

CHRIST—PAST, PRESENT,
AND TO COME.

THE
CITY HALL 
 LECTURES,
BIRMINGHAM.

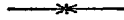
*Delivered before thousands of people on Sunday Evenings,
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By **ROBERT ROBERTS.**

- 1.—An Indelible Page in History.
 - 2.—A Future Certainty arising out of the Past.
 - 3.—The Object of Christ's Second Appearing.
 - 4.—Signs that it is near.
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CONTENTS.



FIRST LECTURE.

SUBJECT :—“ *The first appearing of Christ.*”

	PAGE
Not a mad thing	1
Christ historically indelible	2
Eighteen centuries	3
The question of the first century	5
Mountain facts	6
Eye-witness	6
What they depose to	7
Why are we to refuse the evidence?	9
The character of the Bible settled by Christ's resurrection	10
Christ's view : Inspiration claimed and proved	11
The Bible its own witness	12
Failure of all assaults	13
No hope without Christ	14



SECOND LECTURE.

SUBJECT :—*The Second Coming of Christ a Certainty.*

Scoffing generation	17
Laying hold of facts	18
What Christ said	19
Since he left the earth	20
What the Apostles said	21
Mistaken ideas of when he will come	22
The causes of mistakes	23
A.D. 34	24
A.D. 520	25
A.D. 720	27
A.D. 1294 and 1380	28
A.D. 1731 or 1700	29
A.D. 1793	29
A.D. 1866 8	30
A.D. 1898 and 1948	30
Fulfilled expectations and the prospect	32

THIRD LECTURE.

SUBJECT :—“ *The object of the Second Coming of Christ.*”

	PAGE
Artificial feeling	33
What is Christ coming	34
Punishment of the world	35
The day of vengeance	36
The world's crime	38
“Thy kingdom come”	39
The war of the great day of God Almighty	40
The New Government—Why at Jerusalem?	42
The Kingdom of God identical with the Kingdom of David	44
The restoration of the Jews and its method	41
A new subjugation of the world	45
The natural outlook full of gloom	46

FOURTH LECTURE.

SUBJECT :—“ *Signs that the great event is near.*”

Death and the Coming of Christ	49
Signs in our Day	51
Distress of Nations	52
The Sea and the Waves Roaring	54
The Overblown Armaments of Europe	55
How it has come about	55
The fall of the Temporal Power	56
Papal Enormities	57
At Rome	58
The End of the Papal Power	59
Decadence of the Turkish Empire	59
Holy Land Revival and Movements among the Jews	60
Fulfilled Expectations	61
The Message of the Latter Day	62



FOUR LECTURES ON CHRIST.

IN THE BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL,

BY ROBERT ROBERTS.

FIRST LECTURE.

SUBJECT: "*The first appearing of Christ, a page that cannot be blotted from history; its meaning with regard to human hope and the character of the Bible.*"

It is not the mad thing it seems when we say that Christ may be expected in the earth again by and bye. If it seems so, it is only to those who have not sufficiently realised or been adequately impressed with the fact that Christ has been here once already. Only grant that Jesus Christ appeared in Galilee 1,800 years ago, and that he did and said the things recorded of him in the accounts written by his disciples at the time, and you will be bound to feel that the idea of his second coming is not only not a thing with which madness has anything to do, but one of those reasonable and inevitable things that only benighted people are unable to receive.

It is not asking much to ask you to grant the historic reality of Christ's first appearance as recorded in the New Testament. Yet many people have a difficulty in the matter. Let us try and deal with the difficulty. This is the business of the evening. Everything hangs on the first appearance of Christ. Let us spend a little time in looking at the facts of the case. The facts are first-class in every sense. They are mountain facts. People cannot miss seeing them if they will only look. Of course if they burrow in the cellar, they will not be able to see the sun. The misfortune of the present age is that the people are all busy burrowing in the cellars of their petty transient lives instead of looking around and upwards on the broad universe, to enquire the stupendous reason of things which never can be found in the mere round of eating and drinking, and sleeping, and dying. Unfortunately, too, when they happen to take a peep out of the cellar, the air is filled with smoke of various kinds, and the mountains are invisible, though calmly there. There is no end of chemical works of criticism that send out volumes of vapour and smoke that conceal the landscape from view.

Let us try and make an effort to blow the smoke away, that we may see the mountain-facts connected with Christ. They are before every man's eyes. No man can look around him, on the state of things actually existing or take the most cursory glance backwards along the common

channels of history, without seeing the marks and footprints of Christ on the earth—nay, not only marks and footprints, but pillars and monuments.

Look at this Christendom; would there have been a Christendom if there had been no Christ? Do you think it possible there could have been such a personage as the Pope of Rome if there had not been first of all that other character at the start of things, whom he claims to represent? Do you think there would have been a New Testament if there had been no Christ? Consider this matter, and you will feel bound to come to the conclusion that Christ must have been a reality to have made such a mark.

CHRIST HISTORICALLY INDELIBLE.

Whatever view you may take of Christ, you cannot exclude him from history; he is one of those stubborn things that men call facts. You may ignore him, but you cannot expunge him. You may neglect or misinterpret him, but you cannot get rid of him. He has left an indelible impress on the condition and institutions of mankind. Every church and chapel is in some way a memento of him. Every organised Christian state in Europe is a monument to his historical memory. He is before our eyes everywhere. His name is so ingrained in the fabric of our daily life, that you cannot issue an invoice or execute a deed, or even write a letter, without Christ appearing on the face of it in the date—A.D., year of our Lord.

Now, this matter of undeniable fact calls for explanation. How came this ascendancy of a particular name in all the realms of civilisation; it must be due to circumstances of a very powerful and real character. Names do not come of themselves. A name does not come into circulation unless the man himself is there first of all, and does something to bring it into circulation. We are acquainted with many great names in various countries and various connections; but whoever heard of a great name without a great man to cause it? We have all heard of Napoleon the first, at whose name less than a hundred years ago Europe turned pale. Should we ever have heard of him if there had not been the French captain, who thundered through Europe at the head of victorious armies, upsetting thrones, and overthrowing constitutions? We may all have heard of Charlemagne, another great figure in French history 1,000 years ago; a man who beat the Germans in 33 victorious campaigns; who would seek to account for his name except by the fact that there was such a soldier-king who performed the exploits that made his name great? We have heard of Mahomet, with his fierce squadrons of turbed cavalry; of Alexander the Great, the Macedonian madman, who overthrew Persia, and fought his way through the world; of Cyrus, the destroyer of Babylon, and of many other celebrities. But who ever heard of a man's name great in history who never existed?

The name of Christ has been ringing through the world during all the centuries that have elapsed since his crucifixion. What is the cause lying at the root of this simple and notorious fact? He led no armies, raised no sedition, employed no violence, and yet His name is above every name. You might get through life without hearing of Charlemagne, or even of Cyrus or Alexander, but who could live in the world without hearing of Christ?

What is the cause of this? It must have a cause. Find it. You can find it. In the case of all other famous men, you can tell exactly how they came into notoriety, and by what acts and deeds and events they rose into influence. Here is a name more influential than all. How did it come about? Let us go back to the facts and look at them.

EIGHTEEN CENTURIES.

But you say 1,800 years is a long time; that at that distance, events are hazy; that we cannot be sure about facts, when they are so far off. I propose to show that this is a mistake, and that in this matter, the facts are more distinctly recorded and more substantially authenticated than in any case whatever. Begin just where we are and go backward taking the centuries that have rolled away one by one. We will see them more easily perhaps by connection with other names that inferentially will show us Christ.

The 1,800 years taken in a bundle may seem a formidable distance of time. Our imaginations may be oppressed by them when taken together. So let us take them to pieces. Let us take the interval century by century, and go back gently a hundred years at a time. You say a hundred years is a long time. Well, it is a longish time, but not so long as it seems to us when we are children. I daresay there is no one present a hundred years old; but we may have some over eighty, and that is not far off. Fifteen years or so would bring them to a hundred. Now suppose we have him here on the platform, a man a hundred years old, let him stand for a century. Now suppose we get 18 other such men; in all 19 men, each a hundred years old. Imagine to stand in a row on the platform; you have the 19 centuries. Oh, but you say, they are contemporaries; they are all a hundred years old at the same time; that would not represent a succession of 19 centuries. True, but let us suppose them born one after the other at intervals of a hundred years. It will help us to handle the interval. Now, each century has been distinguished by some prominent name or event. So we will suppose a label hung round each old man's neck to identify him with the successive centuries, till we get back to the first. The idea will be to show that in each century, the name of Christ and the New Testament have been current amid all that has been going on. The names and events will show this.

There is first our own century, the *19th*, now nearly done: you do not require any argument about your own century: you are witnesses to the prevalence of the name of Christ, and the existence of the New Testament, but if you want a name, there is the name of Mr. Gladstone; he would stand for the *19th century*. He is a believer in Christ. We would ask him to stand down and take his place on an empty bench, which we will suppose to be reserved on the floor for the old men as we send them down.

In the *18th century*, you have the name of Voltaire, a notorious man, not a believer. If he was not a believer of Christ, why quote him? Well, he endeavoured to get rid of the name of Christ by his books, and that is quite as good a proof of the currency of Christ's name as if he had been a friend and believer. He thought himself so successful in his opposition to Christ, that he ventured on a prophecy, viz., that in 50 years the New Testament would be obsolete. Is it so? Instead of being

obsolete, there have been more Bibles printed since his day than in all the ages before, and the very house he lived in used as a depôt of the Bible Society. Voltaire may take his place beside Mr. Gladstone on the floor.

In the *17th century*, you have Cromwell; than whom there never was a more sturdy believer in Jesus Christ, and who was not afraid to speak in his political despatches of the Pope as the Man of Sin.

In the *16th*, there was Martin Luther, the German Reformer; concerning whom, all the world knows of his faith of Christ.

In the *15th*, you have Joan of Arc; a believer in her way, who sought to recover France from the English infidels, as she thought them, because of their opposition to the Pope.

In the *14th*, you have Wycliff and his coadjutors; all stout believers. Their business was the translating and printing of the Bible, for which some of them were burnt.

In the *13th*, you have the four last Crusades; in the first of which our own Richard Cœur de Lion took part. These Crusades, you remember, were for the purpose of recovering the sepulchre of Christ from the hands of the Saracens, which would have been an inexplicable enterprise if there had been no Christ.

In the *12th century*, you have the second and third Crusades, to which the same argument applies.

In the *11th century*, you have the first Crusade, and William the Conqueror's landing in England, a believer in Christ. We represent these three centuries by three Knights of the Cross, who will take their seats with the others on the floor.

In the *10th century* you have Edgar and Elfrida in our own country in Anglo-Saxon times, and Otho the Great, Emperor in Germany—all believers in Christ.

In the *9th century*, you have Alfred the Great in England, and Charles the Bald in France, believers in Christ.

In the *8th century*, you have Ethelred in England, and Charles Martel in France, to whom the same remark applies.

In the *7th century*, you have Mahomet making war upon Rome, and the Roman Empire, because of their worship of Mary, *the mother of Christ*, a thing which could not have happened if there had been no Christ before then.

In the *6th century*, you have Justinian the Roman Emperor promulgating the law of Christ according to his conception of it as the law of Europe.

In the *5th century*, you have Theodosius the Christian Roman Emperor in the East.

In the *4th century*, you have Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, and Athanasius, the author of the Athanasian Creed; and Chrysostom, and Augustine, Christian authors who quote the New Testament in their writings as freely as any modern writer.

In the *3rd century*, we have to find our celebrities outside the political realm. Christianity was at this time a proscribed and persecuted thing. Paganism was the religion of the empire. Still, we find prominent public names which show us the same thing, viz., the name of Christ powerful in the earth, and the New Testament current in the professing Christian

community. You have Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage and champion of the Christian faith, and Porphyry, a writer against Christ in 15 books, as much a witness to Christ as if he had been his defender, for he recognise his historic reality. He did more than this. He recognised his performance of miracles as the ground of his influence. What he said about them was what the Scribes and Pharisees said: "He hath Beelzebub: by Beelzebub he casteth out demons." This was not exactly Porphyry's version. He said that Christ had been to Egypt and learnt tricks from the priests there and so pretended to work miracles. He never dreamt of suggesting that Christ had not appeared.

In the 2nd century, we are getting closer to the beginning of things and must keep our eyes attentive. You have Irenaeus, Polycarp and Justin Martyr, prominent believers in Christ, and writers in his defence, all of whom paid with their lives the penalty of their faith. They quote the New Testament in their writings freely.

And now we cross over the boundary line into the *1st century*. Who have we here? I might say we have Paul, we have the apostles, we have Christ himself. But I will not say that. I am keeping the matter on its lowest ground, and getting the facts of the case from sources that no class of men can question or ignore. Whom have we then in the first century? Nero: who was he? All the world has heard of him. The most profligate and cruel of the Roman emperors. He burnt Rome, and threw the blame on the Christians. He lit the amphitheatre with their burning bodies. He affixed living Christians to stakes fixed in the ground at regular intervals round, and having had them wrapped in skins and soaked in oil, he had the fire applied when they wanted light, and in his sportful malignity, enjoyed the tortures that gave the light. His case shows us the Christians a numerous and active class shortly after the middle of the first century—about 30 years after the crucifixion of Christ.

How numerous the Christians were we learn in a very remarkable way—out of the mouth of the enemy. Pliny, a provincial Roman Governor, wrote to the Emperor Trajan to know what he was to do with the Christians. An edict just promulgated required him to suppress them, and he was new to the business, and did not exactly know how to do it. The Christians held on to Christ and promulgated his faith, so that in whole regions the temples were shut up, and the idolatries suspended. This letter belongs to the early part of the second century, but the men themselves lived in the end of the first century, and are witnesses to the fact of the name of Christ being a powerful influence in the Roman world at that time.

THE QUESTION OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

Here, then, by gradual steps, we get right away back from our nineteenth century to the very first century, and looking around us in the first century, we find the name of a young Galilean mechanic, belonging to an obscure province in the Roman Empire, who had been crucified as a felon, by the Roman and Jewish authorities in Jerusalem become so influential throughout the Roman Empire as to create a party that at last permeated the army and subverted the very religion and politics of the State. We have to ask how came such a state of things to exist? What

was there in connection with Christ that could lead to such a powerful influence?

Now, in answering this question, we must be careful to deal with facts, and not with fancies. The world is full of fancies, guesses, and speculations; they are bootless and foolish. We want facts—truth. Can we ascertain them? Certainly we can, as I shall try to show.

MOUNTAIN FACTS.

First of all, here is a mountain fact: the New Testament is in our hands—an account of the facts written at the time by the men who had to do with them—who transacted them. Do you ask how we know that? I answer, we know it just in the same way that we know that any book was written by any author long dead. How do you know that Homer wrote the Illiad? Aristotle, his scientific dissertations? Herodotus, his histories? Josephus, the works known by his name? No one doubts that these men wrote these works, though it is ages ago. Any man doubting it would be scoffed at for his ignorance. How is it people are so certain of the authorship in these cases? Now, whatever answer you give will apply with a hundred times more force to the authorship of the New Testament. You may think that an extravagant statement. You must think otherwise when you realise the simple facts of the case. There has always been a crowd to hand on the New testament. It has been in the hands of multitudes from the very start. The very nature of it involves this: for it is mainly composed of letters addressed to communities. The epistles of Paul were all addressed to bodies of believers, and became public property at once. It has not been so with other books. They were the productions of private writers, for private ends; and a wrong impression of the fact of authorship was a possibility—especially in cases where books have lain in concealment for centuries, and have been accidentally discovered—of which there are examples. Yet the authorship has been accepted by considering this, that or the other, and no question raised or doubt entertained. In many of these cases, the way was open for doubt to be reasonably entertained: but not so in the case of the New Testament. It has always been in the hands of a crowd to pass it on. Imposition was impossible in the circumstances. It might be roughly compared to the case of a horse purchased at a distance. The buyer orders it to be sent on a certain day. The seller sends it on that day; but the buyer has no absolute guarantee that the horse that arrives is the horse he bought. Though the right horse might be started, it might be swopped on the way, there being only one person in charge. But suppose there is a line of spectators all the way between the seller and the buyer, the possibility of exchange is excluded. This is the case of the New Testament. It has been handed down through a crowd of spectators from the very first. In addition to this it has been freely quoted by writers in all the intervening centuries, so that we have a guarantee that does not exist in the case of any other book that this is the book written by the companions of Christ.

EYE-WITNESSES.

Next, consider that they write in the character of eye-witnesses. They do not narrate matters at second-hand. They do not profess to be mere

purveyors of the knowledge of other men. Take Peter (2 Epist. i. 16) "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were EYE-WITNESSES." Take John: (1 Epist. i. 1-3) "That which we have SEEN AND HEARD declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us." Take Luke's declaration (i. 2) that the matters he recorded were testified by "those who from the beginning were EYE-WITNESSES." Take the declaration of the apostles to the authorities in open court: "We cannot but speak the things which we have *seen and heard*." (Acts iv., 20). Take the definition of the necessary qualification for an apostle to be appointed in the room of Judas: "Wherefore of these men who have *companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day must one be ordained to be A WITNESS WITH US OF HIS RESURRECTION" (Acts i. 21-22), and so in a great many other cases.

Thus you have in the New Testament, beyond all reasonable question or cavil, the very testimony of the men who lived along with Christ eighteen hundred years ago. The only question to consider, before introducing their testimony, is—were they honest men? and were they capable of judging of the evidence of their senses? As to the first point, it may be remarked that if ever the veracity of witnesses was guaranteed to subsequent posterity, it is the veracity of the apostles. If men are advantaged by the evidence they give, you always feel that though they may be honest men, but you have not the guarantee of truthfulness that you would have if their testimony told against them. Now, how is it in this case? Why, that the apostles, that all who were associated with them in this matter, were sufferers and only sufferers by the testimony they delivered. We all know in a general way that they suffered persecution, but take their case as circumstantially portrayed in the I Cor. iv. 9, "I think that God hath set forth us, the apostles, last as it were appointed unto death . . . for we are made a spectacle unto the world and to angels and unto men . . . Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place." And again "for him (Christ) I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them, but ~~counting~~ that I win Christ." (Phil. iii. 8.)

