly for watchfulness, and speak with no uncertain voice. The Turkish empire is drying up; the Jews are cared for as they never have been for nineteen hundred years; the Gospel is being preached as a witness in almost every corner of the world. Surely if we would pluck a few more brands from the burning before it is too late, we must work hard and lose no time. We must preach — we must warn — we must exhort — we must give

money to religious societies — we must spend and be spent far more than we have ever done yet.

Know these things clearly, and then you will be often looking for the coming of the day of God. You will regard the second advent as a *glorious* and comforting truth, around which your best hopes will all be clustered. You will not merely think of *Christ crucified* — but you will think also of *Christ coming again*. You will long for the days of refreshing and the manifestation of the sons of God. (Acts 3:19; Romans 8:19.) You will find *peace* in looking back to the cross — and you will find *joyful hope* in looking forward to the kingdom.

Once more, I repeat, know clearly *Christ's present position*. He is like one who is "gone into a far country to receive a kingdom, and then to return."

III. The third and last question I wish to consider, is this: What is the present duty of all Christ's professing disciples?

When I speak of present duty, I mean, of course, their duty between the period of Christ's first and second advent. And I find an answer in the words of the nobleman, in the parable, to his servants: he "delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, *Occupy until I come*."

Reader, I know few words more searching and impressive than these four: "Occupy until I come." They are spoken to all who profess and call themselves Christians. They address the *conscience* of every true believer. They ought to stir up all hearers of the Gospel to examine themselves whether they are in the faith, and to prove themselves. Listen to me for a few minutes, while I try to impress them on your attention. For your sake, remember, these words were written: "Occupy until I come."

The Lord Jesus bids you "occupy." By that He means that you are to be "a doer" in your Christianity, and not merely a hearer and professor. He wants His servants not only to receive His wages, and eat His bread, and dwell in His house, and belong to His family — but also to do His work. You are to "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works." (Matthew 5:16.) Have you faith? It must not be a dead faith: it must "work by love." (Galatians 5:6.) Are you elect? You are elect unto "obedience." (1 Peter 1:2.) Are you redeemed? You are redeemed that you may be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus 2:14.) Do you love Christ? Prove the reality of your love by keeping Christ's commandments. (John 14:15.)

Oh, reader, do not forget this charge to "occupy!" Beware of an idle, talking, gossiping, sentimental, do-nothing religion. Think not because your *doings* cannot *justify* you, or put away one single sin — that therefore it matters not whether you do anything at all. Away with such a delusion! Cast it behind you as *an invention of the devil*. Think of the house built upon the sand, and its miserable end. (Matthew 7:24-27.) As ever you would "make your calling and election sure," be a doing Christian.

But the Lord Jesus also bids you "occupy your pound." By this He means that He has given each one of His people some *opportunity of glorifying Him*. He would have you understand that everyone has got his own sphere — the poorest as well as the richest; that everyone has an *open door* before him, and may, if he will, show forth his Master's praise.

Your bodily health and strength,
your mental gifts and capacities,
your money and your earthly possessions,
your rank and position in life,
your example and influence with others,
your liberty to read the Bible and hear the Gospel,
your plentiful supply of means of grace —
all these are your "pounds." All these are to be used and employed with a continual reference to the glory of Christ. All these are His gifts. "Of Him come riches and honor." (1 Chronicles 29:12.) "His is the silver, and His the gold." (Haggai 2:8.) "His is your body, and His is your spirit." (1 Corinthians 6:20.) "He appoints your habitation: He gives you life and breath." (Acts 17:25, 26.) You are not your own: you are bought with a price. (1 Corinthians 6:20.) Surely it is no great matter, if He bids you honor Him and serve Him with all that you have. Breathes there the man or woman among the readers of this tract that has received nothing at the Lord's hand! Not one, I am sure. Oh, see to it, that you pay out your Lord's money well and honestly! Take heed that you do not *bury* your pound!

But the Lord Jesus bids you also to "occupy until He comes." By that He means that you are to do His work on earth — like one who continually looks for His return. You are to be like the faithful servant, who knows not what hour his master may come home — but keeps all things in readiness, and is always prepared. You are to be like one who knows that Christ's coming is the great reckoning day, and to be ready to render up your *account* at any moment.

You are not to neglect any social duty or relation of life, because of the uncertainty of the Lord's return. You are to fill the station to which God has called you, in a godly and Christian way; and you are to be ready to go from the place of business to meet Christ in the air, if the Lord shall think fit. You are to be like a man who never knows what a day might bring forth and, therefore, to put off nothing until a "convenient season." You are to rise and go forth in the morning, ready, if need be, to meet Christ at noon. You are to lie down in bed at night, *ready*, if need be, to be awakened by the midnight cry, "Behold the Bridegroom comes!" You are to keep your spiritual accounts in a state of constant preparation, like one who never knows how soon they may be called for. You are to measure all your ways by the measure of Christ's appearing, and to do nothing in which you would not like Jesus to find you engaged. This is to "occupy" until Jesus comes.

Think, reader, how condemning are these words to thousands of professing Christians! What an utter absence of *preparation* appears in their daily walk and conversation! How thoroughly unfit they are to meet Christ! They know nothing of occupying the gifts of

God as *loans* for which they must give account. They show not the slightest desire to *glorify* Him with "body and spirit which are His." They give no sign of *readiness* for the second advent. Well says old Gurnall, "It may be written on the grave of every unconverted man: Here lies one who never did for God an hour's work!" Who can wonder in a world like this, if a minister often cries to his congregation, "You must be born again!" "Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven!" (John 3:7; Matthew 18:3.)

Think again, how *arousing* these words ought to be to all who are *rich* in this world — but do not know how to spend their money rightly. Alas, there are many who live on as if Christ had never said anything about the *difficulty of rich men being saved!* They are rich towards their own pleasures, or their own tastes, or their own families — but not rich towards God! They live as if they would not have to give an account of their use of money! They live as if there was no reckoning day before the bar of Christ! They live as if Christ had never said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35.) "Sell what you have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in Heaven that fails not." (Luke 12:33.)

Oh, if this tract should by chance fall into the hands of such a one, I do beseech you consider your ways and be wise. Cease to be content with giving God's cause a few shillings, or an occasional guinea; give far more liberally than you have done yet — give hundreds where you now give tens; give thousands where you now give hundreds. Then, and not until then, I shall believe you are "occupying," as one who *looks* for Christ's return. Alas, for the *covetousness* and *narrow-heartedness* of the Church of these days! May the Lord open the eyes of rich Christians.

Think again, how *instructive* are these words to all who are troubled by doubts about mingling with the *world*, and taking part in its *vain amusements*. It is useless to tell us that races, and balls, and theaters, and operas, and cards, are not forbidden by name in Scripture. The question we should ask ourselves is simply this, "Am I occupying, as one who looks for Christ's return, when I take part in these things? Would I like Jesus to return suddenly and find me on the race-course, or in the ball-room, or at the theater, or at the card-table? Would I think I was in my right place, and where my Lord would have me to be?"

Oh, dear reader, this is the true test by which to try all our daily occupations and employment of time! That *thing* which we would not do if we thought Jesus was coming tonight — that thing we ought not to do at all. That *place* to which we would not go if we thought Jesus was coming this day — that place we ought to avoid. That *company* in which we would not like Jesus to find us — in that company we ought never to sit down. Oh, that men would live as in the sight of Christ! Not as in the sight of man, or of the Church, or of ministers — but as in the sight of Christ! This would be "occupying until He comes."

But think how encouraging are these words to all who seek first the kingdom of God; and love the Lord Christ in sincerity. What though the children of the world regard them as

"righteous overmuch!" What though mistaken friends and relations tell them they pay too much attention to religion, and go too far! Those words, "Occupy until I come," are words which justify their conduct. They may well reply to their persecutors, "I am doing a great work — and I cannot come down! I am striving to live so as to be ready when the Lord comes, I must be about my Father's business!"

Let me *conclude* this tract by a few words of **GENERAL APPLICATION**.

(1) First, let me draw from the whole subject a word of **solemn warning** for every one into whose hands this tract may fall. That warning is — that there is a great change yet to come on this world, and a change we ought to keep constantly before our mind's eye.

That change is a change of **masters**. That old rebel, the devil, and all his adherents, shall be cast down. The Lord Jesus, and all His saints, shall be exalted and raised to honor. "The kingdoms of this world" shall "become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ." (Revelation 11:15.)

That change is a change of **manners**. *Sin* shall no longer be made light of and palliated. *Wickedness* shall no longer go unpunished and unreprieved. *Holiness* shall become the general character of the inhabitants of the earth: "The new Heaven and new earth" shall be the dwelling of "righteousness." (2 Peter 3:13.)

That change is a change of **opinion**. There shall be no more Socinianism, or Deism, or Scepticism, or Infidelity. All nations shall do honor to the crucified Lamb of God — all men shall know Him, from the least to the greatest. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of Him, as the waters cover the sea." (Isaiah 11:9.)

