

Lectures on the Book of Daniel

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With an introduction in review of *Dean Farrar's work on the prophet* in the "Expositor's Bible."

These lectures on the Book of Daniel were taken in shorthand and printed first some forty years ago, with a very slight correction in a later edition. It would be easy to fill up details and to improve their literary form. But as they are, they have helped not a few souls, and not least since Great Britain and the United States have been beguiled into their growing pursuit of that guilty and withering craze which calls itself the "Higher Criticism." What is it in the main but a revival of older British Deism, aided by devices of foreign unbelief, and decorated with modern German erudition or its home imitation? Yet all fail to conceal hostility to God's inspiration, and ceaseless effort to minimize real miracle and true prophecy, where, as in this country, men dare not yet deny them altogether.

The notorious Oxford Essays, which roused strong feeling in a former generation, are quite left behind. Dissenters vie with Nationalists (Episcopalian or Presbyterian), Methodists with Congregationalists, and of late Ritualists with avowed Rationalists, in showing themselves up to date in freethinking; as if the revealed truth of God were a matter of scientific progress. What joy to all open infidels, who cannot but hail it as the triumph of their contempt for His word! It is not now profane men only, as in the eighteenth century, but religious professors, ecclesiastical dignitaries in the various bodies or so-called "churches" of Christendom, and particularly those who hold theological and linguistic chairs in the Universities and Colleges all over the world, who become increasingly tainted with this deadly infection. Alas! it is the sure forerunner of that "apostasy" which the great apostle, from almost the beginning of his written testimony, said must "first come" before the day of the Lord can "be present."

Take, as a recent instance (and it is only one out of many in the conspiracy against Scripture), the present Dean of Canterbury's contri-

bution on the Book of Daniel to the Expositor's Bible. Self-deception may hide much from its victims; but no believer should hesitate to say, "An enemy hath done this." While claiming for the Book an "undisputed and indisputable" place in the Canon, think of the infatuation of denying openly and unqualifiedly its genuineness and its authenticity! "It has never made the least difference in my reverent (!) acceptance of it that I have for many years been convinced that it cannot be regarded as literal history or ancient prediction." Yet such persons assume to be actuated simply by the love of truth; for this they confound with the counter-love of doubting. Alas! they are under "the spirit of error" (1 John 4:6); or, as Jude so warns, "These speak evil of the things which they know not: but what as the irrational animals they know, in these things they corrupt themselves." May the Christian keep Christ's word, and not deny His name!

W. K., CANNES, April, 1897.

Introduction

DANIEL is characteristically the prophet of the Babylonish exile. The frightful excesses of Antiochus Epiphanes find their place in the course of his visions, and a special place, quite distinct from the general ground on which the book starts and proceeds. From the first the solemn fact is made evident that the Jews are for the present Lo-ammi (not My people): God no longer addresses them through the prophet. They are called Daniel's people in Dan. 9:24, Dan. 10:14, Dan. 11:14, Dan. 12:1; and God is distinctively designated "the God of the heavens" (Dan. 2:18, 37, 44); which is repeated in Ezra 1:2, Ezra 5:12, Ezra 6:9, 10, Ezra 7:12, 23, Neh. 1:4, 5, Neh. 2:4, and also in 2 Chronicles 36:23. The state of His people, their idolatrous apostasy, made it incompatible with His nature and majesty to act at their head or in their midst as "the Lord of all the earth." (Joshua 3:11) He is only called "Jehovah" in the prophet's own prayer and confession. (Dan. 9) "Thus saith Jehovah" would have been equally out of place.

Yet, as the God of the heavens, He deigned to make known to the heathen king "what should be at the end of the days" (Dan. 2:28): for then only will God's purpose be manifest to every eye in the judgment of the Gentile empires, and in the subsequent establishment of His kingdom, which shall fill the whole earth and stand for ever. Hence Daniel gives, as no other does, the "times of the Gentiles." (Luke 21:24) This large scope is precisely suited to a great prophet raised up at the starting-point in Nebuchadnezzar's day, and continuing in singular honour not only before a mighty king at first and an unworthy successor at the close, but none the less when the new dynasty superseded the "head of gold," and Medo-Persia rose to supreme power. All this and more agrees with "the six magnificent opening chapters," as well as with the latter six, more wondrous still in unveiling the definite iniquities of the great powers, at the close in particular, and the glorious intervention of the Ancient of Days and Son of man to set them aside judicially, and bring in a

kingdom universal and everlasting. Here only we see that the saints of the high places have judgment given to them (Dan. 7:22), and their "people" have the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven (27).

In this vast sweep of prophecy "the days of Antiochus Epiphanes" receive not the smallest notice. Neither was there any analogy between the circumstances of that day to suggest such grand considerations. Nor, again, did the persecution of that cruel enemy of the Jew, his profane contempt for the institutions of the law, and his rabid zeal for Hellenizing their worship, resemble the evils fore-shown thus far in Daniel. Historically the Syro-Greek antagonism is set out in Dan. 8:9-14, and reappears with fuller detail in Dan. 11:21-32. As not another reference to his days can be proved to occur in the entire book, this may serve to expose the absurd assumption of the "higher critics." Yet absurdity is a venial fault compared with the infidelity which ignores and denies the light from the lamp of prophecy over the Gentile empires as a whole. Especially, as if to destroy their leading principle by anticipation, does the prophet dwell on the closing scenes, which induce the judgment, not even yet accomplished, to be surely executed in the day of the Lord. Only unbelief is surprised at the peculiar traits of the book: what they call its cosmopolitanism, its rhetorical rather than poetic style, and its apocalyptic form. Hence their blindness to its moral and doctrinal elements, and their undisguised contempt for the details in Dan. 11, so considerately given in the absence of living prophets. But surely a man is too bold when he also compares "the grotesque and gigantic emblems of Daniel" with the Second Book of Esdras, the Book of Enoch, and the Sibylline Oracles. If he have no real faith in Scripture, or at least in the Book of Daniel at this moment, he has solemnly subscribed Art. 6.

The new and elaborate effort to defraud Daniel of the book which God gave him to write is the more egregious and unreasonable, as it is not denied that "Daniel was a real person, that he lived in the

days of the exile, and that his life was distinguished by the splendour of its faithfulness." The fact is, that no prophet has in the Old Testament such a testimony to him as Ezekiel renders twice (Ezekiel 14:14, 20 and Ezekiel 28:3); nor is anyone more commended by our Lord in the New Testament to the reader's heed. (Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14) And what does the fact mean that the great prophecy which concludes the Canon of Scripture is grounded on the Book of Daniel more manifestly than on any other prophet?

Is it objected as strange that two languages, Hebrew and Aramaic, should be employed in the book? Such a phenomenon, on the contrary, suits the time of Daniel, not that of Antiochus Epiphanes. Is it not notorious that Jeremiah, his elder, has a verse in Aramaic (Jer. 10:11) strikingly preparing the way? and that the inspired scribe-priest Ezra, who followed and flourished in the reign of Artaxerxes Longimanus, incorporates Aramaic through several chapters? (Ezra 4:8 - 6:18; Ezra 7:12-26) Why, then, object to a similar course in Daniel?

As to the particular words questioned, the reader may well be wary of plausibilities; for hostile criticism is unscrupulous. Take the spelling of the name of the Babylonian conqueror. It is alleged that Daniel always uses Nebuchadnezzar; while Ezekiel invariably writes Nebuchadrezzar, the assumed correct form. But it is remarkable that Jeremiah's prophecy employs both forms, Daniel's no less than Ezekiel's. How does this favour the date of Antiochus Epiphanes? and why be stumbled by some Persian words, allowing the fact to be certain? or even by the three names of musical instruments which resemble Greek words?

The depreciators of the written word cry out loudly against the "uncharitableness" of those who denounce their evil ways. But can those who know the truth be indifferent to a matter so serious and daring as the systematic perversion of the miracles in Daniel into Haggadoth, or religious romances, and of its prophecies into histo-

ries pretending to prediction? To such as neither love the Scriptures nor believe in their divine authority, it is a mere question of literary criticism. Is it not utterly vulgar to feel or to speak with decision about a Hebrew sage? Why not cultivate "sweetness and light"? God is in none of their thoughts.

Some fifteen seeming mistakes are set forth from Daniel 1 to 11:2, all of them founded on appearances against reality, which can only be accounted for by uncommon confidence in man and his monuments, and a total want of faith in Scripture. They have been refuted abundantly, as Dr. Farrar ought to know. That the answers satisfy unbelieving minds is what grace alone can effect until judgment come. Let the first "remarkable error," as it is called, serve for the rest: — "In the third year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah." Now, against such a flippant attack let me cite the calm and clear language of an acknowledged expert in chronology, who was not a theologian, and had no controversial aim but simply the truth. Under the year B.C. 606 (371) Mr. H. F. Clinton says, "The fourth year of Jehoiakim, from Aug. B.C. 606. The 23rd from the 13th of Josiah: Jeremiah 25:3. The deportation of Daniel was in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim: Daniel 1:1. Whence we may place the expedition of Nebuchadnezzar towards the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 4th year, in the summer of B.C. 606. In the 4th year of Jehoiakim Baruch writes the book: Jeremiah 36:1, 2." (*Fasti Hellen.* i. 328) Anyone, even a pert boy, can question anything. But could an upright mind on reflecting fail to see that the supposed contradiction of Daniel 2 is the strongest evidence of truth? No writer in the Maccabean age would have allowed it to appear; but a contemporary, when all was notorious, could leave it to be understood. "The second year" is necessarily Nebuchadnezzar's sole reign, as Dan. 1 implies association with his father; and Daniel's three years (Dan. 1:5) would fall in with it. Scripture is written for believers, not for irreverent cavillers.