As to their capability of judging of the matters to which they bear witness, their writings, apart from inspiration, afford proof of the highest discernment. But the matters to which they bear witness are not such as call for the highest gift. They are not matters requiring powers of recondite investigation. It is no affair of abstruse calculation. It is not a matter calling forth profound powers of judgment. They are matters on which our English courts every day allow very ordinary people to be competent to give reliable evidence on, and that is the evidence of one's senses, as to whether a certain man was seen so many times under such and such circumstances.

WHAT THEY DEPOSE TO.

And now, if the New Testament is the very testimony of the men who were with Christ, who were proved true men by their submission to

death for their testimony, and capable men by the writing of such a book, the only remaining question is, what is their testimony as to the cause of the name of Christ becoming so wide-spread in the Roman empire in a day when there were no railways and telegraphs to send things quickly abroad?

In brief, it is this, that the writers were companions of Christ for a certain number of years; that they accompanied him in his journeyings, and heard his teaching, which they reproduce in these documents; that they saw his miracles, which they narrate with great chasteness and simplicity; that he was arrested by the authorities, and condemned to be crucified; that he was in fact crucified and buried; that they regarded his crucifixion as an upsetting of all their hopes in him, but that a certain number of days after his crucifixion, he appeared to them alive—appeared several times; spoke to them coherently and connectedly; ate and drank with them; allowed himself to be handled; exhibited marks of crucifixion; made appointments for meeting, which he kept, and, finally, after about six weeks of this kind of intercourse, and after telling them that it would be their duty, after his departure, to bear testimony to all the world to these things, he took formal leave of them on the summit of the Mount of Olives, and went away from the earth.

Their account does not stop here. They tell us that just before his departure, he told them not to commence their testimony for his resurrection until he should send power upon them to work miracles in proof of their testimony to his resurrection. He told them to stay in Jerusalem till this power should come. The account goes on to inform us that they did so; that on the day of Pentecost, the tenth day after Christ's departure, being assembled together in one place, the Holy Spirit came upon them with the power of a rushing mighty wind, filling all the place where they were, manifesting itself in a fiery appearance resting on each, and imparting to them a supernatural knowledge of languages they had not learned, and power to work various miracles. They then proceeded to proclaim the resurrection of Christ, in accordance with the command they had received, exhibiting the miracles in token of the truth of their testimony. The effect was to cause multitudes, who witnessed these things, to believe. To these multitudes was extended the same power to work miracles, so that the testimony of Christ's resurrection spread far and wide. The authorities who had put Jesus to death naturally felt themselves compromised by these proceedings, and strove to suppress the movement. In attempting to do so they resorted to legal proceedings. They imprisoned the apostles, and raised a great persecution against all believers everywhere. The apostles, divinely liberated, were re-arrested and re-charged with the offence of proclaiming Christ's resurrection. Their answer was, "We cannot but speak *the things we have seen and heard*." Believers everywhere were steadfast under similar tribulation: the number of believers increased greatly.

Such is the account of this most important matter.

This is the account in brief which they give of the matter. Is it a true one? I submit that you cannot get rid of it without doing violence to every principle of logic and principle of common sense. To say their account is not a true one, you must make them liars, while you have in

the same breath to allow that they preached righteousness, and turned thousands of people from wickedness. You must make them parties to an imposture without a motive, and not only without a motive, but against all motive, for they gained nothing by their enterprise but opposition, calumny, spoliation, and death.

Accept their account and all is plain sailing. We then understand the prevalence of the name and faith of a crucified mechanic. He said he would send the Spirit of God upon them to qualify them as his witnesses; that the words they should speak should not be their own; that he would give them a mouth and wisdom that all their adversaries should not be able to resist. If this is true, all is explained: if it is not true, the inexplicable riddle remains, that the highest literary feat upon earth was performed by ignorant fishermen, and that the loftiest character and most influential name in the whole range of human history has obtained its power in the world through what in that case is a literary imposture.

But the question is not really an open one. The existence of Christendom is an evidence that the declarations of the apostles are true; for nothing less than the resurrection of Christ, earnestly testified by hundreds of eye-witnesses supported by miracle, will account for the fact which no man can contradict, that in the first century the name and faith of a crucified felon were diffused throughout the Roman Empire in the face of imprisonment and death. If the resurrection of Christ is denied, we stand in dim bewilderment in the presence of these matters of undoubted fact which constitute a chapter that cannot be erased from history.

WHY ARE WE TO REFUSE THE EVIDENCE ?

As a question of evidence, the resurrection of Christ cannot be denied. Why are we to refuse the evidence? When it is refused, it is refused through the mere force of intellectual prejudice. Men deny the resurrection of Christ not because there is no evidence of it, but because they have come to the conclusion on other grounds that it is impossible. They say no evidence can convince them of a thing they believe to be impossible. What are we to say to this? Is this the attitude of reason? Is it not the attitude of the highest unreason and even of presumption? It is setting up the limited capacities of the human mind as the standard by which we are to judge of the possibilities of the universe. It was this intellectual stupidity that for ages obstructed the progress of true science, and it is now proving a barrier with thousands to the reception of demonstrated truth of the only really and finally important character for the afflicted race of man.

It is extraordinary that in this age, above all others, such difficulties should be raised in the way of believing a demonstrated fact. Why should it be so difficult to believe in the resurrection of Christ, when it is not considered incompatible with intellectual respectability to believe in the possibility of the Mahatmas of Theosophy, and the so-called materialisations of spiritualism, and the re-vamped ghost stories of past generations? Nay; it is considered respectable to believe that man has sprung from monkeys, and that monkeys sprang from—what? From bits of jelly, and the bits of jelly from—what? From nothing. If it is not considered derogatory

to human intelligence to believe that the intelligence and life of man have come from nothing, why should a word be raised against the attested, beautiful, and sublime fact that the noblest man that ever appeared upon earth was a God-sent man to save the world, and that when he died in demonstration of the wisdom and righteousness of God, he was not permitted to slumber in a dishonoured grave, in which the malice of man placed him; but was roused to life again by angels of light on the morn of the third day, as a germ of a new generation, that will fill the earth with light and glory?

THE CHARACTER OF THE BIBLE AS IMPUGNED BY ITS FOES, AND SETTLED BY CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.

And now if Christ rose from the dead, consider what the fact means, with regard to *the character of the Bible*, and the question of hope for man in the future. The power of the Bible has been undermined through the influence of various theories that change from age to age, except in this one point, that by whatsoever means, they seek to displace the Bible from its position as the Word of God. First it was the vulgar, shallow, malignant opposition of Voltaire and Tom Paine; then it was the more scholarly opposition of Colenso, and the essayists and reviewers; then came the supposed opposition of geology and astronomy. Then Darwin came into the arena with speculations on the origin of man. Now it is the showy and plausible suggestions of so-called "higher criticism," which is really guess and speculation and surmise, and most of it in downright contradiction with the mountain facts of the case.

All the hostile theories have a degree of plausibility at first, but they are all proved equally empty, and vain and false by the side of the undeniable fact of Christ's resurrection.

If Christ rose from the dead, his word is the truth, as he claimed. If therefore we can know what he thought about the Bible, we can know what is the truth on the subject. This is in our power, for his words have been preserved.

Here is a short cut to the settlement of the controversy. Ingenious theories charm the imagination, but they may always be fallacious. The most learned acquaintance with mere documents and the most learned suggestions as to the original composition of these documents may be all mistaken, as shewn by the actual lapse and withdrawal of modern suggestions of learning time after time. But Christ's words must be true; his views of the question must be a settlement of all details and surmises and may-bes. Can we get at his views? Certainly; the four gospels admit us to them.

CHRIST'S VIEW OF THE BIBLE.

Christ always referred to the Scriptures in terms of reverence. It is said by modern learning that these references did not prove his sanction of what was written in the Scriptures, but were a mere accommodation to the authority popularly accorded to it in his day. Stated thus baldly, the suggestion passes current with most people; but it is impossible the matter can be dismissed in this summary manner. Christ said things that cannot be thus explained. When he told the people to search the Scriptures,

he gave a reason for this recommended search. "They," said he, "are *they that testify of me.*" This he said concerning the Old Testament, of course, the bulk of which was written many centuries before Christ's day. Now, again Christ said—"The Scriptures must be fulfilled" (Matt. xxvi. 54), when about to be apprehended. And again, "The Scriptures cannot be broken" (Jno. x. 35), when quoting them in argument with the Jews. And again, "I think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets, I am not come to destroy but *to fulfil*" (Matt. v. 17); and again, "They have Moses and the prophets, *let them hear them*" (Luke xvi. 31). And again, after his resurrection, "All things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms *concerning me*" (Luke xxiv. 44). And again in argument against the Saducees, "Ye do greatly err, *not knowing the Scriptures*" (Mark xii. 24).

INSPIRATION CLAIMED AND PROVED.

All these statements expressly inculcate a view that is inconsistent with the suggestion of so-called higher criticism. They affirm Christ's recognition of the fact that the Old Testament was a prophetic testimony for him before he appeared. Now consider: "Thesescriptures," says he, "testify of me." How came the writers of these Scriptures to "testify of Christ" centuries before he appeared? There is no natural principle upon which this can be answered. But the New Testament itself supplies the answer. Peter says that the Scriptures "came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God *spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter i. 21). Here is a careful distinction between natural authorship and spiritual authorship, between that which results from the action of the natural faculty of man, and that which results from the action of inspiration.

There is a prevalent tendency in our day to confound the two, and to say that if a man is clever, quick, imaginative, poetical, and so on, he is "inspired." This is altogether to confound things that differ. Inspiration of God is one thing, and the natural action of the human mind is another. Paul directly and expressly attributes the inspiration of the Bible to the action of Divine inspiration; "all Scripture," he says, "is given by inspiration of God." This statement, even as a detached statement, is very weighty. How much more so when considered in its connection. He makes the statement as a reason why Timothy should hold on to the faith he had. "Hold fast," said he, "the things of which thou hast heard, knowing of whom thou hast learned them, and that from a child *thou hast known the Holy Scriptures*, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." How came the Holy Scriptures to have this quality that no human writing has, namely the quality of making men wise unto salvation? He proceeded to give us the answer in saying all Scripture is given by inspiration, and is for that reason profitable for instruction, reproof, and correction in the other respects he enumerates (2 Tim. iii. 16-17.)

In another place, Paul equally with Peter discriminates between divine and human authorship in the case. He was an apostle sent directly from and by Christ; he testified of Christ's resurrection on the ground of a personal interview years after it occurred, and was qualified to do so by

the impartation of that Spirit of God which Jesus said would guide them into all truth, and which would shape their utterances according to occasion. It is with peculiar significance, therefore, that we find him saying in I. Cor. ii. 13 ; "which things we teach, *not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth.*"

What do you say? Do you say with some that you would rather have the words of Christ? This distinction between the words of Christ and the words of the apostles is altogether artificial and unscriptural and untrue. Christ made the authority of the apostles co-ordinate with his own. "He that heareth you," said he, "heareth me. He that despiseth you despiseth me, and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me." According, therefore, to Christ, for a man to treat lightly the words of the apostles, is to treat lightly the authority of God himself, from whom the whole work of Christ proceeded,—from God to Christ, and from Christ to the apostles. Paul himself takes this high ground—"If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual," says he, "let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. (1. Cor. xiv. 37).

THE BIBLE ITS OWN WITNESS.

It is evident if we are to be guided by Christ and the apostles, and not by speculators and learned men in this far off century, that we must hold the Bible to be an absolutely divine book. The whole case requires this view. The literary character of the New Testament is inexplicable without it. It is not only that it is a self-evidently true narrative in its artless simplicity and its candid narration of apparently damaging facts, such as that Peter denied Christ, and that the apostles at first doubted his resurrection, but it is a narrative in which you are bound to conclude there must have been some extraordinary influence guiding the writers, as they alleged, for it transcends all the ordinary literary achievements of men in this, that in simple words, and without any attempt at literary effect, it presents in its biographic exhibition of Christ a figure and a personality unapproached in the whole range of human thought and writing; a character such as has never been seen among men before or since, towering as far above ordinary men as heaven is above the earth, in Godlike dignity, purity, beneficence, faithfulness and power. No genius known to man could have conceived such a character. But the writers were not men of genius. Who were the writers? As admitted by all, they were fishermen who were in no way naturally distinguished for capacity, culture, or goodness, but rather for the smallness of character usually belonging to their class. Yet these illiterate companions of Christ have produced in the simplest language an ideal portrait transcending the most gifted of human imaginations. Remember we are dealing with facts. The New Testament is a fact; the figure it exhibits is as much a literary fact as any picture in an art gallery is a fact of art, and yet there is this extraordinary fact about this fact, that the portrait it exhibits of Jesus Christ is a plain ungarnished recital of what he said and did—a portrait beyond all human ideals ever reached, yet not the result of literary art. There is no attempt at panegyric; no extolling of his virtues; no pointing out of heroic qualities; none of the commendation of the hero that is custo-

mary with biographical writers. How are you to account for it? You cannot account for it except you allow the truth of what Christ said:—"Take no thought what ye shall speak: it shall be given you in that same hour what ye ought to say, for it is not ye that speak but the Spirit of my Father that speaketh in you.

The whole case requires the view of the Bible put forth by Christ and the apostles, for the Bible is not otherwise intelligible. Its character excludes the supposition of its being a human evolution. Its tone of thought in every sentence is in total contrast to that which is congenial to man. It exalts God and the divine obligation of human life everywhere, and depreciates man and all his ways. There is no human glory in it anywhere. This is one ground of its unpopularity. Greek epics and Greek plays are popular, because they appeal to human impressions and human sympathies and human views. For the same reason human stories and human books of all kinds are more interesting to the common run of men. But the Bible is pitched in a key that does not harmonise with human views and feelings. It is in unison with the sublime declaration of God by Isaiah—"My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Let Christ's view of the Bible prevail, and this Bible controversy is settled. Men will then give it that attention in constant reading which purifies and ennobles with righteousness and hope. Instead of this, it is regarded as a venerable piece of literary antiquity, good in its way, but not deserving the first place in human life. How can you expect people to read a book of which such a view is entertained?

FAILURE OF ALL ASSAULTS.

All assaults against the Bible have hitherto been in vain; and from the nature of the case, they must ever be so. It has been well said by a popular writer that the Bible is like the rocks on the sea shore, against which the waves dash and roar in a very threatening manner, but which break themselves upon the rocks, instead of breaking the rocks upon which they dash. For a time the rock is hidden by the rushing water, but presently it re-emerges untouched, unscathed, unharmed. As another writer has said:—"Tradition has dug a grave for the Bible; intolerance has lighted for it many a faggot; many a Judas has betrayed it with a kiss, many a Peter has denied it with an oath, many a Demas forsaken it but the Word of God endures," "while the empire of Cæsar has gone, the legions of Rome have vanished, the pride of the Pharaohs is fallen, the avalanches that Napoleon hurled upon Europe have melted away; the pyramids are sinking in the desert sands, Tyre is a rock for the bleaching of fishermen's nets. Sidon has scarcely left a trace behind; but the Word of God endures for ever." "All things that threatened to extinguish it have only helped it; all things prove how transient is the mightiest monument that man can build, and how enduring is the least word that God has spoken."

The Bible is bound to endure. Christ holds it up in his right hand. He commends it to our reverence and faith and he does so with a challenge that has rung down the centuries since the day he uttered it

in the ears of those who heard him. "Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" (John viii. 46.) Christ and the Bible stand or fall together, and as to which it is, there is no real question. It is a case of standing only, and not of a fall at all. The name of Christ stands, whatever people may think of it. It can no more be blotted from human history or the civilisation of man, than the sun in the sky can be extinguished. If this be the case even now, during the time of his absence, the era of faith, how much more powerfully true will it be when Christ is in the earth again, and his voice and hand are living factors in the affairs of men, as we read in Psalm lxxii. :—"His name shall endure for ever, his name shall be continued as long as the sun; all nations shall call him blessed."

NO HOPE WITHOUT CHRIST.

And now let us spend a few concluding moments on the bearing of these conclusions upon the question of human hope. What hope have we in any natural direction? The universe in which we live is of overpowering greatness and glory: but what is our life? It is a vapour that appeareth for a very little while. It opens with interest and with promise; but "soon fades the summer sky." The effervescence of young blood subsides, the poetic ardours of youth die: time flits by, life tones down. Business loses its aim and its interest: the friends of early life disappear one after the other in the universal grave: mortal energy wanes, life flickers in its lamp: and we are at last compelled to own the truth, however long ignored in pride, or silenced in the din of folly, that man is subject to vanity and human life is in darkness. The sun rises and the sun sets on the changeless scene of death. The stars, in their nightly procession, silent and solemn, look down with indifferent eye on the woes of man. The cradle pours its flood of new life from year to year, and the cemeteries yawn to receive its equal torrent. "One generation passeth away and another cometh," only to pass away also. . . . "All is vanity."

Is there no hope, then, of a better life, a better day? Is there no hope of a time when existence will yield its measureless capacities of enjoyment to the noble race inhabiting this noble planet? Christ is the answer, his resurrection the pledge. Human hope is bound up with him, and with him alone. There is no hope in any other direction. The apostles have expressly said, "There is none other name under heaven given among men wherby we must be saved." Why should we look elsewhere and try to slake our thirst at wells that hold no water? Who else has said or can say, "God hath given me power over all flesh that I should give eternal life to as many as He has given me?" Who else has said, or can say, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life?" Who else has said or can say, "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live?" Of whom else can it be said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world?" Who else can say, "I am alive for evermore: and have the keys of the grave and of death?" Remember also those other words, "I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath

one that judgeth him—the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” Resist the modern fashion of recognising religious truth in every system, and putting Christ on a level with Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha, or Mahomet. Christ is the truth exclusively: “all that came before me,” he cries, “were thieves and robbers—hirelings, whose own the sheep were not.” “My sheep hear my voice and follow me. A stranger they will not follow. I gave unto them eternal life, and no man shall be able to pluck them out of my hands. I lay down my life for my sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.”