I say nothing as to the *time* when these things shall take place. I object, on principle, to all dogmatism about *dates*. All I insist upon is this — that there is a great change before us all — a change for the *earth*, a change for *man*, and above all, a change for the *saints*.

I accept the prediction that "there is a great improvement and development of human nature yet to take place." I accept it with all my heart. But *how* and *when* shall it be brought about? Not by any system of *education*! Not by any legislation of *politicians*! Not by anything short of the appearing of the kingdom of Christ. Then, and then only, shall there be universal justice, universal knowledge, and universal peace.

I accept the common phrase of many, "There is a good time coming." I accept it with all my heart. I do truly believe there shall one day be no more *poverty* — no more *oppression* — no more *ignorance* — no more grinding *competition* — no more *covetousness*. But *when* shall that good time come? Never — never until the return of Jesus Christ at His second advent! And for whom shall that time be good? For none but those who know and love the Lord.

I accept the common phrase, "There is a man coming who will set all right that is now wrong. We wait for the coming man." I accept it with all my heart. I do look for one who

shall *unravel* the tangled skein of this world's affairs, and put everything in its right place. But who is the great physician for an old, diseased, worn-out world? It is the man Christ Jesus, who is yet to return.

Oh, reader, let us realize this point! There is before us all a great change. Surely, when a man has notice to leave his present dwelling-place, he ought to make sure that he has before him another home.

(2) Next, let me draw from the whole subject a **solemn question** for all into whose hands this tract may fall. That question is simply this: *Are you ready for the great change? Are you ready for the coming and kingdom of Christ?*

Remember, I do not ask what you think about controversial points in the subject of prophecy. I do not ask your opinion about *preterism* and *futurism*. I do not ask whether you think revelation fulfilled or unfulfilled — or whether you consider the *Man of Sin* to be an individual — or whether you hold prophetic *days* to be years. About all these points you and I may err, and yet be saved. The one point to which I want to fix you down is this, "*Are you ready for the kingdom of Christ?*"

It is useless to tell me, that, in asking this, I put before you too high a standard. It is vain to tell me that a man may be a very good man — and yet not be ready for the kingdom of Christ. I deny it altogether. I say that every justified and converted man is ready, and that if you are not ready — you are not a justified man. I say that the standard I put before you is nothing more than the New Testament standard, and that the Apostles would have doubted the truth of your religion if you were not looking and longing for the coming of the Lord. I say, above all, that the grand end of the Gospel is to prepare men to meet God. What has your Christianity done for you if it has not made you fit for the kingdom of Christ. Nothing — nothing! Nothing at all! Oh, that you may think on this matter, and never rest until you are ready to meet Christ!

(3) In the next place let me offer an **invitation** to all readers who do not feel ready for Christ's return. That invitation shall be short and simple. I beseech you to know your danger, and come to Christ without delay, that you may be pardoned, justified, and made ready for things to come. I entreat you this day to "flee from the wrath to come," to the hope set before you in the Gospel. I pray you in Christ's stead, to lay down enmity and unbelief, and at once "to be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20.)

I tremble when I think of the *privileges* which surround you in this country, and of the *peril* in which you stand so long as you neglect them. I tremble when I think of the possibility of Christ coming again, and of your being found unpardoned and unconverted in the day of His return. Better a thousand times will be his lot, who was born a heathen, and never heard the Gospel — than the lot of him who has been a member of a *Church* — but not a living member of *Christ*. Surely the time past may suffice you to have delayed and lingered about your soul. Awake this day! "Awake you that sleep, and Christ shall give you light." (Ephesians 5:14.)

Lay aside everything that stands between you and Christ. Cast away everything that draws you back, and prevents you feeling ready for the Lord's appearing. Find out the *besetting sin* that weighs you down, and tear it from your heart, however dear it may be! Cry mightily to the Lord Jesus to reveal Himself to your soul. Rest not until you have got a real, firm, and reasonable hope, and know that your feet are on the Rock of Ages. Rest not until you can say, "The Lord may come; the earth may be shaken; the foundations of the round world may be overturned; but thank God I have got treasure in Heaven, and an advocate with the Father, and I will not be afraid." Do this, and you shall have got something from reading this simple tract.

(4) Last of all, let me draw from the subject an **exhortation** to all who know Christ indeed, and love His appearing. That exhortation is simply this — that you will strive more and more to be a "doing" Christian. (James 1:22.) Labor more and more to show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into marvelous light; improve every talent which the Lord Jesus has committed to your charge to the setting forth of His glory; let your walk declare plainly that you seek a better country; let your conformity to the mind of Christ be unquestionable and unmistakable. Let your holiness be a clear plain fact, which even the worst enemies of the Gospel cannot deny.

Above all, if you are a student of prophecy, I entreat you never to let it be said that *prophetic study prevents practical diligence*. If you do believe that the day is really approaching, then labor actively to provoke others unto love and good works. If you do believe that the night is far spent — be doubly diligent to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Never was there a greater mistake than to imagine the doctrine of the personal return of Christ is calculated to *paralyze Christian diligence*. Surely there can be no greater spur to the servant's activity, than the expectation of his master's speedy return!

This is the way to attain a healthy state of soul. There is nothing like the exercise of our graces for promoting our spiritual vigor. Alas, there are not a few of God's saints who complain that they lack spiritual comfort in their religion, while the fault is altogether in themselves. "Occupy," "Occupy," I would say to such people. Lay yourselves out more heartily for the glory of God, and these uncomfortable feelings will soon vanish away.

This is the way to do good to the children of the world. Nothing, under God, has such an effect on unconverted people as the sight of a *real, thorough-going live Christian*. There are thousands who will not come to hear the Gospel, and do not know the meaning of justification by faith — who yet can understand *an uncompromising, holy, consistent walk with God*. "Occupy," "Occupy," I say again, if you want to do good.

This is the way to promote fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light. There will be no idleness in the kingdom of Christ: the saints and angels shall there wait on their Lord with unwearied activity, and serve Him day and night. It is a fine saying of Bernard, that Jacob in his vision saw some angels ascending, and some descending — but none *standing still*. "Occupy," "Occupy," I say again, if you would be thoroughly trained for your glorious home.

Oh, brethren believers, it would be well indeed if we did but see clearly how much it is for our interest and happiness to occupy every farthing of our Lord's money — to live very near to God!

So living we shall find great *joy* in our work — great *comfort* in our trials — great *doors of usefulness* in the world — great *consolation* in our sicknesses — great *hope* in our death — leave great *evidences* behind us when we are buried — have great *confidence* in the day of Christ's return — and receive a great *crown* in the day of reward!

I remain, your affectionate friend,
J. C. Ryle

Scattered Israel to Be Gathered

"Hear the Word of the Lord, O you *nations*, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say: He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock."
Jeremiah 31:10

The text which heads this page is singularly full and comprehensive. It contains both *history* and *prophecy*.

It speaks of the *scattering* of Israel — this is *history*.

It speak of the *gathering* of Israel — this is *prophecy*.

It demands the attention both of the Jew and the Gentile.

To the *Jew* it holds out a *hope*, "Israel," it says, "shall be gathered."

On the *Gentile* it lays a *command*, "Hear the Word of the Lord," it says, "O you nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, He who scattered Israel will gather him."

Reader, the whole body of Gentile Christendom is specially addressed in this text. There is no evading this conclusion on any fair interpretation of Scripture. We ourselves are among the "nations" to whom Jeremiah speaks. Upon us devolves a portion of the duty which he here sets forth. The text is the Lord's voice to all the Churches of Christ among the Gentiles. It is a voice to the Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland. It is a voice to the Churches of Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Holland, Denmark, and America. It is a voice to all Christendom. *And what does the voice say?* It bids us proclaim far and wide the will of God concerning the Jewish nation. It bids us keep one another in memory of God's past and future dealings with Israel. "He who scattered Israel will gather him."

Reader, I ask your serious attention for a few minutes while I try to place the Jewish subject before you in a connected and condensed form. I propose in this address to show

you from Scripture the *past*, the *present*, and the *future* of Israel. I know few texts in the Bible which contain such a complete summary of the subject as the one before you. This text I shall endeavor to unfold.

I entreat you not to dismiss the subject as speculative, fanciful, and unprofitable. The world is growing old. The *last days* are come upon us. The foundations of the earth are out of course. The ancient institutions of society are wearing out and going to pieces. The end of all things is at hand. Surely it befits a wise man, at a time like this, to turn to the pages of *prophecy* and to inquire what is yet to come. At a time like this, the declarations of God concerning His people Israel ought to be carefully weighed and examined. "At the time of the end," says Daniel, "the wise shall understand" (Daniel 12:10).

There are *four points* on which I purpose to dwell in considering the words of Jeremiah which stand at the head of this address.