Two more of these "surprises" betray unmistakably malevolent ignorance — Nebuchadnezzar's prostrate homage to Daniel with an

oblation and sweet odours; whilst the critic asks in astonishment whether Daniel could have accepted the offering. Now it is demonstrably false, from the king's own words, that he regarded Daniel as a god; and it is certain that Daniel disclaimed any such blasphemy as much as Paul and Barnabas. But the heathen king believed, what the Anglican dean does not, that God supernaturally intervened in the case, in making "Daniel the prophet" to recall the forgotten dream, and to be the interpreter for the future throughout the "times of the Gentiles" till His kingdom come. Such a revelation led Nebuchadnezzar, in his deep emotion and gratitude, to pay Daniel the highest honours, even to what we westerns regard as an extravagant degree. There is no semblance of a sacrifice as at Lystra. The word translated "oblation" is frequently and rightly used for "a present," irrespective of the true God or a false one; just as prostration and worshipping were often expressive of no more than civil reverence. But imagine a Jew trying to write the book in Maccabean days; would he have written in this freedom of truth? If he had introduced it at all, what care to tell the king that he must worship and offer to God alone! As to the sweet odours, can anyone be so infatuated as to contend that the very great burning made at the burial of King Asa (2 Chronicles 16:14) implies his deification? As a like offensive tone with utter unbelief of Scripture pervades much of the rest, one may well turn to something more decorous if not better founded.

The unity of the book, so often and vehemently assailed, is now admitted even by the most advanced freethinkers, save eccentric men. This is in no way weakened by the fact that only in the latter half (from Dan. 7) does the writer speak in the first person, or "I Daniel." The first half having the historical form, Daniel is spoken of, and the Gentile chiefs are prominent; especially he who was the object of divine communications (Dan. 2, 4), though the prophet only was given to recall the first and interpret both. The historic chapters (Dan. 3-6) are of the utmost value as following the outline prediction of Dan. 2, and introducing the moral view with its richer in-

struction of Dan. 7 over the same ground. In the second half of the book the prophet alone has the visions and interpretations.

Accordingly things are presented, not in their external aspect, but in their relation to God's people, and with yet higher aims. When Babylon fell, even during the transition of Darius the Mede, a marked change is observable in answer to the prophet's intercession, as he knew by the books that the captivity was near its end. A new appearance and insensibly plainer language were vouchsafed as to the city and sanctuary of Jerusalem, but with the appalling fact that Messiah was to be "cut off and have nothing," and its dire consequences, not only then but when the last week of the seventy is in accomplishment at the end of the age. Lastly, when the restorer from the exile was reigning, the final communication comes in plainer language still, corrective of all vain hopes for the present founded on the return, and in God's gracious condescension giving those continuous and unwonted details which have so roused the scornful unbelief of men, that they have dared to brand them as pretended or "pseud-epigraphic prophecy." They must give account of such incredulity to God. Meanwhile this indulgence in the principle of infidelity — the preference of our own thoughts to God's word — does not fail to spread one knows not how far. It may seem little, but it is the little beginning of a very great evil.

The book thus derives its special form from Daniel as the prophet of the Exile far more impressively than any written by even his contemporaries. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel were inspired to dwell, one on the future blessedness of Israel in the land under Messiah and the new covenant, the other on a wondrous display of the divine glory, which will give a new form to the city and the temple, and a new partition of the land to the restored tribes, when the nations shall know that Jehovah hallows Israel, and His sanctuary shall be there for ever. Their task was outside God's purpose by Daniel, which helps to explain why he abode among strangers when he might have returned to Jerusalem with the remnant in Cyrus' day.

He had learnt definitely that the time for Messiah's coming was not yet, and that, when come, He should be rejected. He was shown subsequently that "at the time of the end" not only should the kings of the north and of the south resume their conflicts, but a new and portentous personage should reign in the land and be assailed by both, the counterpart of Messiah in evil, the man of sin as He of righteousness: a state totally different from and irreconcilable with Antiochus Epiphanes in any of his phases, and introduced by the prophet, not only after that "vile person" had long ceased to trouble the Jews, but expressly at an indefinitely distant time — the end of the age. This, once pointed out, no serious person can intelligently deny to be correct.

Then will an unparalleled tribulation befall the Jews; but another remnant shall be saved out of it with an unparalleled deliverance. Then shall God's people as a whole awake from their long sleep in the dust of the earth, some to life everlasting, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. Then shall faithful and zealous intelligence in the dark day receive its reward when the glory of Jehovah is risen on Zion (still desolate). Then the times and the seasons shall be punctually fulfilled when the scattering of the power of the holy people is accomplished, and he that waited is indisputably blessed. Till then the words were closed up and sealed for the Jew as such till the time of the end. But we Christians know the Incarnate Word, and believe that in His rejection by the Jew and the Gentile He accomplished redemption, and has given us life eternal; so that meanwhile a fuller revelation said for us to a greater prophet, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand." (Revelation 22:10.) Till the time is arrived Daniel was to rest, it did not matter where on earth, still more and better above, as much above the weeping of the old men as above the joyous shouts of the young. (Ezra 3) He was assured, as all saints should be, of standing in his lot at the end of the days.

The style is perfectly adapted to the circumstances with which the book was meant to deal, as much so as richness and sublimity to Isaiah's work, or tender feeling to Jeremiah's, or rugged grandeur to Ezekiel's. How utterly incongruous with the disclosures of Daniel would have been the impassioned and poetic manner of the Psalms! Daniel was given the extraordinary province of revealing "the times of the Gentiles," both in their splendid aspect of conferred imperial power and in their inward reality as "Beasts" before God uncared for and unknown, with special seducers and oppressors within those times; as well as the transgressions of the chosen people and their chiefs, which brought on them such chastenings and such an abnormal state, but also a faithful remnant first and last, who alone were wise and understood His mind.

As Babylon was in God's ways the appropriate place, so during that first empire, till Cyrus the Persian succeeded, was the period for this peculiar testimony. Who can conceive an epoch less morally or circumstantially in keeping with its entire scope than about B.C. 167 for "a brave and gifted anonymous author, who brought his piety and his patriotism to bear on the troubled fortunes of his people"? That Porphyry of Batanea, who hated Christ, should have invented such a fable is intelligible. That an unbelieving Jew like Dr. Joel should not be ashamed of following a heathen philosopher, one can also understand. But is it not treason for a baptised man, for a Christian minister so called, to imitate such profane impiety, As faith is discarded, so any intelligent apprehension of the book becomes impossible. Daniel opens with fixing attention on an event so momentous as the Lord's delivering over the king of David's house to the Chaldean, who carried off part of the holy vessels into the house of his god. This is followed up, in Dan. 2, by the distinct announcement that God set the conqueror of Jerusalem as the first of the world-powers. Only Babylon had this place direct from God; Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome had theirs simply in providential succession. So thoroughly is this distinction recognized in Scripture, that the fall of Babylon brings before the Holy Spirit in Isaiah and Jeremiah the final

destruction of the Gentile authorities as a whole, and the connected deliverance, not of Judah only but of Israel also, Cyrus' being but its foreshadow. It is not so with the intermediate empires, till the judgment is fully manifested which yet awaits the fourth or Roman; for in the final sense "the Beast," or that empire, perishes only when the Lord Jesus appears from heaven, as we read in Revelation 19:19, 20. Now this was made known in Daniel 7 no less clearly. What could a patriotic Jew know about it at a time when prophets admittedly had long ceased? No, it was first given to "Daniel the prophet" to reveal.

The theory of histories turned into pretended prophecies is only worthy of men without faith, insensible to the unique value, character, and authority of God's word when it is before their eyes, with a malignant intent to make spots where they cannot find them. When parables appear (or as goes the Rabbinical term, Haggadoth), they are so styled, or self-evidently such; whereas not a book in the Bible takes more decided ground than Daniel's for historic truth, evident miracles, and true predictions. For the epoch was just one when miracles and prophecies were for God's glory. Imperial power was now first conferred in God's sovereignty on the Gentile, and it was made known by undoubted divine authority. It was as much or more necessary to prove at that very time that God's calling and gifts were not subject to change of mind, though the people who had them were set aside for a while. Hence the remnant, when captive in Babylon, are proved alone to have His secret, even as to the distant future, and maintained by overwhelming and supernatural might against all the rage even of the powers that then were.

Dilettanti critics do not like to hear that their system gives the lie to Daniel, even if we say nothing of the Holy Spirit. And as to objections founded on language, history, general structure, theology, etc., why do they repeat what has been often answered satisfactorily? Do they presume on popular ignorance or personal indolence,

too apt to yield to the last or loudest voice? The book itself, like all Scripture, is the best reply to calumnies.

