

SIR ROBERT ANDERSON

Secret Service Theologian



UNFULFILLED PROPHECY

Unfulfilled Prophecy and "The Hope of the Church"

BY SIR ROBERT ANDERSON, K.C.B., LL.D.

PREFACE

I responded with real pleasure to a request from the Prophecy Investigation Society to write a manual on the prophecy of "The Seventy Weeks." But I soon found that such a book would be a mere abridgment of *The Coming Prince*, or *The Seventy Weeks of Daniel*. And as the narrow limits of space prescribed for me would preclude my citing authorities, or noticing any of the numerous incidental questions involved in the inquiry, I felt that the result would neither satisfy students of prophecy, nor appeal to Christians generally. I sought permission, therefore, to vary the proposed scheme; and, instead of making Daniel ix. the burden of these pages, to use it as the basis for a brief treatise upon unfulfilled prophecy, giving prominence to the well-nigh forgotten truth of that Coming of Christ which is the distinctive hope of the present dispensation—"the Hope of the Church," Bengel calls it.

A "special subject" in a school curriculum is often ignored, as not being essential to "a liberal education"; and prophecy is neglected by many a Christian as being unnecessary to "assurance of salvation." But such neglect is perilous in these days of subtle and sustained attacks upon the Bible; when we are confronted both by the sceptical crusade of the Higher Criticism, and the steadily increasing influence of Romanism. And the study of prophecy will prove a safeguard against both these apostasies. For no Christian who pursues it intelligently, and understands the Divine "plan of the ages," which it unfolds, will be imposed upon by "the learned ignorance" of the Critics. And the present-day decline of Protestantism in England is due to no change in the historic apostasy of Christendom, but to a weakening of faith in Holy Writ. For when the devout religionist begins to lose confidence in the Bible, he is apt to fall back upon "the Church."

"All God-breathed Scripture is profitable." And prophecy fills a large proportion of its pages. The study is a fascinating one; and it will save us from being entrapped either by the Christianised Infidelity of Germany, or by the Christianised Paganism of Rome. I may add that, although *The Coming Prince* has been under the search-light of criticism for so many years, not a single point in my scheme of the Seventy Weeks has been refuted or disturbed. Professor Driver's only disparaging criticism (in his

"Daniel," Cambridge Bible, page 149) is that my scheme is based on that of Julius Africanus (a fact of which I boast!), and that it leaves the seventieth week unexplained (which suggests that he mislaid his copy of my book when he had read only half of it !). R.A.

CHAPTER ONE

Many years ago one of the leading Rabbis of the London Synagogue published a volume of sermons to refute the Christian interpretation of certain Messianic prophecies. The Seventy Weeks of Daniel received prominent notice; and he accused Christian expositors of tampering, not only with chronology, but with the language of Scripture, in their effort to make it apply to the Nazarene. My indignation at such a charge led me to enter upon an extensive course of reading to enable me to refute it. But to my great surprise and distress I found that it was by no means a base-less libel. And this again led me to take up the study of Daniel ix. with an open mind, and a settled determination to accept the words of the prophecy at their face value, and to adopt the standard chronology of the eras and events involved in the inquiry. The error of the received view, that the Captivity era was the basis of the prophecy, was one of my earliest discoveries. And this blunder, trifling though it may seem, has afforded both Jews and Infidels a vantage ground in their attacks upon these Scriptures. There was no "seventy years' Captivity." Because of national sin a judgment of seventy years servitude to Babylon was Divinely imposed upon Judah. This judgment fell in the third year of King Jehoiakim (B.C. 606), when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judea and captured Jerusalem. But his purpose was merely to hold the land as a vassal State, and he left the Jews in undisturbed possession of their City, Daniel and his companions being carried to Babylon to adorn his court as vassal princes.

After three years Jehoiaquim revolted; and five years later Nebuchadnezzar returned to enforce his conquest (B.C. 598). And the youthful King Jehoiachin surrendered almost without a struggle. On his first invasion the King of Babylon had proved magnanimous and lenient. But now he had to punish rebellion; and he "carried away all Jerusalem," leaving none behind "save the poorest sort of the people of the land. This was what, in the opening words of his book, Ezekiel terms " King Jehoiachin's captivity," the prophet himself being numbered among the captives.

Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, was placed upon the throne as vassal king, having sworn allegiance to his suzerain. In common with "the residue of Jerusalem that remained in the land," he had ever before him Jeremiah's warnings that a refusal to submit to the Divine decree which brought them under servitude to Babylon would bring upon them a far more terrible judgment. Nebuchadnezzar would again return to "destroy them utterly," and to make the land" a desolation and an astonishment." But they gave heed to false prophets who pandered to the national vanity by predicting a speedy restoration of their independence; and having obtained a promise of armed support from Egypt, the Jews again revolted. Nebuchadnezzar thereupon invaded Judtea for the third time; and when, after a siege of eighteen months, he captured Jerusalem, the city was given up to fire and sword. The last chapter of 2 Chronicles contains the sad story of Judah's sin and of the Divine judgments it brought upon them.

Three several judgments, distinct, though in part concurrent, thus befell that stiff-necked people. And it was this third judgment of the "Desolations" that filled the thoughts and bowed the heart of Daniel, as he prayed the prayer which brought him the great prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. No words could be plainer or more definite. "I Daniel understood by the books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, for the accomplishing of the Desolations of Jerusalem, even

seventy years."

And by those same "books" he would have understood also that the seventy years of the "Servitude" were on the point of expiring. And, of course, the return of the exiles would bring to an end the judgment of the "Captivity," which thus lasted sixty-two years. But as Daniel had already passed his fourscore years of life he would scarcely hope to outlive the Desolations, seventeen years of which had still to run. And I confidently offer the suggestion that his prayer was an appeal that God would cancel those years, and remit the still unexpired portion of the judgment. The circumstances of the time, and the whole tenor of the prayer, seem to point to this. The closing words are specially explicit: "O Lord forgive; O Lord hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God; for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name."

What more there was in his heart to utter we know not; for "while he was speaking in prayer" the angel Gabriel appeared to him - the same heavenly messenger who heralded in later times the Saviour's birth in which should be read as in Bethlehem, and from him the prophet received, in answer to his supplication, the great prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. Here are the words:-

"Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Know therefore and discern, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: it shall be built again, with street and moat, even in troublous times. And after the threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and shall have nothing: and the people of the Prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and even unto the end shall be war; desolations are determined. And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week; and for the half of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that maketh desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolator."

CHAPTER II.

The Hebrew Scriptures contain no Messianic prophecy that is simpler and more definite than this of the Seventy Weeks, and none better fitted to silence the infidel and convince the Jew. But its meaning and evidential value are lost in a bewildering maze of forced or fanciful interpretations. And this is the evil work of Christian expositors! The meaning of the language of the prophecy may be deemed matter for discussion; but no intelligent reader, whether he be Christian or Jew or Infidel, who will study it with an unbiassed mind, can entertain an honest doubt as to what it says. Echoing the words of Daniel's prayer, the angel's message told him that not seventy years, but seventy weeks of years were decreed upon his people and his holy city, before they would enter into full Divine blessing.

This era is divided into three portions, of seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week, respectively. It dates from the issuing of a decree to build Jerusalem. From that event "unto Messiah the prince" there were to be 7+ 62 weeks. And after "the sixty-two weeks" the Messiah would be "cut off." The seventieth and last week of the era would be signalled by the advent of another Prince, who would make a seven years' covenant (or treaty) with the Jews; and iii the middle of the week (i.e., after three years and a half), he would violate that treaty and suppress their Temple worship and the ordinances of their religion.

All this is so plain that any intelligent child could understand it. We must remember, however, that with the Jews in ancient times it was as natural to speak of a week of years as of a week of days. And further, that their year was one of three hundred and sixty days. Such was the year in use in Babylon, where the prophecy was given. And, moreover, it was the year by which the judgment of the "Desolations" to which the prophecy referred, was reckoned. That era dated from the day on which the city was invested; namely, the 10th Tebeth in the ninth year of Zedekiah -a day that for four and twenty centuries has been observed as a fast by the Jews in every land. And, as the Prophecy of Haggai so explicitly records, it ended on the twenty-fourth day of Chisleu in the second year of Darius Hystaspes. Now from the 10th Tebeth B.C. 589 to the 24th Chisleu, B.C. 520, was a period of 25,200 days, or seventy years of 360 days.

The first question then which claims attention relates to the "decree" to rebuild the city. And at this point most expositors proceed to discuss various recorded edicts for the return of the exiles, or for building or adorning the Temple. But if we refuse to treat Divine prophecy in the loose and careless way we read a newspaper or a novel, we shall seize upon the fact that Jerusalem was rebuilt in pursuance of an edict issued by King Artaxerxes of Persia in the twentieth year of his reign; and that history, sacred and profane, knows nothing of any other "decree" for the rebuilding of the holy city.

Nehemiah was cupbearer to the King-"an office of high honour in Persia," and his Book opens by mentioning that certain Jews arrived at the Persian capital bringing him grievous tidings of the condition of Jerusalem. The second chapter narrates that, while discharging the duties of his office, the King taxed him with showing signs of private grief in the royal presence. "Why should not my countenance be sad?" he pleaded, "when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire?" "For what dost thou make request?" the King demanded; and Nehemiah answered, "That thou wouldest send me to Judah, unto the city of my father's sepulchres, that I may build it." The King thereupon authorised Nehemiah to undertake the work of restoration; and before the next Feast of Tabernacles Jerusalem was again a walled city, secured by gates and ramparts.

Our next enquiry is whether sixty-nine weeks of years, measured from the date of that edict, ended with any event to satisfy the words, "unto Messiah the Prince." And here we must remember that the Cross, and not the Incarnation, was the world's great "crisis." And while Scripture nowhere records the Saviour's birth date, the epoch of His ministry is given, 'with absolute definiteness, as occurring in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. Now (pace the "reconcilers" and expositors) "the reign of Tiberius, as beginning from the 19th Augustus A.D. 14, was as well-known a date in the time of Luke as is the reign of Queen Victoria in our own day; and no single case has ever been produced in which his regnal years were reckoned in any other manner.'

We can thus definitely fix upon Nisan A.D. 29 as the date of the first Passover of our Lord's ministry. And as His ministry ex-tended over four Passovers, it is as certain as inspired Scripture and human language can make it that the date of the Crucifixion was the Festival of Nisan, A.D. 32.