Even such words alone make us feel with the officers who returned powerless to effect his arrest: “Never man spake like this man”; but when we go from his words to his deeds, we are dumb with speechless admiration and helpless faith. Who can contradict him when he says, “The works that I do, bear witness of me that my Father hath sent me?” Who can answer his challenge when he remarks, “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works.” What were his works? They were such as must command the submission of reason. They were such as are beyond all human capacity or control. He summarised them on a certain occasion: “Go tell John what things ye have seen and heard: the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised.” (Luke vii. 21.) Matthew tells us (iv. 34): “His fame went throughout all Syria, and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those that were possessed, . . . and he healed all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Luke informs us (vi. 17), “A great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases. And the whole multitude sought to touch him, for there went virtue out of him, and healed them all.” Mark tells us (iii. 8), “A great multitude, when they had heard what great things he did, came unto him. And he spake to his disciples that a small ship should wait on Him, because of the multitude, lest they should throng him; for he had healed many, insomuch that they pressed upon him to touch him, as many as had plagues.” Is it a wonder that Nicodemus, one of the Jewish rulers, should say to him: “Rabbi, we know Thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.”

What can we say to these things? Here is a man who never sinned; who taught righteousness and condemned wickedness with a fervour never before shown by man; who cured all diseases; who raised the dead; who was put to death because he said he was the Son of God and the King of Israel; who said his death was no accident, but his own voluntary submission to the violence of men in obedience to the commandment of God as a sacrifice for sin; who said he would rise after he should die; whose body could not be found three days after his death; whose resurrection was trumpeted through the Roman world as a matter of their personal knowledge, by his apostles, within a year after his crucifixion, in the teeth of universal opposition and at the hazard of every consequence that men dread; and whose aim in the proclamation was to turn men to

righteousness in preparation for the return of Christ to raise his friends from the dead to immortal life and fill the earth with righteousness.

What do you say to these things? Can you say they are not true? Do you say the apostles were guilty of falsehood and imposture without a motive, and against all motive, and in the interest of righteousness and holiness? The suggestion is an insult to common sense and an outrage upon reason.

No, no, the case stands squarely on its own foundation only. Christ rose from the dead and lives for evermore and will re-appear on the earth by-and-bye. It is not without beautiful reason that he said, "I am the bright and morning star." Do not let your eyes be blinded to his glory by the false glammers of science. Science is useful in its sphere, but it has nothing to do with the foundations of things. It is only a little knowledge on the surface of a boundless universe. It can tell us nothing of the origin or the purpose of things. The universe existed before science. All the forces that science investigates—all the phenomena it studies—the gorgeous constellations of the starry depths towards which it turns its enquiring telescopes in vain—were all calmly there before science began. Men almost talk as if science had made these things. They forget that the professors of science are poor mortals who sucked their bottles a short time back.

Let us clear the cobwebs from our eyes. Wisdom did not begin with man. It does not consist of the scientific technicalities which men have invented for themselves. It was in the universe before the human race had appeared upon the earth: before the earth itself existed: before the stars were marshalled in their glory and their beauty. "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (Jno. i. 1, 14).

This is the word which, by Jesus Christ speaks to us. It is on this strong foundation that our hope is built. Christ is to us the power of God and the wisdom of God and the salvation of God. Look at Him and embrace Him with all your heart. Reject the delusive shadows that play everywhere on our path. Lay hold of the hope that is built on the solid rock of actual fact and truth. It is no phantom figure that stands at the other end of the long vista of the 19 centuries that lie behind us; it is no mocking voice that sounds in our ears when He says, "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is the voice of God himself that says by Isaiah the prophet: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, come unto me, hear that your soul shall live. And I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." (Isaiah, iv., 1-3.) Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. Happy is the man whom Christ shall approve in the day of his coming.

SECOND LECTURE.

SUBJECT: "*The second coming of Christ a certainty arising out of the first; the time for its occurrence at the door.*"

The idea of the second coming of Christ is scouted by the vast majority of people, as a wild and visionary idea. All classes of the community—high and low, rich and poor, ignorant and educated, aye, religious and irreligious—are of one mind on the subject. And they freely express it. Christ, say they, will never be seen on this earth again. The prophecy has been fulfilled which says, "In the last days there shall arise scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and 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."

What are sensible men to do under those circumstances? Are they to be turned away from truth by mere scoff? There is great danger that they will unless they are very much on their guard. We all know the power of numbers. We naturally attach weight to the voice of the multitude. We say "What everybody says must be true" This is all very well in matters of common knowledge and experience. It does not apply to matters that are outside of ordinary knowledge, and that require search and application. Things pertaining to God are in this position. Knowledge of them comes by revelation. We should never have known God if he had not revealed himself. We should never have known of Christ if he had not spoken the words and done the works recorded of him in the apostolic writings. Now the crowd does not apply itself to this source of knowledge. Their loves lie in other directions. On the whole, they are in the position alleged by the Bible: "They hate knowledge and do not choose the fear of the Lord." (Prov. i. 29.) As a consequence, the world is in the condition described by John: "The whole world lieth in wickedness." (1 Jno. v. 19.) In this connection, numbers instead of being a guarantee of right and truth, are the reverse. You may be quite sure that when a thing is popular in an evil world, it is not a thing that is pleasing to God. The majority has never been in the right in things pertaining to God. Need I remind you of a whole world against Noah? Need I remind you of the Jewish world against Christ in his day? Need I remind you of the ascendancy since then of a false church among the millions of Europe, (Rev. xvii. 2) and the predicted prevalence of darkness at the time of the end? (Isaiah lx. 2.)

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The crowd as a crowd may think itself safe in the matter ; but take the crowd in detail, and you will see how little its verdict is worth. Every man in it is victimised by the rest—unwittingly it may, but not less really—victimised, overborne, and intimidated. Ignorant himself, and unable to say how the matter stands, a man looks at the rest, equally ignorant with himself, and he is impressed with their mere numbers and intimidated from the conclusions he might come if he followed his individual judgment. The reasonable man will resist this situation ; he will refuse to be overborne by the mere force of ignorance multiplied. He will look round and demand facts and follow their lead, whichever way the crowd may go. This is what Lord Bacon, 300 years ago, taught students to do in nature, and the result is the exact science of modern times. The same principle will lead us to truth in religion. Let us have facts, and not traditions or feelings.

No amount of scoffing will alter facts. Public opinion cannot alter facts : public opinion has nothing to do with the settlement of the question of Christ above all things. The thing is true independently of the public. We are at liberty to remain ignorant if we choose, but we cannot alter the truth. We might as well try to alter the course of the seasons, or the motions of the heavenly bodies.

LAYING HOLD OF FACTS.

One of the facts we looked at in the last lecture is that Christ has already been in the earth. This fact, visible to us in the various ways then indicated, leads to other facts. It leads to the fact of Christ's resurrection. The possibility of mistake in the case is absolutely excluded. There is no place for fable or deception : as Peter declared—" We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses." They were eye-witnesses not only of the general fact of Christ's appearance, but of the particular fact of his resurrection, which is the most material fact of the whole case. If there had been no resurrection of Christ, the world would never have heard of him, notwithstanding his beautiful teaching. If the Roman soldiers, stationed by the Jewish authorities at his grave, had been able to retain in Joseph's tomb the dead body entrusted to their charge, his disciples, a dispirited band, must have dispersed, and disappeared, and the name of Christ must have perished after an ephemeral and local notoriety of three years and a half. But it was not so. He rose and re-appeared to his disciples, and remained with them many days. And this is what follows : that all his words are true. What man in this vast audience will object to this, that if Christ rose from the dead, he was the Son of God, and we may trust his word implicitly ? What man will object to this, that if all his words are true, and if he said he would come again, then his second coming is a certainty of the future arising out of the first ? It must be so. The thing to ascertain is what he said on the subject. Did Christ while upon the earth declare that he would come again ? Did he say anything about it after he had gone away from the earth, by message sent to the earth ? Did the apostles whom he sent forth to preach his name say the same thing that he said ? If we find it is so, what conclusion is left but the affirmation of our lecture—that his coming is a certainty ?

WHAT CHRIST SAID.

What Christ himself said on the subject was very definite and even precise, and was employed on occasions and in connections that leave no room for misconception as to his meaning. For instance, take these simple words, "If I go away, I will come again." Here is an antithesis—one thing the opposite of the other. Whatever his going away was, his coming again is the process reversed. Now, as to the nature of this going away, nothing is plainer: "He led them out as far as to Bethany; and he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, *he was parted from them and carried up into heaven.*" (Luke xxiv. 51.) "When he had spoken these things, while they beheld, *he was taken up*, and a cloud received him out of their sight. (Act i. 9.) "So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was *received up into heaven*, and sat on the right hand of God." (Mark xvi. 19.)

Thus the real and personal nature of his departure is as plain as anything in the New Testament. It was the subject of frequent allusion by himself before it happened. A glance at these allusions will strengthen the idea we get from the apostolic narrative.

He said on one occasion, in answer to a question affecting his disciples, "The bridegroom," meaning himself, "shall be taken away from them." The question was asked, "Why do thy disciples fast not, seeing that both the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees do so?" His answer lays hold of a custom of the country: "Can the children of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them?" Christ was the bridegroom of this figure; he was with his disciples, and therefore they could not fast, but were rather in the mind to feast. "But," said he "the days come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them." (Matt. ix. 15.) To these days he referred privately to his disciples thus: "The days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and shall not see it." (Luke xvii. 22.) More plainly at last he said, "I go my way to Him that sent me." And again, "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go to prepare a place for you, I will will come again and receive you unto myself. . . . Ye have heard how I said unto you, 'I go away and come again to you. . . . And now I have told you before it is come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye may believe.'" (John xiv. 2, 3, 28, 29.) He never referred to his departure without referring to his coming again; "but first," said he, "must he be rejected, and suffer many things of this generation."

Afterwards, his return would be as real and obvious as his departure. "The Son of Man," said he, "shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works." (Matt. xvi. 27.) Again,— "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory with all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory." (Matt. xxv. 30.) At his trial before the high priest the question was pressed home upon him,— "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" "Yes," he replied, "and hereafter ye shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven." He spoke of himself frequently in parable as a man going into a far country, leaving his servants behind him, and to every man his work; and who, after a long absence, should return. "After a long time," says he, in one of those parables (Matt.

xxv. 19), "after a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh and reckoneth with them," or, as it is in Luke, "a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And it came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded those servants to be called unto him." (Luke xix. 12-15.)

Such are a few plain illustrations of Christ's teaching upon the subject, while he was upon the earth. Is there any room for mistaking his meaning? His birth was real; his life was real; his crucifixion was real; his resurrection was real; and his departure to heaven was real; and on what ground can it be suggested that his coming will not be real? Any suggestion in this sense is for ever excluded by the express words of the angels to the apostles, when Christ had just been taken from them. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken from you, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts i. 10.)

SINCE HE LEFT THE EARTH.

And now look for a moment at the communication that he made after he left the earth. When he had gone away, the disciples went forth to their work in the teeth of universal opposition. Their experience of persecution was something terrible; it was enough to quench all human enterprise. They experienced the truth of the extraordinary saying of Christ which no teacher ever addressed to his disciples before or since: "Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake." So to comfort them and encourage them, sixty years after his ascension, he appeared to John, when that apostle was banished upon a desert island, and gave him a message to be sent to certain representative communities of believers in Asia Minor. You will find the particulars in the first chapter of Revelations. "He said unto me, What thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephe-us and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea." The object of the message is defined in the first verse,— "to show unto his servants thing- which must shortly come to pass." The bearing of the message upon all subsequent believers, as to whether it is a thing for them to attend to or not, is shown by the third verse,— "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy." The prophecy in question occupies the whole of the book of Revelations, consisting of twenty-two chapters. It concludes with these very express words, 16th verse,— "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches."

Here then is a message direct from Christ since he left the earth. We may notice it as a curious circumstance in passing, that in a community professedly Christian like the modern church in all its denominations, this message of Christ is tabooed as a thing not to be understood and dangerous to meddle with. Religious leaders of the people have said in this hall that people who dabble in Revelations are only fit for the lunatic asylum. This may be true of "dabblers." Men who dabble in anything are not likely to be helped; it is like medicine: if they do not take enough, it will do them more harm than good. A little mathematics, a little chemistry, or astronomy, will only put a man in a maze. Let them

go thoroughly into the matter, and then that which appears a bewildering labyrinth becomes a lucid and harmonious system of knowledge. So it is with the Apocalypse, when understood in its proper relation to the whole system of truth, of which Christ is the centre.

What light does this last message of Christ throw on this subject of his second coming? There is no feature of it more clear and distinct: all its practical allusions take it for granted. Thus in the 25th verse of the second chapter, in his message to Thyatira,—“That which ye have already, hold fast *till I come.*” Or the message to Philadelphia, verse 11, chapter iii,—“Behold *I come quickly*; hold that fast which thou hast, and let no man take thy crown.” Or the celebrated parenthesis of the xvi. chap., 15th verse, at a certain political conjunction of events,—“Behold *I come as a thief*? blessed is he that watcheth,” or the twice repeated statement of the last chapter: first, verse 12,—“Behold *I come quickly*, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.” And the last verse but one,—“He which testifieth these things saith, surely *I come quickly.*” All these are but the re-echo of the statements with which the whole prophecy opens: in the 1st chap., verse 7, “Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”

Is it possible to mistake the sense of these statements? Reason admits of but one answer,—that just as Christ’s life upon the earth was bodily, actual, visible, and literal, and his departure from the earth of the same character, so will his coming again be. He has not died since his departure. In the course of this apocalyptic message, he says—“I am alive for evermore.” And as Paul alleges in Rom. vi. 9—“Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over him.” He has not ceased to be a corporeal being since he came out of Joseph’s tomb, for his disciples saw him and handled him as recorded so fully and circumstantially in the last chapter of Luke. And he himself appealed to their senses on the subject: “Handle me and see; a spirit hath not flesh and bones such as you see me have,” of which he gave them further proof by eating in their presence. When he comes, we have the assurance that it will be “this same Jesus,” a fact illustrated incidentally in the prophet Zehariah, in the statement that his hands will bear the marks of his crucifixion wounds, and that the Jewish nation will look upon these wounds and recognise in them the tokens of the terrible mistake of their fathers. (Zech. xii. 10; xiii. 6.)

WHAT THE APOSTLES SAID.

The next enquiry is, What have the apostles said on the subject? What did they say when they went forth to preach the death and resurrection of Christ for the remission of sins? What did they say in the letters they wrote which have been preserved, and which are in our hands at this day? Here the case stands in exactly the same position; as we should expect in view of Christ’s remark: “He that heareth you, heareth me.” Their declarations are plain, frequent, unequivocal, and uniform. Thus Peter within a few weeks of Christ’s departure said to a crowd of Jews, in Jerusalem, who had crucified him, “God shall send Jesus Christ.” This was after he had said to them “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his

Son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead whereof we are witnesses. Repent, therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out when 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 time of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken." (Acts iii. 13-21.) Can we mistake the meaning of these words: "God shall send Jesus Christ?" So also in the apostolic letters: 2 Thess. i. 7,— "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." Phil. iii. 21,— "From heaven we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus, who shall change our vile body." Tit. ii. 11,— "We look for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of the great God and Saviour." Heb. ix. 27,— "To them that look for him shall he appear the second time to their salvation." 2 Tim. iv. 1,— "He shall judge the living and the dead at his appearing. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing." 1 Pet. v. 2,— "When the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away." Col. iii. 4,— "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory." 1 Jno iii. 2,— "When he shall appear we shall be like him." 1 Thess. i. 9,— "Ye wait for the Son of God from heaven." 1 Pet i 7,— "The trial of your faith will be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" 1 Jno. ii. 28,— "Now little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

What are we to say to these statements? Their meaning cannot be cavilled at. Intelligence stands dumb before them, either in faith or in unbelief. Enlightened faith discerns their meaning, and believes them. Unbelief pre-occupied with other things, and ignorant of the powerful position of the matter, can only say, "Yes, that is the meaning of the statements. They doubtless allege that Christ will come again, but I cannot believe it." Whether belief or unbelief is the rational attitude is a question we have already debated. The only question now is, what did Christ and the apostles teach on the question of the second coming of Christ? The answer is before you; they allege that he will come again to the earth, and his first coming having been a reality, and his resurrection an attested fact, there is no escape from the conclusion that he will come again as certainly as he went away.

MISTAKEN IDEAS OF WHEN HE WILL COME.

The next proposition is one that may have more interest for some, namely, that the time for this second coming of Christ is near, even at the door. This may not be so easy to prove as the fact that he is coming again; it is possible to prove it to the ear of calm and patient reason. But we must meet a preliminary objection. It is said that the coming of

Christ has been so often expected since Christ went away, that the idea of fixing upon any particular era now is utterly discredited, and can only excite ridicule. Well, let us look at the matter, and see how it stands. There is a certain amount of surface reasonableness in the objection, and it calls for reasonable treatment. Let us see why there have been so many premature and mistaken expectations, and why at the same time, these premature and mistaken expectations in the past, do not invalidate the grounds of the present expectation, but rather give strength to them by pointing out considerations not previously taken into account.

There is this peculiarity about the position of the matter, that, while a time is fixed in the divine purpose for Christ's second coming, just as there was a time fixed and revealed for his first coming, yet along with the revelation of the time of his second coming, there is an intimation that the revelation would not be intelligible until the very end, and that prior to then, the people of God would not know the times and seasons in any clear manner. To Daniel, the prophet whom Christ commends to our attention, was given the largest and plainest revelation on this question: yet to him it was expressly said, (12th chap., 9th verse), "The words are *closed up and sealed till the time of the end.*" This closing or obscuration of the matter has been accomplished in what we might call a very ingenious way. It has been accomplished by communicating the revelation in a form that has almost invited the various premature expectations which the past has witnessed; while at the same time not actually justifying them. One result springing from this has been that the people of God have been able in all generations to hope that the day of deliverance was not far off from their day. This is a feat of wisdom, accomplishing two objects: the saints have been supported during the dreary ages of their probation, which might have sickened their hearts by deferred hope; while on the other hand, the scornful class have been caught in a snare into which they were too ready to fall, illustrating the words of Hosea: "The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall in them." (Hosea xiv. 9).

THE CAUSES OF MISTAKE.