1. The *meaning* of the word "Israel," both here and elsewhere in Scripture.
2. The *present condition* of Israel.
3. The *future prospects* of Israel.
4. The *duty which Gentile Churches* owe to Israel.

1. The MEANING of the word "Israel." The *definition of terms* is of first importance in theology. Unless we explain the meaning of the words we use in our religious statements, our arguments are often wasted, and we seem like men beating the air. The word "Israel" is used nearly seven hundred times in the Bible. I can only discover three senses in which it is used.

First, it is one of the *names of Jacob*, the father of the twelve tribes; a name specially given to him by God.

Second, it is a name given to the *ten tribes* which separated from Judah and Benjamin in the days of Rehoboam and became a distinct kingdom. This kingdom is often called *Israel* in contradistinction to the kingdom of *Judah*.

Thirdly and lastly, it is a name given to the *whole Jewish nation*, to all members of the twelve tribes which sprang from Jacob and were brought out of Egypt into the land of Canaan. This is by far the most common signification of the word in the Bible. It is the only signification in which I can find the word "Israel" used through the whole New Testament. It is the same in which the word is used in the text which I am considering this day. That *Israel*, which God has scattered and will yet gather again — is the whole Jewish nation.

Now, why do I dwell upon this point? To some readers it may appear mere waste of time and words to say so much about it. The things I have been saying sound to them like

truisms. That Israel means *Israel*, is a matter on which they never felt a doubt. If this be the mind of any into whose hands this address has fallen, I am thankful for it. But unhappily there are many Christians who do not see the subject with your eyes. For their sakes I must dwell on this point a little longer.

For many centuries there has prevailed in the Churches of Christ a strange, and to my mind, an unwarrantable mode of dealing with this word "Israel." It has been interpreted in many passages of the Psalms and Prophets, as if it meant nothing more than *Christian believers*. Have *promises* been held out to Israel? Men have been told continually that they are addressed to *Gentile saints*. Have glorious things been described as laid up in store for Israel? Men have been incessantly told that they describe the victories and triumphs of the Gospel in Christian Churches. The proofs of these things are too many to require quotation. No man can read the immense majority of commentaries and popular hymns without seeing this system of interpretation to which I now refer.

Against that system I have long protested, and I hope I shall always protest as long as I live. I do not deny that Israel was a peculiar *typical* people, and that God's relations to Israel — were meant to be a type of His relations to His believing people all over the world. I do not forget that it is written, "As face answers to face, so does the heart of man to man" (Proverbs 27:19), and that whatever spiritual truths are taught in prophecy concerning Israelitish hearts — are applicable to the hearts of Gentiles. I would have it most distinctly understood that God's dealings with individual Jews and Gentiles — are precisely one and the same. Without repentance, faith in Christ, and holiness of heart — no individual Jew or Gentile shall ever be saved.

What I protest against is the habit of *allegorizing* plain sayings of the Word of God concerning the *future history of the nation Israel* and explaining away the fullness of their contents in order to accommodate them to the Gentile Church! I believe the habit to be unwarranted by anything in Scripture, and to draw after it a long train of evil consequences. Where, I would venture to ask, in the whole New Testament shall we find any plain authority for applying the word "Israel" to anyone but the nation Israel? I can find none. On the contrary, I observe that when the Apostle Paul quotes Old Testament prophecies about the privileges of the Gentiles in Gospel times, he is careful to quote texts which specially mention the "Gentiles" by name. The fifteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a striking illustration of what I mean. We are often told in the New Testament that under the Gospel believing Gentiles are "fellow-heirs and partakers of the same hope" with believing Jews (Ephesians 3:6). But that *believing Gentiles* may be called "Israelites," I cannot see anywhere at all.

To what may we attribute that loose system of interpreting the language of the Psalms and Prophets, and the extravagant expectations of universal conversion of the world by the preaching of the Gospel, which may be observed in many Christian writers? To nothing so much, I believe, as to the habit of inaccurately interpreting the word "Israel," and to the consequent application of promises — to the Gentile Churches with which they have nothing to do!

The least *errors in theology* always bear fruit. Never does man take up an incorrect principle of interpreting Scripture, without that principle entailing awkward consequences and coloring the whole tone of his religion. Reader, I leave this part of my subject here. I am sure that its importance cannot be overrated. In fact, a right understanding of it lies at the very root of the whole Jewish subject, and of the prophecies concerning the Jews. The duty which Christians owe to Israel, as a nation, will never be clearly understood, until Christians clearly see the place that Israel occupies in Scripture.

Before going any further, I will ask all readers of this address one plain practical question. I ask you to calmly consider — What sense do you put on such words as "Israel," "Jacob," and the like — when you meet with them in the Psalms and Prophecies of the Old Testament? We live in a day when there are many Bible readers. There are many who search the Scriptures regularly and read through the Psalms and the Prophets once, if not twice, every year they live. Of course you attach some meaning to the words I have just referred to. You place some sense upon them. Now what is that sense? What is that meaning? Take heed that it is the right one.

Reader, accept a *friendly exhortation* this day. Cleave to the *literal sense of Bible words* and beware of departing from it — except in cases of absolute necessity. Beware of that system of *allegorizing* and *spiritualizing* and *accommodating*, which the school of Origen first brought in, and which has found such an unfortunate degree of favor in the Church. In reading the authorized version of the English Bible, do not put too much confidence in the "headings" of pages and "tables of contents" at beginnings of chapters, which I consider to be a most unhappy accompaniment of that admirable translation. Remember that those headings and tables of contents were drawn up by *uninspired hands*. In reading the Prophets, they are sometimes not helps, but real hindrances and less likely to assist a reader than to lead him astray. Settle it in your mind, in the reading the Psalms and Prophets, that Israel means *Israel*; and Zion means *Zion*; and Jerusalem means *Jerusalem*.

And, finally, whatever edification you derive from *applying* to your own soul the words which God addresses to His ancient people — never lose sight of the *primary sense* of the text.

2. The second point in the text on which I proposed to dwell, is the PRESENT CONDITION of Israel. The expression used by Jeremiah describes exactly the state in which the Jews are at this day, and have been for nearly eighteen hundred years. They are a "scattered" people. The armies of Assyria, Babylon, and Rome have, one after another, swept over the land of Israel and carried its inhabitants into captivity. Few, if any, of the ten tribes appear to have returned from the *Assyrian* captivity. Not fifty thousand of Judah and Benjamin came back from the captivity of *Babylon*. From the last and worst captivity, when the temple was burned and Jerusalem destroyed — there has been no return at all. For eighteen hundred years, Israel has been dispersed over the four quarters of the globe. Like the wreck of some goodly ship, the Jews have been tossed to and fro on all waters and stranded in broken pieces on every shore.

But though Israel has been "scattered," Israel has not been *destroyed*. For eighteen hundred years, the Jews have continued a separate people, without a king, without a land, without a territory — but never lost, never *absorbed* among other nations. They have been often trampled underfoot — but never shaken from the faith of their fathers. They have been often persecuted — but never destroyed. At this very moment, they are as distinct and peculiar a people as any people upon earth — an unanswerable argument in the way of the infidel, a puzzling difficulty in the way of politicians, a standing lesson to all the world. Romans, Danes, Saxons, Normans, Belgians, French, Germans have all in turn settled on English soil. All have in turn lost their national distinctiveness. All have in turn become part and parcel of the English nation, after the lapse of a few hundred years. But it has never been so with the Jews.

Dispersed as they are, there is a principle of *cohesion* among them which no circumstances have been able to melt. *Scattered* as they are, there is a *national vitality* among them which is stronger than that of any nation on earth. Go where you will, you always find them. Settle where you please, in hot countries or in cold, you will find the Jews. But go where you will and settle where you please, this wonderful people is always the same. Scattered as they are, few in number compared to those among whom they live, the Jews are always the Jews. Three thousand years ago Balaam said, "The people shall dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations." Eighteen hundred years ago our Lord said, "This generation shall not pass away until all be fulfilled." We see these words made good before our eyes (Num. 23:9; Luke 21:32).

But by whose hands was this scattering of Israel wrought? The text before us today declares expressly that it was the *hand of God*. It was not the armies of Tiglath-Pileser or Shalmanezar, of Nebuchadnezzar or of Titus. They were only *instruments in the hand of a far higher power*. It was that God who orders all things in Heaven and earth, who dispersed the twelve tribes over the face of the earth. It was the same God who brought Israel out of Egypt with a high hand and mighty arm and planted them in Canaan — who plucked them up by the roots and made them "wanderers among the nations" (Hosea 9:17).

And why did God send this heavy judgment upon Israel? To what are we to attribute this surprising *dispersion* of a people so highly favored? The inquiry is a very useful one. Let us mark well the answer. The Jews are a "scattered" people — because of their many sins. Their hardness and stiff-neckedness, their impenitence and unbelief, their abuse of privileges and neglect of gifts, their rejection of prophets and messengers from Heaven, and finally their refusal to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, the King's own Son — these were the things which called down God's wrath upon them. These were the causes of their present dispersion.