In accordance with Jewish custom, the Lord went up to Jerusalem "six days before the Passover," i.e., on Friday, the 8th Nisan. Presumably He spent the Sabbath in Bethany; and in the evening, when the Sabbath was ended, there took place the supper in Martha's house. And upon the following day, the 10th Nisan, He made His "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem. No careful student of the narrative can fail to recognise that this was, both in intention and in fact, a crisis in His ministry. After the great Council of the nation had decreed His death He charged His Apostles not to make Him known; and from that time He shunned all public recognition of His Messiahship. But now He welcomed the acciamations of "the

whole multitude of the disciples," and silenced the remonstrances of the Pharisees by declaring that "if these held their peace the stones would immediately cry out."

For on that day was fulfilled Zechariah's prophecy: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold thy King cometh unto thee, lowly and riding upon an ass." And when the disciples raised the triumphant shout, "Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord," the Saviour looked off toward the Holy City, and exclaimed, "If thou also hadst known even on this day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes!" "Even on this day," for it was the fateful day on which the sixty-nine weeks of the Daniel prophecy expired. And it was the only occasion in all His earthly sojourn on which He was acclaimed as Messiah the Prince, the King of Israel.

There is no vagueness in Divine reckoning. As the Jewish year was regulated by the Paschal moon, we can calculate the Julian date of any Nisan. The 1st Nisan in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, when the decree to restore and build Jerusalem was issued, was the 14th March, B.C. 445. And the era intervening between that day and the 10th Nisan (or 6th April), A.D. 32, was 173,880 days, or sixty-nine weeks of years, to the very day. (*See Ch. x. of The Coming Prince.*)

The Artaxerxes date was calculated for me by the Astronomer Royal; and the dates of the years of the Ministry will be found in various standard works upon the subject.

The scheme here unfolded was foreshadowed by Julius Africanus in his Chronography: the detailed elucidation of it is a part of my personal contribution to the interpretation of Daniel. And the result may well give food for thought both to the Christian and the Critic. The sceptical crusade of the Higher Criticism claims to have discredited the Book of Daniel as being either a pseud-epigraph or a romance. But how then can it account for the fulfilment of this particular prophecy? If someone announced that the distance, say, from the main door of St. Paul's Cathedral to some well-known rural landmark, was exactly 173,880 yards, and the statement was found to be absolutely accurate, what estimate should we form of anyone who dismissed the result as being a mere coincidence or a happy guess? Should we not brand him as either knave or fool? And unless we are to allow our respect for Professors and pundits to outweigh our reverence for God and His holy Word, this must be our estimate of those who either champion or accept the "assured results of the Higher Criticism" respecting the prophecy of Daniel.

[CHAPTER THREE](#)

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CHAPTER III.

No Christian doubts the Messianic fulfilment of the 69 weeks of this prophecy. And if we distinguish between what is doubted and what is doubtful, no less certain is it that the 70th week awaits fulfilment in a future age.

The suggestion that such an era should be thus interrupted in its course may seem strange and untenable, but the intelligent student of Scripture will recognise the principle which this involves. That principle is strikingly exemplified in the era of four hundred and eighty years, reckoned from the Exodus to the Temple (1 Kings vi.). According to the historical books, that period was in fact five hundred and seventy-three years; and this is confirmed by the Apostle's words at Pisidian Antioch (Acts xiii. 18-31). How then can this difference of ninety-three years be explained?

Though this problem has perplexed chronologers the solution of it is plain and simple. These ninety-three years are the sum of the servitudes recorded in the book of Judge. During five several periods Israel's national existence as Jehovah's people was in abeyance when, in punishment for their idolotry, He "sold them into the hands of their enemies." They thus became enslaved to the King of Mesopotamia for eight years, to the King of Moab for eighteen years, to the King of Canaan for twenty years, to the Midianites for seven years, and finally to the Philistines for forty years. (*The sum of 8+18+20+7+40 is 93. The servitude of Judges x. 7, 9 affected only the tribes beyond Jordan, and did not suspend Israel's national position.*) When God forgives our sins He blots out the record of them. And if this principle obtains even in reckoning an historical era, how legitimate it seems in the case of a prophetic era like that of the Seventy Weeks. By their rejection of Messiah, Israel forfeited their normal position of privilege and special blessing. And seeing that Messianic prophecy runs in the channel of Israel's national history as the covenant people, its fulfilment is tided back until the Lo-ammi sentence which now rests upon them is withdrawn.

The 24th chapter of Matthew, moreover, is an end of controversy on the question here at issue. The first book of the New Testament, like the last, is prophetic. And the 24th chapter is well described by Dean Alford as "the anchor of Apocalyptic interpretations." To understand it aright we must shake free from traditional exegesis, and read it with intelligent appreciation of the position and attitude of those to whom it was addressed. They were men whose thoughts were moulded and whose hopes were based upon the

Hebrew Scriptures. And when they put the question, "What shall be the sign of Thy Coming and of the winding-up of the age?" they had in view the age of Israel's subjection to Gentile supremacy and the Coming again of Christ "to restore the Kingdom to Israel."

It is extraordinary that any intelligent reader should confound that event with the Coming revealed in the Epistles. The one is the Coming foretold in Hebrew prophecy, which will bring deliverance to the favoured nation in days to come. The Lord here terms it "the coming of the Son of Man." -a Messianic title which never occurs in the Epistles, and is never used in Scripture save in relation to His earthly people. But the Coming revealed in the Epistles is one of the "mystery" truths of Christianity - a "Coming" to call up to their heavenly home the redeemed of this Christian dispensation. These "Comings" have nothing in common save that both refer to the same Christ. With still greater force does this remark apply to "the Second Advent" of theology, an event which will be not less than a thousand years later than "the Coming of the Son of Man." For the Coming foretold in Matthew xxiv., xxv. will inaugurate the kingdom of heaven upon earth-"the millennial reign of Christ" (to use a theological phrase), whereas "the Second Advent" of theology is His coming to judgment at the end of that thousand years. There can be no intelligent study of unfulfilled prophecy if we fail to distinguish between these several "Comings" of Christ.

Certain it is that if the Coming of Christ of which the Epistles speak be the same as "the Coming of the Son of Man" of Matthew xxiv., the Apostle's words are in flat and flagrant opposition to the Lord's explicit teaching. For His warning is clear and emphatic that His Coming as Son of Man must not be looked for until after the coming of Antichrist, the horrors of the great Tribulation," and the awful signs and portents foretold in Messianic prophecy. Whereas the Epistles will be searched in vain for even a suggestion that any event of prophecy bars the fulfilment of what Bengel calls "the hope of the Church." If then these several Scriptures relate to the same event, we must jettison either the First Gospel or the Pauline Epistles, for the attempt to reconcile them is hopeless.

But, it may be asked, did not the Lord on that same occasion use the words, "Watch. for ye know not what time your Lord doth come"? Yes, truly; but those words have reference to the waiting time when the Tribulation is past. and all the events foretold to precede His Coming have been fulfilled. For at that juncture the attitude of the earthly people toward the Coming which is their special hope, will be the same as that which is enjoined upon us in this present age -constant expectation of the Lord's return." (Alford.)

For, as the Epistle to Titus tells us, the grace-taught Christian learns "to live looking for that blessed Hope." And "looking for" is but a poor equivalent for the Greek word it represents. A still stronger word the Apostle used when, in writing to the Philippians from his Roman prison, he said, "We are looking for the Saviour." It is a word that. expresses earnest expectation of something believed to be imminent. According to Bloomfield, "it. signifies properly to thrust forward the head and neck, as in anxious expectation of hearing or seeing something." Such was the attitude of the mother of Sisera as she watched for her son's return: Through the window she looked forth, and cried through the lattice, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? And yet there are religious teachers who assert, and sometimes with dogmatic vehemence, that the Lord cannot come until after the Tribulation, thus relegating the "blessed hope" to the sphere of other Christian hopes which, like that of the resurrection, for example, though divinely "sure and certain," are indefinitely remote. Indeed. this teaching absolutely kills the hope. For we recall the Saviour's words that "except those days should be shortened" none of His people would survive them. And this being so, it would surely be our longing wish and prayer that He would let us pass

to heaven by death before the advent of such evil times.

Nor is this all. For this question may be viewed from another standpoint. We are Divinely exhorted to live in constant expectation of the Coming of the Lord; to stand with our hand upon the latch, as it were, in readiness to obey His call. And yet, we are assured of a long-drawn-out warning of His coming, not only by the fiercest persecution earth has ever known, but also by a series of appalling signs and portents in the sphere of nature!

Suppose that some chapter of a novel should contain the story of a man who announces to his retinue of servants that he is going abroad, and may be absent for a considerable time. The date of his return he cannot fix, but he assures them that they shall have a very clear and ample warning notice of it. And yet, at the same time, he goes on to impress upon them to live in constant expectation of his coming back, for any day and any hour he may walk in upon them. Should we not throw down the book with feelings either of amusement or contempt for such utter nonsense? What, then, shall be our estimate of the teaching above impugned, remembering that on a theme so sacred as that of our Lord's return all folly is profane?"

(If the master told his servants that between the warning notice of his coming and his actual arrival there would be an interval, and that during that interval they might expect him any day and any hour, the story would exemplify the difference between the words of verses 4-10 and of verses 33-44 of Matt. xxiv.)

CHAPTER IV.

The fulfilment of the Seventieth week of Daniel clearly pertains to a time that is within the scope of other visions granted to the prophet, and also of other Apocalyptic visions to which these are inseparably allied. At this stage of our inquiry, therefore, we enter a field of heated controversy; and it may be well, before proceeding, to consider the principles which should guide our further progress. And this inquiry will be facilitated by a brief survey of the scheme of Divine prophecy as a whole.

Until comparatively recent years the majority of prophetic students were ranged in one or other of the rival camps of futurist or historicist interpretation. But in these more enlightened days most of us have come to recognise the truth of Bacon's words, that "Divine prophecies, being of the nature of their Author, with whom a thousand years are but as one day, and, therefore, are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and germinant accomplishment throughout many ages though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age." We refuse to believe, therefore as the futurist system would imply, that Messianic prophecy has no voice for this age of Israel's rejection. And no one who understands aright what may be termed the ground plan of the Bible will enlist in the camp of the historicists. For that system, as formulated by its accredited exponents, displays utter ignorance respecting the place which Israel holds in the Divinely-revealed purposes for earth, and also as to the peculiar character of this Christian dispensation and the distinctive truths pertaining to it.