The way in which this has been accomplished will be understood, if we look at the facts. They are somewhat complicated. I desire to simplify the matter as much as possible, and must therefore ask the help of your imagination. Last Sunday night, it was 19 old men. On this occasion, it shall be ten measuring rods of different sizes and materials and colours. I wish I had them on the platform large enough for you to see. But I must ask you to imagine them. Each rod shall represent a measured period; and the object will be to show how these measured periods, though true in themselves, have been mis-applied, with the result of causing the disappointments that have wearied the hearts of saints, and given occasion for the scornful laughter of sinners.

The rods shall be ten in number, but the two last we shall put by themselves, as they are of a future application. I introduce them to notice not in the order of their length, nor in the order of their beginning, but in the order of their ending.

I premise that "days" as employed to define these periods signify years,

as God said to Ezekiel "I have appointed thee each day for a year." (Ezek. iv. 5.)

It has always been a question with the people of God "How long" it would be to the glorious ending promised, and there have been various indications which our supposed measuring rods represent, and to which the burdened saints have naturally clung with hope from time to time.

Our rods shall be of various materials and colours, to represent the various apparently legitimate modes of reckoning by which the end has been at various times prematurely expected. The rods represent the measure: the figure which I shall mention after each represents the date at which the measures were supposed or might have been supposed to end.

1. *Glass* (A.D. 34); 2. *Iron* (A.D. 520); 3. *Blue* (A.D. 720); 4. *Black* (A.D. 1294); 5. *Red* (A.D. 1360); 6. *Green* (A.D. 1760); 7. *Scarlet* (A.D. 1793); 8. *Spotted red* (A.D. 1866-8).

The two others we leave over, as they are future.

Let us take these *seriatim* for the purpose of seeing the apparent reasonableness of the mistaken views of time entertained, and that we may see where the mistake lay, and be saved from the conclusion that some rashly jump to that because mistakes have been made, therefore there is nothing reliable in the subject one way or the other. The mistakes have in fact been part of the plan from a divine point of view. God did not intend his children at any time to know with their poor mortal capacities for endurance that the kingdom, upon which their hearts are set, was so far off. At the same time, he desired them to know so much that their hearts might be upheld in the great darkness that necessarily prevails upon the earth while God's face is hidden because of sin. If the information communicated seem to be slender and scrappy, we must remember how great is the value of a little information where there is no knowledge otherwise obtainable. People feel this in the case of a mysterious murder, or an absconded friend, or a concealed government measure. We must remember that of ourselves, we absolutely know nothing of the course of futurity or the nature of the divine purpose. And, therefore, a little hint, if ever so obscure, is a great condescension on the part of Eternal Wisdom to weak and unworthy man.

A.D. 34.

1. First, then, we take our glass measuring rod; it is the shortest of them all. It only measures 490 days (or years). We use glass because when you look at an object through glass, it does not seem as if there was anything between you and your object. You will see the application of this when we bring our measuring rod to bear. It goes back to B.C. 456. Daniel was told (chap. ix. 25) that "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem," which at that time was in the ruined and deserted state caused by Nebuchadnezzar's siege of the city 70 years before, until the appearing of the Messiah, should be a period of seventy weeks (verse 24), which are 490 days (representing years). Now, this commandment issued from Artaxerxes, the ruler of Persia, by the hands of Nehemiah, his Jewish cup-bearer, in the twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes. (Neh. ii 1-8.) This was 456 B.C. When Christ was 30 years of age, the end of the 490 was near at hand, and the people were IN EXPECTATION. (Luk. iii. 15.) John the Baptist was active

on the scene as the Messiah's herald, "to prepare his way": and "all men mused in their hearts whether he were the Christ or not." (The same.) It is said that "John did no miracle." (John x. 41.) He merely "came preaching in the wilderness of Judea." (Matt. iii. 1.) This is something deserving of the consideration of our intelligent friends who think the New Testament is guilty of romancing in telling us of the miracles of Christ. If the New Testament is guilty of romancing in one part, of course it would in another, and we should have had John doing all manner of miracles. But no. "John did no miracles." It says so because it is true: and the other is true also—that when Christ came he "did works that none other man did" (John xv. 24.)

The point is here—when the 490 years of Dan. ix. were ended, Christ was there in Israel's midst. You may ask, what has this to do with premature expectations? Well, this much: "The disciples *thought the kingdom of God should immediately appear.*" So Luke testifies (xix. 11). Why should they think so? The language of the prophecy of Christ's first appearing appeared not only to admit of it, but to involve it. The angel's description to the prophet Daniel of what was to be accomplished at the end of the 490 years, spoke of "the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the finishing of iniquity, the sealing up of the vision of the prophecy" (see Dan. ix. 24). This reads very like a finishing of his whole work at that time. Especially weighty is this appearance of things in the prophecy of Isaiah lxi., which Christ said in the synagogue of Nazareth referred to him. (Luke iv. 17-21) "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach the gospel. . . . to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God: to comfort all that mourn: to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning. . . and they shall build the old wastes," &c. Here again, it seems as if the glad and healing and restoring work of Christ would ensue concurrently with his preaching work. So, also, in Isa. liii., which foretells his rejection and death: "I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death," &c. (verse 12). It reads as if there would be no interval between his suffering and his glory.

His disciples, therefore, fell into a very natural mistake in supposing that having come, he would stay and cause the Kingdom of God to immediately appear.

Was the 490 measure an untrue measure then? By no means. It was proved true beyond contradiction by Christ's actual death at the very time stated. It was the interpretation put upon it that was mistaken. It was intended to reach only up to the death of Christ; all the glorious work was to come after: it did not say how long after; and the disciples were naturally guided by the appearance coinciding with their own desire that the glory should come immediately after.

A.D. 520.

2. Our next measure is *the iron rod*. This represents a period of 1260 days (*i.e.* years). It occurs in connection with the prophetic vision of the four great empires (Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome) shown to Daniel "in the third year of Belshazzar," and recorded in the 7th chapter of his

book ; it belongs to the fourth of these empires, Rome. We select iron to represent it, because iron was the metal chosen to symbolise Rome in the image vision of Daniel ii. The period occurs in connection with the fourth beast, as measuring the duration of persecuting power (see Daniel vii. 25). It is there expressed as 'time, times, and the dividing of time;' this is an Hebrew cypher of time, the value of which is placed beyond all doubt by its expression elsewhere. (Rev. xiii. 5 ; Rev. xii. 6, 14), as forty and two months and 1260 days, which are exactly one time (Hebrew year), 360 days, two times, 720 days, and half a time, 180 days—total, 1260.

The question is, the application of the period. Those who in early times, without the advantages which we enjoy from the clear historic evolutions of the past, looked at Rome as an empire, might conclude this period must date from the foundation of Rome. If they did so, they commenced with B.C. 740, which would give the ending of A.D. 520, and they would be greatly mistaken. The mistake would not be in the measure of the time, but in their application of it. Looking again, any one can perceive that the measure was not intended to apply to the Roman empire as a whole, but to only one feature of it—a detail in connection with it—a development in the heart of it. It is the Papacy seated right in Rome that has been the persecutor of the saints by its intrinsic constitution. It is the Papacy that has proved the most notable and longest lived feature of the whole Roman system. It is no wonder, then, that in the symbol of Rome's career, we should find the Papal feature have a prominent place. It has this place in the form of a horn shooting up in the head of the beast, after the beast itself had appeared in the arena, and after ten other horns had sprung up foreshowing the division of the Roman Empire into ten separate sovereignties, when the barbarians of the north overthrew her power. This horn had features corresponding with the character of the system it represented. If you turn to the 7th chapter of Daniel (verses 8, 20), you will find it was a horn with eyes and mouth before which three of ten horns that were on the head of the beast before it came, fell. The eyes identify it with the Papacy beyond question. Eyes represent a bishop or overseeing power: you have all heard of the "see" of a bishop, and you may have heard this term applied in its largest sense to the Papacy, which is known at the present day as "the Holy See." How it comes to be so described may be learned in the study of the beginnings of things. A bishop was first of all a Christian official, literally an overseer, one who had charge of a congregation over whom he was appointed as guide and shepherd. In the course of time, his oversight or bishopric extended to other congregations, and the district in which these communities existed came to be called his see, or the district that he oversaw. Eyes, therefore, were a natural symbol of ecclesiastical power. The horn in which the eyes were set naturally stands for the power possessed by the system of which the eyes came to be an element. A horn always stands for power in the Bible: it is the natural symbol of power as an instrument of offence in the animal world; in prophetic vision it stands for the exercise of power offensively.

In this case, we have the Papal See as a growth within the Roman Empire, and coming at last to exercise the whole power of the empire. Before its appearance, there were other ten horns on the head of the beast, but they had no eyes and mouth. It is explained in the course of the

chapter what these ten horns meant. "They are ten kings," said the interpreter to Daniel, "that shall arise." The Papal horn with eyes was the eleventh, and before it, the vision says, three of the ten fell. This is in direct accordance with the history of the case as reflected in what we might call the Papal regalia. Three of the original sovereignties into which the Roman Empire was divided after its decline and fall were handed over to the Pope by Charlemagne, and the tokens of his investiture with these three states is seen to this day in the headgear of the Pope, which consists of a mitre encircled by three crowns, one above another. This Papal ornament is an unmistakable identification of the little horn of Daniel's fourth beast with eyes and mouth, before whom three of the other horns fell.

The most distinguishing feature of the little horn was its persecuting character. It "made war with the saints," says the narrator, "and prevailed against them until the Ancient of Days came." (verse 21). It is in connection with this feature of its career that the specification of time occurs (verse 25)—"He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws, and they shall be given into his hands, until a time and times and the dividing of a time." This is the specification of time in the case: which, though not very intelligible at first sight, is truly definite, and is placed beyond misunderstanding by its representation in various other forms, all agreeing one with another, as I have already stated. 1260 years is therefore the revealed duration of the war-making power of the Papal horn of the Roman beast, and not the Roman beast itself. Therefore the non-realization of the end in A.D. 520 was not the fault of the vision, but of a natural misapplication of its terms.

A.D. 720.

3. Next, we deal with the *blue* measuring rod, which also represents 1260 days, but in connection with a different vision, and leading to a different ending. We call it blue from the blue waters of the river Hiddekel, on whose banks the vision was seen (see Dan. x. 4). This vision was a rehearsal of the events reaching from the moment of utterance down to the appearing of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead. This you will find on a careful reading of chapters x., xi. and xii. The beginning of the rehearsal is definitely fixed in the first verse of chapter x., taken in connection with the second verse of chapter xi. The first of these states the vision was given in "the third year of Cyrus" (which was before Christ 540), and the second picks up the thread of events in the life of the then reigning sovereign, and proceeds to say: "There shall yet stand up three kings in Persia." Tracing the rehearsal from that point downwards, we come at the end of the vision to the time of the end, and the resurrection of the dead. Having listened anxiously to the whole rehearsal, Daniel hears this question put (chap. xii. 7): "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The answer he heard was: "It shall be for time times and a half"—the Hebrew equivalent for three and a half years, or 1260 days, or 1260 years, as we have seen. Now, what is the meaning of this answer? It is evidently vague. Does it mean that 1260 years would be the period occupied by the events commencing at the beginning of the vision? If so, it would

commence 540 years before Christ, from which it is easy to see how the mistake would be made of supposing that in A.D. 720, or thereabouts, the finish of the vision might be looked for in the standing up of the Great Prince and the resurrection of the dead. In fact, to those living at the time, it would seem as if there could be no other conclusion. It required the lapse of time and the occurrence of other and collateral events to shew that the period of 1260 years was not intended to define the period of the whole of the events since B.C. 540, but only a certain phase of those events which we shall have to look at afterwards. That it was a wrong meaning might have been seen by verse 11, where another period of 1290 years is dated *from the taking away of the daily sacrifice which happened in A.D. 70*, but this evidently was not seen, and therefore the general and larger impression would remain, leading to that widespread expectation of "the end of the world" as it is phrased, which prevailed in the middle centuries, and passed away.

A.D. 1294.

4. Our next rod is *black* (death of Christ), also representing 1,260 years, but a different possible application of the period. Those who might not be satisfied with the dating of the 1260 of the Roman beast from the building of the city of Rome—those who might argue that as a measure of persecution, it ought to begin with the first victim, would select the year of the death of Christ (A.D. 34) as the right commencement, and would consequently look for the end in A.D. 1294. The mistake of this application would lie in connecting the period with the Roman beast as a whole instead of the little horn with eyes on its head. It was not Rome as a political system, but the Papal phase of the Roman power that was the subject of the measurement.

A.D. 1360.

5.—Our *red* measuring rod, dating from the *bloody* events of the Jerusalem siege, lays hold of another period, which was open to natural misapplication, the period of 1290 mentioned in Dan. xii, 11. The verse reads thus: "From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate shall be set up, there shall be a thousand twelve hundred and ninety days." The daily sacrifice was taken away in the year A.D. 70. If there were to be 1290 years from the destruction of Jerusalem, obviously, the ending of the 1260 would be A.D. 1360, consequently another premature expectation would set in. But why premature? Was not the conclusion inevitable? Apparently. Not really! No, not really. There is a double event given in the fixing of the date: not only the taking away of the daily sacrifice (which was the sacrifice offered daily in the temple as required by the law of Moses), but the "setting up of the abomination that maketh desolate." What was this? Jesus answers in telling the disciples that they would see in the Roman power encamped against Jerusalem, "the abomination that maketh desolate, spoken of by Daniel, the prophet." (Matt. xxiv. 15; Mark xiii. 14; Luke xxi. 20). But though the Roman power was "the abomination that maketh desolate," it was not "set up" as a substitute for the Mosaic system when Jerusalem was destroyed. It was a long time afterwards before Rome took the place of Jerusalem; before the Pope took the place of the Aaronic supreme pontiff: before the Romish priesthood, the place

of Levi, taking tithes of the people; the Romish ordinance of baby sprinkling, the place of circumcision, and so on. How long? The final "setting up" was by decree of Phocas, in A.D. 606-8. Of this there is no question.

Now the question would be, should not both the events spoken of in the verse be completed before the time begins to be reckoned? It is a little peculiar to give a double event as a starting point, but it is not so strange as it seems when we recollect that the two events were co-related, and when we remember that it was an express design to "close up" the words by throwing a veil of indefiniteness over them which the progress of events would remove as time marched onward.

If we were to date a lease "from the time that Ann Sreet was taken away and the Council House was put up," when should we reckon it commenced?—with the first pickaxe put into the old houses of Ann Street, or with the finishing and official opening of the Council House? We should probably all say the latter. So when we are told that there would be a period of 1290 years from the taking away of the Mosaic system and the setting up of the Roman system, it will not seem unnatural to suggest that the time should reckon from the final establishing of the Papacy, and not from the destruction of Jerusalem.

A.D. 1731 or 1760.

6. Our *Green* rod represents the period mentioned in Dan viii. 14—two thousand three hundred days (years.) It is green because telling of hope. This is the measure of the ram and goat vision, showing a period of 2,300 years as the length of time during which the divine polity in the Holy Land and people, should be downtrodden by Persia, Greece, and Rome. Those who reckoned this period from the date in which the vision was shown to Daniel, namely, the third year of Belshazzar, would end it in A.D. 1731: while those who commenced it with the beginning of the events shown in the vision, namely, the uprise of the Persian power in 540, would end it in A.D. 1760. Here was another source of premature expectation. The explanation is found, either in the fact that the time of the vision should not commence to reckon till the first movement that Daniel saw in the vision—the pushing of the Persian ram westwards in menace against Greece; or in the fact that there is another reading of the number—2,400—which may or may not be the correct one. At all events, the ground of the expectation is manifest which is the main point now aimed at.

A.D. 1793.

7 *Scarlet* (the scarlet coloured beast of the Apocalypse).—The 1260 of Daniel vii, and Rev. xiii. 5, reckoned from the first official sanction of the Roman See, or by the Emperor Justinian in A.D. 533, would give A.D. 1793 as the terminus. There was a terminus then certainly. In that year, royalty was extinguished in France and a revolution established which swept through Europe like a hurricane; dethroned kings, deposed the Pope, overturned the Justinian Constitution of Europe, which had been promulgated 1260 years before, and substituted the Code Napoleon, which has since been the basis of European jurisprudence.

The system of things in Church and State established by Justinian in A.D. 533 was overthrown amid great public commotion just 1260 years afterwards. This fact naturally attracted attention to Daniel's prophecy, and those also of John in Revelation, which deal with the same subject, and mention the same period. But the Papal power, though terribly shaken did not cease as a persecuting power, till 75 years later, viz., in A.D. 1867-8. This introduces

A.D. 1866-8.

8. Our next measuring rod—*spotted red*—(the spotted leopard). This also represents 1260 years, but dated from the year that the Pope was fully and finally established as an element in the European constitution, and the legal power placed at his disposal for the enforcement of his claims. This occurred by decree of the emperor Phocas in A.D. 606-8. The eyes of expectation were therefore naturally fixed on 1866-8 as the terminal point; that was the time when it was anticipated the war-making power or Papacy would elapse; and when, therefore, its perdition would ensue at the hands of the Lord returned. It was fondly hoped and expected that as its initial overthrow in A.D. 1793 had been marked by the appearance of a powerful conqueror like Napoleon, so its final overthrow would see the personal re-appearance of Christ, the true Pope. This expectation was based upon 2 Thess. ii. 7,—“Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with *the brightness of HIS COMING*;” and also upon Dan. vii., which declares that the little horn with eyes should prevail against the saints “until the Ancient of Days *CAME*.” The ending of the little horn and the coming of the Ancient of Days apparently seemed synchronous events.

But the expectation was only partly fulfilled. The war-making power of Papacy truly came to an end. The temporal power fell in, and at the present moment it has no existence. This is the great fact of the hour, the important significance of which cannot be overrated. It shows the correctness of the interpretation of the period defining the war-making power of the Pope, and although the Lord himself is not yet here, it imparts to us the highest warrant for expecting him in connection with the two remaining measuring rods reserved—the one *brown* (abomination); and the other *fire-streaked crystal*—the establishment of the age of glory.

A.D. 1898 AND 1943.