The *vine* which was brought out of Egypt bore wild grapes. The *gardener* to whom the vineyard was let out, rendered not of the fruit to the Lord of the vineyard. The people that were brought out of the house of bondage, rebelled against Him by whom they were set free. Hence the wrath of God rose until there was no remedy. Thus He says, "You only have I known among the inhabitants of the earth, therefore I will punish you, because of

your iniquities" (Amos 3:2). "They killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last!" (1 Thessalonians 2:15,16).

Israel was "scattered" to be a perpetual warning to the Gentile Churches of Christ. The Jews are God's *beacon* or *pillar of salt* to all Christendom, and a silent standing lesson which all who profess to know God, ought never to forget. They proclaim to all Christians . . .

God's hatred of spiritual pride and self-righteousness,

God's high displeasure with those who exalt the traditions of men and depart from His Word,

God's hatred of formality and ceremonialism.

If any man desires to know how much God hates these things, he has only to look at the present condition of the Jews. For eighteen hundred years, God has held them up before the eyes of the world, and written His abhorrence of their sins, in letters which he who runs may read.

I cannot pass away from this part of my subject without entreating all who read this address, to learn a *practical lesson* from the scattering of Israel. I entreat you to remember the *causes* which led to their dispersion, and to beware of the slightest approach to their peculiar sins. I am sure the warning is needed in these latter days. I am sure that the opinions which are boldly broached and openly maintained by many religious teachers in all Churches of Christendom, call loudly on all Christians to stand on their guard. It is not without good reason that our Lord said, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Sadducees and Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6).

Look to your own heart. Beware of tampering with false doctrines. Churches are never safe unless their members know their individual responsibility. Let us each look to ourselves and take heed to our own souls.

The same God lives, who scattered Israel because of Israel's sins. And what does He say to the Churches of Christ this day? He says, "Be not high-minded, but fear. If God spared not the natural branches — take heed lest He also spare not you!" (Romans 11:20, 21).

The third part of the text on which I propose to dwell is the FUTURE PROSPECTS of Israel. In taking up this branch of my subject, I feel that I am entering on the region of *unfulfilled prophecy*. I desire to do so with all reverence, and with a deep sense of the many *difficulties* surrounding this department of theology, and the many *diversities of opinion* which prevail upon it. But the servant of God must call no man master on earth. Truth is never likely to be attained, unless all ministers of Christ speak out their opinions fully, freely, and unreservedly — and give men an opportunity of weighing what they teach.

Reader, however great the difficulties surrounding many parts of unfulfilled prophecy, two points appear to my own mind to stand out as plainly as if written by a sunbeam. One of these points is the second personal advent of our Lord Jesus Christ *before* the Millennium. The other of these points is the *future literal gathering of the Jewish nation and their restoration to their own land*. I tell no man that these two truths are *essential to salvation* and that he cannot be saved, unless he sees them with my eyes. But I tell any man that these truths appear to me distinctly set down in holy Scripture, and that the denial of them is as astonishing and incomprehensible to my own mind, as the denial of the divinity of Christ.

Now what says our text about the future prospects of the Jews? It says, "He who scattered Israel — will gather him." That gathering is an event which plainly is *yet to come*. It could not apply in any sense to the ten tribes of Israel. They have never been gathered in any way. Their scattering has never come to an end. It cannot be applied to the return of the remnant of Judah and Benjamin from the Babylonian captivity. The language of the text makes such an application impossible.

The text is addressed to the Gentiles, "the nations." The declaration they are commanded to make is, "to the isles of the sea." In the days of the Babylonian captivity, the "nations" of the earth knew nothing of the Word of the Lord. They were sunk in darkness and had not even heard the Lord's name. If Jeremiah had told them to proclaim the return of the Jews from Babylon under such circumstances, it would have been useless and absurd. There is but one fair and legitimate interpretation of the promise of the text. The event it declares is yet future. The "gathering" spoken of is a gathering which is yet to come.

Reader, I believe that the interpretation I have just given, is in entire harmony with many other plain prophecies of Scripture. Time would fail me, if I were to quote a tenth part of the texts which teach the same truth. Out of the sixteen prophets of the Old Testament, there are at least ten in which the *gathering and restoration of the Jews* in the latter days are expressly mentioned. From each of these ten I will take one testimony. I say "one" testimony deliberately. I am anxious not to *overload* the subject with evidence. I would only remind the reader that the texts I am about to quote are only a small portion of the evidence that might be brought forward.

1. Hear what *Isaiah* says: "In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to *reclaim* the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea. He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will *assemble* the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth." (Isaiah 11:11,12).

2. Hear what *Ezekiel* says: "This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will *gather* them from all around and bring them back into their own land." (Ezekiel 37:21).

3. Hear what *Hosea* says: "The people of Judah and the people of Israel will be *reunited*, and they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel." (Hos. 1:11). "For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol. Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days." (Hos. 3:4,5).

4. Hear what *Joel* says: "Judah will be inhabited forever and Jerusalem through all generations." (Joel 3:20).

5. Hear what *Amos* says: "I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them, says the LORD your God." (Amos 9:14,15).

6. Hear what *Obadiah* says: "But on Mount Zion will be deliverance; it will be holy, and the house of Jacob will possess its inheritance." (Obad. 1:17).

7. Hear what *Micah* says: "In that day," declares the LORD, "I will *gather* the lame; I will assemble the *exiles* and those I have brought to grief. I will make the lame a remnant, those driven away a strong nation. The LORD will rule over them in Mount Zion from that day and forever." (Micah 4:6,7).

8. Hear what *Zephaniah* says: "Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing. At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they were put to shame. At that time I will *gather* you; at that time I will bring you *home*. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I *restore* your fortunes before your very eyes, says the LORD." (Zeph. 3:14-20).

9. Hear what *Zechariah* says: "I will strengthen the house of Judah and save the house of Joseph. I will restore them because I have compassion on them. They will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the LORD their God and I will answer them. The Ephraimites will become like mighty men, and their hearts will be glad as with wine. Their children will see it and be joyful; their hearts will rejoice in the LORD. I will signal for them and gather them in. Surely I will redeem them; they will be as numerous as before. Though I *scatter* them among the peoples, yet in distant lands they will remember me. They and their children will survive, and they will return. *I will bring them back* from Egypt and gather them from Assyria. I will bring them to Gilead and Lebanon, and there will not be room enough for them." (Zech. 10:6-10).

10. Hear, lastly, what *Jeremiah* says: "The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when *I will bring my people Israel and Judah back* from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess,' says the LORD." (Jeremiah 30:3). "I am with you and will save you,' declares the LORD. 'Though I completely destroy all the nations among which I scatter you, I will not completely destroy you. I will discipline you but only with justice; I will not let you go entirely unpunished.'" (Jeremiah 30:11).

Reader, I place these texts before you without note or comment. I only wish that they may be weighed and examined, and the several chapters from which they are taken read carefully. I believe there is one common remark that applies to them all. They all point to a time which is yet *future*. They all *predict the final gathering of the Jewish nation* from the four quarters of the globe and their *restoration* to their own land. I must ask you to believe that the subject admits of being drawn out at far greater length than the limits of this address allow. I am resolved, however, not to encumber it by entering on topics of comparatively subordinate importance. I will not complicate it by dwelling on the *manner* in which Israel shall be gathered, and the *particular events* which shall accompany the gathering. I might show you by Scriptural evidence, that the Jews will probably first be gathered in an unconverted state, though humbled; and will afterwards be taught to look to Him whom they have pierced, through much tribulation. I might speak of the future glory of Jerusalem, after the Jews are restored, and the last siege which it shall endure, as described by Zechariah and by our Lord Jesus Christ.

But I forbear. I will not travel beyond the bounds of my text. I think it better to present its weighty promise to you in its naked simplicity. "Israel *scattered* — shall yet be *gathered*." This is the future prospect of the Jew.

Now is there anything contrary to this *gathering* in the New Testament? I cannot find a single word. So far from this being the case, I find a chapter in the Epistle to the Romans where the subject is fully discussed. An inspired Apostle speaks there of Israel being once more "received" into God's favor, "grafted in," and "saved." (See Romans 11:1532.) Is there anything impossible in this gathering of Israel? Who talks of impossibilities? If an *infidel*, let him explain the present condition and past history of Israel, if he can. And when he has solved that mighty problem, we may listen to him. If a *Christian*, let him think again before he talks of anything being impossible with God. Let him read the *vision of the dry bones* in Ezekiel, and mark to whom that vision applies. Let him look to his own conversion and resurrection from the death of trespasses and sins, and recall the unworthy thought that anything is too hard for the Lord.