Daniel 1 is a preface, from Jerusalem losing the direct government of God (who set up meanwhile Babylon in a fresh imperial position), down to the first year of Cyrus. Dan. 12 has also a conclusory character in the judgment of the Gentiles up to the deliverance of Israel. From Dan. 2 to 6 Gentiles are prominent in an exoteric way. From Dan. 7 to the end, only the prophet receives and communicates the mind of God intimately on all, with the glory of the Son of man and His people here below and His saints on high. We may therefore call this half esoteric. What had so immense, as well as intimate, a range of truth in keeping with Maccabean times? It is true that the Syrian king's furious persecution of the Jews, and his profanation of worship, find a marked place in the course of the book; but where it does, plain indication is given of a greater power and worse evil typified thereby before "the end of the indignation." What sad belittling of an inspired book to make that king, audacious as he was and cruel, a blind not only to the final actor in that sphere, but to others on an incomparably larger scale, who are all to come under divine dealings at "the time of the end" — a time which assuredly is not yet arrived!

Daniel 2 conveys the interesting and important fact that "the God of the heavens" acted by a dream on the first Gentile head of empire, to show the general course of dominion then begun till its extinction: an image gorgeous and terrible, but gradually deteriorating as it descends, and closing with great strength and marked weakness also. Then He sets up another kingdom, His own, after destroying not only the fourth empire in its last divided condition of the ten toes (which did not exist when Christ suffered or the Holy Spirit came down), but the remains of all from the first — the gold, the silver, the brass, as well as the iron and clay. Only when judgment was executed does the "little stone" expand into a great mountain and fill the whole earth. Here the rationalist coalesces with the

ritualist in teaching the self-complacent nonsense of an "ideal Israel," the church or Christendom. Yet in the church is neither Jew nor Greek, but Christ is all. It is the body of the glorified Head; and its calling is to suffering grace on earth, awaiting glory with Christ at His coming. Crushing to powder the image of Gentile empires is in no way or time the church's work. The once rejected but now exalted Stone will do it, as He declared in Matthew 21:44 and in other scriptures. But the literal Israel will be then and there delivered, and become His earthly centre in power and glory. Such is the uniform witness of the prophets. We need not begrudge this to the remnant of Jacob then repentant; for we are called to far brighter glory with Christ in heavenly places. But, whether believed now or not, the first dominion on earth will surely come to the daughter of Zion in that day, and as long as the earth endures.

The intervening histories in Dan. 3-6 are in the fullest accord with the predictions of Daniel, two of them general (Dan. 3, 4) and two particular (Dan. 5, 6) (as we shall find the prophecies are also), but none of them referring to the peculiar scourge in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. In not one is there a trace of Hellenism imposed on the Jews. Not even in Belshazzar have we the least real likeness to punishing recalcitrants against the gods of Olympus. The aim is to show how the Gentile entrusted with imperial power by God used it, deeply impressed as he had been by the lost secret which none but the Hebrew captive could interpret. Alas! man being in honour abides not; he is like the beasts that perish. So it had been with Israel under law, with Judah, and with David's house. New-fangled idolatry on pain of the most cruel death was the first recorded command of the Gentile world-power: a religious bond to unite by that act the various peoples, nations, and tongues of the one empire, and thus to counteract the divisive influence of gods peculiar to each of these races. But such a universal test gave God, thus ignored, the occasion to prove the nullity of that idol and every other, the total and manifest defeat of supreme power even by its own captive cast into the fiery furnace, be it ever so heated. How grave

the public lesson read to all the Gentile empires, were not man as forgetful of God as he is bent on his own will!

The next chapter (Dan. 4) is no less general, and the more impressive as the deepest humiliation was inflicted by God, after His slighted warning, on the same haughty head of imperial power. Nebuchadnezzar had ascribed all his glory to himself, and was debased, as none else ever was, to the bestial state till "seven times" passed over him. After that he "lifted up his eyes to heaven," a repentant and restored man owning the Most High, no longer like the brute but morally intelligent. It is childish to lower or restrain to the Seleucid prince a lesson he never learnt. It is infidel to doubt the facts of this chapter or of the preceding one. It is blind not to recognize that Dan. 3 looks on to the deliverance of faithful ones (not "the many") at the end, as the other to the day when the Gentile shall have a beast's heart no more, but will bless the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth: the character of the divine display when this present evil age terminates. What connection had either with the loathsome foe of the Jews, Antiochus Epiphanes? Nothing could be more telling than both displays of God's power during the "head of gold" "till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." It is Satan's work to disbelieve them; and a nominal Christian is far more guilty now than a heathen of old if he help Satan against God.

The special aims of Dan. 5, 6 are of no less serious moment. Neither the one nor the other resembles or represents Antiochus Epiphanes. In Dan. 5 we see dissolute profanity eliciting a most solemn token of divine displeasure on the spot, and judged by a providential infliction that very night. Monuments or not, the word of our God shall stand for ever. Nothing more dangerous than to trust anything or one against Scripture; and what can be more sinful? What avail the brave words of men enamoured of Babylonish bricks, cylinders, etc.? Let them beware of the snares of the great enemy; not even resurrection power broke Jewish unbelief. In Dan. 6 man was by craft set up for a while as the sole object of prayer or worship,

which brought on its devisers the sudden destruction they had plotted for the faithful. What bearing had this, any more than the chapter before, on the grievous time of Antiochus Epiphanes? They evidently prepare the way, for the judgment of the future Babylon in the one (Dan. 5), and for that of the Beast in the other (Dan. 6), as given in the Book of Revelation, where both perish awfully though differently.

Next follow the more complicated communications of God's mind about the four "Beasts," the last especially, much fuller and more intimate than in Dan. 2. The movement of heaven is disclosed, and God's interest in His people, and particularly in the sufferers for His name, specified "as saints," and even as "saints of the high places." The dream of Nebuchadnezzar, condescending as it was to him and awe-inspiring in itself, contained no such vision of glory on high, no such prospects for heaven or earth, no such display of divine purpose in the Son of man.

But as in Dan. 2, so yet more in Dan. 7, the last and most distant empire, the fourth, is much more fully described than the Babylonish then in being, or the Medo-Persian that next followed, or the Greek that succeeded in its due time. For we have a crowd of minute predictions of an unexampled nature, the many horns in the last empire at its close, the audacious presumption and restless ambition of its last chief, who from a small beginning governed the rest, and, not content with trampling down the saints, rose up in blasphemy against God and His rights, which called forth summary and final judgment on all, with the action of heaven in establishing the everlasting kingdom of power and glory.

Such a revelation fundamentally clashes with the canons of the Higher Criticism, and demonstrates, if believed, their utter futility. Hence we can understand their efforts to get rid of the unvarnished truth Daniel sets before us in this vision. The attempt to separate the Medish and the Persian elements, so as to make them respec-

tively the second and third empires, is desperate and unworthy. Dan. 5:28 was explicit beforehand as well as Dan. 6:8, 12, 15; and afterwards Dan. 8 demolishes such contradiction of Scripture. The bear in Dan. 7 answers to the ram in Dan. 8, which had two horns, the kings of Media and Persia — not two Beasts but one composite power expressly. The leopard, therefore, with its four heads answers to the goat of Greece, for whose great horn, when broken, four stood up in its stead. The fourth Beast, different from all the Beasts before, is none other than the Roman Empire, which has ten horns in its final shape, after which, when further change comes, divine judgment falls in a form without previous parallel.¹

If we let in, as we are bound, the further light of the Apocalypse, where we cannot but recognize the same "Beast" as Daniel saw in the fourth place, we gain the fullest certainty from Rev. 17 that the seven heads were successive governing forms, of which the sixth or imperial head was in being when John saw the vision (v. 10); and that the ten horns were contemporary, for all receive authority as kings for "one hour with the beast." It is preparatory to the last crisis, when they make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them. (vv. 12-14) This is also decisively shown in verse 16, "And the ten horns which thou sawest, and [not 'on'] the beast, these shall hate the harlot," etc., as they also give their kingdom to the "Beast" until the words of God shall be fulfilled. This, accordingly and absolutely, disposes of the attempt to make the "ten horns" mean only ten successive kings, so as to apply the list to the Seleucidae, and make it appear that Antiochus was the little horn of Daniel 7, who got rid of the three last of his predecessors. Such a scheme is mere perversion of Scripture, wholly dislocates the chap-

¹ As far as I know, Ephraem Syrus stands alone among the early ecclesiastics in treating Antiochus Epiphanes as the little horn of Daniel 7. A devoted man, extremely attached to monasticism, and vehement against the heterodox, he died in A.D. 378, but one has yet to learn why his differing from all other fathers earlier and later should have weight. Grotius and others, notorious for excluding the future and Christ, and for limiting prophecy to past history, followed in modern times, though early fathers enough led in the same path of unbelief.

ter, and deprives us of the only true interpretation. For this supposes a divine interposition at the end of the age in judgment of the Roman Empire, revived to fulfil its complete destiny and to be judged by the Lord Jesus at His appearing.

The first empire had a simplicity peculiar to itself. The second or Medo-Persian had dual elements; and so has the symbol two horns, of which the higher came up last. The third or Macedonian had after its brief rise four heads, of which two are noticed particularly as having to do with the Jews in the details of Daniel 11. The fourth empire, beyond just doubt, is the Roman, diverse from all before it, and distinguished by the notable form of ten concurrent horns, ere its destructive judgment by a divine kingdom which supersedes all, and is truly both universal and everlasting. Then shall the saints of the high places have their grand portion, surely not to eclipse the Son of man, as these sorry critics would like, but to swell the train of His glory who is Heir of all things.