In its spiritual aspect the Bible is the story of redemption; and we know from the Lord's own teaching that it speaks of Him in every part of it. In the record of His post-resurrection ministry we read that "the Lord expounded in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." *(This threefold division of the sacred Canon was familiar to every Hebrew. The Psalms being the first book of the third division, gave its name to it.)* And more definite still are His words to the disciples on the day of the Ascension, "that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets and in the Psalms

concerning Me."

But the Bible has also an exoteric aspect. And when thus read, what do we find? A brief preface tells of the Creation and the Fall; of the judgment of the Flood; of the apostasy of the Noachian age; and of the building of Babel, and its consequences. The events of more than twenty centuries are thus dismissed in the eleven chapters that lead up to the call of Abraham. And the rest of the Old Testament relates to the Abrahamic race; the great Gentile nations of antiquity coming under notice only in connection with Israel. For Israel was chosen of God to be His witnesses and agents upon earth. As the Apostle to the Gentiles wrote to a Gentile church, "to them (Israel) were committed the oracles of God;" and of them, "as concerning the flesh, Christ came." And with emphasis he wrote also, "God hath not cast away His people whom He foreknew"; and the receiving of them again to favour will be as life from the dead "in blessing to the world.

But ever since the days of the Latin Fathers Christendom religion has been obsessed by the error of supposing that "the Church" has supplanted Israel in the Divine scheme of prophecy; that God has jettisoned His revealed purposes for earth in relation to the Covenant people; and that when "the number of His elect" of this dispensation is complete, earth and its inhabitants will be engulfed in a cataclysm of judgment fire. But human sin cannot thwart the purposes of God, albeit the realisation of them may thus be delayed. And no Divine word of prophecy or promise can ever fail. The prophecy of Israel's sacred calendar, for example, shall be fulfilled in every part of it. For even the festivals which marked the successive stages of the annual harvest of the land are a veiled prophecy of the harvest of redemption. The sheaf of the first fruits at Passover speaks of Christ and His resurrection from the dead. The "two wave loaves" of Pentecost point forward to the two houses of Israel in full acceptance with God in days to come. And when, at the Feast of Tabernacles, the Israelites assembled in Jerusalem with palm branches in their hands, the celebration typified the harvest-home of redemption - earth's great "Feast of Ingathering," when the palm-bearing host of the redeemed of an age still future, an innumerable multitude "out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues," shall raise their loud-voiced cry of praise to God.

The popular conception of the Divine "plan of the ages" may be epigrammatically described as a pandemonium ending with a conflagration. How vastly different is it from the scheme revealed in Scripture? For all Hebrew prophecy, from Moses to Malachi, speaks of "times of restitution of all things, or, in other words, of a coming age when everything shall be put right on earth by a reign of righteousness and peace.

And this was the burden of the Baptist's preaching, and of the early ministry of the Lord and His Apostles. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" was not "the gospel" as we understand the word; it heralded the advent of the promised "times of restitution," when the heavens shall rule upon the earth. But though Israel's Messiah-King was in their midst "His own received Him not," and His death on Calvary was the response the nation made to that "gospel of the kingdom."

His intercessory prayer upon the cross obtained for them a respite from the consequences of that awful sin; and at Pentecost the Apostle of the Circumcision was inspired to proclaim that a national repentance would bring back "the Christ who before was preached unto them," and usher in the promised age of blessing. But Israel was obdurate, and the murder of Stephen was the answer made to the Pentecostal amnesty. He was the messenger sent after the King to say they would not have Him to reign over them. So "there was no remedy," and instead of sending back the Christ, God sent them the awful judgment under which the nation still lies prostrate. After the death of Stephen, the Apostle Paul received his call.

It is generally over-looked that, though his commission was specially to the Gentiles, it included a definite mission to Israel And in fulfilment of that mission he traversed all Jewry, from Jerusalem round to Rome. And in every place his first appeal was to the Synagogue.

But though individual Jews responded to the Gospel, not a single synagogue accepted the proffered mercy. That part of his commission, therefore, was fulfilled, when "the chief of the Jews" in Rome rejected his testimony; and the Book of the Acts closes by proclaiming that "the salvation of God was sent unto the Gentiles." And surely the fact is significant that it is in "the Captivity Epistles," written after that crisis in his ministry, that we find the full revelation of the distinctive truths of Christianity.

Then as to principles of interpretation; if at a meeting of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, two thousand years ago, some learned Rabbi had ventured to offer a strictly Scriptural forecast of the coming and career of Christ, he would doubtless have been silenced by the indignant rebuke that such literalness of exegesis was fitted to bring discredit upon Holy Scripture. And yet we now read those very prophecies with knowledge of their fulfilment even in minute details.

Here are a few of them:

"A virgin shall conceive and bear a son ";

"thy King cometh unto thee . . . riding upon an ass ";

"they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver ";

"and I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord ";

"they part my garments among them and cast lots upon my vesture ";

"they pierced my hands and my feet ";

"they gave me vinegar to drink."

To the prophets themselves such words were full of mystery; and no doubt they were generally "explained away" as mere poetry. And yet in every jot and tittle of them they found their counterpart in fact. Seeing then that the Scriptural records of such fulfilments are our best, if not our only, guide in dealing with prophecies that were still unfulfilled at the close of the sacred Canon, we may unreservedly accept the principle of literal fulfilment in our study of them.

We shall therefore take careful note of the prefatory words of Gabriel's prophecy, echoing the concluding words of Daniel's prayer:

"Seventy weeks are decreed upon thy people and thy holy city." And we shall reject any scheme of interpretation that finds the fulfilment of this prophecy in the present dispensation when Jerusalem is a Gentile city, and Israel is Lo-ammi.

But while insisting on the principle of literal fulfilment, we must not reject the other principle of "germinant accomplishment." For Scripture itself affords some striking illustrations of it; as, for example, the Lord's reference to the Baptist as being the Elijah of Malachi's prophecy. "If ye are willing to receive him (He said) this is Elijah." And yet at a later date he said, "Elijah truly shall first come and restore all things. And specially apt is the Apostle Peter's reference to the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost as being within the scope of Joel's prophecy -the fulfilment of which pertains to an age after Israel has been restored to national prosperity and spiritual blessing. For this is the burden of Joel's prophecy. In the present age of Israel's rejection, Jew and Gentile stand by nature upon the same level of guilt and doom.

"There is no difference, for all have sinned." But neither is there any difference as regards salvation.

Grace is reigning, and therefore "there is no difference, for the same Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him. The Jew call have blessing as freely as his neighbour, if only he will give up his boasted vantage ground of covenant and promise. Blessing on that ground is as inconsistent with grace, as is blessing on

the ground of works, or of personal merit of any kind. For in the same sense in which we say that "God cannot lie," we recognise that He cannot act upon incompatible principles at the same time.

It is clear, therefore, that before this prophecy of the Seventy Weeks can be fulfilled for Daniel's people, there must be a change of dispensation as definite and vital as that which took place when Israel was rejected and set aside. Israel's outcast condition is one of the "mystery" truths of this Christian dispensation. (*It was in grace that God gave the covenant; but the covenant established a relationship; and, for those who were within it, blessing was on that ground. But when the Cross put an end to every claim upon God, the only alternatives were grace or judgment.*) But this dispensation will be brought to an end when the Lord rises up from the throne of grace and, in fulfilment of that other "mystery," comes for His heavenly people, including both Jews and Gentiles, who are one with himself as members of "the Church which is his body." And then the earthly people will come to their own again; and "the receiving of them will be fraught with widespread blessing.

The prophecy of Zechariah points forward to "that day" when there will be a great national and spiritual revival among them in their own city and land. And the blessings promised to them in Daniel ix. 24 await "that day" of Zechariah xiii. 1. In no part of them have these blessings yet been realised for Israel.

[CHAPTER V](#)

SIR ROBERT ANDERSON

Secret Service Theologian



UNFULFILLED PROPHECY

CHAPTER V.

The Lord's reference to "the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet," gives the clue to the right interpretation of the unfulfilled portion of the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks. If the Sermon on the Mount is commonly misread, no less so is this "Second Sermon on the Mount," in which that reference occurs. (Matthew xxiv. 15.) To understand it aright we must remember that it is a prophecy; and, as already suggested, we must put ourselves in the place of those to whom it was addressed, and study it as though the present "mystery" dispensation had never intervened, and the predicted events had run their course during the lifetime of the Apostles.

His words were in reply to their inquiry, of verse 3; "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the winding up of the age" And, of course, the "Coming" to which they refer is that of Messianic prophecy, and the "age" is that of Gentile supremacy, which is to last until that Coming. In verse 3 He speaks of the sunteleia of the age; and in verse 14 of its telos (or end). And then, as is so usual in the prophetic Scriptures, He goes back upon the period already covered in brief outline; and in verse 15 He gives them the sign by which they will know that the warned-against terrors of the Great Tribulation are about to break upon them. (v. 21.)

Although the events of the siege and capture of Jerusalem by Titus may well be within the scope of the Lord's words, surely no one who studies them in connection with Daniel's prophecy, which the Lord expressly cites, and the other Scriptures relating to the same era, can entertain a doubt that their fulfilment awaits the future restoration of the Covenant People to their own land and to Divine favour. For the words which the Lord spoke that day upon the Mount of Olives were not "spent (to use a legal term) when the Jewish disciples to whom they were addressed became, so to speak, "denationalised" by being raised to the heavenly relationship of the Body of Christ, in which "there is neither Jew nor Gentile." Like all the words He spoke on earth, they are eternal; and in an age to come they will be read and pondered by an "elect remnant" of Israel, gathered in their own land. We are always keen to mark how clearly the Lord had *us* in view in much of His teaching; but Christians seem never to realise that, in a passage such as this, He was thinking of His saints in the coming days of the fiercest trial which His people have ever known. If even in this time of their impenitence and rejection "they are beloved for the fathers' sakes," how deep and solicitous must be that love, in view of the coming age of their repentance

and faith! Can we doubt that, when the Lord gave utterance to this forecast, His Divine omniscience had in view His Jerusalem saints of that future age in which it will be all fulfilled? Nor can we doubt that, as they scan the newspapers, and watch the gathering clouds of the storm that is about to break upon them, it will be with mind and heart intent upon these sacred words of warning. And thus they will await the dreaded signal for immediate flight- "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place."