Is there anything inconsistent with God's former dealings in the gathering of Israel? Is there any extravagance in expecting such an event? Why should we say so? Reasoning from analogy, I can see no ground for refusing to believe that God may yet do wonderful things for the Jewish people. It would not be more marvelous to see them gathered once more into Palestine, than it was to see them brought from Egypt into the promised land. What God has done once, He may surely do again. Is there anything improbable in the gathering of Israel?

Alas! reader, we are poor judges of probabilities. God's ways of carrying into effect His own purposes are not to be judged by man's standard, or measured by the line and plummet of what man calls probable. In the day when the children of Israel went forth from Egypt, would anyone have said it was probable that such a *nation of serfs* would ever produce a book that should turn the world upside down? Yet that nation has done it. From that nation has come the Bible.

Four thousand years ago, would anyone have said it was probable that God's Son would come to earth and suffer in the flesh on a cross — before He came to earth in glory to reign? Yet so it has been. Christ has lived, and Christ has suffered, and Christ has died. Away with this talk about improbabilities! The ways of God are not our ways.

Finally, is there anything fanatical or enthusiastic in this expectation that Israel shall be gathered? Why should men say so? Your own eyes tell you that the *present* order of things will never convert the world. There is not a church, or a parish, or a congregation — where the converted are more than a little flock. There is not a faithful minister on earth, and never has been — who has ever seen more than the "taking out of a people" to serve Christ. A change must come before the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. A new order of teachers must be raised up and a new dispensation ushered in. These teachers, I firmly believe, shall be converted Jews. And then shall be seen the fulfillment of the remarkable words, "If the casting of them away be the reconciling of the world — what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" (Romans 11:15.)

I may not dwell longer on this branch of my subject. I leave it with one general remark, which may sound to some readers like a bald truism. Whether it be a truism or not, I believe the remark to be of vital importance, and I heartily wish that it was more deeply impressed on all our minds. I ask you, then, to settle it firmly in your mind that *when God says a thing shall be done — we ought to believe it*. We have no right to begin talking of probable and improbable, likely and unlikely, possible and impossible, reasonable and unreasonable. What is all this but *veiled scepticism and infidelity* in disguise?

What has the Lord said? What has the Lord spoken? What says the Scriptures? What is written in the Word? These are the only questions we have a right to ask; and when the answer to them is plain — we have nothing to do but believe. Our *reason* may rebel. Our *preconceived ideas of what God ought to do* may receive a rude shock. Our private *systems of prophetic interpretation* may be shattered to pieces. Our *secret prejudices* may be grievously offended. But what are we to do? We must abide by Scripture, or be of all men most miserable. At any cost, let us cling to the Word. "Let God be true and every man a liar."

In all matters of unfulfilled prophecy, I desire, for my own part, to fall back on this principle. I see many things I cannot explain. I find many *difficulties* I cannot solve. But I dare not give up my principle. I am determined to believe everything that God says. I know it will all prove true at the last day. I read that He says in the text before us this day,

"He who scattered Israel — shall gather him." It must be true, I feel, whatever be the difficulties. That Israel shall be gathered, I steadfastly believe.

The last point on which I propose to dwell is one *purely practical*. **It is the duty which Gentile Churches owe to Israel.**

Reader, in touching on this point, I would not have you for a moment suppose that the future gathering of Israel depends on anything that man can do. God's counsels and purposes are independent of human strength. The sun will set tonight at its appointed hour, and neither Queen, Lords, nor Commons, Pope, President, nor Emperors — can hasten, prevent, or put off its setting. The tides of the sea will ebb and flow this week in their regular course, and no scientific decree nor engineering skill can interfere with their motion. And just in like manner, the promises of God concerning Israel will all be fulfilled in due season, whether we will hear, or whether we will forbear.

When the "times and seasons" arrive which God has "put in His own power," Israel will be gathered; and all the alliances and combinations of statesmen, and all the persecution and unbelief of apostate Churches shall not be able to prevent it. But seeing that we look for such things, it befits us all to be found in the *path of duty*. It behooves us to consider gravely the solemn question: What manner of people ought we to be? And in what way can we testify our full assent to God's purposes about the Jews? Can we in no sense be *fellow-workers with God*? Should we not remember that remarkable saying of Paul, "Through your mercy, they shall obtain mercy" (Romans 11:31). This is the question to which I now desire briefly to supply a practical answer.

1. I believe, then, for one thing, that it is a duty incumbent on all Gentile Christians to take a special interest in the *spiritual* condition of the Jewish nation, and to give their *conversion* a special place in our prayers. I say, advisedly, their *spiritual* condition. I leave alone their civil and political position. I speak, exclusively, of our duty to Jewish souls. I say that we owe them a special debt, and that this debt ought to be carefully paid. We prize our Bibles, and we are right to do so. A sky without a sun would not be more blank, than a world without a Bible. But do we ever reflect that every page in that blessed book was written under God's inspiration by Israelitish hands? Remember that every chapter and verse you read in our Bible, you owe under God to Israel.

There is not a religious society that meets in London in the month of May which is not constantly working with Israelitish tools. We prize the glorious Gospel of the grace of God, and we are right to do so. A land without the Gospel, like Mongolia or China, is nothing better than a moral wilderness. See the vast difference between Europe and America with the Gospel, notwithstanding all their vices — and Africa and Asia without it. But do we ever reflect that the *first preachers* of that Gospel were all Jews? The men who, at cost of their lives, first carried from town to town the blessed tidings of Christ crucified, were not Gentiles. The first to take up the *lamp of truth*, which was passed from hand to hand until it reached our heathen forefathers — were all men of Israel.

We rejoice in Christ Jesus and glory in His person and work. Well may we do so! Without a living Savior and the blood of His atonement once made on the cross — we would indeed be miserable. But do we ever reflect that when that Savior became a man, in order that as man's substitute He might live, and suffer and die — He was born of a Jewish woman? Yes, let that never be forgotten! When "God was manifest in the flesh" and was "born of a woman," that woman was a virgin of the *house of David*. When the promised Savior took flesh and blood that He might bruise the serpent's head and redeem man — He took not flesh and blood of any royal house among the Gentiles — but of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Reader, I know well that these are ancient things. They have been often urged, often alleged, often pressed on the attention of the Churches. I am not ashamed to bring them forward again. I say, that if there be such a thing as gratitude in the heart of man, it is the duty of all Gentile Christians to take special interest in the work of doing good to the Jews.

2. I believe, furthermore, that it is a duty incumbent on all Gentile Christians, to be especially careful that they take up stumbling blocks out of the way of Israel, and too that they do nothing to disgust them with Christianity or hinder their conversion. This is a matter which is expressly mentioned in Scripture. There we find Isaiah bidding us, "Take up the stumbling blocks out of the way of God's people" (Isaiah 57:14). Truly the Prophet might well speak of this. No man can look round the Gentile Churches, and fail to see that he had cause. What shall we say of the glaring unholiness and neglect of God's Ten Commandments which prevail so widely in Christendom? What shall we say of the open unblushing *idolatry* which offends the eye in all Roman Catholic Churches? What shall we say of the rationalistic mode of interpreting Old Testament history, which has crept so extensively into modern commentaries — the system of regarding the histories of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and the like, as so many myths or ingenious fables, but not as narratives of facts which really took place? What shall we say of the traditional mode of interpreting Old Testament *prophecies*, in which so many Christians indulge the system of appropriating all the blessings to the Church of Christ and handing over all the bitter things to poor despised Israel; the system of interpreting all prophecies about Christ's *first* advent literally — and all prophecies about His *second* advent figuratively; requiring the Jew to believe the first in the letter — and refusing in turn to believe the second, except in what is called (by a sad misnomer) a *spiritual* sense?

What shall we say of all these things but that they are stumbling blocks — great stumbling blocks in the way of the conversion of the Jews? What are they all but great barriers between the Jew and Christ, and barriers cast up by Christian hands?

Reader, we must all do our part in aiding to take these stumbling blocks away. Here at least all may help. Here, at any rate, every Gentile Christian can aid the Jewish cause. The more *pure* and *lovely* we can make our holy faith — the more we are likely to recommend it to Israel. The more we can check the progress of the Roman apostasy, and protest against its idolatries and corruptions — the more likely is the Jew to believe there is something in Christianity. The more we can promote the habit of taking all of Scripture

in its *plain literal sense*, the more we are likely to remove prejudices in the minds of honest inquirers in Israel, and to make them ready to hear what we have to say.

3. Finally, I believe it is a duty incumbent on all Gentile Christians to use *special efforts* in order to promote the conversion of the Jews. I say *special efforts* advisedly. The Jews are a peculiar people and must be approached in a peculiar way. They are peculiar in their state of mind. They require an entirely different treatment from the heathen. Their *objections* are not the heathen man's objections. Their *difficulties* are not the heathen man's difficulties. They believe many things which the heathen man never heard of. They have a standard of right and wrong, with which the heathen man is utterly unacquainted. Like the heathen, they need to be converted. Like the heathen, they need to be brought to Christ. But the lines of argument to be pursued with the Jew and the heathen, are widely dissimilar. A faithful missionary might do admirably well among the heathen, who might find it difficult to reason with a Jew.