None but the Roman Empire corresponds with the feet of iron and clay; none other furnishes an analogy to the ten toes in one case and ten horns in another, the only true force of which is ten kings (subject to the violent change indicated) reigning together. Nor can any power that ever bore sway be so truly compared to "iron breaking and subduing all things," or a most ravenous nondescript brute with great iron teeth which "devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it." The entrance of the Teuton clay indicates the brittleness of independent will (in contrast with the old Roman cohesive centralism), which, as it broke up the empire in the past, will culminate in the tenfold division of the future in that revival of the empire which is presupposed in Daniel 7 before judgment falls, and is distinctly revealed in Revelation 17. This is a trait wholly absent from all previous empires, as well as from the Syro-Greek kingdom, which never was an empire nor approached it.

As this revival of the Roman Empire is so momentous a fact of the future and for "the time of the end," it may be well here to point out the clear and conclusive evidence of Scripture. On the showing of Daniel 2 and 7 the fourth or Roman Empire is in power when the kingdom of God comes, enforced by the Son of man. But the Revelation explains how this can and will be. In Rev. 13:1-10 is seen the "Beast" emerging once more from the sea or revolutionary state of nations, having seven heads and ten horns. These last have been ever held to identify it with Daniel's fourth empire. And the seven heads, now appropriately added, can only confirm it, for (explained as it is in Rev. 17:9, 10) this description applies to no known empire so significantly as to the Roman. Only we have to observe an absolutely new fact in connection with the healing of that one of his heads (the imperial, as I conceive) which had been wounded to death, that the great dragon (who in Rev. 12 is declared to be Satan) gave him his power and his throne and great authority.

Pagan Rome was evil exceedingly, and had its part in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. The same Roman Empire will reappear at the end of the age, energized by Satan in a way neither itself nor any other empire ever had been. This gives the key to its extreme blasphemy and defiance of the Most High as well as its other enemies, because of which the judgment shall sit and the dominion be taken away by the wrath of God from heaven, when the Beast with its hosts dares to make war against the Lord descending in power and glory. The horns will then act as one will with the "Beast" that is then present to give imperial unity. For still more clearing the intimations of Rev. 13, Rev. 17:8 is most explicit, "The beast that thou sawest was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go into perdition." Again, at the close of the verse, "Seeing the beast, how that he was, and is not, and shall be present." (See also verse 11.) It was the "Beast" without the horns under the Caesars and their successors. Horns in their varying numbers were without the "Beast" in the middle ages and onward: "The beast was, and is not." But the wonder of the future is that the Beast, before

the closing scene, is to arise not only out of the sea, but, with the far more awful symbol, out of the abyss, the prelude of perdition. Here, again, the consistency of the truth asserts itself. To none but the Roman Empire can these predictions apply. To Alexander's empire they are irrelevant, how much more to a mere offshoot of it! No, it is the empire that rose up against the Lord in humiliation, which, blinded and filled by Satan's power, will make war with the Lamb when He comes in glory to its appalling ruin.

Dan. 8 is manifestly of a character and scope more circumscribed than the general prophecies of Dan. 2 and Dan. 7. Yet it is none the less important for its design, because it takes up only a special part; but all alike conduct us to the catastrophe at the end. As this we have seen to be evidently true of the great general visions of the book, so is it equally of the particulars, which circumstance exposes the fallacy of identifying the objects. All come into collision with divine judgment; but they are distinct in character as in fact. "A divine kingdom" crowns the two general series of the four empires, as even rationalism does not dispute for Dan. 2, and admits that our Lord in Matthew 26:64 alludes to Dan. 7. There is, indeed, an effort to treat "the personality of the Messiah" as "at least somewhat subordinate and indistinct." But such unbelief is vain. No believing Jew severed the coming kingdom from the Great King, as haughty Gentiles are prone to wish. The saints of the high places are very far from usurping the Son of man's place in the vision, which makes Him the manifest centre and the object invested with dominion for ever. But their blessedness also is carefully shown. Whatever honour these saints may have in that day (and they reign with Christ, as the New Testament plainly puts it), it is a false interpretation which denies Him personally and supremely the excellent glory.

In this Dan. 8, then, the first of the special prophecies, we have the second empire of Medo-Persia assailed overwhelmingly by the third or Greek kingdom of Alexander the Great. How any upright mind can fail to apprehend this from the simple reading of the text is hard

to account for. The great horn was broken when it became strong, and in its stead came up four notable horns. Out of one of these four kingdoms rose a little horn which became exceeding great, and also meddled peculiarly with the Jews and the sanctuary. It is a deplorable lack of intelligence to confound this oppressor with the little horn of chapter vii., the one being as manifestly a ruler over a part of the Greek Empire in the East, as the other from a small beginning arrives to be the chief of the Western Empire. Both are to be excessively impious and wicked, and both are punished by God beyond example; but to confound them is to lose the difference of the actors at the close, even wholly opposed as they are to each other, though both inflict the worst evils on the chosen people. But there is the less need of many words here, as it is agreed that the vision in its later part from verse 9 does set forth the Seleucid enemy of the Jews and of their religion. And it would appear that verses 13, 14 apply to his defilement of the sanctuary and suppression of the daily offering.

As usual in Daniel, and elsewhere in Scripture, the interpretation not only explains, but adds considerably, and in particular dwells, not on the typical Antiochus Epiphanes, but on the final antitypical enemy in the same quarter at the latter day. It is weak to pretend that the awful end predicted for the infamous personage of the future in this chapter and at the end of Daniel 11 was fulfilled in the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, terrible as it was in the estimate of Greeks as well as Jews. Thus the real prediction of his history in the preceding verses of the same chapter (11 up to 32) does not dwell on it as comparable with that of him who is found at the end.

Even in the earlier portion (Dan. 8) there is a remarkable parenthesis in verses 11, 12 defined by "he," as compared with "it" in the verses before and after. This appears to give marked personality to the evil actor that is chiefly in view, however much the king who sought the apostasy of the Jews and the destruction of such as refused to Hellenize made him a type.

But the prophecy goes on to the consummation, when God interferes in unmistakable power. Hence the angelic interpreter would make Daniel know "what shall be at the end of the indignation." Who can say with the smallest show of truth that this was in the days of the Syrian's evil or of the Maccabean resistance? "The end of the indignation" will only be, when Israel are truly repentant and God has no more controversy with His people. Nor should this surprise anyone who reads the Scriptures in faith, for all the prophets look on to that happy time. The real person before the mind of the Holy Spirit at the close is one who will "stand up against the Prince of princes," but shall be "broken without hand," in a way far beyond its type in past history. A gap, therefore, necessarily occurs in every one of the prophecies. In no instance is continuity aimed at. Enough is said to make the general bearing plain; but in every case the Holy Spirit dwells on the final scene which connects itself with the subject-matter before us, because then only will the judgment of God decide all absolutely and publicly, and introduce the kingdom of power and glory that shall never pass away.

Daniel 9 has its own peculiarities. Those who contrast this book with other prophecies, as lacking the predominantly moral element, only prove their own blindness. In no prophecy is it so conspicuous; and the same chapter which so profoundly tells out to God a heart that identified itself with the sins and iniquities ("we have sinned," etc.) of the men of Judah, and of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and of all Israel near and far off, but with the most earnest intercession, is precisely the one that, as he prayed, received from God a prediction in some respects the most striking and important of such scriptures. Here even rationalism cannot but own that the promised blessings of verse 24 belong to the Messianic hope, when the 490 years are closed. Thus it shares, with every other prediction in the book, the mark of going down to the end of the age when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and God sets up His kingdom in Christ by judgments executed on all wickedness, Jewish or Gentile. But here,

where Jeremiah's seventy years are referred to, with the provisional return of a remnant from Babylon to rebuild the city and the sanctuary, we have not only Jehovah the Lord God of Israel addressed, but also Messiah's first advent and cutting off. This interrupts the thread of the seventy weeks, as it naturally must, and an undated vista of desolation follows. For it clearly includes Messiah's rejection, and leaves nothing but the destruction of the city and temple, and a flood of troubles on the Jews. There evidently is the break. Messiah's death was "after" the sixty-ninth week = 483 years. Then follow the desolation determined, and to the end war, outside the course of the "weeks" altogether, as it is hardly possible to deny.

The last week remains for the close, without fixing any connection or starting-point, save that the Roman "prince" (whose "people" came and destroyed Jerusalem) will, at the time of the end, make covenant with "the many," or mass of faithless Jews, for a week or seven years, and will in the midst of it cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. That is, he will put down the Jewish religion, contrary to his covenant; and "because of the protection" (rather than the overspreading) "of abominations" or idols, which take its place, a desolator will be, even until the consumption and that which is determined be poured on the desolate, i.e. Jerusalem. The desolator seems to be the last north-eastern enemy, as the Roman prince is he who is so prominent in Daniel 7, where we saw the times and laws given into his hand for the same last half week, or three and a half times.

Instead of this plain, worthy, and homogeneous interpretation, what do the neo-critics say? "There can be no reasonable doubt that this [the cutting off Messiah] is a reference to the deposition of the high priest, Onias III., and his murder by Andronicus (B,C, 171)"; while the rest is turned to Antiochus. Of course, all is chaos among the critics. The design is to pervert the prophecy, from Christ's death and the burning of their city and the flood of desolation, to those murderers. The precise scope is clear if the interruption of the

series is observed in the text, with the future bearing of the last week. If this be true, it is a death-blow to the "higher critics," and an unanswerable proof that the true Daniel wrote it, who here distinctively brings in the awful truth of Christ's rejection, which has deferred the world-kingdom till His second advent, while the disasters of the poor Jews are shown not only till the Romans destroyed their city and temple, but at the end of the age when they meet their worst tribulation before deliverance comes for the godly in that day.