"History repeats itself." The first holder of the Imperial sceptre of Gentile supremacy demanded divine worship for a statue of himself. And the last great Kaiser of the evil line will set up his image, to be worshipped by all, under penalty of death for refusing to render it divine homage. And the language of Daniel ix. 27 is explicit that it will be "upon the Temple" not inside the shrine where none but the priests would see it, but in some prominent position, *coram populo*. And as Satan will be the instigator of this, surely the suggestion is neither wild nor fanciful that the site on which the statue of the Antichrist shall be erected may be "a pinnacle of the Temple," corresponding to that on which the Lord Jesus stood when tempted of the Devil."

The "text-card system" of prophetic study has tended to discredit the Bible. And a knowledge of "dispensational truth" is a safeguard against this influence. For it teaches us, as Bacon quaintly phrased it, "to sort every prophecy of Scripture with the event fulfilling the same." And thus it brings to light the hidden harmony of Holy Writ; and prophetic study, instead of being a pastime for mystics, becomes a confirmation of our faith. As already noticed, "the doctrine of the second advent" is a by-product of this text-card system of exegesis. Every passage that speaks of the Lord's coming again is separated from its context; and all are thrown together, as though they referred to the same event, and are to be fulfilled at the same epoch.

What concerns us here, however, is the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks; and at the cost of some repetition a restatement of the problem may be opportune. That era has to do with Daniel's city and people. The 69th week ended with "the cutting off " of Messiah. Israel was then set aside, and the course of the era was interrupted. And the unfulfilled 70th week will not begin to run until the covenant people are again Divinely recognised. And, as already noticed, that recognition implies a thorough "change of dispensation." The reign of grace must end. and the members of the heavenly election of this age must be called away from earth before the earthly people can be restored to their own again. (See page 84 ante.) The epoch of the whole era was "the issuing of a decree to restore and build Jerusalem." And the epoch of the final week of the era will be the signing of a treaty by the last great Kaiser- the coming Prince of Daniel ix. 27-guaranteeing to the Jews their national rights, with special reference, apparently, to the observance of their national religion. And in the middle of the week he will violate that treaty by the desecration of the Temple; an event that will be followed immediately by "the Great Tribulation." The duration of that persecution is definitely specified as three and a half years, forty-two months, or twelve hundred and sixty days. And it will be brought to a sudden end by the terrible convulsions in the sphere of nature which are to herald the day of wrath.

The Lord's words recorded in Matthew xxiv. 6, ff., have their precise counterpart in the Apocalyptic visions of the Seals (Rev. vi.). His first warning note is of "wars and rumours of wars "; and when the first seal is opened, a white-horsed rider goes forth "conquering and to conquer."

The Lord next indicates wars of a more terrible character; and this has its parallel in the appearance of the red-horsed rider of the second seal, to whom is given "a great sword" and "power to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another." The wars of the first seal are apparently of the type to which

we are accustomed; but those of the second seal will be an orgy of ruthless slaughter. It is not a mere repetition of the preceding vision.

The Lord's next word is "famines "; and when the third seal is broken, the black-horsed rider appears with a pair of balances in his hand, to weigh out the necessaries of life at famine prices. As famines are natural sequence to wars of the type here indicated, no less certainly does pestilence follow famine. And " pestilence" is the word the Lord next utters; so the rider in the vision of the fourth seal is empowered to kill with " death "-a word that needs no interpreting to any who realise the horrors of epidemic plague. But the judgments of the seals are cumulative, and this rider, whose name is Death, "kills with the sword and with hunger and with pestilence."

No rider appears when the fifth seal is broken; but neither the meaning of the vision, nor its place in the scheme of prophecy, is open to doubt. In Matt. xxiv. 8, the Lord describes the judgments of the first four seals as "time beginning of sorrows "; and in verse 9 we read "then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all the nations for My name's sake." The Lord's words in verse 21 teach explicitly that this is tile Tribulation, the "time of trouble "of Daniel xii. 1; and in the vision of the fifth seal are seen under the altar the souls of the martyred victims of that awful persecution. No less certain is the identity of the events of the sixth seal with those portrayed by the Lord in verse 29. All the events of the preceding seals are such as men can account for on natural principles. But now, in view of the unparalleled sufferings of His people in the great Tribulation, and in response to the prayers of the martyrs of that awful time (Rev. vi. 9, 10), God at last puts forth His power; appalling portents in the sphere of nature strike terror into the hearts of the impenitent of every class, from kings to bond-men, and in a universal panic they seek to hide from the coming wrath.

The Lord's words in verse 29 are explicit that the terrors of the sixth seal follow immediately after tile Tribulation; and, as the period of the Tribulation is the latter half of the 70th week of Daniel, the events of these seals fall within the chronology of prophecy. But it is a common error to suppose that the events foretold in verses 30 and 31 will immediately follow the close of the 70th week. The vision of the seventh seal is yet to be fulfilled. The *theu* (toto) of verse 30 does not refer to the *telos* of the age, but to its *sunteleia*- not to a definite point in time, but to the whole period here in view-a sense which the word bears in three other verses in this same chapter. And the Lord's teaching in the passage beginning with verse 32 deals with that very period.

And here another parallelism with the vision o the seals suggests itself. In Rom. viii. 1, we read: "When he had opened the seventh seal there was silence in heaven about the space of half-an-hour." May not this mysterious lull symbolise the very period here in view? What its duration will be we know not, save that it will be within the life-time of that generation, and yet that it will be sufficiently prolonged to make the world forget the preceding terrors, and to make His people need exhortations to sustained watchfulness. "As in tile days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage," so will it be then. Signs and portents in abundance mark the *sunteleta* of that age, but its *telos* will be unheralded and sudden. In answer to His disciples' question, I again repeat, He warned them to watch, not for His coming, but for the events which must precede it. But now that these events are all fulfilled, his word is "Watch, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." For time day and hour of the coming of the Son of Man is a secret unrevealed.

CHAPTER VI.

"The people of the Prince who is coming will destroy the city and the sanctuary" (Daniel ix. 26). Who is this Prince? The manner in which he is here mentioned enables us to answer this question with confidence. For it is not by way of a new revelation, but of incidental reference to some one of whose personality and coming Daniel was already aware. There can be no doubt, therefore, that he is "the King of fierce countenance" of the vision accorded to the prophet two years before. And it is universally recognised that the Antichrist of Hebrew prophecy is identical with the Antichrist of the New Testament. The view that the time-Coming Prince is the Messiah might be ignored, were it, not that some eminent names can be cited in support of it. Indeed, it is sufficiently refuted by the fact that it is by the people of this Prince that the city and sanctuary will be destroyed. To find the fulfilment of this in the action of the Zealots during the Titus siege indicates to what lengths some expositors will go in support of a false system of exegesis. For the suggestion that Holy Scripture would describe religious apostates as the Lord's people savours of profanity.

A like remark applies to that wild vagary of exegesis that the Lord made a seven years' covenant with the Jewish people, and brought it to an end by His death "in the midst of the week." And the figment that His death put an end to "sacrifice and oblation" savours of the ignorance of apostate Christendom. The Jew is more intelligent in this respect than the nominal Christian; for he knows that, until this sin-defiled earth has been purified by fire, there can be neither altar nor shrine without "sacrifice and oblation." And when, in the future age of the kingdom, a regenerate Israel will assemble in their divinely-ordered Temple at Jerusalem, the Book of Ezekiel will give them in full detail the Divinely revised ritual to guide their worship . *

(They will doubtless note what that ritual is and what it retains of the Mosaic cult. They will read Ezekiel with the Epistle to the Hebrews in their hands; and they will not fail to distinguish between sin-offerings in relation to ceremonial uncleanness, and the great sin-offering which typified what the death of Christ accomplished in putting away the sins of the people. In that aspect of it the sin-offering can never be repeated. As the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches, the Christian place of worship is the sanctuary above, with its heavenly altar and Great High Priest. On this subject I would refer to Bishop Lightfoot's Commentary on Philippians, pp. 181-185.)

The word "Antichrist" occurs nowhere in Scripture save in the Epistles of John. But it is recognised that the title applies to the Kaiser of Daniel's visions, to the Man of Sin of 2 Thessalonians, and to the "Beast" of the Apocalypse.

Belief in a personal Antichrist was universal in the Early Church, and it held undisputed sway for more than a thousand years. But when the apostasy of Christendom was fully developed, it was only natural that Christians should raise the question whether the prophecies of Antichrist might not find their fulfilment in Rome. And this belief very generally prevailed until the Evangelical revival of the nineteenth century. In these days of ours Protestantism has no such champions as were the men of that revival. And what led to their change of view was no weakening of their antipathy to Rome but a more intelligent study of Holy Scripture. They awoke to the discovery that this "Christian dispensation" denotes neither the failure nor the abandonment of the Divine "plan of the ages." They came to understand the place which the earthly people of the covenant hold in that plan, and to realise that although both the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants are now in abeyance, they have not been cancelled; and that when this dispensation is brought to an end by the Lord's coming to call His heavenly people home, the main stream of Messianic prophecy will resume its course as though this Christian age had never intervened. Holy Scripture had long been like an elaborate mosaic, of which the several parts had been disturbed, and

the main design forgotten. But its hidden harmony was brought to light by the study of "dispensational truth" (an apt phrase that was much in use in those days). And that study included the "mystery" truths of this distinctively Christian revelation, truths which had been lost in the interval between the Apostolic age and the era of the great Patristic theologians.

Although traces of these truths may be found in the writings of the Fathers, they have no place in their "systematic theology." They confounded the true Church, the Body of Christ, with the Professing Church on earth - a departure from the faith which is the root error of the Roman apostasy. And they confounded the Lord's coming at the close of this Christian dispensation with His coming for the deliverance of His earthly people in a future age. And they also confounded grace with covenant, and thus let slip the basal truth of Christianity.

For the doctrines which generally pass for Christian truths are older even than the Divinely-ordered religion of Judaism. The truth of the first coming of Christ is as old as the Eden promise of "the woman's seed." And atonement by His death is as old as Abel's sacrifice. His coming again to judgment dates back to the prophecy of "Enoch the seventh from Adam"; and justification by faith was revealed to Abraham. But not until we reach the Epistles of the New Testament do we find the "mystery" truths of Christianity - truths, that is, which had not been revealed in the earlier Scriptures. As, for example, "the mystery of the Gospel" - the great basal truth of the reign of grace; the "mystery" of the Church, the Body of Christ, with its heavenly calling and hope; and the "mystery" of that coming of the Lord which will bring the present dispensation to a close.