We look again and see *why* the Lord did not come when the power of Papacy fell in. Though 1260 was given as the measure of the persecuting power of the Papacy, it was not given as the limit of its whole existence, for its existence continues awhile after the Lord's very appearance, as we learn from Rev. xix. 19. There is another period besides the 1260; I have already referred to it. It is found in the 12th chapter of Daniel, verse 11, where we read that from the taking away of the daily sacrifice and the setting up of the Roman abomination, “there shall be 1290 days,” that is, 30 more than 1260. If the 1260 ended in A.D. 1866-8, where would the 1290 end? In 1898. What is to happen then? It does not say; it simply says there shall be that number of days. But from corresponding prophecy of Rev. x. 7, we learn that then arrives the

time for the finishing of the work of God. The exact wording of Rev. x. 7 is: "The mystery of God shall be finished as He hath declared to His servants the prophets." Daniel is one of them to whom this mystery has been declared. He tells us that at the end of the days, many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, and that there shall stand up the great Prince of Israel.

Going beyond the 1290 is another period of 1335 (our *fire-streaked crystal rod*), concerning which there is this statement in the last two verses of the last chapter of Daniel: "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the 1335 days. But go thou thy way, Daniel, for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." 1335 is 45 more than 1290, and seems to afford scope for the setting up of the kingdom of God, which is not the work of a moment. It will take time, and will require events as we read in Micah in the last chapter: "According to *the days of thy coming out of Egypt* I will show unto thee marvellous things. The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might. They shall creep out of their holes like worms of the earth, and shall fear because of the Lord thy God, and because of thee."

This reference to the coming of Israel out of the land of Egypt is suggestive of an interesting parallel which we cannot suppose to be accidental, seeing that Moses was a type of Christ, the prophet like unto him. God had revealed to Abraham that Israel would be in affliction 400 years, and that afterwards they would be brought out of Egypt. When the 400 years were coming to a close, Moses was on the scene, and though he had received no divine commission at that time, he imagined the time had come for the promised deliverance, and with this idea, he took the initiative in certain matters which caused his expulsion from Egypt and his exile in the wilderness of Midian. Afterwards, he was sent to deliver them, and he delivered them, but it was not till *30 years after the expiry of the period* mentioned to Abraham. You will find it stated in verse 41, Exodus xii, that "at the end of 430 years, in the self-same day they went out of the land of Egypt." A further point is, that although they left Egypt at the end of 430, they did not enter upon the inheritance of the land of promise until 45 years afterwards. They wandered in the wilderness 40 years, and made war upon the inhabitants of Canaan for 5 years, and *then* they entered into the possession of the land—or 475 years from the commencement of the 400. Here is where the parallel lies: 430 years are 30 years more than 400; so 1290 years are 30 years more than 1260; 475 years are 45 years more than 430, and so 1335 years are 45 years more than 1290.

This analogy most strongly confirms the idea that the right way of looking at the periods of Daniel xii is that the longer periods overlap the shorter ones, and that it was a mistake to suppose that the Lord would come at the time the 1260 years of appointed affliction ended, instead of at the end of the 1290. Up to 1866-8, it was imagined the longer periods began sooner than the shorter ones, and that they all ended together. There were reasons for this view which we need not go into on the present occasion. Suffice it to say that time has shown it was a wrong view, and that a re-examination shows that the longer periods are the last to end.

We have now, therefore, to deal with the more natural view that the

1290 goes 30 beyond the 1260; and that the 1335 goes 45 beyond the 1290, and that in accordance with this progressive evolution of time, there will be a gradual development of events leading the world from the depth of its present misery into the glorious sunshine of Messiah's kingdom.

FULFILLED EXPECTATIONS AND THE PROSPECT.

The development of events has already begun. We have seen an actual occurrence of expected events; we have seen the power of the Pope disappear at the end of the 1260 years. 30 years added would bring us to 1896-8, when, as Moses appeared at the end of 30 years going beyond the appointed affliction in Egypt, we may hope to see Christ appear at the end of the 30 years going beyond the Papal 1260. 45 years beyond that delightful event, we shall see the kingdom of God established on the ruins of human government in full power in all the earth. This would take us forward to 1943 for the full accomplishment of the blessed revolution promised, when the kingdoms of this world shall be subject to the direct government of Christ. But long before then, if the view now presented be correct, the world will once more have evidence of the powerful presence of the Son of Man.

It is no wild suggestion that in five years hence, the tidings of that event may be made known. In our last lecture we shall see that everything in the world favours this deduction of prophetic chronology. The duty of to-night's lecture is performed in the simple realisation of the fact that the coming of Christ is at the door. The suggestion will, of course, seem but the aberration of fanaticism, to those who are not in sympathy with the subject, or who are unacquainted with the foundations upon which it rests. It must be otherwise when the full view is taken of all the facts that have been rehearsed. The expectation of the early coming of Christ becomes then but the deduction of calm reason, which a man would be insane to ignore.

The logic of the argument cannot be assailed. If the subject is universally derided, it is only what Christ said would be the case. His words are: "As it was in the days of Noah so shall it be when the Son of Man shall be revealed. As in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." (Matt. xxiv. 27; Luke xvii. 26-30). The situation of the world in this respect at the present time is such as to give pungent point to those other words of Christ: "Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be counted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." "What I say unto you, my disciples, I say unto all, Watch."

THIRD LECTURE.

SUBJECT: "*The object of the second coming of Christ—Judgment on the world for its wickedness—The overthrow of the present social and political system, and the establishment of a new order of things, in which God will be glorified and mankind blessed.*"

We have seen that Christ is a historic reality. If Christ be a historic reality, then is he a present and living reality, for that is the most conspicuous feature of his case, that he rose again to die no more. It was the feature singled out by the Roman governor, Festus, in stating Paul's case to King Agrippa. He said the quarrel between the Jews and Paul was "concerning one Jesus who was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive." (Acts xxv. 19.) If Christ be now alive, he will certainly come again, for he said he would, and he cannot say a lie or forget what he intends to do.

Yet most people have a feeling to the effect that there can be no connection between a returned Christ and the kind of life that goes on in this practical world. They seem to think that Christ and the earth belong to two different spheres—that they are on two different planes of life, as the modern phrase goes; that there can be no connection between one and the other; that Christ in the earth would be more out of place than a prince^s in a coal mine or a crowned king in the grimy precincts of an iron-smelting works.

Well, this feeling is entirely artificial. It is due to the artificial theology that has taken the place of the truth in the course of centuries, as foretold by Paul in 2 Tim iv. 4, 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12. If people got their ideas from the Bible instead of from the pulpit, they would not be troubled with any such feeling as I have referred to. The whole mission of Christ, as exhibited in the Bible, has to do with the earth and with man as a bodily organization. The whole purpose of God, of which Christ is the instrument, is directed to the recovery of the earth from its present evil state. All the things accomplished hitherto in the execution of that purpose have been things done on the earth. The mischief to be remedied is a mischief on the earth. The promises of healing are all promises related to the earth. The earliest-drawn picture of a saved world is that of "*the whole earth filled with the glory of God*" (Num. xiv. 21); and the closing scene of Revelations is the manifestation of the glory of God upon the earth, and the proclamation, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them . . . and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying,

neither shall there be any more pain." (Rev. xxi. 3.) It is in the earth that Christ appeared to take away the sins of the world. He laid the foundation of this great result in offering himself in sacrifice at his first appearing, as the Father required. The consummation of the work requires that second coming in power and great glory, which he so frequently spoke of when upon the earth in weakness. It is the very earth that is promised to him for his inheritance. (Psa. ii. 8.) It is the land in which Abraham sojourned as a stranger, that is promised to him and his seed as an everlasting possession (Gen. xiii. 14)—a promise, in which Paul plainly declares, Christ is conjoined with him (Gal. iii. 16.)

These facts have become obscured from the eyes of Bible believers through the prevalence of the philosophic fiction that man is an immortal being who survives the dissolution of his body, and floats away to other spheres. This is an extremely natural result. If, when we die, we say good-bye to the earth for ever, of what interest can the destiny of the earth be to us? If, when we die, we go to Christ, which might be to-night, what can it matter to us whether Christ is coming to the earth again, or not? But we put aside this classical fiction—this Greek speculation—of which the Bible has nothing to say. It has been largely dissipated by modern science; and people have imagined that the Bible has been damaged and discredited by this. The very reverse is the case. The Bible from the beginning has taught what science now recognises—that man is a mortal being whom the grave obliterates for the time being. Only the Bible does what mortal science cannot do: it supplies us with the reason why a being with such noble capacities and aspirations as man is in such an evil state—abortive while he lives, and with death waiting as his inevitable end. And it lightens our darkness, as science cannot do, with the hope and prospect of resurrection to immortal life, after the example of Christ, the great "first-fruits of them that sleep," who came out of the tomb in which the soldiers of Pontius Pilate tried in vain to hold him, and became the nucleus and head of the new race which will yet people the earth with life and glory.

When these things are understood, much fog is cleared away, and the mind contemplates with freshened interest the great fact that Christ is coming again. We are prepared with a quickened solicitude to enquire and consider the object of his coming.

"WHAT IS CHRIST COMING FOR?"

In olden times, when a certain great man came to a certain little place, the inhabitants in fear and trembling said to him, "Comest thou peaceably?" They were afraid what his visit might mean. How must it be when so mighty a personage as Jesus, the resurrected and glorified Son of God, proposes to re-appear in the land in which he was rejected and slain? "Comest thou peaceably?" The answer is "Yes" and "No." "Yes" as regards final results; for he is the Prince of Peace; but "No" as regards proximate effects. When a surgeon arrives to amputate a rotting limb that will destroy the life of the patient if let alone, is his coming a humane coming? Certainly. Yet he will use knife and saw and inflict pain. So when Christ comes to cut out the rotting mass of wickedness that is destroying the world, his coming is none the less

but all the more a beneficent coming, because it will, in first case, have a calamitous bearing on the world.

The testimony will show us that the arrival of Christ upon the earth will precipitate an era of convulsion and disaster such as the world has never seen, to be followed by blessedness which it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive. This necessarily follows from the nature of the work he comes to do. In its most comprehensive form it was announced by Paul to the inhabitants of Athens in these words:—“God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance to all men in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts xvii. 30.) Here we ponder a moment. To judge might be to do any one of three things; first, to discriminate between the righteous and the wicked; second, to condemn and punish the world; and third, to judge as David judged Israel, which was to reign in the sense of an orderly administration of human affairs. Which of all these is signified by Paul’s declaration that God will judge the world by Christ? We find that they are all signified.

First, as to punishing the world. Paul expressly declares in 2 Thess 1-7, “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven *taking vengeance* upon them that know not God and obey not the gospel.” Isaiah testifies in chap. xxvi. verse 21, “The Lord cometh forth out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquities.”

PUNISHMENT OF THE WORLD.

We may not like this idea. What then? Let me remind you of an incident in the life of Christ while upon the earth. Christ on a certain occasion told Peter: “Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of sinners, and they shall condemn him, and spit on him, and scourge him, and crucify him.” Peter objected, “Lord this shall not be unto thee; pity thyself, Lord.” How did Christ take Peter’s objection? He rebuked him severely, saying, “Thou favourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” The thing that was “of,” or according to, God in this case was the arrest and killing of Christ. The thing that was “of,” or according to, men was the saving of Christ from such an undesirable fate. Superficially viewed, the human view was the better view. Peter, with the best of natural feeling was on the side of the human view in the case, and came under the Lord’s rebuke. Let us take care to favour those things that be of God, and not those that be of men, however apparently preferable the latter may be.

If the death of Christ was one of the “things that be of God,” the second coming of Christ, and everything connected with it, must be not less so. It is a thing purposed by God, and arranged by him, and which in a sense will be performed by him. As Peter says, “God shall send him.” If God send him, it will be for God’s ends, and not for man’s. God’s ends and man’s ends do not harmonise. Man’s end in the management of the earth is that man may be at liberty to gratify his appetites and tastes without reference to God. God’s end is that man may find his well being in the recognition of God’s relation to the whole matter as the Creator and

Proprietor and Governor. "The earth he hath given to the children of men," but in the ultimate issue of things it is only for a certain class of the children of men that He has designed it as a permanent habitation. They are thus defined in the Bible. "They that wait upon the Lord they shall inherit the earth" (Psa. xxxvii. 9.) And again, "The meek shall inherit the earth" (Matt. v. 5.) This is the finish of things, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

That Christ should punish the world may seem strange to people who only conceive him as the incarnation of kindness and gentleness exclusively. In itself, his judicial function is the reverse of inconsistent with his character, and it is far from unnecessary for his work. Energy and executiveness in dealing with obstacles and opposition are essential to the true effectiveness of benevolence. A kind man unable to cope with wickedness would be a failure. Christ is not only the Lamb of God, the meek and lowly one, but he is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, at whose roar the world will yet get on its knees. Even when he was on the earth, this aspect of his character was illustrated more than once. Mark tells us (chap. iii. 5) that he looked round about with anger upon the Scribes and Pharisees who sought to interfere with his words, and Matthew records in chap. xxiii. a speech which for scathing denunciation against the misleaders of the people has never been exceeded,—characterising the Scribes and Pharisees as "hypocrites," "serpents," "a generation of vipers," "whited sepulchres," and so on. John exhibits him in chap. ii. in the act of driving from the precincts of the temple with a whip of small cords the crowd of chaffering merchants that profaned the courts with their unholy traffic. If he could show fire and righteous indignation in the day when he came to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, what may we not expect when he comes to proclaim "the day of vengeance of our God"?

THE DAY OF VENGEANCE.

The prophecy which assigns to him the work of proclaiming and establishing the day of vengeance, as well as the day of favour, is contained in Isa. lxi. It was read by him publicly in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke iv. 17), and applied by him to himself. But he stopped short at the mention of the "acceptable year." Because the time for the day of vengeance had not then arrived. As he said, "The Son of Man had not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." For everything there is a season and a time. The day of vengeance will come when he comes "to take vengeance on them that know not God," as Paul says he will. Of the nature of this day of vengeance we are enabled to judge by the representations we have of it in various parts of the Scriptures. See the terrible hieroglyphic of Rev. xix.—His eyes as a flame of fire, out of his mouth a sharp sword, in his hand a rod of iron that with it he should smite the nations. See this terrible figure "treading the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." Such is the awful portraiture of Rev. xix. verse 15. Or take Rev. xiv.—a white cloud, seated thereon the Son of Man crowned, and in his hand a sickle to reap, not the wheat to be gathered into his garner, but grape clusters which the last verse in the chapter alleges to represent the wickedness of the earth. See the clusters

thrown into the winepress and trodden by the mystic judgment figure. See the blood issue in streams from every aperture of the great wine vat, and overflow the surrounding country to the depth of four or five feet for many miles. This in the rough form of a symbol would give us an idea of the sanguinary character of the era introduced by the arrival of Christ. What it literally means we may learn from a prophecy in Jer. xxv.: We have all heard of Jerusalem, the most ancient city in the world, except Damascus.—Jerusalem, the city where Christ was crucified, and buried, and from which, after his resurrection, he ascended to heaven. The city is still on the face of the earth, though sunk into comparative insignificance. It was the seat of the manifested glory of God in a temple erected by Divine appointment and plan. It is in connection with this city that the message of the prophet was delivered. I refer to it thus particularly because of the bearing of the matter upon ourselves in the manner you will presently see. The prophet was told to declare the wrath of God against “all the kingdoms of the world which are upon the face of the earth,” and to say to them,—“Lo, I begin to bring evil upon the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? *Ye shall not be utterly unpunished*; I WILL CALL FOR A SWORD UPON ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE EARTH, saith the Lord, and the slain of the Lord shall be at that day from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth. They shall not be lamented nor gathered, nor buried: they shall be dung upon the ground.”

This reference to Jerusalem, is a direct illustration of what is meant by the judgment by which God will punish the world. Very full particulars of the siege and destruction of that city have been preserved for posterity in the writings of Josephus, who took a personal part in the Jewish war of independence which terminated in that awful calamity. The war lasted three years, during which the fugitive population from all the outlying places captured by the Romans took refuge in Jerusalem, resulting in the cramming into the city of a population of about two millions of people. The city was provisioned for three years, but the granaries containing these provisions were destroyed by fire at the commencement of the siege, in consequence of which the population soon suffered the miseries of famine and died off like flies. The deaths became too numerous for burial, and the bodies were thrown over the walls in such vast numbers that the Romans were obliged to break up their camp at one point to escape the pestilential fumes of putrefaction. At last, on the capture of the city, the place was given to the flames, in which shrieking multitudes perished. This is no fancy picture, but a matter of literal history supplied by an eye-witness who was himself a general in the war, and whose account was confirmed as a true one by Titus and Vespasian, under whom these terrible events happened.

We may understand from this example what is meant by the terrible statement concerning the Gentile nations at the coming of Christ, “Ye shall not be unpunished, for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth, for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh, he will give them that are wicked to the sword.”

This will enable us to understand the full import of the statement of

Daniel that at that time there shall be a time of trouble such as there never was since there was a nation upon the earth. This statement was made by Christ, concerning the time of trouble that came upon the Jews, and it is also applied to the troubles to come upon the Gentiles at the time of the end as you may see by Dan. xii. 1.

THE WORLD'S CRIME

Perhaps you ask what is the world to be punished for? Go to Eden to get your answer. Do you smile a pitying smile on being referred to Eden? Perhaps you look upon the story of the garden of Eden as a nursery tale, on a par with Jack the Giant Killer. You cannot do this if you profess to believe in Christ. Christ endorsed the writings that give us Eden as the Word of God. Unless you say Christ was an impostor, you are bound to receive Eden as a fact in the beginning of human history.

What do you see in Eden? One act for which our first ancestors were driven out to misery and toil and death. Oh yes, say our smart sceptical friends, a world of woe from the eating of an apple. Oh, my shallow friends, not for eating an apple: for setting aside the will of the Most High; for disobeying the command of the Eternal. Is that no crime? What more terrible offence could man commit than to set aside the revealed will of God? Adam and Eve did this in one instance, and behold them exiled from the Divine presence and favour: "one offence." Do you ask what the world is to be punished for? "For knowing not God," for forgetting God; for disregarding Him; for disobeying His commandments; for repudiating His authority; for setting aside His rights and proprietorship in His created handiwork. The whole world is heedless of God. They live as if God had not made them, and as if God had not spoken. This is wickedness though so lightly esteemed by man, and will only be expiated in seas of blood through which mankind will wade from the darkness and folly of the present age, to the wisdom and joy that lie beyond. So it is revealed, and we cannot alter it.