It is well known that De Wette in his German version of the Bible strove to eliminate "Christ" from this great prophecy, so striking for its chain of dates; and that the dogs of rationalism do their worst in rending it ever since by exaggerating whatever difficulty may exist. The chief difference among believers is the slight one of applying "the word to restore Jerusalem" (Dan. 9:25) to the decree of Artaxerxes Longim. either in his seventh year (Ezra 7), or in his twentieth year (Nehemiah 2). The prediction itself leaves a margin, not "at" but "after" the 62 weeks, added to the preliminary 7 (= 69 weeks, or 483 years); so much so, that some suppose this margin covers the three years or more of our Lord's ministry before the cross, answering, in fact, to the first half in evil of the future Roman chief's covenant with "the mass" of ungodly Jews. Otherwise the lineaments are plain. Here De Wette betrayed his unbelief; for Messiah no more in Hebrew than in English requires the definite article. It is correct to say, "Messiah shall be cut off." Why did he say here only "ein Gesalbter," when elsewhere he gives "der G."? Was it not to get rid of the weightiest truth predicted and fulfilled, and to avoid the total refutation of the reverie here about the days of Antiochus Epiphanes? But all this effort is fighting against God's word. May men learn their folly and sin before His judgment overtake them! may they be spared to proclaim the truth they have sought to destroy, and glorify God thereby, if to their shame, assuredly to their joy and blessing for ever!

Of course to these critics the chapter is confusion, and wholly unworthy of a prophet. But the cutting off of Messiah was an event of transcendent importance, especially being through the will and guilt of His people; as is implied in the interruption of the weeks, and the undated vista that follows of their desolation, in which is prominent the accomplished destruction of their place and nation by the Roman people. It is not yet, however, the prince that should come. He is reserved for the last week, when he makes covenant with "the many," or ungodly majority, in contrast with the faithful remnant of the Jews, and breaks it with yet more iniquity, when the end of evil comes, and the long expected blessing follows.

The last three chapters are also a particular prophecy, and Dan. 11 is exceedingly minute, to the fierce dislike of such as think for God, and would dictate to Him if they could. There is a rich variety in Scripture, and not less in the prophetic word. Our place is to bow to God and learn of Him. Unbelief sits in judgment on Him who is worthy of all trust and adoration. Now Dan. 11, peculiar as it may be, demands and deserves our fullest confidence, whatever say the scorners. It was in the third year of Cyrus that the revelation came to Daniel. Three more kings were to arise in Persia — Cambyzes, Pseudo-Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspes; then the fourth, richer than them all, Xerxes, who, when waxed strong by his riches, should stir up the whole against the kingdom of Javan, or Greece.² This gives the fitting gap, which necessarily must be, unless an uninterrupted thread were inserted: a thing unprecedented in such cases, as the gap we have seems to be regular.

² It is a false statement (p. 61) that the writer only knows of four kings of Persia — Cyrus, Cambyzes, D. Hystaspes, and Xerxes; for after Cyrus he refers to three, and describes Xerxes as the richest. In Ezra 4 they are named Ahasuerus answering to Cambyzes, Artaxerxes to Pseudo-Smerdis (who helped the adversaries), and Darius H. (who adhered to Cyrus' proclamation). Later Persian monarchs appear in Ezra and Nehemiah.

The next personage is the Macedonian chief, who repaid the blow intended by Persia. No honest man can avoid seeing Alexander the Great in verse 3, or his divided kingdom in verse 4, which introduces two of those divisions, the kingdoms of the north and the south, and their conflicts which follow. Again, it is clear and certain that in verses 21-32 we have a full account of him who more than any hated the Jews and their religion. The sceptical theory is, that a patriotic Jew in his day personated Daniel of ancient renown in the exile, and converted the past history into professed prophecy up to that time. But the fact stands opposed that, when Antiochus Epiphanes is dropped, verses 33-35 give a protracted state of trial which ensued long for the Jews, when their old foe ceased from troubling, and that the text expressly declares their trial was to go on to "the time of the end." Here, therefore, is the great gap implied in accordance with the other predictions of the book, and even with the same principle on a smaller scale between verses 2 and 3 of this chapter.

Then from verse 36 we find ourselves confronted with the last time. We are told, not of a king of the north or of the south as before, but of "the king," that final wicked one whom a prophet so distinguished and early as Isaiah presents in Isa. 11:4, Isa. 30:33, Isa. 57:9 with the same ominous phrase, the personal rival of the Anointed, reigning in the land according to his own pleasure, and thus fully contrasted with Him who only did His Father's will. It is an energetic sketch of one exalting himself against every god; whereas Antiochus Epiphanes was devoted to the gods of Greece and Rome. Though speaking impious things against the God of gods, he is to prosper till the indignation be accomplished — God's indignation against His guilty people (as Isaiah also spoke), another proof of days still to come. The Palestinian prince (which Antiochus Epiphanes was not, but king of the north) will have no regard for the God of his fathers, namely, Jehovah (for he is an apostate Jew), nor the desire of women (Messiah, the hope of Israel), nor any god (i.e. of the Gentiles), which last it is absurd and false to say of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is,

in truth, the long predicted and then present Antichrist, supplanting Christ, denying the Father and the Son, coming in his own name, and received by those that refused Him who came in the Father's. His and their destruction is shown elsewhere; but here the prophet turns to the old struggle of the kings of the north and of the south, both being as opposed to "the king" as to each other: an incontestable proof of the folly, first of fancying Antiochus Epiphanes here, and next of denying that these events, believed or disbelieved, are set forth as the prophet's prediction of the last future collision.

Observe, finally, what accumulation of proofs Daniel 12 affords of these events to come, which of themselves refute the petty scheme of seeing only Antiochus Epiphanes up to the end. For when the last king of the north perishes by divine judgment, a divine intervention on behalf of Israel is assured "at that time." Sorely will the Jews need it, for they will have passed through this their last and severest tribulation. But, unlike their calamitous history for long centuries, "at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." It is no mere policy nor prowess, but mercy for the righteous. Hence the appropriate figure of many of the sleepers in the dust awakening, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. So Isaiah (Isa. 26) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 37) employed the same figure of resurrection for the uprising of Israel nationally, but with the rejection of the unrighteous, as our prophet plainly indicates.

The result, then, of this brief survey of the book, assailed by neo-critical unbelief, is to show that their scheme is unfounded from first to last, and that it overlooks the grand scope of Gentile empire, both exoteric (Dan. 2) and esoteric (Dan. 7). In this so inconsiderable a ruler as Antiochus Epiphanes could have no place, still less be the culmination of all in bringing on the divine extinction of the entire system of Gentile empire, and hence in restoring Israel under conditions of blessing and glory which will change the world's history. It is plain that no such time is come. When Christ came, the fourth em-

pire was in power; which will also play its part against Him at His second advent, as the New Testament carefully and clearly reveals. His cross laid the basis for reconciling, not believers only, but all things also in due time. Meanwhile in the world "the times of the Gentiles" proceed, and "the indignation" against faithless Israel. The gospel is indeed sovereign grace toward all and upon all that believe, and the church is Christ's body for heavenly glory. But the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ is not yet come, nor can it come till the seventh trumpet is blown. Even in the particular prophecies of Daniel, where Antiochus Epiphanes is referred to (Dan. 8 and Dan. 11), the book itself teaches us to look on from his evil to a greater and worse antitype expressly bound up with "the time of the end," which in no way applies to the Seleucid king.

Thus every part of the book, when received in faith, is seen to rise up in rebuke of the unbelieving dream that makes Antiochus Epiphanes the paramount object and chief upshot. And as the Roman Empire, in its not yet revived shape, is from the earliest vision predicted, and its judgment when the Son of man appears in glory, so also we learn of a north-eastern monarch who is to oppress the Jews at the final crisis. (Dan. 8) Nor is the book silent on the role of the western chief in making and breaking his compact with the Jews, and in imposing idolatry on them, and thus bringing on the consummation. (Dan. 9) Then Dan. 11:36-39 presents the clear picture of the lawless king in the land, who magnifies himself above God and Christ, as well as every pretended god, yet honours a strange god himself, exalting whom he will, and dividing the land for gain. If we had not the Lord Jesus vindicating for ever "Daniel the prophet," such a survey calls for believing and thankful acknowledgment of the book as not only genuine and authentic but inspired of God, casting His light authoritatively on all the Gentile empires, and especially on the end of the age, on which each part converges.

It was for others rather than our prophet to descant on the bright scenes of righteousness and peace under Him who is alike David's

Son and David's Lord, the Man whose name is the Branch and Jehovah, King over all the earth, as He is also Head over all things. But Daniel simply abides prophet of "the times of the Gentiles"; and this he is with a divine precision and fulness for all who are children of light now. For others it is only natural to love darkness rather than light.