The study of "dispensational truth" in no way undermines the principle of "germinant accomplishment" of the prophecies, which is the element of truth in the "historicist" scheme of interpretation; but it exposes and refutes the pretensions of that scheme to finality of fulfilment. The evil of that system is not merely that it limits and perverts the scope and meaning of special chapters and isolated texts, but that, in doing this, it tends to discredit the Bible altogether. And as Adolf Saphir wrote, it thus prepared the way for the attacks of Rationalism and Neology.

Moreover, this "Protestant interpretation" became an anachronism when the Pope lost his "temporal power," and Rome became the capital of the Italian kingdom. This event led the "historicists" to adopt the view that the Antichrist was not the Pope, but the Church of which he is the head. But Revelation xvii. is explicit that "the Harlot" is distinct from "the Beast"; and therefore every proof that the scarlet woman is the Apostate Church is a further proof that she cannot be the Antichrist.

The pretensions of Rome reach their climax in claiming that the Pope is the vicar of Christ, whereas the Kaiser of prophecy will demand universal worship as being himself the Messiah. He is not a Vice-Christ, but Antichrist. As the Lord expressly declared, "he will come in his own name." He will be the impersonation of "the mystery of lawlessness," whereas the Pope and the Church of Rome are merely its most advanced exponents and representatives. Every sacerdotalist, every one who believes in "the Holy Catholic Church," save in the sense in which the Reformers defined it - in a word, everyone who puts "religion" in the place of Christ, and in any way denies that He is the only Mediator between God and man - is an Antichrist in the same sense in which the Pope is Antichrist. The difference is one merely of degree.

A single instance must here suffice to justify my charge against "the continuous historical interpretation" scheme. Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticae* is the standard text-book of the cult. Its first five chapters may well impress us with a sense of the value of the writer's scheme. But when he passes from the first five seals to explain that the vision of the sixth seal was fulfilled by the downfall of Paganism in the fourth century,

we suffer a revulsion of feeling proportionate to our sense of the "trueness" and solemnity of Holy Writ. For the closing verses of Revelation vi. are a passage the awful solemnity of which has no parallel in Scripture, save in the kindred prophecies of Isaiah and Joel, and of the Lord Himself in Matthew xxiv. They speak of the dread *dies ire*, ending with the words, "the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" If it be urged that the events of fifteen centuries ago were within the scope of the prophecy we can consider the matter on its merits; but when we are told that the prophecy was thus fulfilled. we can hold no parley with the teaching. It is the merest trifling with Scripture.

"Moreover, it clashes with the charter truth of Christianity. For if the day of wrath has come, the day of grace is past, and the gospel of grace is no longer a Divine message to mankind. To suppose that the day of wrath can be an episode in this dispensation of grace betrays ignorance of grace and brings Divine wrath into contempt. The grace of God in this day of grace surpasses human thought, and His wrath in the day of wrath will be no less Divine. The opening of the sixth seal heralds the dawning of that awful day; the visions of the seventh seal unfold its unutterable terrors. But, we are told, the pouring out of the vials, 'the seven plagues which are the last, or in them is finished the wrath of God' (Rev. xv. 1, R.V.), is being now accomplished. The sinner, therefore, may comfort himself with the knowledge that divine wrath is but stage thunder which, in a practical and busy world, may safely be ignored!

Even in Apostolic times there were many Antichrists: in these days of ours they are innumerable. During the last half-century their influence has undermined the Protestantism of our National Church. The Evangelicals have become a dwindling minority, and the "Evangelical Party" is but a memory of the past. During the same period a crusade of systematised infidelity has corrupted all the Churches of the Reformation. And side by side with these phases of the apostasy is the rise and spread of demon cults, some of which overawe their votaries by a display of genuine miraculous power.

The times are full of peril, and we need to realise that all these antichristian movements are preparing the way for Antichrist himself.

It is of practical importance, therefore, to note what Scripture teaches respecting his character and career. And this will appear in a further study of the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.

[CHAPTER SEVEN](#)



SIR ROBERT ANDERSON

Secret Service Theologian



UNFULFILLED PROPHECY

CHAPTER VII.

The belief of early times, that the Antichrist will be personally energised by Satan, was based on Scripture. For his coming, we are told, will be "after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders." Still more explicit is the language of the Apocalyptic vision, that "the Dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority." And we recall the words of the Lord Himself that, in that awful time, false Christs and false prophets "will show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they will deceive the very elect."

To fritter away the meaning of these statements by referring them to the errors and follies of priestcraft is a profane trifling with the Word of God. Indeed, to put it on a lower ground, it is an insult to the intelligence of every Protestant. For no one whose mind has not been "doped " by "Christendom religion" could be duped by its "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits."

Even among spiritual Christians there are but few who attempt to realise what the condition of the Professing Christian Church will be during the age of which these Scriptures speak. In his Commentary on Matthew xii. 44, Dean Alford describes in a few pregnant sentences its sad history and present condition. And he adds:- "What the effect of the Captivity was to the Jews, that of the Reformation has been to Christendom. The first evil spirit has been cast out. But by the growth of hypocrisy, secularity, and rationalism the house has become empty, swept and garnished by the decencies of civilisation and discoveries of secular knowledge, but empty of living and earnest faith. And he must read prophecy but ill, who does not see under all these seeming improvements the preparation for the final development of the Man of Sin, the great re-possession when idolatry and the seven more wicked spirits shall bring the outward frame of so-called Christendom to a fearful end."

If the present condition of the Church is a cause of distress and grief to all true Christians, what will it be when they are called home to heaven at the coming of the Lord, and the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit is no longer felt, as it is felt even in these evil days! It will not be the superstitious only who will be deceived by "the signs and wonders of falsehood." Even the infidel will accept their testimony. His unbelief today is not so unintelligent as is the quasi faith of many who pose as Christians and Ministers of Christ. Like them, he accounts for the miracles of Scripture by the fact "that the Bible was written by orientals for orientals, and that miracle and myth are congenial to the oriental mind." And he appeals to

the absence of miracles during the history of Christendom. "If (he says) I witnessed miracles such as are alleged to have occurred in Bible times, I would renounce my infidelity." This is the mental attitude of multitudes of fair-minded men. And thus they spread a net in which they will become entangled in the coming Antichristian age. And if open infidelity capitulates before its "signs and lying wonders," surely the nominal Christians will flock to its shrines and join in its cult.

But, it will be asked, if the Lord's own people are "caught up" at His coming, and nominal Christians accept the Antichrist, who will be the victims of the persecution? Now, first, it is noteworthy that the Antichrist is primarily the persecutor of the "Covenant people." And though, in the Apocalypse, the Great Tribulation embraces Christendom, in Messianic prophecy it is spoken of only in relation to Israel. And while, in ancient times, idolatry was their national sin, the judgments which that sin brought upon them seem to have made them intolerant of idol worship. Indeed, the idolatry of "Christendom religion" is one element that prejudices the Jew against Christianity. No display of miraculous power would lead him to prostrate himself before an image.

And secondly, the difficulty above stated is one of many that are due to our inveterate habit of confounding plausible inferences from Scripture with what Scripture explicitly teaches. It is commonly assumed, and often asserted with emphasis, that in that coming age there will be no salvation for the sinners of Christendom. For is it not written that "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be condemned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" But this is merely a special application of the great principle that the acceptance or rejection of Christ fixes the destiny of men. And we may not dare to assert that a just and loving God will hold that every unbeliever is a Christ-rejecter. Even in our own favoured land there are very many "church members" who have never heard "the gospel of the grace of God," but have it dinned into their ears continually that "the sacraments," plus a moral and religious life, will win heaven for them. And what of the multitudes who are never "evangelised" in any way?

And is there any Scriptural warrant for asserting that some, even in truly Christian circles, who are now "halting between two opinions," may not find mercy when brought to decision by being left behind at the coming of the Lord? All such will have forfeited the heavenly home and the heavenly glory that are the portion of the redeemed of this present dispensation. But we dare not assert that they can never find salvation, and be enrolled in the book of life; albeit they must needs "enter the kingdom" through torture and death, in a persecution more awful than any recorded in the past.

But a difficulty of another kind claims notice, It is argued that, if the Antichrist be energised by Satan, he must be a monster of wickedness. How then can he command the worship of "all that dwell upon the earth? This difficulty springs from the prevalent belief in the mythical devil of Christendom. Had such a monster appeared in Eden, Eve would have fled from him in terror. But she was "thoroughly deceived" by the real Satan when he posed as the great philanthropist and proclaimed "the gospel of humanity." The characteristics of that Eden gospel are both simple and charming. "Hath God said!" "Ye shall not surely die." "Ye shall be as gods." First, it casts a doubt upon the plain words of the Divine revelation; secondly, it denies the eternal consequences of sin; and thirdly, it proclaims the elevation of humanity. In this gospel there is everything to attract the "natural" man, and nothing to repel him. And even here and now, in Christian Britain, it is preached from numberless quasi Christian pulpits; and thousands, even of real Christians, are in some measure deceived and corrupted by it. Who then can doubt that, when it is accredited by a great display of miraculous power, it will gain universal acceptance

We cannot understand aright the prophecies relating to Antichrist unless we realise that, so far from

being a monster of hideous mien and loathsome character, Satan is a being whom man, in his estrangement from God, would admire and emulate.

But did not the Lord Jesus brand him as a liar and a murderer? The words here referred to claim the closest scrutiny. They were addressed to the religious leaders of the Jews, devoutly zealous men who, having witnessed His miracles and weighed us teaching, were now plotting His destruction. To them it was He said, "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the desires of your father it is your will to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh the lie he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth ye believe me not."