They are peculiar in their position in the world. They are not to be found all assembled together, like the Africans at Sierra Leone, or the Hindus, or New Zealanders, or Chinese. They are emphatically a *scattered* people, a few in one country and a few in another. An effort to get at them, must aim at nothing short of sending missionaries in search of them all over the world.

Circumstances like these appear to me to point out clearly that nothing less than a special effort will ever enable Christians to discharge their debt to Israel. There must be a division of labor in the missionary field. There must be a special concentration of preaching, praying, and loving fellowship on the Jewish people — or the Church of the Gentiles can never expect to do them much spiritual good. Without such special effort, the cause of Israel will inevitably be lost sight of in the cause of the whole heathen world. Without such special effort, I cannot see how the command of the text can be rightly obeyed.

I leave the whole subject with *three remarks*, which I pray God to impress on the minds of all into whose hands this address may fall.

1. For one thing, I charge every reader of this address to remember the special blessing which God has promised to all who care for Israel. Whatever a sneering world may say, the Jews are a people "beloved for their fathers' sake." Of Jerusalem it is written, "They shall prosper, who love you" (Psalm 122:6). Of Israel it is written, "Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you" (Num. 24:9). These promises are not yet exhausted. We see their fulfillment in the blessing granted to the Church of England since the day when the Jewish cause was first taken up. We see their fulfillment in the peculiar honor which God has put from time to time on individual Christians who have labored especially for the Jewish cause. Charles Simeon, Edward Bickersteth, Robert M'Cheyne, Haldane Stewart, and Dr. Marsh are striking examples of what I mean. Is there anyone that desires God's special blessing? Then let him labor in the cause of Israel, and he shall not fail to find it.

2. For another thing, I charge every reader of this address never to forget the close connection which Scripture reveals between the time of Israel's *gathering* — and the time of Christ's second advent to the world. In one Psalm it is expressly declared, "When the Lord shall build up Zion — He shall appear in His glory" (Psalm 102:16). Where is the true believer who does not long for that blessed day? Where is the true Christian who does not cry from the bottom of his heart, "May Your kingdom come"? Let all such work and give and pray, so that the Gospel may have free course in Israel. The time to favor Zion is closely bound up with the restitution of all things. Blessed indeed, is that work of which the completion shall usher in the second coming of the Lord!

3. Finally, I charge every reader of this address to make sure work of his own salvation. Rest not in *mere head knowledge* of prophetic subjects. Be not content with *intellectual soundness* in the faith. Give diligence to make your own calling and election sure. Seek to know that your repentance and faith are genuine and true. Seek to feel that you are one with Christ and Christ in you, and that you are washed, sanctified, and justified. Then, whether the completion of God's promises to Israel are near or far off — your own portion will be sure. You will stand safely, when the kingdoms of this world are passing away. You will meet Christ without fear, when He comes the second time to Zion. You will join boldly in the song, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." You will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God and go out no more.

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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 (Rom. 11:26).

This is one of the great unfulfilled prophecies of Scripture. More than eighteen centuries have rolled round since St. Paul wrote these words. During that period many marvelous and unexpected events have taken place. The world has often been convulsed and turned upside down. Empires and kingdoms have risen and fallen. Nations and peoples have decayed and passed away. Visible Churches have disappeared, and their candlestick been removed. But up to this hour St. Paul's prediction awaits its accomplishment. "All Israel shall be saved" remains yet unfulfilled.

To a plain man, untrammelled by traditional interpretation, the words of this prophecy appear very simple. It is not like the temple which Ezekiel saw in a vision: a dark and obscure thing, of which we may say as Daniel said of another vision, "I heard, but understood not." It is not presented to us under the veil of emblems,

like the seals, trumpets, vials, and beasts in Revelations, about which we will probably never be of one mind till the Lord comes, and the wisest commentator can only conjecture. Nothing of the kind! The sentence before us is a simple categorical proposition, and I firmly believe it means exactly what it appears to mean. Let us analyze it.

“And so,” that means, as Parkhurst says, “and then, then at length.” It is an expression of time, rather than manner. It is like Acts 7:8, “And so Abraham begat Isaac;” and 1 Thess. 4: 17, “And so shall we ever be with the Lord.”¹

“Israel shall be saved,” that means the Jewish nation and people. It cannot possibly mean the Gentiles, because they are mentioned in the verse which directly precedes our text, in distinct contrast to the Jews. “Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom. 11:25).

“All Israel,” that means the whole people or nation of the Jews. It cannot possibly mean a small elect remnant. In this very chapter the Israelitish nation and the election out of Israel are mentioned in contradistinction to one another. “Israel AND SO ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED
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has not obtained that which he seeks for; but the election has obtained it, and the rest were blinded” (Rom. 11:7).

“Shall be saved [future tense],” that means, shall be redeemed from their present unbelief, and have their eyes opened to see and believe the true Messiah, shall be delivered from their low estate and restored to the favor of God, and shall become a holy nation and a blessing to the world.

So much for the interpretation of our text. I shall now proceed to invite the attention of my readers to four points respecting Israel, which every friend of the “Jews” should endeavor to keep always fresh and green before his mind. Trite and familiar as they may seem to some, they

are overlooked and forgotten by others. But I do not hesitate to say that a firm grasp of these four points is the foundation of any real and abiding interest in the Jewish subject and cause.

1. I ask you then, in the first place, to consider *the very peculiar past history* of this Israel, which is one day “to be saved.” For the facts of that history I shall simply refer you to the Bible. Whatever modern skepticism may be pleased to say, the story of Israel which that venerable old Book records is as trustworthy as the story of any ancient nation in the world. We have no more warrant for disputing its accuracy than for disputing the accounts of Egypt, Assyria, Persia, and Greece, related by Herodotus. On the contrary, there is continually accumulating evidence that the Old Testament memoirs of the Jewish people are thoroughly trustworthy and true.

Israel, then, we find for nearly 1,500 years was more favored and privileged by God than any nation in the world. David might well say, “What one nation in the earth is like Your people Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself?” (2 Sam. 7:23). It was the only nation in the earth to which God was pleased to reveal Himself. “To them were committed the oracles of God.” (Rom. 3:2). While all other nations were suffered to walk in their own ways, and to live in moral and spiritual darkness, the Jews alone enjoyed an immense amount of light and knowledge. The humblest priest in Solomon’s temple was a far better theologian than Homer. Daniel, and Ezra and Nehemiah knew more about God than Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, and Cicero, all put together. The Jews were brought out of Egypt by miraculous interposition, planted in Palestine, one of the choicest corners of the earth, and fenced off and separated from other nations by peculiar customs and ceremonies. They were supplied with a moral law from heaven so perfect, that even to this day nothing can be added to it

or taken from it. They were taught to worship God with ceremonial rites and ordinances, which, however burdensome they may seem to us, were admirably adapted to human nature at that early stage of man's history, and calculated to train them for a higher dispensation. They

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were constantly warned and instructed by prophets, and protected and defended by miracles. In short, if mercies and kindnesses alone could make people good, no nation on earth should have been so good as Israel. While Egypt, and Babylon, and Greece worshipped the works of their own hands, the Jew alone was a worshipper of the one true God.

But Israel, unhappily, we find, were a people always prone to backsliding and falling away from God. Again and again they fell into idolatry and wickedness, and forsook the Lord God of their fathers. Again and again they were chastised for their sins and delivered into the hands of the nations around them. Midianites, Philistines, Ammonites, Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians were rods by which they were repeatedly scourged. From the time of the Judges down to the end of Chronicles, we see a sorrowful record of constantly recurring rebellions against God, and constantly recurring punishments. Never, apparently, was there a nation so stubborn and obstinate, and so ready to forget instruction, so mercifully dealt with and yet so impenitent and unbelieving.

Finally, we find Israel at the end of 1,500 years given up by God to a fearful punishment, and allowed to reap the consequences of their own sins. After repeatedly rejecting God's prophets, they headed up their wickedness by rejecting God's only begotten Son. They refused their true King, the Son of David, and would have no king but Caesar. Then at last the cup of their iniquity was full. Jerusalem was given up to the Romans. The holy and beautiful temple was burned.

The Mosaic services were brought to an end. The Jews themselves were deprived of their land and scattered all over the earth. The whole history is wonderful, peculiar, and unlike anything else that is recorded and known by man. Never was a people so peculiarly favored and so peculiarly punished. Never did any nation at one time rise so high and at another fall so low. Never was there such a tremendous proof given to the world of the depravity of human nature, and the incessant tendency of man to moral and spiritual decay. Those who are fond of telling us in modern times that kindness and love are sufficient to regenerate man and keep man good, are always forgetting the mighty lesson that is taught us by the history of the Jews. The corruption of man is a far worse disease that your modern philosophers suppose. Israel was surrounded by mercies and loving - kindnesses: yet Israel fell. Let that never be forgotten.