What else after all could be expected from one who, ignoring the word and Spirit of God, takes his stand on "our reason and our conscience as lights which light every man who is born into the world" The apostle Paul alleges, in Romans 1 and 2, that these suffice to leave without excuse even a Gentile who has not the law (still less the gospel). Think of a professing Christian abandoning his precious privileges for heathen ground! And what perversion of John 1:9 to a similar purpose! There the evangelist is really asserting the supreme excellence of Christ as the Light, which, coming into the world, sheds its light on every man, instead of acting, as the law, in the limited sphere of the Jews. One could understand such ideas in a Quaker, though not a few of the Society are beyond that. No wonder that one so far from the truth of the gospel testifies his gratitude to the heathen philosopher Porphyry (86, 87, 317), the bitterest foe, not only of Christ, but of Christianity and of revelation. No wonder that he praises the "manly words" of Grotius in avowedly adopting this part of Porphyry's scepticism. "The unjust knoweth no shame." The "higher criticism" begins in disloyalty to God and His word, and can only work to more and greater ungodliness.

Daniel 1

It must be evident to any attentive reader that this first chapter is purely a preface to the book. It introduces us into the scene to which the prophecies, of which Daniel was either the interpreter or the vessel, are the great after-piece, the subject-matter which the Spirit of God is about to convey to us. We may therefore take advantage of this, to inquire into the peculiar nature of the book on which we are about to enter.

The properly prophetic part of Daniel begins with the second chapter. Then follow certain historical incidents, which, as I conceive, have a most intimate connection with the prophecy — if not directly, in the way of types — which show out the moral principles or the issues of the powers of the world, with which the book is occupied.

In order to understand Daniel it is necessary to bear in mind that prophecy in the Old Testament divides itself into two great parts. There were prophecies that concerned the people of God, Israel, when they were still under His government; unfaithful often, but still subject to His discipline and owned of Him to a certain extent. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and indeed many of the lesser prophets, such as Hosea, Amos, and Micah, have this first character. Israel was still recognized as God's people, if not the whole, at least that part of the people with which God still had certain dealings in the land: of course I refer to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, which clung to the house of David. After a while they too fell, and the heir of David became the leader in rebellious idolatry against the Lord. Then a change of the utmost importance ensued. The throne of the Lord, which was established in Jerusalem, ceased altogether upon the earth. God no longer owned Israel, nor even Judah, as His people. And I call your attention particularly to this, because there are often vague thoughts as to what is meant by "the people of God" in Scripture. As Christians we look at God's people as those that really belong to Him — His children by faith of Christ. Now there is a danger

of carrying the same thoughts back to the language of the Old Testament. But it will be found, if we examine Scripture with care, that in the ancient oracles by "people of God" is meant only the Jews or Israel. Nor is it merely a certain aggregate of the elect among them, but the entire nation, or that part which still clung in a measure, though very unfaithfully, to God's king, and whatever they might be, owned as the people of God. Then came a time when God disowned His people. This was predicted by Hosea. It was accomplished when God gave up the last king of Judah to the Chaldean conqueror. God would have sacrificed His own holiness, truth, and majesty, if He had longer tolerated the Jews or their idolatrous king.

Now it is a remarkable thing in the history of the world, that although there were certain powers of growing importance and ambition in the east, none before had been allowed to step into positive superiority to all rivals. In the west there were only hordes of wanderers, or, if some were settled, they were uncivilized barbarians. In the east and south powers had rapidly risen; one of them, Egypt, is particularly well known in connection with Israel. Another too, Asshur, is quite as ancient in its origin: indeed, we read of its name, and of certain aspirations and efforts after power, before we read of Egypt at all. These were the great rivals of the early world, and they had a civilization of their own. It might have a rude character, but that it was barbaric grandeur none can deny who believes the Scriptures, nay, who sees the relics of Egypt and Assyria. Well, these powers were constantly struggling for the mastery. But however God might use the Egyptians and Assyrians, or others less considerable, as a rod of discipline for the good of Israel, yet to no nation on earth was supremacy allowed until it was perfectly plain that God's people were proved to be unworthy of being His witness and the scene of His government on the earth. First, then, Ephraim (the ten tribes), having sunk into hopeless idolatry, was swept away. For a long time there had been monarch after monarch only following or exceeding each other in evil; and all through it had been a scene of rebellion and idolatry. Thus God had been compelled to root such a

people, that only disgraced Him, out of the land where they had been planted. Still the two tribes that clung to the house of David were owned. But clouds hung over them, and snares were laid by the enemy of the most fatal kind. At this crisis prophecy shines out in all its fulness. For prophecy always, I think, supposes failure. It never comes in during a normal state. But when ruin is impending or begun, then the lamp of prophecy shines in the dark place.

This we find true from the first. Take the revelation in Gen. 3 — that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. When was it given? Not when Adam walked sinlessly, but after he and his wife were fallen. Then God appears, and His word not only judged the serpent, but took the form of promise to be realized in the true Seed — certainly a blessed disclosure of the future, on which the hope of those who believed rested. It was the condemnation of their actual state. It did not allow the faithful who followed to sink into despair, but presented an object above the ruin on the part of God, to which their hearts became attached. Again, Enoch is the person in the antediluvian world who, above all others, is said to have "prophesied," though we do not get the record of it till one of the latest books of the New Testament. "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." Now that the evil, found in the germ in Adam, had broken out into all but universal corruption and violence, we have a well-defined prophecy of judgment coming on the world. It was the interference of God in testimony before He acted in power. Then Noah is seen, who, still more than Enoch, was publicly connected with this evil state. I believe that Enoch's prophecy had a remarkable application to the deluge, though it looks onward, of course, to the grand catastrophe in the last days. When a prophecy is given there is often a partial accomplishment at the time or soon after. But we must never look back at the past pledge as if the whole thing were exhausted. That

would be to make Scripture of "private interpretation." And this is the true sense of 2 Peter 1:20: "No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation." We must take it in the vast scope of the plans of God, and the unfolding of His purposes, which alone find their consummation at the close. It is to that point that all prophecy looks. Then only we have the grand fulfilment.

Again, let us take the patriarchs, who are expressly called prophets. "He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, He reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets no harm." (Ps. 105:14, 15) Their claim to this title may be explained on the same principle. They were the then interpreters of the mind of God; "called out," because there was a new and fearful evil come into the world, which we never read of before the days of Abraham — idolatry. Worship of idols, as far as Scripture reveals it to us, is only mentioned after the flood. This was spreading everywhere, and becoming paramount even in the descendants of Shem; and, therefore, God called out a witness in word and deed separate from so flagrant iniquity. Prophecy, or a prophet, always supposes the presence of new and increasing evil, because of which God is pleased to unfold His mind with regard to the future, and to make it of present practical value to those then on the earth.

In the case of Moses it was manifest; for, though he was the great lawgiver, the golden calf was set up almost immediately after, and thus the ruin of Israel, as a people under law, was complete. And so it remained for him, as the great prophet of Israel (Deut. 34:10), to reveal the sure and growing corruption of the people, whatever might be the resources of God's grace at the end; as, at an earlier epoch, he had predicted the inevitable judgment of God upon Egypt. Coming lower down in the history of Israel, we have one who begins the line of prophets emphatically so called; for he is mentioned thus: "Yea, all the prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after," etc. His call was at a very critical period in Israel's history; at a time when the children of Israel had fallen into such a frightfully

low state, that they were willing to use even the ark of God as a charm to preserve them from the power of their enemies. Then it was that God put His people to shame. His own ark was taken, and Ichabod was the only name that godly feeling could dictate. The glory was departed. Just about that time we hear of Samuel the prophet. If this was the token of some new crisis, equally at least did it show that God, in vindication of His own name, brings in the light of prophecy as a comfort to the hearts of those who stand for Himself.

Descending still further, we find the full outburst of prophetic light in the time of the prophet Isaiah. The reason is apparent. Not merely had Israel committed itself to idolatry, but the king, David's son, had actually taken the pattern of the heathen altar at Damascus, and must have another made for himself in the holy city! There was a sin heinous and most insulting to God. Isaiah is set apart with unusual solemnity to the prophetic office. The evil condition of the Jews is realized by him. He sees the glory of the Lord, which draws out from him the immediate confession of his own and the people's uncleanness. "Then said I, Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." But one of the seraphim touches his lips with a live coal, assuring him that his iniquity was taken away, and his sin purged. And he is sent with a message of judicial darkness upon the people, which must last till the cities were wasted, and the land made utterly desolate. Thus we have prophecy so much the more brilliant because the evil was manifest and profound. The consequence of the prophetic warning, where received, was a genuine spirit of repentance and of intercession. And God subsequently raised up a royal witness for Himself, so that for a time the evil was suspended.

And all this while you have prophecy coming out with more and more distinctness, directing the hearts of the saints to Him whom the virgin should conceive and bear — the Son of David, Emmanuel, that was to be the only and sure foundation for the people laid in

Zion. I need not now attempt to give even an outline of the distinctive features of the prophets that followed. But this far, I trust, the great principle is clear, that prophecy, as a whole, comes in when there is ruin among the people of God. As the ruin deepens, prophecy adds fresh light in the goodness of God.

Besides this universal character of prophecy, we have seen it, first, while God is still disciplining the people and owning them as His. But there is another form of which Daniel is the great example in the Old Testament. This is, when God, no longer able to address His people as such, makes an individual to be the object of His communications.