The gloss that the Lord's sayings were always true, and that the Devil told lies, is deplorably trivial. The lie is here the antithesis to the truth; and the Devil's being a liar is connected with his being "a murderer from the beginning." The beginning of what? We are here vouchsafed a glimpse into a past eternity, when, to the heavenly host was first made known "the mystery of God, even Christ," namely, that a Firstborn was to be revealed, who was "in all things to have the pre-eminence." The wonderful being whom we know as Satan, and whom the Lord saw "fall from heaven as lightning," aspired to that position; and he rebelled against the Divine purpose, and from that hour he has sought to thwart it. This is fully disclosed in the "Temptation" of our Lord. Who of us makes any serious effort to realise the meaning of that narrative? Having "led Him up," and given Him that mysterious vision of earthly sovereignty, "the Devil said unto Him, "To thee will I give all this authority and the glory of them, for it hath been delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship before me it shall all be thine."

This was no mere outburst of profane folly. It was a bold assertion of a disputed right. Satan claims to be the true Messiah, the true Firstborn and heir of creation; and as such he claims the worship of mankind. These apocalyptic visions foretell his greatest, as it will be his final, effort to supplant the Christ of God. And to that end he will give to the Antichrist "his power and his throne and his great authority." Can we then be surprised at the sequel, that "all the world wondered after the Beast? And they worshipped the Dragon (Satan, the old Serpent of Eden) which gave power unto the Beast; and they worshipped the Beast, saying, 'Who is like unto the Beast?'" But even this is not all. For the Seer "beheld another Beast . . . who exerciseth all the power of the first Beast before him, and causeth the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first Beast." Thus the mystery of the Godhead will be travestied by this trinity of evil - Satan, the Antichrist, and the "False Prophet." And as already noticed, they will be accredited by signs and wonders that would deceive, if that were possible, the very elect. If we appreciate in any measure the awful significance and solemnity of what these Scriptures teach, we shall no longer be deluded by the almost unbelievable folly of seeking their fulfilment in the history of Christendom. It is not unnatural that an unbeliever should regard these visions as the brilliant day-dreams of a pious mystic. But that any spiritual Christian should treat them with such utter levity is no less strange than it is deplorable.

CHAPTER VIII.

No intelligent student of these Scriptures can fail to recognise that, in the age to which they point, there will be spiritual forces in operation such as earth has never experienced in the past, and from which the present age has been singularly free. For, as compared with both past and future, this Christian age is

marked by altogether peculiar characteristics.

First, "the grace of God, salvation-bringing to all men, has been manifested," and the Lord Jesus is exalted, not only as Prince, but as Saviour. Therefore is it that the Divine throne is now a throne, not of judgment, but of grace. And this again explains the mystery of a silent heaven. For "the kindness and love-toward-man of our Saviour God has been manifested." He has spoken His last word of mercy, and when again He breaks the silence it will be in wrath. But until the Lord Jesus passes from the throne of grace to the throne of judgment all direct punitive action against human sin is deferred. Before the dawning of the "day of vengeance" "the acceptable year of the Lord" must run its predestined course. And secondly, the Holy Spirit is now dwelling upon earth. "The promise of the Father" was not merely that believers in Christ should have the Spirit's guidance and help, for that was the portion of the people of God in every age, but that, when the Lord Jesus returned to heaven, He would send the Holy Spirit to take His place on earth, a promise that was fulfilled at Pentecost. So really is He present with us that the greeting from heaven, with which certain of the Epistles open, is only from "the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." And during His presence with His people upon earth the powers of hell are definitely restrained. But, when the people of the heavenly election are called from earth to their heavenly home, at the Coming of the Lord, that restraint will cease, "the Man of Sin" will be revealed, and the powers of hell will be permitted to operate in ways and to an extent unprecedented in the past. Another element which tends to a misreading of these prophecies is a want not only of sympathy, but of acquaintance, with the promises and hopes of Israel. As believers of this dispensation "our citizenship is in heaven," whereas Israel's citizenship is earthly. The true Israelite, therefore, in the coming age will not be looking for the Lord to call him away to heaven, but for "the coming of the Son of Man" to "restore again the kingdom to Israel," and inaugurate the promised rule of the heavens upon earth. The Lord Jesus was "born King of the Jews." And when He began His Ministry by proclaiming that "the kingdom of Heaven is at hand," that "gospel of the kingdom" did not mean that God was about to rule in heaven, but that, in fulfilment of Messianic prophecy, Divine government was about to be established upon earth.

And this explains the attitude and conduct of the Jewish leaders toward the Lord Jesus. They argued that, if He was indeed the Messiah, He was the promised "Son of David," who would put an end to Gentile supremacy and restore the Davidic covenant, which had been in abeyance ever since the imperial sceptre was entrusted to the King of Babylon.

(So deep and widespread is ignorance of all this that those of us who are advanced in years remember when the belief prevailed, even among spiritual men "of light and leading," that the Kingdom of Heaven would be established, as of course, by the preaching of the Gospel. If such a belief has survived the apoatasy of the last half-century, surely this hideous world war will avail to quench it. Human nature being what it is, there can be no reign of peace on earth without stern and righteous government.)

The Messiah they were looking for would be a conquering hero, who would deliver them from their enemies and revive the glories of the greatest of their kings. And such the future Antichrist will be; not merely a false Messiah in the religious sense, but a mighty Kaiser. The Apocalyptic visions already quoted clearly indicate that he will be a man of transcendent natural qualities. "All the world wondered after the Beast . . . and they worshipped the Beast, saying, Who is like unto the Beast? Who is able to make war with him?" The mingling of Kaisership with Deity is as old as classic Paganism; and it is not altogether unknown in later times. But it will be no mere theory in the case of the Man of prophecy. A great statesman, an orator (v. 5), and a brilliant general - here is the "superman" whom nations will honour, and armies will follow with enthusiasm. And when we take account of the fact that, added to

this, he will be endowed with the superhuman powers of Satan, we can understand the words of Christ, that none but the elect of God will refuse to render him Divine homage. In these visions the word "beast" signifies primarily an empire or kingdom, and then it is used to symbolise an individual. The Beast of Rev. xiii. is clearly identical with the fourth Beast of Daniel vii.- the last great Gentile world-power. But in the Apocalypse it appears at a later stage of its development. Three periods of its history are marked in Daniel. In the first it has ten horns. In the second it has eleven, for a little horn comes up among the ten. In the third it has but eight, for three of the ten have been torn away by the eleventh. Up to this point Daniel's vision represents the beast merely as the fourth kingdom upon earth," but here it turns away to describe the action of "the little horn."

And at this epoch it is that Revelation xiii. opens. The first three stages of the history of "the fourth kingdom" are past, and another has been developed. It is no longer a confederacy of nations bound together by treaty, but of kings subordinate to a Kaiser whose greatness has won for him the supremacy. And this is the Prince of the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks; the Antichrist of the New Testament; the man whom Satan will single out to administer his awful power on earth in days to come, the man to whom he will give his throne, his power and great authority - all that the Lord Jesus refused in the days of His humiliation. If Expositors are right in assuming that he is the prominent figure in the several visions of the prophet Daniel there seems to be no doubt that he will come to notice first as the ruler of some petty State within the territorial limits of the ancient Grecian Empire. He is called "a little horn, a symbol that well suits one who should arise from one of those petty principalities which once abounded in Greece. For "a little horn" indicates what he is, not as a man, but as a monarch. In his origin he will, of course, be merely human; and for a time he will be a patron of religion. But after the terrible crisis in his career, at which he sells himself to Satan, he becomes a relentless persecutor, and he ends by claiming divine honour.

This amazing change takes place at an epoch of supreme import in the course of the future age, namely, the middle of the seventieth week of Daniel. For it is an epoch signalled by the war in heaven between the Archangel and the Dragon; when Satan and his angels will be "cast out into the earth," and the Seer bewails mankind because the Devil is come down into their midst, "having great wrath because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. As the Coming Prince of the prophecy of the Seventy Weeks is identical with the Man of Sin of 2 Thessalonians, that Epistle claims notice here. Both the Epistles to that church indicate that a grievous persecution was then raging in Thessalonica, and the Christians had come to believe that the Tribulation of prophecy had begun, and "the day of the Lord was at hand" - "the great and terrible day of Jehovah." Having regard to the teaching of the First Epistle it may seem strange that such an error could prevail. But, owing to the persecution, the Christians, no doubt, could only meet furtively and in scattered groups; and their leaders being possibly in hiding, their knowledge of that Epistle depended probably on what they remembered of it from hearing it "read in church." Moreover, it would appear from chapter ii. 2 and iii. 17 that they had received a forged letter, as from the Apostle, cancelling or modifying the teaching of the First Epistle. And the Hebrew converts among them would have knowledge of such Scriptures as, e.g., Isaiah xiii., Joel ii., and Malachi iv. 5. And, with these in view, they might easily glide into the error which the Second Epistle was designed to correct.

The Apostle's words, "I beseech you on behalf of the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (R.V. margin), show clearly that the error against which he was warning them was destructive of the truth he had taught them. They could not live looking for "that blessed hope" (Titus ii. 13) if they were living in view of the awful terrors of the Tribulation and the day of the Lord. For these lines of truth are wholly separate. The

one is the line of Messianic prophecy, leading up to the coming of Christ as Son of Man, in a future age, for the deliverance of His earthly people, and for the establishment of His earthly Kingdom. The other is not within the range of Messianic prophecy at all, but points to the fulfilment of the hope of His heavenly people of this Christian dispensation. Following the words above quoted, the Apostle proceeds: "For it (the day of the Lord) will not come except the falling away (the apostasy) come first, and the Man of Sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped. So that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God." These words claim careful attention. The so-called Protestant interpretation of them finds their fulfilment in the Pope's being carried into St. Peter's at Rome, and seated there somewhat higher than the "tabernacle of the host." If St. Peter's were thus divinely recognised as "the temple of God," those of us who reverence, and seek to obey, His Holy Word would promptly make a qualified submission to Rome, and repair at times to the appointed shrine! This Protestant interpretation thus undermines Protestantism altogether! And this is only a very low ground for rejecting it, for such trilling with and perverting of Scripture is deplorable and evil in the extreme. The Apostle's language points to the same crisis as the Lord's words respecting "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet." And it will be fulfilled when the Prince of Daniel ix. violates his treaty with the Jewish people, and desecrates the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. The Antichrist will set up his image upon the Temple, to be worshipped by all (see p. 89 ante.) And (on certain "high days," no doubt) he will personally sit enthroned within the Sanctuary, "setting himself forth as God." This twofold desecration is generally overlooked. But is it credible that any Jew would acknowledge a Gentile as Messiah? Now first, we have no definite ground for assuming that the Man of prophecy may not be an Israelite. And secondly, are we to assume that "all power and signs and wonders of falsehood" would prove unequal to the task of forging a pedigree, and obtaining the acceptance of it by an apostate people? For the "elect" among them will repudiate him. And the language of Daniel ix. 27 is noteworthy; it is with the many that he will make the treaty, implying that a minority of the nation will stand aloof and refuse to be a party to it. And lastly, if to the apostates of Christendom "God will send strong delusion that they should believe the lie," is it strange that the apostates of Judaism should also be thus divinely given over to delusion? And, moreover, we are not dealing here with a human forecast, but with a Divine prophecy.