But the judgment to be inflicted on mankind at the coming of Christ, is not to be a work of indiscriminate and objectless slaughter. Its general object is briefly expressed in the 26th chap. of Isaiah as "teaching the world righteousness." The method adopted in reaching this result is hinted at in Micah where God says by the prophet it will be "according to the days of Israel's coming out of the land of Egypt." This introduces the plagues to notice, which were not promiscuously inflicted, but were sent one after the other in connection with a scheme of things to which they stood related. The general object was to make God's existence known to Israel and to the Egyptians, and to all the earth (as declared several times in the course of the Exodus narrative). But the particular way in which this was done, was to raise a political issue to which they stood related in the nature of military measures. God demanded Israel's liberation; Pharaoh refused, and God enforced His demand by repeated acts of judgment, until Pharaoh's power was broken, and Pharaoh's obstinacy yielded in the overwhelming presence of God's manifested power.

So the judgments of the terrible era that will teach the world righteousness will turn upon a distinct political issue.

The nature of this issue we may discern very plainly when we consider the scripture doctrine of the Kingdom of God. Everyone has been made familiar by Handel's "Messiah" with the declaration that "the kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of God, and of His Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." The popular idea of the meaning of this is that the states and kingdoms of the world will slowly become inoculated with divine principles of action, and so be transformed into the kingdoms of Christ. The scriptures present a very different idea from this. Violence is always exhibited as the means by which the change is to be brought about. Even in so simple a presentation of the matter as we find in the second Psalm, this is manifest. "I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Upon which there follow the words: "*Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron and shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel*" What an extraordinary association of terms is this if the meaning be that the world is gently and gradually to learn righteousness. But suppose Christ will become king of the nations only after the most terrible war that the world has ever seen, then how natural it is to represent it in this way. That this is the fact is lucidly exhibited in the 2nd chap. of Daniel. It is not the modern habit to have any interest in, or to show any respect for Daniel. This is part of the inconsistency of Christendom. It professes to follow Christ, yet refuses to be guided by Christ's estimate of Daniel. Christ refers to Daniel as a prophet, and says "He that readeth let him understand—the prophet Daniel." Daniel himself said in the message he communicated to Nebuchadnezzar, at whose court he was an honorary captive, "The God of heaven hath made known to the king Nebuchadnezzar *what shall be in the latter days.*"

THY KINGDOM COME.

Let us turn for a moment to the vision to which Daniel thus alludes. It is in the 2nd chapter of his book. Nebuchadnezzar, as verse 29 informs us, had been speculating as to the course of empire in the days that should come after him. Adapting revelation to this predisposed state of mind, God communicated to him, by the figure of an image composed of various metals, a rough foreshowing of the course of human history. He then sent Daniel to him to explain the meaning of what he saw. The image he saw had a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, and legs of iron—the feet part of iron and part of clay mixed. Daniel told the king that this composite image symbolised the four empires that should arise in succession, including the empire of Babylon, and the mixed state of things that should succeed to the fourth empire, represented by the admixture of clay with the iron of the feet.

Nebuchadnezzar had seen a stone descend and smite the image on these feet, and involve the whole structure in ruin. He had also seen the stone enlarge, and grind the materials to powder, and expand till it became an earth-filling mountain. It is to Daniel's words as to the meaning of this that our attention must now be very specially directed. Verse 44: "In the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, and the kingdom shall not be left to other

people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, the great God hath made known unto the king what shall come to pass hereafter. The dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure." Now, in estimating the meaning of these really plain words, we have to note that history has completely verified the truth of this vision, so far as it has been developed.

The four great empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome rose and fell one after the other in successive ages. We are now in the fifth stage represented by the mixture of the iron with the clay. The Roman iron is mixed with the barbaric and democratic clay of the North, resulting in the division of Europe into a number of separately-organised sovereignties on the Roman basis, corresponding with the toes on the feet, and the ten horns on the head of the fourth beast. When you look on a map of Europe and see the various countries of Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain, France, &c., you are looking on the iron-and-clay divided state of government that succeeded the iron of the Roman Empire. You are looking on the feet of the image. The stone miraculously hewn from the mountain side has not yet descended upon these feet. But we are in the neighbourhood of that great event.

The stone in the case is identifiable with Christ, who compared himself to a stone, concerning which he said,—“Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken,”—as Israel were—“but upon whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder” which the wind will carry away, and leave the stone to grow into a mountain that will fill the whole earth. This piece of symbolism and its interpretation is complete and symmetrically so far as it goes. The details we find in other parts of the scripture.

When Christ arrives in the earth, having summoned and organised his friends of all ages for association and co-operation with himself in the great work he is about to do, for which he will qualify them by imparting to them his own immortal nature, he will lay claim to universal dominion. The Apocalypse shows us a manifesto addressed to all the world, when the Lamb stands upon Mount Zion (Rev. xiv.)—“Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment *is come*.” Psalm ii. shows us the advice suitable to the times. “Be wise, O ye kings, be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Kiss the Son (that is, tender allegiance to him) lest he be angry.” With such a demand made upon them, it is no wonder that we read “The kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to fight against him.” (Rev. xix., 19).

THE WAR OF THE GREAT DAY OF GOD ALMIGHTY.

Men who possess power do not give it up on demand: try to take a bone from a dog, and you will see an illustration of what will occur when the kings of the earth are summoned to surrender their power to an unknown claimant, new risen in the east. We read in Rev. xvii that the ten horns make war with the Lamb, that is, the European governments coalesce against Christ when he comes. Why they should make war upon him will be all perfectly apparent to those who

know the nature of the kingdom he comes to set up. The prophet **Isaiah** tells us in chapter lii. 15, that the kings shall shut their mouths at him, for this reason: "that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider." The chaplains and ecclesiastics of the governments, do not tell them that Christ is coming to take possession of all the kingdoms of the world. When therefore, he arrives and addresses to them a demand for their submission, they give no heed to the summons, but assemble their armies to make war against the king enthroned in Mount Zion, (Psa. ii. 6; Rev. xiv. 1; xix. 19.) Then ensues what is described in Rev. xvi. 14 as "the war of the great day of God Almighty,"—mistranslated "battle" in the authorised version. Particulars of this war in some of its aspects you may learn from Zech. xiv., Joel iii., Ezek. xxxviii. and xxxix., and other places. The result of such a war could never be doubtful of course, and to some people, it is inconceivable that there should be such a war at all. First, they think the mere fact of Christ's presence would paralyse the armies of his foes,—which might be true if his foes knew whom they had for an antagonist; but this they do not know. When he comes, they will doubtless set him down as a new fanatical Mahdi from the desert.

Then it is argued that a war with Omnipotence on one side could not last a moment, which would be true if the object of omnipotence were merely to get rid of opposition; but seeing that the object is to punish the world and teach them righteousness, it is necessary that the governments of the world should be allowed like Pharaoh to put forth their strength in war against him, that they may receive in repeated overwhelming disaster the judgments which the crisis calls for, and that enlightenment as to the Divine character of the situation, which is essential for the end in view. At the last, the Lamb overcomes the coalition of the kings, backed up though they are by 14 millions of armed men with breech-loaders, and magazine rifles and rifled artillery. The final result is described in the 24th of Isaiah: "The kings of the earth shall be gathered together as prisoners." This is after the type of Joshua and the kings of Canaan, who, after their subjugation, were brought to him ignominiously.

The work that God has given him to do requires him to do all this. In the 110th Psalm we have a glimpse of it. Christ quoted and applied this Psalm to himself (Matthew xxii. 41—45)—so that we are on safe ground. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The application of this to Christ is made plain in the New Testament (Mark xvi. 19)—that he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. The Psalm is expressly applied in this sense by Peter on the day of Pentecost to disprove its applicability to David, and its consequent applicability to Christ. (Acts ii. 34.) "David is not ascended into the heavens, but he saith, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand." "Sitting on the right hand of God" is the Bible description of Christ's present position; but the point at residence is as to his remaining there always, or returning to the earth. The occurrence of the word "until" is the point of the verse, as indicating a limit; he remains there "till" his enemies are made his

footstool. When the time comes for the enemies of Christ to be put under him, what then? The Psalm proceeds, "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of ZION, rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." The Jews were not willing in the day of Christ's weakness, and they are not willing now; but here is a time when there will be a change, a time when he will no longer remain at the right hand, but re-appear in Zion, out of which his power will go prevailing. The Psalm proceeds, "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath." When the kings are smitten, what follows? Zech. xiv 9 tells us. "The Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one king and his name one." Daniel gives us the same answer in another way, chap. vii. verse 15: "There was given unto him a kingdom, glory, and dominion, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him." Psalm lxxii. gives us the same picture: "All kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him." The Apocalypse gives us the same consummation in a more comprehensive manner: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ."

When Christ at his return is enthroned in Jerusalem, we read in the 24th chap. of Isaiah,—“The kings of the earth shall be gathered together as prisoners. Then shall the moon be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.” The 9th chap., 6th verse, which speaks to us of the child to be born, the Son to be given, whose name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, tells us,—“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, but he shall sit upon the throne of David.” In the second chapter, at the third verse we read that many people shall then go and say,—“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths, and out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.”

All which enables us to understand the beautiful prophecy in the 25th chap., at the 6th verse,—“In this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And He will destroy on this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil which is spread over all nations; He will swallow up death in victory, and the Lord God shall wipe away tears from off all faces, and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth, for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, lo this is our God, we have waited for him, he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

THE NEW GOVERNMENT—WHY AT JERUSALEM?

The sequel is the new government resulting from the setting up of that kingdom spoken of by Daniel. In the passages quoted, you will observe it is associated with Jerusalem. Why should this be? Why should Christ reign in Jerusalem? Why not in London? Why not in Rome? Why not in New York? There is a very substantial reason which will be

appreciated by those who know the gospel of the kingdom. Though Christ is introduced to our notice as the Son of God, he is perhaps more frequently proclaimed as the Son of David. The very first verse of the very first chapter of the very first book of the New Testament, while omitting the assertion that Christ is the Son of God, announces him as the Son of Abraham the Son of David.

Now David was king in Jerusalem over the nation of the Jews, who were the descendants of Abraham, the friend of God. Would not David's son in the natural order of things succeed to David's throne where David reigned? There might not be much in this if it were not that God made a specific promise to David that he should have a son who would sit on his throne for ever. To this covenant of promise David made a special reference in his last recorded words. "God," he said, "hath made with me an everlasting covenant, which is all my salvation and all my desire" (2 Sam. xxiii. 5.) This covenant, he said, related to one who would "rule over men"; who would be just, and who would be "as the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds." This covenant he repeatedly alludes to in the Psalms in a way that shows us the shape and bearing of it. Take, for example, Psalm cxxii. 11: "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, he will not turn from it. Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." Psalm lxxxix. 34: "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." The precise terms of the covenant may be ascertained by reference to the 7th chap. of 2nd Samuel; and the terms of that covenant, though having an application to Solomon, are specifically and finally applied by Peter to Christ on the Day of Pentecost. Acts ii. 29: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn to him with an oath, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." We may therefore clearly understand the words of the angel to Mary, the mother of Christ, before Christ was born. (Luke i, 33): "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of His father David, and he shall reign over the house of David for ever, and of His Kingdom there shall be no end."

Of course as heir to David's throne, he is King of the Jews, which enables us to understand the accusation written over his cross,—“This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Also the statement,—“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” We also read in a clear light the words of Psalm cx. which we have already looked at—“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power,” that is, the Jews,—for his spiritual people are willing in the day of his weakness. Also the statement,—“They shall look upon him whom they have pierced.” We also understand the force of Christ's declaration to Jerusalem,—“Ye shall not see me henceforth until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF DAVID IDENTICAL.

Christ enthroned on Mount Zion is therefore no strange picture nor an accidental or poetical association of ideas. It is the accomplishment of a long announced purpose, and anciently established covenant. It is according to the fitness of things: it is the result of the deposition of the kings of the earth from their thrones. The kingdom of God which Daniel said would be set up when the kingdoms of men should be destroyed, is the kingdom of David, the kingdom of Israel restored; consequently, the first thing when Christ arrives, after he has summoned around him his approved friends, of all past generations, is the work declared by the prophet Amos, thus,—“I will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down, and close up the breaches thereof, and I will build up his ruins, as in the days of old.” This enables us to understand the question of the apostles to Christ before he went away, Acts i. 6,—“Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom again to Israel?” Also his promise to them while upon the earth,—“When the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of his glory ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”—(Matt. xix. 28).

THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS AND ITS METHOD.

In this connection, the restoration of the Jews has its natural place. Usually, this purpose of God is believed in by devout people in a disconnected way, simply as an isolated fact, because they read it in the prophets; but when the purpose of God to set up a kingdom is understood, it then falls into its place as a natural element in the whole process. That they will be restored again is most plainly declared,—“He shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth” (Isa. xi. 12). “He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock” (Jer. xxxi. 10). “Behold I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country, and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Zech. viii. 7). “I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land, and I will make them one nation upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all” (Ezek. xxxvii. 21).

The process of this restoration will have progressive stages, as the deliverance from Egypt had. For it is according to the analogy of this deliverance that this restoration is to take place. We read in Isa. xliii. 3, —“I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back. Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.” What is this but a demand upon the governments of the world to expedite the restoration of the Jews? In this work, a maritime power identifiable with Britain takes a prominent part, according to Isa. lx. 9. “The isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, to the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee, and the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, their kings shall minister to thee. In my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. And the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall

perish, yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." This implies coercion of the extremest type, after the manner of the force that compelled Pharaoh in Egypt to let Israel go. As the result, we read in Isa. li. 22,—"I have taken out of thine hand the cup of trembling, even the cup of my fury, and thou shalt no more drink it again, but I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee, which have said to thy soul, Bow down that we may go over, and thou hast laid thy body as the ground, and as the street to them that went over. Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem. From henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean." That the result should be effectual is natural in view of the means employed, but how satisfactory to find it so exhibited as in the following testimony. Isa. xlix. 22,—“Thus saith the Lord God, behold I will lift up my hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people, and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters upon their shoulders, and kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers. They shall bow down to thee with their faces toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet, and thou shalt know that I am the Lord. They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.”

A NEW SUBJUGATION OF THE WORLD.

A new subjugation is waiting the nations of the earth. It is subjugation at the hands of Christ; but Christ employs the nation of Israel as the instrument of the work. This is a revealed fact, however, foreign to our Gentile notions. What else is the meaning of the following passages :—“Many nations are gathered against thee, saying, Let her be defiled; let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they his counsel, for he shall gather them (the nations) as the sheaves into the floor. Arise and thresh, O Daughter of Zion . . . thou shalt beat in pieces many people” (Micah iv. 11-13.) “The remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep, who if he go through both treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver,” (Chap. v. 8.) “They shall be as mighty men which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle, and they shall fight because the Lord is with them.” (Zech. x. 5.) “The nations shall see and be confounded at all their might; they shall lay their hand upon their mouth; their ears shall be deaf; they shall lick the dust like a serpent; they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth; they shall be afraid because of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee.” (Micah vii. 16.) “Behold I will make thee a new sharp threshing instrument having teeth. Thou shalt thresh the mountains (kingdoms) and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them.” (Isaiah xli. 15) “With thee will I break in pieces the nations, with thee will I destroy kingdoms, and with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider, and with thee I break in pieces the chariot and his rider.” (Jer. li. 20, 21)

The nations having been broken by the divinely-wielded weapon of the Jewish nation in war, will be brought into a worshipping and obedient

moor. "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, because thy judgments are made manifest." (Rev. xv. 4 ; Psa. lxxxvi. 9 ; Ezek. xxxix. 21.) The world is so impregnated with ideas subversive of divine authority, that it will take a long process of drastic discipline to purge and subdue them. But the result will come at last ; they will "fear God and give him glory." It is the last thing they are inclined to do at present, and the last thing they will submit to apart from coercion. Coercion will do it notwithstanding the foolish popular outcry against it.

We read in the 2nd chap. of Isaiah, "The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of man bowed down and the Lord alone exalted in that day. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud, and lofty, and every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low. . . . They shall go in the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, *when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.*" The finish of the awful time is beautifully described in the 46th Psalm : "The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved, he uttered his voice, and the earth melted. Come behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth ; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder ; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still and know that I am God ; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

It is in this connection that we may understand the picture depicted by Isaiah 2nd chap. : "Many people shall come and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his path ;" and again by Zechariah, "Many nations shall be joined unto the Lord in that day, and shall be his people."

This is the glorious gospel of the kingdom. The will of God shall be done on earth as it is in heaven. That will expressed in its highest form is this. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." How happy will the earth be when these two commandments are the universal rule of human action. The words may seem a mockery now, but they express a great and glorious principle which will yet come into force, the prospect of which inspired the song of the angels in the plains of Bethlehem when he was born who is to bring about the glorious reform : "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill towards men."

THE NATURAL OUTLOOK.

We often hear of the good time coming. What prospect is there of it apart from Divine intervention ? The reverse of any such prospect. The natural outlook is one of darkness and despair. Lord Beaconsfield said in one of his latest addresses that he could hear the low moan of coming tempest on the distant horizon. John Bright, in one of his last letters said something to the effect that he could see no augury but that of darkness and calamity ahead in the present aspect of human affairs. These are not the utterances of gratuitous pessimism ; they are the discernments of high sagacity. Any thoughtful mind is bound to indulge the same view who fairly takes the full drift of things into account. There is a

widespread movement going on in the world which cannot be called anything else than a dangerous ferment. After ages of subjection, the masses have received political power in all countries, and they are only just beginning to know how to use it. The result is seen in the agitation of various plausible schemes, which one and all mean the desire and aim of the lower classes to bring down the upper, and to get their share of the good things that have hitherto been in the hands of a few. These aims, as yet, are being promoted by peaceable methods; but who can look forward without alarm to the inevitable enforcement of inadmissible demands at the point of the sword? The world is rapidly verging towards socialism.