For this is the manifest feature of Daniel. It is no longer a direct address to the people, reasoning, pleading, warning, opening out bright hopes, as in Isaiah, etc. Nor is it, as in Jeremiah, a prophet "ordained to the nations," with most affecting appeals to Israel and Judah, or at least a remnant there. In Daniel all is changed. There is no message to Israel at all; and the first and very comprehensive prophecy contained in the book, was not at first given to the prophet himself, but rather a dream of the heathen king, Nebuchadnezzar, though Daniel was the only one who could recall it, or furnish the interpretation. The other visions were seen by Daniel only, and to him all the interpretations were given. What is the great lesson to be drawn from this? God was acting on the momentous fact that His people had forfeited their place — at least for the present. They had lost their distinctive standing as a nation — God would no longer own them. The presence of elect persons among them did not, in the least degree, arrest the divine sentence. It was not a question of there being "ten righteous" in their midst. Of a corrupt Canaanitish city, like Sodom, that was said as a reason why it should be spared. But does God ever speak so about His people? He may liken them to Sodom for their iniquity, but there can be no such hindrance to judgment in their case. On the contrary, it is expressly said in Ezekiel 14, that "though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it

[the land of Israel], they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness "; and again, "they shall deliver neither son nor daughter." That is, in His own land, and in the midst of His guilty people, no matter who were there, nor what their righteousness, the righteous only should be delivered, and God's four sore judgments must be sent. And so, at this very crisis of the captivity, there were righteous men, such as the prophets themselves, and others, kindred spirits in their measure. Whatever, then, be His willingness to spare the world, God does not refrain from judging the evil of His own people, because of a handful of righteous men in their midst. "Hear this word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore, I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos 3:1, 2) Otherwise, there never could have been a national judgment of Israel at all; for there was always a line of faithful ones in their midst. The entire principle is false. In a book I lately met with, such was the plea why England should come comparatively unscathed out of the terrible judgments about to fall on the nations of the earth. There are so many good men! — such changes for the better in high and low — such benevolent and Christian institutions — the Scriptures not only printed in abundance, but everywhere circulated, read, and expounded! But these are the very grounds which, to my mind, make divine judgment inevitable. For it is quite clear from Scripture, that, if there is to be any difference in the measure, those who know His will and do it not "shall be beaten with many stripes." A more fearful illusion can scarcely be conceived, than that the possession of a greater amount of spiritual knowledge and privilege is to be an effectual shield when the earth comes into judgment.

The Lord recalled the memory of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 11), but it was only to show the far greater guilt of the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long

ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you." But there was another city still more favoured (elsewhere called His own city, Matt. 9:1), because it was where He then usually dwelt; and, therefore, was its case so aggravated in guilt. "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell; for if the mighty works which were done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." In other words, the measure of privilege is ever the measure of responsibility.

We have seen, then, the startling fact that the government which God had set up in Israel (accompanied by the visible sign of His presence, i.e. the Shekinah of glory), was now to subsist no more. God Himself stripped them of their name as His people. Henceforth they were "Lo-Ammi," not My people. That was their doom now, as far as He was concerned, whatever the ultimate designs of His grace might be: for His "gifts and calling" are "without repentance."

Along with this sad change, and dependent on it, the prophecy of Daniel begins. And in this respect there is a strong analogy between this book and the grand prophecy of the New Testament. No doubt, in the latter, special messages were sent to the seven churches through John. But the book, as a whole, was addressed and confided to him, however much it was intended that the things should be testified in the churches. Christ sent and signified the revelation, by His angel, unto His servant John, who stands in the same sort of relation to Christendom that Daniel did to Israel. The failure was so complete that God could no longer address the prophecy directly to His people in either case. Thus there is a very serious moral sentence of God upon the condition of Christendom. It was a ruin as regards practical testimony for God — Ephesus threatened with the removal of its candlestick, if it did not repent, and Laodicea with the certainty of being spued out of the Lord's mouth. Not but what God

continued to save souls: this He always did and does. But it has nothing to do with the witness which His people are responsible to render. More than two hundred years after Judah had become "Lo-Ammi" Malachi could tell of them that feared the Lord speaking often one to another: "And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." All that might be true; yet the solemn sentence of God — "not My people" — remained on them. Circumstances could affect neither His judgment of the nation nor His grace to faithful souls within it. And what was true then remains equally true now. The salvation and blessing of souls go on. But before God, that which bears the name of Christ in the world is as far from satisfying the thoughts of God about us, as the people of Israel were from fulfilling His design in them.

Accordingly, we find that the character of the book perfectly accords with the time and circumstances in which Daniel was called to be a prophet. It was when the last vestiges of God's people were being taken away. In Jeremiah 25:1, the date of Nebuchadnezzar's reign is reckoned from the first attack. And I would just observe, that there is a little difference from what is said in Daniel 2. In Babylon, where the latter wrote, the reckoning was naturally from the time when Nebuchadnezzar succeeded to the throne upon his father's death; whereas, in Jerusalem, where Jeremiah prophesies, it was just as naturally from the time that Nebuchadnezzar, during his father's life, wielded the power of the kingdom, to the ruin of Jerusalem and the Jews. The truth is, the case is not uncommon, both in sacred and profane history. Whatever may be the difficulties in the word of God, they really arise from want of light. Generally, the object of the particular portion where they occur is not understood. But speaking of dates, another little thing it is well to bear in mind, which the first verse of our chapter, as compared with Jer. 25:1, gives occasion to: years are sometimes reckoned from their beginning, sometimes from their end, that is, either inclusively or exclusively. So it is in the well-known instances of the days between our

Lord's death and resurrection, and of the six or eight days before the transfiguration. Thus in Daniel it was said, "in the third year of Jehoiakim"; but in Jeremiah, "in the fourth year." The one was the complete, the other the current year.

Looking then at the moral character of Daniel's prophecy, the key to the ways of God at the time it was given lies in this, that God no longer exercised a direct, immediate government upon the earth. He had owned David and his seed as the kings that He had set upon the throne of Jehovah at Jerusalem. (1 Chr. 29:23) No other kings were thus recognized of God. They were emphatically His anointed, before whom even the high priest had to walk.

And here was what God intended to set forth by them: a foreshadowing of what He is going to do by and in the Christ, the true Son of David. The same thing is found throughout Scripture. First, a position is committed to man's responsibility, and failure is immediate; then, it is taken up by Christ, who establishes it on a foundation which cannot be moved. Thus, God makes man, and sets him sinlessly in paradise, with dominion over the lower creation. Man falls at once. But God never gives up His purpose of having a man in paradise. Where shall we find it now? In the first Adam it broke down utterly. He was turned out of Eden: his race became outcasts from that day to this; and all the efforts and the material progress that man makes in this world are only so many remedial measures to hide the fact that God has driven him out of paradise. But the last Adam is God's glorious answer to that first trust which was confided to man's keeping — the Second Man exalted in the paradise of God. Again, Noah, as it were, begins the world afresh after the flood, and has the power of life and death first committed to his hand. The sword of magistracy was introduced. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made He man." This was the root of civil government, and man was thereby made responsible to restrain or punish the violent hand. This is never reversed. Christianity, wherever received, brings in

other and heavenly principles. But the world remains bound by this irreversible statute of God for its guidance. Noah, however, failed in his trust as completely as Adam had in the garden. He did not govern himself nor his family to God's glory. He becomes intoxicated, and his younger son insults him: and the issue is, that, instead of the universal blessing of righteous rule, a curse falls upon a portion of his descendants. So, in due time, the principle of a king, responsible to rule righteously over God's people, was tried in the house of David. And what is found,, Even before David died, there was such dreadful sin that the sword was never to depart from that very family which ought to have secured blessing to Israel. Did God therefore abandon His designs? In no wise. The Lord Jesus takes up headship, government, and the throne of David's Son. And so with all the other principles that broke down in man's hands; all will be illustrated and established for ever in the person and glory of the Lord Jesus.

We saw that Jerusalem ceases to be Jehovah's throne. And Jeremiah shows us the holy city counted as one among the other nations; and as most privileged, so the first to drink the cup of God's fury. Babylon must drink it also, but Israel first. It is in the same chapter (Jer. 25) that you have the distinct prediction of the seventy years' captivity, during which Judah was to be carried away to Babylon; and then should come at the end the judgment of the power that led them captive. But while Jeremiah predicts the rising supremacy of Babylon, and its final judgment, and that, too, not as a matter of history alone, but as the type of the world's overthrow in the day of the Lord, we have not there the details that intervene. So Ezekiel, among the captives at Chebar, brings us up in the first half of his prophecy to the time of the great struggle for the chief place among the powers of the world. Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, desired to have it; but, as the Assyrian before him, he is destroyed, and Babylon remains the ambitious claimant of universal dominion. There were these three powers, Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon; the latter comparatively young as a great kingdom, though founded probably

upon the oldest associations of all, viz., Babel — "the beginning of Nimrod's kingdom." They were like fierce animals, held in by an unseen leash till the experiment was fairly tried, whether the daughter of Zion would walk humbly and obediently with the Lord, or whether she would turn from her backsliding and repent at His call. But she did neither. This left room for what had never been seen before — the rise of universal empire.