CHAPTER NINE

SIR ROBERT ANDERSON

Secret Service Theologian



UNFULFILLED PROPHECY

CHAPTER IX.

"Prophecy is not given to enable us to prophesy, but as a witness to God when the time (of fulfilment) comes." Even if limits of space allowed of it, my appreciation of these words of Pusey's would prevent my indulging here in any forecasts of the future, beyond what Scripture expressly warrants. Certain extra-Scriptural forecasts have been discredited by the present war. For example, the language of the opening verses of Zechariah xiv. were taken to indicate that the future siege and capture of Jerusalem will be the work of half-savage Oriental troops. For, it was argued, Western civilisation would not tolerate the excesses here described. How foolish this appears in view of the atrocities perpetrated by the Germans in this war!

But while avoiding flights of fancy as to the means by which, and the manner in which, the events foretold in prophecy will come about, we may well take note of present-day movements and occurrences, which seem to be preparing the way for their fulfilment. For example, appeal may be made to the probable effect of the war on the future of Palestine. If the Turk be driven out, the attempt of any one of the Entente Powers to seize possession of that land would be the signal for another war! And this consideration will, in all probability, lead to its being constituted a protected Jewish State. And thus the present generation may possibly witness the building of the very temple upon which the Prince of Daniels prophecy will yet set up his image. But this is merely a probable surmise, and the introduction of it here is possibly an indiscretion.

If Pusey's axiom were construed strictly the study of prophecy would be valueless until the time of its fulfilment. But this was far from his intention. For not only is it of fascinating interest to the thoughtful, but of great practical importance to every Christian. It serves to put us on our guard against evil influences and movements, of which the ultimate development and full fruition are described in the prophetic Word. Spiritualism, Christian Science, and other cults of a similar character, may be mentioned in this connection. These cults are daily winning over not a few, even among those whose Christian profession seemed to be above reproach. And the experience of many gives proof that those who yield to these demon influences soon reach a stage where recovery seems impossible, even if they wish to escape from them.

In view of the genuine miracles by which they are accredited, to denounce them as mere charlatanism is

idle. And as their miracles are of a beneficent character their votaries regard them as Divine. In dark days of persecution Satan was as "a roaring lion, seeking whom he might devour." And in that character he will be known in the darker period of the coming age. But now "he fashions himself as an angel of light," even as he did in Eden, and in the Temptation of the Lord.

But, it may be asked, how can this be reconciled with what was stated on a preceding page as to the contrast between the present age and that which is to follow it? Here we must be guided by what Scripture records of former "changes of dispensation." These changes find an illustration in the sphere of nature. For while Science can mark with accuracy the changes of the seasons, the actual transition is unnoticed by the observer. And this has its parallel in the spiritual sphere. The law and the prophets were until John, and then the Kingdom of God was preached. But yet the Lord reproached the Jews that though they could discern the face of the sky they could not discern the signs of the times. And so was it again when Israel was set aside, and the present Christian dispensation was inaugurated. The change was a crisis of extreme significance, but yet it passed unnoticed; and many characteristics of the new dispensation had marked the later stages of that which it superseded. And as we observe the present-day manifestations of the sinister spiritualist influences and movements which will be fully developed in the coming age, may we not hail it as giving hope that the present dispensation is nearing its end, and that "the coming of the Lord is drawing nigh?" And that hope will be intensified if we are given to see "the land of the promise" restored to the people of the Covenant.

On yet another ground the practical importance of prophetic study is incalculable. To all who pursue it intelligently it affords full and irrefutable proofs of the Divine authorship of the Bible, and it thus provides an antidote to the poison of the "Higher Criticism." The writings of the eminent scholars who have led or championed that sceptical crusade will be searched in vain for proof of acquaintance with the scheme of Divine prophecy, a scheme that can be traced, like a silver thread, through all the Scriptures. And still more remarkable is their neglect of the typology of scripture, which is so closely allied with prophecy. Indeed, their "learned" writings are notable examples of exegesis on the text-card system. These Critics are like men who empty the works of a watch into a bowl, and then, after examining them in detail, arrive at the sapient conclusion that they present no proof of unity or design!

The aphorism that "truth is one" applies unreservedly to Holy Writ. But if we read it on the text-card system we lose all sense of its "hidden harmony." We cannot intelligently apprehend what God has revealed about the future if we are ignorant or unmindful of His revelation respecting the past and the present. We need, for example, to recognise the dual character of this "Christian Age." For, as already noticed, the root error of the Apostasy of Christendom is the failure to distinguish between the Professing Church, the administration of which is committed to man, and the true Church which Christ is building. The Professing Church is for earth and time, whereas the spiritual Church stands related to eternity and heaven. The truth respecting it is a "mystery" of the Christian revelation. And its temporary connection with earth will cease at that Coming of the Lord, which is another of the "mystery" truths revealed in the Epistles of the New Testament.

In this, its higher aspect, the present dispensation is not within the purview of the earlier Scriptures. And, viewed in relation to earth and time, it is an interlude in the great drama of prophecy as unfolded in those Scriptures. To rule out in this way some two thousand years of human history will seem neither startling nor strange, if we remember that, with God, a thousand years are "as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night."

And as regards the past we must keep in view the Divine plan of the ages. The Adamic dispensation was

brought to an end by the judgment of the Flood; and the Noachic was marked by the Babylonian apostasy, in which the primeval revelation was utterly corrupted. An apostasy so subtly adapted to our fallen nature that even Evangelical Christianity is leavened by it. God thereupon took up Abraham and his race to be His agents and witnesses upon earth, and "unto them were committed the oracles of God." But the nation of Israel proved false to that trust; and instead of being light-bearers to the world, they proudly claimed a monopoly of Divine favour. The Holy Temple, designed to be "a house of prayer for all nations," they regarded as their own house, and ended by making it "a den of thieves." Here, then, we have the clue to a right reading of the 11th chapter of Romans. It is a chapter of cardinal importance to the student of prophecy, but it is much neglected. And the Apostle's warning to us Gentiles not to be "wise in our own conceits" is practically ignored, as witness the figment that "the Christian Church" has ousted Israel from the olive tree position. The teaching of the chapter is explicit, that Gentiles are wild olive branches, "grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive tree," the natural branches being Israelite. But they are only branches. For the allegory of the olive tree points back to the Abrahamic covenant and promise. And it is not as "members of the Church" that we are grafted into it, but as Gentiles, who, in virtue of faith, are become "children of Abraham." In the true Church there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Neither is there in the Vine, which represents a vital relationship with Christ, to be manifested by fruit-bearing.

And this chapter teaches emphatically that the present age is not only parenthetical but, in its earthly aspect, abnormal. And further, that as Israel was cut off because of unbelief, so the Professing Church of this age will be cut off. And then "There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. And so all Israel shall be saved" (v. 26) Not "every Israelite," but Israel as a nation. For this chapter does not deal with the position and destiny of individuals, but with national and dispensational distinctions and changes.

Neither does it deal with Churches in the sense of our English word "denominations," but with the Professing Church on earth as a whole. For Scripture recognises only two Churches, namely, the Church the Body of Christ, which, when complete, will be manifested in heavenly glory; and the Professing Church, "the outward frame of so-called Christendom," now drifting to its "fearful end." Even with knowledge of its evil history and present condition, we can form no adequate conception of what it will become when all true Christians are called away to heaven, and the influence of the Holy Spirit is no longer felt. But with awe we ponder the words of the Apocalyptic vision, that when the day of its judgment comes all heaven will ring with Hallelujahs, and the wonderful Beings who sit around the throne will fall upon their faces in adoring worship as they join in the refrain, "Hallelujah, Amen" "All Israel shall be saved." "And if the casting away of them was the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead!" The cemetery condition in which Christendom will leave the world shall give place to the life and gladness of a summer garden! For when the People of the Covenant have been regenerated in the great revival foretold in prophecy, "the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world." And the result of their testimony will be the in-numerable multitude of earth's great Feast of Ingathering "out of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues." Let us then shake free not only from the errors, but from the mean pettiness of Latin theology on this great subject. One of the most popular of its accredited exponents in our own day describes the present age as "the last great eon of God's dealings with mankind," Could we but realise aright the significance of the Ministry and Death of Christ in God's purposes for earth, we might be tempted to declare that this age of ours is the first great eon of the unfolding of those purposes. And the statement, though unwarranted, would not

be so flagrantly false as is the "pandemonium and conflagration" theory of this theology. If only we knew more of God, and if we realised that earth's history runs its course in open view of all the great intelligences of heaven, the mysteries of both the past and the present might perchance seem less perplexing. And we should be led with eagerness to scan the prophecies still unfulfilled, to find there that this sin-cursed earth is yet to be a scene of blessedness and peace - all that we should expect a God of infinite goodness and power to make it:

**"When a King, in kingly glory,
Such as Earth has never known,
Shall assume the righteous sceptre,
Claim and wear the holy crown."**

Let us then, with the intelligent enthusiasm of faith, take our stand by the side of the inspired Apostle as, surveying this glorious vista of the Divine "plan of the ages," he exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments. and His ways past finding out!"

But no intelligent student of these prophecies, and very specially of this eleventh chapter of Romans, can fail to recognise that before they can be realised there must be "a change of dispensation" as definite and drastic as that which was signalled by the call of Abraham, and again by the "casting away" of Israel, and the welcoming of Gentile slum-dwellers, and tramps of the highways, to partake of God's great supper of salvation. The reader of these pages, therefore, will appreciate their second title, and the prominence here given to the Coming of the Lord. It is not intended to suggest that "the hope of the Church" is within the scope of the Hebrew Scriptures. But the realisation of that hope will usher in the age to which the great field of unfulfilled prophecy pertains. And therefore it provides the only standpoint from which that field can be surveyed in a true perspective.

CHAPTER X.