It is an attractive idea in the abstract that all should work for the good of all—that the world should be one family, with one purse and one life—and that there should be no such thing as any man or class of men left out in the cold, but all should be cared for and provided for as under the roof of one house. A beautiful idea; but who can believe it practicable without irresistible authority and infallible wisdom at the head to enforce it? The French Revolution was an experiment which thoughtful minds can never forget. Mr. Donnelly, in his book, *Cæsar's Column*, shocked the world a few months ago by a dreadful picture of the probable state of society some two hundred years hence. The poor have become poorer, and the rich have become richer, with the effect of a general burst up, in which the rich are exterminated, and a new chaos sets in. It cannot be considered a fancy picture. The population is rapidly increasing, while the means of subsistence on the planet have a fixed limit. The tendency is necessarily in the direction of a more and more fierce competition, which becomes a debasing struggle for mere existence. Business degenerates to reckless cunning, and by-and-bye to mere fraud and cruelty in which hearts are broken, life is blighted, and men made to bewail their very existence.

To talk of a good time coming in the ordinary course, is to talk mockery. Rather talk of bad times, black times, dreadful times—a hell upon earth, when there will be more people upon earth than can be fed, and human kindness killed as in a crowd flying in panic from a burning building.

There is no ground for expecting any good time apart from Christ. We need no other than God has purposed in him. His mission contains every element of rescue from the morass of misery into which the world is slowly sinking. Who can break up and disband the crushing armies of Europe but he? Who can establish a strong and wise and just and kindly government but he? Who can fuse mankind into one happy family but he? If he punish the world first, it deserves it; for there must first be righteousness before there can be peace. If he destroy its institutions first, and enforce his own single authority on its unwilling populations, it is because it is for its good, for it cannot find well-being in its own ways. Six thousand years have tragically proved the inadequacy of every form of human government; it has all been a terrible failure. The divine remedy remains, and will come. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness." (*Acts xvii. 29.*) "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes (even his tried and glorified brethren) decree judgment. And this man shall be an hiding place from

the wind, a covert from the tempest, the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." The long and terrible night will end. The world will find rest and plenty and holiness and peace and joy in the supernal age that Christ will establish when he has torn up the present system by the roots, and set up the power and worship of God in all the earth.

"He shall judge the people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment. He shall save the children of the needy, and break in pieces the oppressor. In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth. He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Kings shall fall down before him, and all nations shall serve him, for he shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence, and precious shall their blood be in his sight. His name shall endure for ever, his name shall be continued as long as the sun; men shall be blessed in him, and all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and blessed be his glorious name. And let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and amen." (Psa. lxxii.)

FOURTH LECTURE.

SUBJECT:—“*Signs that the great event is near, even at the door—Distress—Overblown armaments—Universal war-preparation; threatening demands of the international democracy, backed up with dynamite outrage and labour riots—Disappearance of the temporal power of the Pope—The exhausted state of Turkey—Revival of the Holy Land and movements among the Jews—The bearing of those things upon the advent.*”

Before commencing the last lecture of the present course, it may be profitable to refer to the indifferencence which most men feel towards the subject of the second coming of Christ. Even men who might profess themselves believers in the New Testament fail to take it into their calculations as a thing affecting them in any way. They have a reserve feeling to the effect that it may be so far away as to have nothing to do with the u. They say that the coming of Christ has been so often expected without result, that it may possibly be thousands of years off, and they seem to feel that these thousands of years must lie between them and the event in question in such a way as to obscure it from all practical sight or calculation. The effect is to blind the eyes and deaden the heart to a subject of the most urgent practical importance.

I desire to endeavour to show the unreasonable and delusive nature of this feeling. It will in fact, on examination, be found to be a demoralising fiction of the imagination which it behoves every wise man to get rid of as quickly and effectually as possible. It springs from a mental illusion of which we are all liable to be the victims, unless we put forth a vigorous and decisive effort of the understanding. It comes from an inevitable habit of looking forward to the time that is ahead of us as if it belonged to us. We virtually assume that we shall be contemporary with it and with whatever it may bring with it. We seem to feel as if we shall have to go through it all before we can stand face to face with those spiritual issues with which it has pleased God to associate this mortal life in responsible cases. The fact is that we have nothing to do with any time beyond our own life; there can be no more time ahead to a living man than the length of his actual life. When life stops, the recognition of time stops. Solomon, by divine inspiration, tells us that “The dead know not anything,” and that “there is no work nor device nor wisdom nor

knowledge in the grave whither thou goest." (Ecc. ix. 5, 10.) If a dead man have no knowledge of time, how long will it seem to him from the moment he closes his eyes in death to the moment he opens them again at the resurrection? How long does the time seem to a person in a faint, or to a man lying in a hospital ward unconscious from some injury of the brain? How long did the past ages seem to us before we were born?

The fact is that in the death state there is not a moment's conscious interval between death and resurrection. The fact has a direct bearing on the subject. It brings the coming of Christ close to every responsible man's door, however far off it might be in reality. There is not a man or woman of us but what might die this very night, and if death is a blank, it must necessarily be that it would seem to us as if Christ came this very night even if he did not actually come for ten thousand years. Every wise man will press this undeniable truth home to his own heart. It will help him to be wiser. It will help to bring Christ closer to him. Christ is only so far away as death is. Death is always busy. It might be compared to an invisible official who stalks through the community, and puts his summoning hand on all our shoulders one after the other. He may be a long time in coming our way, but he will come at last, and we never know when. His visit may be in the next street to-day; ten streets off to-morrow; and then the next door in our own street. Then he may fly off and wander about from street to street for a while, but at last he knocks at our own door, and he will take no denial. Our turn has come and we must go.

When he comes, he does a great thing. He is a great magician in his way. With a touch of his wand, he brings about an extraordinary change. Literally, he does no more than produce a corpse and a funeral for the time being, but in relation to the dead man's consciousness, he causes the most extraordinary transformation ever witnessed by human eyes. The familiar surroundings of daily life give place as in a moment to the scenes connected with the arrival of Christ and the resurrection of the dead.

Do you call this mere lugubrious sentimentalism? Mere solemn drivel? I appeal to you in the name of common-sense against such a view. It is the simplest matter of fact to which only a fool would close his eyes. It is a constantly imminent contingency to which we hourly stand related. Are there no registrars of deaths in Birmingham? Is there no cemetery at Witton? Have you no undertakers waiting to attend you with their trappings of woe? Is there no such thing as a death rate per thousand? Are any of us exempt from the universal reign of death that may lay any man low within a week? Christ's words have a pungent application in this connection: "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh." Though he does not really come till he literally arrives in the earth at the time appointed, his coming bursts instantaneously upon every responsible man's vision who dies, by reason of the absence of conscious interval between death and the resurrection.

The question of the second coming of Christ is therefore of urgent practical moment at any time and at all times, quite irrespective of the signs of the times. Let us get rid of the fog, and it will cease to seem a thing afar off.

SIGNS IN OUR DAY.

But, of course, there is a peculiar interest in the idea that there are signs in our day, indicative of the nearness of Christ in an imminent chronological sense

There is something specially agreeable no doubt in the idea that we may be among those who shall escape visitation from the invisible official already referred to, who is on his daily round; and may be found among those to whom Paul refers as those who shall not sleep, but who shall be alive at the coming of the Lord (1 Cor. xv. 51. 1 Thess. iv. 15:) and to whom also the Lord alludes as the servants whom he, "when he cometh shall find watching" (Luke xii. 37).

It is to this subject we must now devote our attention.

There were signs connected with the first advent of Christ, and when Christ came, he found fault with the leaders of the people, for not being able to discern those signs (Matt. xvi. 3). What would he say to modern leaders of the people, who not only do not discern the signs of the times, but scout the possibility of this discernment, and even deny that the coming of Christ is a thing to be looked for at all? It is said the common people heard him gladly, while the rulers rejected him. It is so now. It is the common people untrammelled by class interest, who do embrace the truth, while the leaders stand afar off in the pride of artificial learning. This is an obstacle in the way of many who would like the truth for its own sake. They do not like its common-people associations. A wise man will recognise in this his opportunity. He will say "Well, we do not in our day have to go to the stake: all the more reason why I should accept any drawback that may be associated with the truth in the circumstances of the nineteenth century."

The signs connected with his second coming are necessarily dependent on the times, for if there were no delimitation of times, we should be at a loss how to place the signs. The signs might be ever so promising: but we should never know they meant anything, unless they were associated with particular times. That there are times connected with his second coming, Jesus recognised in saying that Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles, until *the times of the Gentiles* should be fulfilled (Luke xxi. 25.) And Peter did the same thing in another way in saying that the heavens must hold Christ, "*until the times of the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the prophets*" (Acts iii. 20.)

These Gentile times have nearly run out, as we saw in a former lecture; these times of restitution have drawn nigh. Is the state of the world in accordance with this fact? Are the signs visible that ought to be visible in such a supposition? The answer to this question presupposes there are some specified symptoms or tokens by which the arrival of the times can be recognised,—some mention in the Bible of the state of things there would be when the end should come. If this were not the case, it would be vain to attempt to recognise signs in any state of things. But it is the case. A state of things has been indicated as indicative of the approach of the time of the end. You will see this for yourselves in the following simple illustrations,—"*When ye see these things come to pass, then know that the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand*" (Luke xxi. 31.) "Then shall

appear *the sign of the Son of Man* in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn when they shall see the *Son of Man* coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv. 30.) "That day shall not come except there come a *falling away first*." (2. Thess. ii. 3.) "The Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret to his servants the prophets." (Amos iii. 7) "*At the time of the end*, the king of the north shall come. . . . into the glorious land." (Dan. xi. 40.) "*In the latter days*, the king of the north shall come out of his place in the north parts, and many people with him." (Ezek. xxxviii., 15-16). Then we have the whole of the Apocalypse to show things which must shortly come to pass (Rev. i. 1.)

These statements show that there are states and circumstances which have been foreordained as elements in the programme leading up to the coming of the great day, when, as we read in Zephaniah, "God will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath." These states and circumstances are SIGNS OF THE APPROACH OF THE LATTER DAY. What are they?

DISTRESS OF NATIONS WITH PERPLEXITY.

Christ says: "On earth there shall be distress of nations with perplexity . . . men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming upon the earth." (Luke xxi., 25, 26.) Do we see this sign in manifestation in the present state of the world? There is no sign more visible. There has of course been distress upon the earth before, but there never have been the precise sources of distress that are now active. For one thing, there have never been so many people upon the earth as there are now, neither have there been the same conditions, affecting trade and commerce, and the relations of men and communities one to another.

It used to be possible for men to get a good living by farming; in fact this was one of the opulent employments of the country, but now, through the overwhelming supplies of cheap produce from all quarters of the world prices have gone down to a point which render it extremely difficult to extract a living from the soil. Farming has consequently become an anxiety and a night-mare instead of the joyous and bountiful occupation it used to be. To aggravate the evil, the labourers have combined in unions which interfere with the free relations of employer and employed. Wages are demanded that cannot be paid, and failing to get them, labourers are finding their way to the towns. Farms are going out of occupation, and agriculture is withering.

It might be supposed there is at least some compensation for this in the gain to producers in the Colonies and the United States: but this is not so. The corn trade is monopolised by gigantic capitalists who fix the prices. The raiser is obliged to sell at these prices or have his crop rotting on his hands. He cannot afford to hold out. His poor profits are all needed to pay the interest on the money which capitalists have advanced on his farm. He is obliged to sell at the low rates ruling in the market,

and he also is in affliction through the very process of cheap supply that is causing affliction here.

Then it might be supposed that at least the general population get the benefit in cheap bread and all kinds of commodities. Yes; bread is cheap, but money to buy it with is scarce for a variety of reasons. For one thing the farmer who used to spend money freely in general commodities has now little or nothing to spare. It takes him all his time to raise his rent. For another thing, general trade is embarrassed by a keenness of competition which becomes sharper and sharper. Every business is so overrun with hungry men, and so cut down as regards the margin of profit, that living by honest traffic has become almost impossible. Business becomes more and more a feverish struggle and a reckless scramble for bare existence. There is a tendency on the part of the maker to go direct to the consumer with prices on which an ordinary retailer could not live. The consequence is that big affairs grow bigger and small men go to the wall. In former times, there was an escape in foreign directions. Men who did not do well at home could cultivate connection with foreign parts; but now both home and abroad are alike in the exigencies of competition. The telegraph has made the world one system, so that the price of commodities in London is known the same day all over the world, and lucrative transactions based upon foreign ignorance of prices are rendered impossible. Men used to be able to make a living by shipping English goods to the Colonies; but now the Colonies are either their own manufacturers, or send their agents direct to British markets to buy. The world in a sense is used up.

Even the working man with his daily wages, who as a rule is the only man without anxiety, is getting into the whirl. He combines in trades unions to keep up wages, but what is the use of that, if the state of trade does not allow of the wages demanded? They strike and subject themselves to misery, and suppose they manage to screw up the wage standard, they only send business out of the country, because wages are lower in other countries, and capital goes where it can work cheapest. At this moment, there are many cotton factories running in Japan, put up by English money and worked by Japanese hands, who work for perhaps half what an English workman would want. And they are turning out vast quantities of orders that used to come to England. It is the same in other countries and in other departments of manufacture. Thus there is an undermining of trade at home, and the English working man, successful in his strikes, driving away orders, has to work short time and is often at his wits end to get bread for his children. The great army of the unemployed gets daily more numerous, and the distress is increasing, not alone in our country, which is the richest country in the world, but in all countries, this mad competition of classes and individuals is slowly sinking the community in a morass of misery from which there is no prospect of their being lifted.

The Tories think the cure would lie in the abolition of Free Trade. "Put an end," they say, "to this suicidal policy of taking other people's stuff into the country without taxation, who wont let our stuff into their countries without heavy customs duties." But the Liberals say "No, no; we get cheap stuff by Free Trade, and if you put on duties, it will check supply, increase the price of living, and make matters worse all round."

And thus they plausibly argue on one side and the other side. Meanwhile, there is no alleviation. It is a current saying that in former commercial depressions, business men could always see through the cloud to the other side: but that the depression now prevailing is like a sky without a break. The aspect of human affairs on this head is very gloomy, and the prospect grows blacker as time goes on. "Distress of nations, with perplexity," is an exact description of the situation.

"THE SEA AND THE WAVES ROARING."

There is next the threatening attitude of international democracy backed up by dynamite outrage and the labour riots. Jesus speaks of this under the figure of "the sea and the waves roaring." He says, "Upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, *the sea and the waves roaring*, men's hearts failing them for fear" (Luke xxi. 26). This is not the literal sea of course, for its waves always roar—it is the sea of nations. It is a very common figure in the Bible to compare the population to the sea. (See Rev. xvii. 15. Psa. lxxv. 7., Jer. li. 42, &c.)

In former times, and until recently, this sea was comparatively calm; not that the people were well off, but they had no organisation, no power to act in unison, no means of making their weight felt in the discussion of the problems of life. They were like a flock of dumb cattle. They were at the disposal of kings and governments to tax or drill, as occasion might call. They had no corporate life; they lay in black stagnation, like a sea of death. But now, all this is changed; the people have been enfranchised; they have learned the art of combination in trades unions and otherwise; they act together and make their power felt. Every now and then, there is a great roar of the sea, as when 400,000 men turn out on strike in Yorkshire and Durham; or as when the working men in every capital in Europe turn May Day, which used to be the symbol of everything innocent and beautiful, into a terror with their processions and their violent speeches, and their lawless deeds. Or as when Anarchic plotters enforce their demands with dynamite explosions or the assassin's knife; or as when mobs gather at Buffalo to stop railway trains, and wreck waggons, and burn produce, and require the military to be called out to quell their turbulence, and even keep the military at bay for four days; or as when in the peaceful State of William Penn, of Pennsylvania, Carnegie's men arm themselves with revolvers to shoot down Non-Unionists, or bribe the cooks to put poison in their victuals—all this in the land of Stars and Stripes, "the land of the free—liberty, equality, and fraternity."

King Mob is rapidly rising as a great power, and a great terror, a hideous spectre in the great darkness. Lamentable spectacle, our best statesmen are deferring to him. It is the age not only of socialistic agitation, but of anarchic plottings and formidable political menace by the masses.

The whole aspect of the world is that of a storm-swept sea, troubled and angry, full of threat and peril. Thoughtful men regard the situation with apprehension and alarm. It is one of the signs of the times; it is a state of things that was unknown at the beginning of this century, or in any other age of the world. There have been popular agitations, and popular outbreaks before; but never before has the democracy of the

world been organised in all countries into one power formulating its demands with the calculated emphasis that compels politicians to listen, at the risk of losing votes without which they cannot exist.

THE OVERBLOWN ARMAMENTS OF EUROPE.

Who ever expected to live to see such a spectacle as is presented by Europe of the present day? — the entire population turned into soldiers on or off duty: every man compelled to spend a certain part of his life under military training? We have a difficulty in this country in realising the actual state of things as it exists across the English Channel. Universal military conscription is enforced in all the great countries of the world. In France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Russia, &c., every man, whatever his age, or rank, or condition, prince or peasant, employer or servant, capitalist or working man, priest or pauper, is bound to take his turn at shouldering the rifle for a certain number of years, and has afterwards to hold himself in readiness at a week's call by the government for military service. The result is that the governments of Europe have at their call military forces of an extent unknown and undreamt of in the past history of the world. It is said that France can call into line five millions of soldiers; Germany, seven millions; Russia, ten millions; Italy, four millions; Austria, four millions, and other countries *pro rata*.

Such a state of things is truly appalling, and fills thoughtful minds with the gloomiest apprehensions for the future. I asked who ever expected to live to see such a state of things. There is one class of people that did entertain this expectation, and that is, those who believe in the prophets. The development has indeed gone beyond their expectations. It is one of the signs of the times, as is most obvious to those who know the Scriptures. Preparation for war is declared to be one of the features of the end; the dullest apprehension must see this in such a statement as this from the prophet Joel concerning the time for the restoration of Israel:—"Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles, *prepare war*, wake up the mighty men; let all the men of war draw near; let the weak say, I am strong. Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears." (chap. iii. 9).

HOW IT HAS COME ABOUT.