2. I shall now ask you in the second place to consider the *very peculiar position which Israel as a nation occupies at the present day.*

In handling this point I shall first simply refer to facts which are open to the observation of every intelligent and well informed man upon earth, whether believer or unbeliever. I will allow such a man to shut up my Bible for a moment, and I will not ask him to listen to texts. I will only appeal to facts, and I challenge him to deny them if he can.

I assert then that the Jews are at this moment a peculiar people, and utterly separate from all other people on the face of the earth. They fulfill the prophecy of Hosea: "The children of Israel shall abide AND SO ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED

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many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice" (Hosea 3:4). For 1,800 years they have been scattered over the globe, without a country, without a government, without a capital

city, strangers and aliens everywhere, often fiercely persecuted and vilely treated. Yet to this moment they continue a distinct, isolated, and separate nation, far more so than any nation on the earth. The wonderful words of that strange prophet Balaam, who God constrained to speak, are still literally true: "The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9).

Of what nation or people on earth can the like be said? I answer, confidently, none. When Nineveh, and Babylon, and Tyre, and the hundred-gated Thebes of Egypt, and Susa, and Persepolis, and Carthage, and Palmyra were destroyed, what became of their inhabitants and subjects? We can give no answer. No doubt they were carried away captive and dispersed. But where are they now? No man can tell. When Saxons, and Danes, and Normans, and Flemings under the persecution of Alva, and Frenchmen after the edict of Nantes, settled down in our own England, what became of *them*? They were all gradually absorbed into our own population, and have generally lost all their national distinctions, except, perhaps, in some cases, their names. But nothing of the sort has ever happened to the Jews; they are still entirely distinct and never absorbed. Even in matters of comparatively minor importance, there is to this very day an extraordinary separateness between the Jews and any other family of mankind on the face of the globe. Time seems unable to efface the difference. At the end of eighteen centuries they are a separate people. *Physically*, they are separate. Who does not know the Jewish type of countenance? Even a man like Mr. Lawrence, in his work on physiology, is obliged to admit that "the Jews exhibit one of the most striking instances of national formation unaltered by the most remarkable changes" (p. 468, ed. 3). In *customs and habits* they are separate. The tenacity with which they still keep to their Saturday Sabbath, and the

feasts of their law, might put Christians to shame. Even in their *political influence* they are strangely separate. The extraordinary financial power which they exercise in all the money - markets of the world enables them to sway the actions of Governments to an extent of which few have any conception. In short, if there ever was a people who are distinct, marked, cut off and separate from others, that people is Israel. Though they have dwelt among the Gentiles for eighteen centuries, they are still as distinct from the Gentiles as black is distinct from white, and seem to be as incapable of mixture or absorption as oil is incapable of being absorbed into, or mixed with, water.

Now how shall we account for this extraordinary state of things? How shall we explain the unique and peculiar position which the Jewish people occupies in the world? Why is it that, unlike Saxons, and Danes, and Normans, and Flemings, and French, this singular race still floats alone, though broken to pieces like a wreck, on the waters of the globe, amidst its 1,500 million inhabitants? After the lapse of 1,800 years, it is neither destroyed, nor crushed,

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nor evaporated, nor amalgamated, nor lost sight of. Rather, it lives to this day as separate and distinct as it was when the arch of Titus was built at Rome.

I have not the least idea how questions like these are answered by those who profess to deny the Divine authority of Scripture. In all my reading I never met with an honest attempt to answer them from the unhappy camp of unbelievers. In fact it is my firm conviction that, among the many difficulties of infidelity, there is hardly any one more really insurmountable than the separate continuance of the Jewish nation. It is a burdensome stone which your modern skeptical writers may stubbornly despise, but cannot lift or remove out of their way. God has many witnesses to the

truth of the Bible, if men would only examine them and listen to their evidence. But you may depend on it there is no witness so unanswerable as one whom he always keeps raising up, and enlivening, and moving before the eyes of mankind. That witness is the Jew.

The question, however, about the exceptional and peculiar position of the Jewish people is one that never need puzzle anyone who believes the Bible. Once open that Book and study its contents and the knot which so completely baffles the skeptic is one which you can easily untie. The inspired volume which you have in your hands supplies a full and complete explanation. Search it with an honest determination to put a literal meaning on its prophetic portions, and to reject traditional interpretation, and the difficulty will vanish away.

I assert that the peculiar position which Israel occupies in the earth is easily explicable in the light of Holy Scripture. They are a people reserved and kept separate by God for a grand and special purpose. That purpose is to make them a means of exhibiting to the world in the latter days God's hatred of sin and unbelief, and God's Almighty power and Almighty compassion. They are kept separate that they may finally be saved, converted, and restored to their own land. They are reserved and preserved, in order that God may show in them, as on a platform, to angels and men, how greatly He hates sin, and yet how greatly He can forgive, and how greatly He can convert. Never will that be realized as it will in that day when "All Israel shall be saved."

3. I will ask you in the third place to *consider the very peculiar future prospects of Israel.*

The singular condition of the Jews at the present time, we have seen, is most painful and instructive. They are still lying under the just displeasure of God. Because they despised His prophets and rejected His messages, because they "would not believe

the voice of His Scriptures read to them every Sabbath day,” because they killed the Prince of life and were His betrayers and murderers, for all these reasons His wrath is come upon them to the uttermost, and for a time they are cast off and rejected. Like Cain, they slew their holy Brother, and like Cain, they are fugitives and vagabonds on earth, and bear the mark of God’s displeasure. The blood of the Messiah, whom they murdered, is upon them and their children. And their eyes are yet blinded. The veil is still upon their hearts. They stand before the world at

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this moment, like a beacon at the top of a hill, a perpetual witness that nothing is so offensive to God as unbelief, formalism, self - righteousness, and abuse of privileges. Such is their present position. But what are their future prospects? Let us turn once more to the Bible and see.

The history of Israel then has not yet come to an end. There is another wonderful chapter yet to be unfolded to mankind.

The Scripture tells us expressly that a time is coming when the position of Israel shall be entirely changed, and they shall be once more restored to the favor of God. For what says the Scripture which cannot be broken? What is written in that Book of which no prediction shall ever fail?

I read that when the heart of Israel “shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away” (2 Cor. 3:16).

I read that a day is coming when God says, “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son” (Zech. 12:10).

I read that in that day “there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1). I beg you will remember that the primary application of

these prophecies of Zechariah belongs literally to the Jews.

I read, furthermore, that God says in Ezekiel to Israel:

I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you will be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that you shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall you remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, says the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus says the Lord God: in the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be built. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, this land that was desolate is become like the Garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places and plant that which was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus says the Lord God: I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall

know that I am the Lord” (Ezek. 36:24 - 38).

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Once more I remind you that this wonderful passage *primarily* belongs to the JEWS. No doubt the Church of Christ may secondarily make a spiritual use of it. But let us never forget that the Holy Ghost first caused it to be written concerning Israel. But time would fail me, if I attempted to quote all the passages of Scripture in which the future history of Israel is revealed. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Zechariah, all declare the same thing. All predict, with more or less particularity, that in the end of this dispensation the Jews are to be restored to their own land and to the favor of God. I lay no claim to infallibility in the interpretation of Scripture many excellent Christians cannot see the subject as I do. I can only say, that to my eyes, the future *salvation* of Israel as a people, their *return* to Palestine and their national conversion to God, appear as clearly and plainly revealed as any prophecy in God’s Word.

Concerning *the time* when Israel shall finally be saved, I shrink from offering an opinion. No doubt there are many “signs of the times” which deserve the serious attention of all Christians, and it would be easy to enumerate them. But, after all, we are always bad judges of anything that happens under our own eyes. We are apt to attach an exaggerated importance to it, for the simple reason that we ourselves are affected by it. Let it suffice us to believe that whatever God has said concerning Israel, God *will* do in His own good time. Let us not be hasty to fix dates. Those last words of our Master are very instructive, when the disciple said, “Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” He answered, “It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father has put in His own power.” (Acts 1:6, 7). To study prophecy is most useful and

brings a special blessing. To turn ourselves into prophets is not wise, and brings discredit on the cause of Christianity. Concerning *the manner* in which the complete salvation of Israel will be effected, we shall do well not to enquire too closely. We must avoid rash speculation and conjecture. If I may venture an opinion, I should say that Scripture seems to point out that Israel will not be restored and converted without an immense amount of affliction, affliction far exceeding that which preceded their deliverance from Egypt. I see much in the words of Daniel: "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at THAT time your people will be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1).

I believe the words of Zechariah are yet to be fulfilled: "It shall come to pass, that in all the land, says the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God" (Zech. 13:8, 9). But I freely confess that these are deep things. Enough for you and me to know that Israel shall be restored to their own land, and shall be converted, and saved, without entering too minutely into particulars. Let me close this branch of my subject with the Apostle's
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words: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33).