As noticed in preceding pages, there will be not less than three future Comings of Christ.

(1) That Coming by which this Christian dispensation of the reign of grace and the heavenly Church will be brought to an end;

(2) "the Coming of the Son of Man," in fulfilment of Messianic prophecy, to bring deliverance and blessing to His earthly people; and

(3) His Coming to judgment in a far distant future, at the close of the kingdom dispensation. But though the Coming of Christ is the hope of His people in every age, Theology gives us nothing but the "Second Advent" of His coming to judgment; and thus disposes, not only of the Christian's hope in the present dispensation, but of Israel's hope in the dispensation which is to follow it.

For while Christianity is based upon the teaching of Holy Scripture, "the Christian religion" depends largely upon the teaching of the Latin Fathers. And before the era of the great Patristic theologians "the hope of the Church" had already been forgotten; and Messianic prophecy had been so perverted or "spiritualised" as to shut out Israel's hope altogether.

But here a question of extreme importance claims attention. The saints of the Apostolic age were taught

to live "in constant expectation of the Lord's return." How then is the delay of nineteen centuries to be accounted for? The Infidel's answer is that the Apostolic teaching was false. And some Christians would have us believe that, although the saints were divinely taught "to live looking for that blessed hope," it was settled by a Divine decree that the Lord would not come until long centuries had run their course. If these be the alternative solutions of the problem, most of us will take sides with the Infidel. For though the loss of the Epistles would be a disaster, it would be infinitely worse to charge the God of truth with flagrant untruthfulness of a kind that would not be tolerated in our fellow-men. But we reject both alternatives with scorn. Some, again, would tell us that owing to the evil history of the Church on earth, even from the earliest times, the promise is cancelled, and the hope it engendered is lost. But though God is often said to have "repented" in regard to threatened judgments, Scripture records no instance of His failing to fulfil a promise of blessing. Many a case, however, can be cited where the fulfilment was delayed because of unfaithfulness or sin on the part of His people. And does not this suggest the right solution of our difficulty?

But if the Lord delays His Coming until "the Church" is what it ought to be, is not the promise practically cancelled? Yes; but it was not to the Church that He gave the promise, but to His elect people scattered throughout the Church. And nowhere is it given more explicitly than in the very Scriptures which foretell the Church's apostasy and doom. Plain words are needed here. For in these days, when the Protestant spirit is waning in our land, there is no influence, perhaps, more harmful to Christian life than the prevalent superstitious and errors respecting "the outward frame of Christendom," "the Christian Church," as it is called. Our position in it and our attitude toward it ought to be akin to that which the Lord taught His disciples to maintain toward "the Jewish Church." They were in it, and yet, in a real sense, not of it. For though Divine in its origin and as to its responsibilities, it had apostatised. It was, in fact, "the world" of His prayer on their behalf (John xvii. 16). And as Bishop Westcott wrote of "the Christian Church," the world got into it in the fourth century, and has never since been got out of it. The crisis to which he referred was, presumably, the Conversion of Constantine. When wolves are about, the sheep keep near to the shepherd. And so, till then, the danger of persecution kept the Christians near to the Lord. But the century which followed was marked by such apostasy that, even in the sphere of morals, "the Christian Church" sank to the level of the heathen world.

The account given of it in Salvian's celebrated treatise on "Providence," written in the middle of the fifth century, is appalling. Here are two typical sentences from it:- "A very few excepted who flee from evil, what else is almost every assembly of Christians but a sink of vices. . . . I put it now to the conscience of all Christians whether it be not so, that you will hardly find one who is not addicted to some of the vices and crimes which I have mentioned; or rather, who is it that is not guilty of all ?

(Footnote - full extracts in "The Bible or the Church")

The first Divine warning which Scripture gives of the apostasy of the Church is the Apostle's Paul's address to the Elders of Ephesus (Acts xx. 29, 30). And it is an extremely significant fact that while his Epistles written prior to that epoch were addressed to Churches, his "Captivity" Epistles were addressed to "the Saints at Ephesus "; "the Saints at Phiippi "; "the Saints at Colosse."

In these evil days we need to hold fast the great truth which Bishop John Ryle, of Liverpool, championed so fearlessly, that "there is only one true Church," the spiritual fold which includes only those who are Christians in the deeper sense. His Christian Leaders of the Last Century is, incidentally, a grave indictment of "the Christian Churches" in our land. He shows, indeed, that at that epoch they were the enemies of Christ and of His people. When toward the end of the eighteenth century William Carey

sought to excite interest in missions to the heathen, among his brethren in the Baptist Ministry, he was put down as a troublesome faddist. For "if the heathen were elect, they would be saved without their help; and if God wished them to send out missionaries He would renew the gift of tongues." And when Carey and Thomas sailed for India in June, 1793, they went out as emissaries, not of "the Christian Church," but of a dozen Baptist Ministers- "troublesome faddists" -assembled in the low-roofed back parlour of Widow Wallis, at Kettering, in October, 1792. Thus was launched, to quote Sydney Smith's sneer, by a few 'consecrated cobblers,' the first English mission to the heathen in India.'

If the men who took the initiative in work of this kind had waited for "the Christian Church" to promote missions to the heathen, the heathen would possibly be still unevangelised. For even the Church Missionary Society was the offspring of the despised "Clapham Sect." The meeting at which it was founded was held in neither Westminster Abbey nor St. Paul's, but in a hired room in a poor sort of City inn. And it was not till forty years afterwards that Ecclesiastical dignitaries accorded it their patronage. For by that time all the Churches had begun to feel the influence of the Evangelical revival of the early decades of last century.

Still deeper and far more widespread was the influence of the revival which marked the middle of the century. But no sooner did the spiritual power of that revival begin to wane than a new apostasy set in. And as the result our National Church has been so thoroughly corrupted by Romanising influences that it is no longer Protestant, and the great Evangelical Party is but a memory of the past. And all our British Churches have been leavened with the Kultur of that German infidelity which has reduced that nation morally to the level of savages.

But what bearing has all this upon the truth of the Lord's Coming? It is owing to a false estimate of "the Church" that so many devout Christians neglect that truth, seeing that it is ignored in all our doctrinal standards. It will be said, perhaps, that it has no place in the "dogmatic theology" of the Epistles. True, for it is a fact of great significance that the Coming of the Lord is never mentioned as a doctrine that needed to be expounded, but only as a truth with which every Christian was supposed to be familiar. And the reason of this is clear. For the very first day on which a convert was privileged to enter a Christian assembly he heard the words, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come." And if "unlearned in doctrine," he might well ask, "But has He not come?", and then all would be explained to him; and ever afterwards, as week by week he heard those charter words, the hope of the Coming would be inseparably linked with the atoning death of Christ.

But with Christians generally all this is now forgotten, and the Lord's Supper points only back to Calvary. And it is too commonly associated with "the cult of the Crucifix," which reaches the Pagan level in "the reservation of the Sacrament" and "the Mass." Indeed, there are many, even among spiritual Christians, who habitually speak of the Supper as "remembering the Lord's death." We do thus "proclaim the Lord's death"; but the vital and essential element in the sacred rite is that to which the Lord's own words give emphasis: "This do in remembrance of ME" -not a dead Christ, but an absent Saviour and Lord.

If then, shaking free from every false or superstitious estimate of "the Church" and its theology, the Lord's Supper regained its right place in Christian thought and Christian experience, the truth of the Coming would be restored to the place it held in Apostolic days; and a vague sort of intellectual faith in a "Second Advent" in a vastly distant future, would give place to a real heart-belief in the Lord's return, as a present hope, to cheer and comfort us in sorrow, and to influence character and conduct in our daily life.

Of days in Israel when their religious leaders failed them it was written, "Then they that feared the Lord

spake often one to another; and the Lord listened, and He heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before Him." And in these days of ours let us remember that it was not "the Church" or its leaders that promoted missions to the heathen, but a few lightly-esteemed Christians who were fired with the enthusiasm of faith in God. And if even a very few spiritual Christians in every place would begin to "speak often one to another" about the Coming of the Lord they would soon come together to pray for His return. And from such small beginnings, it may be that, for the first time in the history of Christendom, companies of His people shall be found meeting together to claim 'the fulfilment of His promise, "Surely I am coming quickly," and to pray the prayer which He Himself has given us, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

THE END

APPENDIX NOTE.

It is due to the "text-card" system of Bible study, and the resulting ignorance of "dispensational truth" (see page 40 ante), that so many Christians ignore, and some vehemently reject, "that blessed hope" of the Lord's Coming. For they are thus betrayed into confounding His Coming as Son of Man for the deliverance of His earthly people, after "the great tribulation," in a future age, with His Coming to call home His heavenly people, and to bring this Christian dispensation to an end. And this "text-card" system is harmful in a wholly different sphere. No pulpit utterance of recent years obtained a wider publicity than the "Love your enemies" sermon preached in St. Margaret's, Westminster, on the 25th March two years ago. The Lord's teaching for the guidance of His disciples in their "Gospel of the Kingdom" ministry was used to indicate what our attitude ought to be toward our enemies in this war, entirely ignoring His words to those same disciples on the eve of His leaving them (Luke xxii. 35, 36). And yet even a village Sunday school might be expected to notice that He then bade them to provide themselves with swords! Neither did the preacher notice the Lord's emphatic statement that His teaching was not to be taken as cancelling one jot or tittle of the law, i.e., the Mosaic Scriptures. And by those very Scriptures it is that our public affairs, whether national or international, should be regulated. This question, moreover, may become a burning one if, as we hope, our armies invade Germany and seize Berlin. Are our troops to fraternize with the Germans, and declare their love for them? Or is their bearing toward them to be akin to that of our police and magistrates toward our criminals at home? We may rest assured that there will be no reprisals in kind for the hideous atrocities inflicted by the enemy upon peaceful citizens in the lands they have invaded. But if the Governments of the Allies should see fit to inflict exemplary punishment upon Germany as a nation, by rifling and destroying all national property, let no British Christians bring discredit upon Holy Scripture by raising a protest based upon perversion of the teaching of our Divine Lord. And what is to be our attitude as Christians toward our German brethren after this war? If by condemning and deploring the crimes committed by their nation against humanity and law they give proof that they are indeed followers of Christ, our course is clear. But otherwise we may fitly act toward them in the spirit of the Lord's explicit words recorded in Matthew xviii. 15-17, and refuse definitely to acknowledge them as Christians.