The means by which the armed state of the world has been brought about are in themselves one of the leading signs of the times. Not only is the whole world armed as it never has been in any previous period of its history, but this state of things has been brought about in a way exactly foreshadowed in Revelations. It was to be the work of France, as symbolised by *three frogs*, in chap. xvi. 13, 14. France is the only country that ever employed three frogs to represent her nationality, as England has the lion. The political frogs were so to operate on the mouth of the dragon, the mouth of the beast, and the mouth of the false prophet, as to influence all the kingdoms of the earth in the direction of preparation for "the war of the great day of God Almighty." The political frogs have done their work. Men laugh when we speak of the frogs, but it is a sensible and very serious matter notwithstanding. Because of this prophecy, believers have looked for her to perform the part which she has fulfilled. It is France that has done this work under providence, as every one knows that is acquainted with the history of the

past 30 years. Since the very beginning of the century, she has been the disturber of Europe. Her restless ambitious and intriguing disposition has kept the political waters in a state of commotion, and has compelled all nations in self-defence to enlarge their military establishments, and to keep on the alert in watchfulness of her designs. This is speaking generally; but the matter becomes more striking when we look into it particularly.

The frogs of the symbol went "out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet." These symbols are identifiable with Constantinople, Vienna, and Rome, as could be shown did time permit. The assertion is sufficiently proved by the fact that in this very order, did France in the days of Napoleon III. operate on the European centres, causing wars. First, that ruler so operated on Turkey as to bring about the Crimean war, resulting from a French-inspired declaration of war from Constantinople. Second, the Austro-Sardinian war, resulting from a declaration of war evoked from Vienna, by French diplomacy; and third, the Italian war, caused by a declaration from Rome by the Pope under French inspiration, which in their combined effects roused the world from the peace dormancy that had prevailed since Waterloo, and established universal conscription as the law of Europe. This is one of the most glaring and unmistakable signs of the times.

THE FALL OF "THE TEMPORAL POWER."

Next, there is the disappearance of the temporal power of the Pope. In the ears of most people, this seems a light and insignificant event. It carries no more weight or suggestiveness to the common mind than some reference to the limitation of the powers of some agricultural or local board. How differently the matter stands in truth. We soon forget our troubles when they are over. We soon forget an abuse when it is removed. But it scarcely seems possible that men should forget the terrible nature of the institution that cast its baleful shadow over Europe for more than twelve centuries, prophetically symbolised in the Apocalypse as *a woman drunk with blood*. Let us try for a moment to realise what this terrible Temporal Power was, that we may be able rightly to estimate the significance of its cessation in our day, at the very time foreshewn by the prophets for ages in advance.

Let us go back to the days when the Power was at its fullest development: let us imagine those days with us now: how would they have affected us? For one thing, we should not have been able to hold this meeting. The Pope was the legal lord of men's consciences, with the arm of the civil power at his disposal for the enforcement of his claims. By his agent, the local canon, abbot, rector, friar, or other representative, he would have interdicted all religious assemblies other than those in "licenced" places, and the police would have enforced the interdict. Worse than that, he would not only have interdicted the unauthorised exposition of the Scriptures, he would have interdicted their possession. He would have forbidden our having Bibles at all—either in our houses or anywhere else. And, supposing we had refused to obey the wicked mandate—supposing we had, like the apostles, chosen to obey God rather than man—what then? We

should have made the acquaintance of the inside of the prison—and not such prisons as are used in our days—not clean, well-ventilated places—at least, I suppose they are such, from reports: (we are supposed none of us to know from experience)—no, not clean places like modern prisons, but loathsome dungeons, with iron rings fixed in the wall and our bodies chained to the rings: cut off from light and air and liberty and proper food—visited only at intervals by the inquisitory paying and mocking emissaries of the priesthood to see if we were likely to relent under the cruelty. If not, a touch of the inquisition might be tried next—a hellish institute for the infliction of pain in every degree and variety; and if thumbscrew and rack and flesh pincers failed to move us, then out to the market place, tied to a pole, faggots gathered round, fire set to the faggots, and the Pope would have his triumph. That is what the temporal power meant in its ultimate application.

PAPAL ENORMITIES.

Consider that the Pope had this power in all countries through the governments—in our own English country itself at one time. The full enormity of the thing is not to be measured by the number of victims; we have to consider the incubus of such a terror on the population, dragooning them into a lifeless submission which having an external show of order, was intellectual slavery and spiritual death. Yet the awful picture is seen most vividly by statistics. In a pamphlet, “The Hidden Hand,” recently issued by Robert Banks and Son, Racquet Court, Fleet Street, London, the following statement is quoted:—“As some luxurious emperors of Rome exhausted the whole art of pleasure, so that a reward was promised to any one who should invent a new one, so have *Romish persecutors exhausted all the art of pain, so that it will now be difficult to discover or invent a new kind of it, which they have not already practised upon those marked out for heretics. They have been shot, stabbed, stoned, drowned, beheaded, hanged, drawn, quartered, impaled, burnt, or buried alive, roasted on spits, baked in ovens, thrown into furnaces, tumbled over precipices, cast from the tops of towers, sunk in mire and pits, starved with hunger and cold, hung on tenter hooks, suspended by the hair of the head, by the hands or feet, stuffed or blown up with gunpowder, ripped with swords and sickles, tied to the tails of horses, dragged over streets and sharp flints, broken on the wheel, beaten on anvils with hammers, blown with bellows, bored with hot irons, torn piecemeal by red-hot pincers, slashed with knives, hacked with axes, hewed with chisels, planed with planes, pricked with forks, stuck from head to foot with pins, choked with water, lime, rags, urine, excrements, or mangled pieces of their own bodies crammed down their throats shut up in caves and dungeons, tied to stakes, nailed to trees, tormented with lighted matches, scalding oil, burning pitch, melted lead, etc. They have been flayed alive, had their flesh scalped and torn from their bones; they have been trampled and danced upon, till their bowels have been forced out, their intestines have been tied to trees and pulled forth by degrees; their heads twisted with cords till the blood, or even their eyes started out; strings have been drawn through their noses, and they led about like swine, and butchered like sheep.”*

“THE INQUISITION—a name at which humanity has learned to shudder—

is a long and supremely cruel and wicked history compressed into one word. Instituted for the avowed purpose of suppressing heresy, it was established in every country which submitted to Papal authority. In Spain alone it has been proved by the careful statistical investigations of Llorente, that between the years 1481 and 1808, over *three hundred and forty-one thousand persons* were condemned by this "Holy Office," of whom 31,912 were burned alive, 17,000 burned in effigy, and nearly 300,000 tortured and condemned to severe penances. Every Roman Catholic country in Europe, Asia, and America had its INQUISITION, and its consequent unexplained arrests, indefinitely long imprisonments of innocent persons, its secret investigations, its horrible torture chambers, and dreadful dungeons its *auto da fés*, or burnings of obstinate heretics, and its thousand nameless cruelties and injustices.

AT ROME.

The Pope had his own inquisition at Rome. It is no longer his. When it was taken from him, it was thrown open to the admission of the public to their great horror at the discoveries they made. Letters appeared in our own London daily papers at the time, in which shocking details are given. The *Daily News* correspondent says he was horrified. He had always taken it for granted that it was a decent institution, and that much that was said against it was the exaggeration of partisan calumny, but now he could not deny his own senses. He says:—"The officer in charge let me down to where the men were digging in the vaults below: they had cleared a downward flight of steps, which was choked with old rubbish, and had come to a series of dungeons under the vaults deeper still, and which immediately brought to my mind the prisons of the Doge under the canal of the Bridge of Sighs at Venice, only that here there was a surpassing horror. I saw imbedded in the old masonry, unsymmetrically arranged, five skeletons in various recesses, and the clearance had only just begun; the period of their insertion in this spot must have been more than a century and a-half. From another vault, full of skulls and scattered human remains, there was a shaft about four feet square ascending perpendicularly to the first floor of the building, and ending in a passage off the hall of the chancery, where a trap-door lay between the tribunal and the way into a *suite* of rooms destined for one of the officials. The object of this shaft could admit of but one surmise. The ground of the vault was made up of the decayed animal matter, a lump of which held imbedded in it a long silken lock of hair, as I found by personal examination as it was shovelled up from below."

How many men and women have suffered death, and worse than death, under this system is known only to God in heaven: but an approximate estimate has been made from the statistics published by friends of the Inquisition at various times: for they have actually made it a boast in some countries of what the Inquisition has done to maintain "the true church" on the earth. The estimate is that the Popes of Rome have, directly or indirectly, slain FIFTY MILLIONS of the best of mankind, whose only crime was refusal to submit to her outrageous and blasphemous claims.

THE END OF THE PAPAL POWER.—A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE.

Remember all these dreadful things when we talk of the "disappearance of the Temporal Power of the Pope" Realise what a mighty change it—what a stupendous event it is. And then realise the significance of such a change. What is the meaning of it? To all natural appearances, it seemed likely that the Pope would continue to be the great personage in European life he has been for over 1,200 years. Macaulay, in his essay on the lives of the Popes, said that he saw no signs of decay in the Papacy, and that to all appearance, the elective sovereignty of the Vatican would outlast all the dynasties of Europe, or something to that effect. Those who believed in the prophet Daniel entertained a different view.

It is written in the word of prophecy, both by Daniel and John, that his power to prevail against the saints would end in 1260 years from its beginning, and that the powers of Europe would then turn against the Pontiff of the persecuting church, and take away his dominion. For this reason, believers looked for its disappearance in 1866-8 and their expectations were not disappointed. When that time arrived, the temporal power of the Pope ceased, and he now complains that he is a prisoner in the Vatican. This is a truly extraordinary change. What a change it is that this system, represented in the Apocalypse by a woman drunk with blood, should be reduced in our day to the position of a merely tolerated church, with no more power to enforce her authority by faggot and flame, than the meanest secretary in the community. No, not even in Rome, where the circulation of the Bible has been an unknown thing for over 1260 years, but is now as free and unfettered as in England.

It is a crying sign of the times: It is almost natural that there should be a sign of the times connected with such a subject, for consider who the Pope is. He claims to be the vicar of Christ, God upon earth. He is a false shadow of Christ thrown across the field of history. That his career of powerful evil-doing should be measured by Christ's own career of powerful well-doing—that whereas Christ's life of doing good was $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of days, the Pope's official career of doing evil in his name should be $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of years, is a beautiful fitness, and a natural beacon light in the darkness. The cessation of his power to make war against the saints tells us that the day is near when the whole body of the beast will be given to the burning flame of war at the sublime crisis symbolised in these extraordinary symbolic words,— "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow and the hair of his head like pure wool. His throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire: a fiery stream issued and came forth from before him, thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; and the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake, I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame."

DECADENCE OF THE TURKISH EMPIRE.

Next, look at the state of the Turkish Empire. Once it was the terror of Europe; it sent forth hordes of fanatical horsemen who swept over Europe like a deluge, and threatened to inundate the whole of Christendom, as in Bulgaria and Greece until recent times. At a certain point

that flood was arrested, but though arrested, it remained a dominant flood inundating many lands, and appeared beyond human power to quell. But it had been written that in our time, the great river Euphrates, (its symbolic name from the principal river of Turkey) would be "dried up that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared." Therefore the gradual subsidence and shrinking of this flood has been looked for for more than a hundred years by believers of the prophets. A writer one hundred years ago said that he fully believed it would come, but that at the time of his writing, he saw no human probability or means by which such a great change could be brought about, as to reduce the Turkish power from the ascendant position then occupied to the level of helplessness implied by a drying river. What is the state of Turkey now? A merely tolerated intruder. The present generation has witnessed the great change from one condition to the other. If anyone will compare the map of Turkey as it is now with what it was in 1848, he will at once see in a geographical shape the striking change that has taken place. For the meaning of the change he will have to look deeper than a map: he will have to look in the Apocalypse chap. xvi. verse 12,—“The water thereof was dried up that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.” These kings of the east, as we learn from Daniel, and John and many parts of the Scriptures, are the Saints of God, described by Jesus as “Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets” and in Rev. xi. 18, as “thy servants the prophets, and them that fear thy name, both small and great.” They are the kings of the coming age; John heard them singing,—“Thou hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth.” Paul wrote to some of them that were suffering with him,—“We shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. ii. 12). And Christ said to them,—“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne.” The whole of the class are styled “the seed of Abraham!” (Gal. iii. 29), to whom the Holy Land was promised. The Holy Land is, “their way” of which the Turkish empire has possession. As long as that empire existed in its strength, the preparation of the way was impossible. That empire had to be gradually removed for the accomplishment of this preliminary preparatory work. The political Euphrates had to be dried up to admit of this preparation. This is the meaning of the helpless state into which the Turkish empire has sunk. The sign is far advanced; the way is being prepared both in the revival of the land and the return of its original possessors, the Jews. This introduces

HOLY LAND REVIVAL AND MOVEMENTS AMONG THE JEWS.

This is a remarkable fact of the times. The Holy Land which has been sunk for ages in desolation, has been steadily reviving for 30 years. It is the only part of the Turkish empire that is not drying up. Its population and its revenues are both steadily increasing, and its resources developing, and this growing prosperity is almost wholly connected with the Jews. Strangely enough, extreme persecution has had to do with this result. The oppression of Israel in Russia, Germany, and other countries and the closing of the door of admission against them in America and the British colonies, has compelled fleeing refugees to seek asylum in the land of their fathers. It is estimated that there are now 100,000 of them in the Holy Land. The number may be exaggerated, but the number is great

compared with previous times. Jerusalem has become a Jewish city, and Jewish colonies are being formed in various parts of the land, in accordance with expectations formed long ago on the strength of Ezek. xxxviii. 12.

FULFILLED EXPECTATIONS.

These are all speaking signs of the times. The remarkable fact connected with them is that they were expected long before they came. For 40 years, public events have taken the shape anticipated by those who are guided in their expectations by prophecy. When I say this, I do not mean that in looking back we can see in the events that have happened a fulfilment of prophecy, because that might be a feat of ingenious adaptation. What I mean is that before the things happened, they were expressly and definitely expected. I speak positively on this point, because I am a personal witness in this case. I speak from memory confirmed by writings produced at the time. It is 40 years since in the goodness of God, my eyes were opened to the meaning of the Bible in its bearing on those things. I know what the state of things was then and I know what was expected then.

There was at that time a very different state of things from that which now prevails in the world. There were no prodigious armaments in Europe, the world was inclined for peace. The Exhibition of 1851 had created the idea of international amity, the abandonment of armaments, and the submission of political disputes to arbitration. The agitations of anarchic and international democracy had not been heard of. France was a neutralised force in the politics of Europe, through the overthrow of her monarchy and the establishment of a republic. The Pope was a temporal sovereign, having still a remnant of the war making power against the saints which he once possessed throughout the civilised world. Turkey was a strong empire which had to be taken into account in all the movements of diplomacy. Egypt was largely under French influence; Cyprus was a possession of the Sultan's; Palestine lay in the unbroken slumbers of the desolation that had prevailed for centuries. The Jews were unheard of in public life, and the idea of their return to Palestine was scouted as a chimera.

The expectations at that time entertained by those who looked at public affairs in the light of prophecy, distinctly included the following points:—1, that the peaceful tendency of politics would disappear; 2, that there would set in such an era of war preparation as the world had never seen; 3, that this change would be due to France, operating on the leading European centres; 4, that Turkey would decline to a shadow; 5, that the Pope's power would come to an end; 6, that Russia's power and development would increase in the direction of the Holy Land; and finally, 7, that England would occupy Egypt, and acquire ascendancy in the islands of the Mediterranean, in connection with which, Palestine would revive, and Jewish colonisation become a feature in the development of the country.

What has been the course of events during the 40 years that have rolled away? Those now living who may be acquainted with the history of the time, are in a position to give an emphatic answer. Almost every expectation has been realised.

The peaceful condition of the world passed away, in consequence of Louis Napoleon seizing power in France and intermeddling with Euro-

to you to have public opinion on your side when public opinion is everywhere a self-convicted imposture? What safety will it afford you to be on the side of popular institutions, and human dignities, and human honours, and human prestiges, and human respectabilities of all sorts when they are visibly tumbling to ruin in a hurricane of Divine anger?

Be wise in time. You are not only warned against judgment to come, but you are offered nothing less than a kingdom and a crown. It is not a fable that the people of Christ will reign with Christ, The world laughs at the Millennium; will they laugh when Christ is here to establish it? Nay: there will be a craven rush for his favour, as he tells us. "Many," he says, "will come to me in that day and shall say, Lord, Lord, open unto us: have we not preached in thy name, and in thy name done many wonderful works? But I will profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom, but he that doeth the will of my Father." Now is the time for the doing of that will as revealed. Separate yourselves from the multitude that refuse to do it. Don't wait until the only permissible response to your frantic appeal, must be "Too late: too late: too late." Now is the accepted time; now, while God is dishonoured; now, while all is darkness; now, while the Bible is unheeded; now, while there is nothing but promise; now, while men blaspheme; now while the voice of wisdom is a still small voice on the ear of reason, from which fools turn away. This is the time for that victory of faith, without which it is impossible to please God.

Whether you choose or refuse, a pall overspreads the political sky. It has been a long time gathering, and it grows denser every year. A storm is visibly brewing before the eyes of all men. The nature of the storm is known only to those who know the Bible. Christ is in that storm, and therefore they will not fear when it burst. Its bursting is not far off. Soon the big ominous rain drops will begin to fall: the thunder mutters on the distant horizon will grow sharper, the darkness will increase: A blinding gleam will tell you the storm has begun. The appalling thunder peal will chase frightened creatures to shelter. The torrents will descend; the elements will rage. Gleam upon gleam: peal upon peal: crash upon crash: Oh the racket of Heaven's wrathful artillery! Long, loud and awful will be the outburst of Divine judgment intended at once both to punish, and prepare mankind for the blessedness beyond. Low at last will be laid the greatness of man, and all the inventions and institutions of his folly.

When the storm is spent, the clouds disperse; light will break forth; the sun will pour his healing beams from a cloudless sky; all nature will smile through her tears. His kingdom alone will prevail, and all the children of wisdom in unutterable thanksgiving will rejoice in the arrival of the glorious, long-promised day when mankind, weary of their own folly, and their incompetent ways, will find peace and well-being under the shadow of the Messiah, in fulfilment of the promised blessing of all families of the earth in Abraham and his seed.