Only let us grasp firmly the great principle laid down by Jeremiah:

Fear not you, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save you from afar off, and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall

return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. Do not fear, O Jacob my servant, says the Lord: for I am with you; for I will make a full end of all the nations where I have driven you: but I will not make a full end of you, but appropriately correct you; yet will I not leave you wholly unpunished” (Jer. 46:27, 28).

4. I shall now ask you in the fourth and last place to consider *the peculiar debt which Christians owe to Israel*. I shall touch on this branch of my subject briefly, because it is one with which most people are familiar. But it is a branch of such vast importance that I dare not altogether pass over it. It is one about which we all need to be reminded.

That every Christian is a debtor and under solemn obligation to do good to his fellow men, is one of the great first principles of the Gospel. An ignorant formal Churchgoer, who never reads his Bible, or prays with his heart, or thinks seriously about his soul, may not understand this. He is apt to say with Cain, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” “Let every one mind his own business.” But a man who is taught by the Holy Spirit, who feels his sins, and knows his obligation to Christ, and has tasted the comfort of peace with God, such a man will long to do good to others. He will feel for those who are living without God and without Christ. He will say, “I am a debtor to Greek and Barbarian, to Africa and India, to China and Hindostan. What can I do to save souls and make others partakers of my blessings?”

Now I ask such a man to consider gravely this day, whether he is not under special obligations to the Jew. I ask him to remember that there are peculiar reasons why we should care with more than ordinary care for Israel.

1. To whom do we owe *our Bible*? By what hand was that blessed Book written, which is a lamp to so many feet and a lantern to so many paths, that Book without which we could neither live with

comfort nor with comfort die? I answer that every book in the Old and New Testament, unless we except Job, was written by Jews. The pens which the Holy Spirit guided to put down the words which He inspired were held by Jewish fingers. The hands which were employed to forge this matchless sword of the Spirit were Jewish hands. Every time we take up that wondrous volume, that volume whose nature and existence no infidel can explain away, every time we draw out of it doctrine, correction, reproof, instruction in righteousness, our eyes fall on matter which passed through Jewish minds. The texts which we live upon now, the texts we shall cling to by memory in death, when sight and hearing fail us, the texts which will be a staff in our hand when we go down into the cold river, these texts were first put down in black and white by Jews. Is this nothing?

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2. To whom do we *owe the first preaching of the Gospel?* Who were the first to go forth into the world, and proclaim to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ? Again I answer, they were all Jews. The men who first turned the world upside down and deprived heathen temples of their worshippers, and put to silence the philosophers of Greece and Rome, and made kings and rulers tremble on their judgment seats, and made the name of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth more influential than the name of Caesar, they were all children of Israel. They soon passed away. Many of them died for their preaching. The lamp they lighted was taken up by multitudes of converted Gentiles who walked in their steps. But the fact remains, that the FIRST to begin that blessed work on which the very life of a Church depends at this day, I mean the preaching of the Gospel, were all Jews. Where would Europe be at this moment, if it had not been for an invasion of Jewish preachers who obeyed the call,

“Come over and help us “? Surely this also is something.

3 Above all, what shall we say to the great fact that *the woman of whom the Savior was born, when He condescended to come into the world, was a Jewish woman?* When that grand mystery, the incarnation, took place, the mystery which so many slur over and keep back, when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, the virgin who miraculously conceived and bare a son, was a virgin of the house of David. No royal family of Assyria, or Persia, or Greece, or Rome, was chosen for this honor. That precious blood which was shed on Calvary for our redemption, was the blood which flowed from the body of one who was Man in all things like ourselves, sin only excepted, and took a man’s nature by being born of an Israelitish woman. The seed of the woman, be it always remembered, that bruised the serpent’s head, the Mediator between God and man, the Almighty Friend of sinners when He “took on Him the form of a servant, though equal to God,” was pleased to take upon Him the form of a Jew. “He took on Him the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16).

If facts like these do not make up a peculiar claim on Christians, I am greatly mistaken. In the face of the Bible, the preaching of the Gospel and the person of Christ, I am bold to say that Christians owe a peculiar debt to Israel. If there is such a thing as gratitude in the world, every Gentile Church on earth is under heavy obligation to the Jews.

But how can our debt be paid? That question admits of being answered in two ways.

On the one hand, we may pay our debt *directly*, by using every reasonable effort to bring the Gospel to bear on the minds of our Jewish brethren in every part of the globe. No doubt they need to be approached with peculiar wisdom, delicacy, and care. They are not to be treated as heathen,

but as men who already hold half the truth, who believe the Old Testament like ourselves although they do not see and receive its full meaning. But all experience proves that there is everything to encourage those who endeavor to lead Israel to the true Messiah, the Christ of God, with love and patience.

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Now, as in the apostles' times, though the nation, as a whole, remains unbelieving, there is a "remnant according to the election of grace." I repeat, there is abundant encouragement to do what the *Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews* does and to preach the Gospel directly to the Jews. If Saul the Pharisee was converted and made a Christian, I know not why we should despair of the conversion of any Israelite upon earth, in Europe, Asia, Africa, or America.

On the other hand, we may all pay our debt *indirectly* by striving to remove stumbling blocks which now lie between the Jews and Christianity. It is a sorrowful confession to make, but it must be made, that nothing perhaps so hardens Israel in unbelief as the sins and inconsistencies of professing Christians. The name of Christ is too often blasphemed among Jews, by reason of the conduct of many who call themselves Christians. We repel Israel from the door of life, and disgust them by our behavior. Idolatry among Roman Catholics, skepticism among Protestants, neglect of the Old Testament, contempt for the doctrine of the atonement, shameless Sabbath - breaking, wide - spread immorality, all these things, we may depend on it, have a deep effect on the Jews. They have eyes and they can see. The name of Christ is discredited and dishonored among them by the practice of those who have been baptized in Christ's name. The more boldly and decidedly all true Christians set their faces against the things I have just named, and wash their hands of any complicity

with them, the more likely are they to find their efforts to promote Christianity among the Jews prosperous and successful.

And now let me conclude all with a few plain words of application. I ask all who read this paper to take up the cause of the *Jews' Society*, and the Jewish subject, for the following reasons.

1. Take up the subject because of the *important position which it occupies in Scripture*. Cultivate the habit of reading prophecy with a single eye to the literal meaning of its proper names. Cast aside the old traditional idea that Jacob, and Israel, and Judah, and Jerusalem, and Zion, must always mean the Gentile Church, and that predictions about the Second Advent are to be taken spiritually, and first Advent predictions literally. Be just, and honest, and fair. If you expect the Jews to take the 53rd of Isaiah literally, be sure you take the 54th and 60th and 62nd literally also. The Protestant Reformers were not perfect. On no point, I venture to say, were they so much in the wrong as in the interpretation of Old Testament prophecy. Even our venerable authorized version of the Bible has many "tables of contents" which are sadly calculated to mislead, in the prophetic books. When the revised version comes out, I trust we shall see a great improvement in this respect.

2. In the next place, take up the Jewish subject *because of the times in which we live*. That man must be blind indeed who does not observe how much the attention of politicians and statesmen in these days is concentrating on the countries around Palestine. The strange position of things in Egypt, the formation of the Suez Canal, the occupation of Cyprus, the project of the Euphrates railway, the drying up of the Turkish empire, the trigonometrical survey of Palestine, what curious phenomena

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these are! What do they mean? What is going to happen next? He that believeth will not make haste. I will not pretend to

decide. But I think I hear the voice of God saying, "Remember the Jews, look to Jerusalem."

3. In the next place, take up the Jewish subject *because of the special blessing* which seems to be given to those who care for Israel. I challenge any one to deny few ministers of Christ have been so useful of late and made a greater mark on the world than the following well - known men, Charles Simeon, Edward Bickersteth, Haldane Stewart, Dr. Marsh, Robert McCheyne, and, though last but not least, Hugh McNeile. They were men of very different gifts and minds; but they had one common feature in their religion. They loved the cause of the Jews. In them was the promise fulfilled: "They shall prosper that love you" (Psa. 122:6).

4. In the next place, take up the Jewish subject because of its *close connection with the Second Advent of Christ and the close of this dispensation*. Is it not written, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory" (Psalm 102:16). "If the casting, away of Israel be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15). The words which the angel Gabriel addressed to the Virgin Mary have never yet been fulfilled: "He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:33).

5. Last of all; let us annually support *that great and good institution, the Jews' Society*, by our money and our prayers. Our money will be well bestowed on an old and faithful servant of Christ, which does Christ's work in Christ's own way. Our prayers are well bestowed if given for a cause which is so near our Master's heart. The time is short. The night of the world is drawing near. If ever there is "a nation born in a day" [Isa. 66:8], that nation will be Israel. Let us pray for that blessed consummation, and give habitually as if we really believed the words, "All Israel shall be saved."