After the flood, and the judgment of the Lord at Babel, the great dispersion of nations took place — families, kindreds, tongues, and lands, all separate. Israel was the centre of this system of independent nations. So it is written in Deut. 32:8: "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance; when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." All was arranged with reference to Israel, for "Jehovah's portion is His people, Jacob is the lot of His inheritance." They were the divine centre for the earth, and God will yet make good His purpose. Though completely frustrated through the wickedness of the people, Israel must yet be His centre of nations in this world, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. This, too, was first tried in the hands of man, and failed; then it is turned over into the hands of Christ, who will establish it in due time. Israel's pride made it to depend at first upon their obedience to God. At Sinai they undertook the responsibility of the law. Whenever a sinner attempts to stand upon that ground with God, he is lost. The only safe and lowly ground is, not what Israel would be for God, but what God would be in faithfulness and love and pity toward Israel. And so it is with every soul at all times. Israel accepting that condition, the law became their scourge, and God was compelled to judge them. Death accordingly was certain, spite of God's marvellous patience. People fail, priests fail, and kings at last became the leaders in all evil. God was compelled to give up His people. From that moment all that held in check the nations of the earth was taken away, and the vast rival dynasties struggled for the mastery. God no longer had a people that He owned as the theatre of His government. If their

heart had only turned to Him, like the needle to the pole, spite of quivering to and fro, there would have been long-suffering (as indeed there was to the uttermost), and the intervention of divine power would have established them in blessing for evermore. But when not only the people, but the king anointed of Jehovah, blotted out His very name from the land; when His glory was given to another in His own temple, all was over for the present, and "Lo-Ammi" was the sentence of God. They had become now the most bitter in their idolatry, being apostates from the living God, and, if maintained, would have been the active champions of heathen abominations. By God's judgment, therefore, the people and the king at length passed into captivity.

At this crisis Daniel appears at the court of the Babylonish monarch, according to the sure word of Isaiah to King Hezekiah. (Isa. 39) "The times of the Gentiles" (for so runs the remarkable phrase in Luke 21) were begun, and of those times Daniel was the prophet. They are not always to run on; they have a limit assigned by God, when the present interruption of His direct earthly government shall cease, and Israel shall again be acknowledged as the people of God. During this interval, as we saw, their distinctive calling being lost, God allows in His providence a new system of government, the system of imperial unity, to rise up in the great successive Gentile powers. It is no longer independent nations, each having its own ruler, but God Himself sanctioning, in His providence, the surrender of all nations of the earth to the absorbing authority of a single individual. This is what characterizes "the times of the Gentiles." Such a thing was unexampled before, though there may have been strong kingdoms encroaching upon weaker ones. Even the infidel historian is compelled to recognize, as all history does, the four great empires of the ancient world. Israel was now merged in the mass of nations. Hence that expression comes in, "the God of heaven." God had, as it were, retreated from the immediate control of the earth, in which character, at least in type, He had governed Israel. This had now wholly disappeared, and God, acting sovereignly, and at a distance,

so to speak, from the scene — "the God of heaven" — gave certain defined powers of the Gentiles to succeed each other in a world-wide empire.

Before these preliminary remarks close, I add a little word on the great moral features of this chapter; for if they are brought out prominently in Daniel, they were not written for his sake only, but for ours, if we desire the same blessing.

The chapter opens with the scene of the complete prostration of the Jews before their conqueror. They were now besieged and overwhelmed in their last stronghold. "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god." Next we have the fulfilment of the remarkable prophecy of Isaiah, already alluded to. Hezekiah had been sick, nigh unto death. At his urgent desire to live, God had added to his days fifteen years, and this was sealed to him by a striking sign; the sun returned ten degrees by which it was gone down. But it had been better to have learnt well the lesson of death and resurrection, than to have life prolonged, fall into a snare, and hear of the sorrows that yet awaited his house and, with it, the eclipse of Israel's hopes. Whether a sign so remarkable was what chiefly attracted the notice of a nation the most celebrated in the ancient world for its astronomical lore, I cannot say. Certain it is, that at that time the king of Babylon sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, and this, not merely because he was recovered of his sickness, but to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land. (2 Chr. 32:31) Instead of going softly all his years, Hezekiah displays his treasures to the ambassadors of Merodach-baladan. "There was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah showed them not." "Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the Lord of hosts: Behold, the days come, that all that is in

thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon."

Here we see this accomplished. "And the king spake unto Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes (or nobles); children in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans." Accordingly "the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat and of the wine which he drank; so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king." Along with this, the names of Daniel and of his three companions are changed. It would appear, that the desire was to efface the memory of the true God, by giving them names derived from the idols of Babylon. "The prince of the eunuchs gave to Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego"; in all probability names derived from Bel and the other false gods then worshipped in Chaldea.

And now let us mark what the Holy Ghost records, as peculiarly showing Daniel's heart for God, that in his moral ways he might be a vessel to honour, and meet for the Master's use. How remarkably is the power of God superior to all circumstances! Daniel and his companions say nothing to the change of names, painful as it must have been. They were slaves the property of another, who had the authority to call them as he pleased. "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." Naturally they would have received such fare with thankfulness; faith works, and it is refused. It

was connected with the false gods of the country, being a part of the daily food of an idolatrous king. Even in their own land, and apart from idols, God insisted upon separating between things clean and unclean, and much that was prized among the Gentiles was an abomination to a Jew. The law was stringent as to these defilements, and Daniel, as a Jew, was under its obligations. Christianity comes in and delivers the conscience from anxiety as to such things. "Whatsoever is sold in the shambles," Paul says, "that eat, asking no question for conscience' sake." And so at a feast. If it were known, however, that certain food had been offered unto idols, the Christian was not to eat, both for the sake of those that named the fact and for conscience' sake. But for the Jew, there was unqualified separation required. Daniel at once shows himself decided for the true God. It was not to him a question of doing at Babylon what was done there, but of the will of God as enjoined upon Israel. "Therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself." God had meanwhile wrought in His providence that Daniel should find special favour. But this did not lessen the trial of faith. And when difficulties and dangers were pleaded, still he has confidence in God. We are all apt to find good reasons for bad things; but Daniel's eye was single, and his whole body full of light — the only means of understanding the mind of God. He did not consider what was pleasing to himself; he did not fear to risk the peril; he looked at the matter in connection with God. He only asks that they may be proved for ten days; "and let them give us pulse to eat and water to drink. Then let our countenances be looked upon," etc. Not "pleasant bread," but that which spoke of humbling themselves before God, was what a true heart felt to be their suited food; such fare as the lowest in that proud and luxurious city might have disdained. What is the result of this trial? Daniel and his companions turn out "fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat." Thus they were spared further trouble on that score.

But that is not all. There was the positive blessing of God, in giving them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom. And of Daniel it is said, that he was made to understand "all visions and dreams." They were prepared of God, each for what he had afterwards to fill. God was their teacher, and the trial of their faith was a needed, essential part of their training in His school. Then, when they stood before the king, none was found like them. When the king inquired of them, he found them, in all matters of wisdom and understanding, "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm." (Verses 17-20)

If we, too, are to understand the Scriptures, I believe that we must travel the path of separation from the world. Nothing more destroys spiritual intelligence than merely floating with the stream of men's opinions and ways. The prophetic word is that which shows us the end of all man's projects and ambition. "And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." Doubtless, "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." But all the plans of men will come to nothing first, though "they shall labour in the very fire, and shall weary themselves for very vanity." Himself shall do it. If there be one Scripture truth which stands out more prominently than another, or rather which underlies all truth, it is the total failure of man in everything that pertains to God, before His grace interferes and triumphs. And this is true, not of unconverted men only, but of His people of old, and of His Church since. Nor is there any advantage greater for the enemy, short of destroying the foundations, than the mixing up of the saints of God with the world, and the consequent darkening of all spiritual intelligence in those who ought to be its light. God would have us in practical communion with Himself: in His light we see light. If we see the end of all the plots of Satan to thwart the work of God, it separates us from what leads thereto, and joins us with all that is dear to Him. Then "the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." So walking, we shall under-

stand the word of God. It is not a question of intellectual capacity and learning. I am confident that human erudition in the things of God is only so much rubbish, wherever it is made to be anything more than a servant. Unless Christians can keep what they know under their feet, they are incapable of profiting fully by the word of God. Otherwise, whether a man know much or little, he becomes its slave, and it usurps the place of the Spirit of God.

Faith is the sole means and power of spiritual understanding; and faith puts and keeps us in subjection to the Lord, and in separation from this evil age. Daniel was separated from what, to a Jew, dishonoured God, and God blessed him with wisdom and understanding.

Daniel 2

Before entering upon my present subject, I would point out an obvious proof that Dan. 1 has a prefatory character. The last verse of the chapter informs us that "Daniel continued unto the first year of king Cyrus." It is not merely an account of certain circumstances, before we are introduced to the various revelations or facts that are given in succession in the book; but we have the preparation for the place that Daniel was to keep. And then we are carried, as it were, on to the end. The continuance of Daniel is shown through the whole term of the Babylonish monarchy, and even to the beginning of the Persian. It is not meant that Daniel only lived to the first year of king Cyrus; because the latter part of the book shows us a vision subsequent to that date. The fact is simply stated, that he lived at the commencement of a new dynasty. And it will be found that the end of the last chapter is an equally suitable conclusion to the book; answering, as such, to the first chapter as a preface.

But before going farther, I would make one remark of a general kind. The book divides itself into two nearly equal volumes or sections. First, that which refers to the great Gentile powers, and the features that would mark their outward conduct; and, finally, to the judgment of it all. This is continued up to the end of Dan. 6. Then, from Dan. 7 to the close, we have not the external history of the four Gentile empires, but that which is of more peculiar interest to God's people. This was, evidently enough, indicated by the circumstance that the first portion of the book does not consist of visions that Daniel saw; for the only one, properly so called, was seen by Nebuchadnezzar. There is one in Dan. 2, and then another of a different character in Dan. 4; Dan. 3, 5, and 6 being facts that had to do with the moral condition of the first two monarchies, but nothing at all that was made known in the first instance to Daniel, or visions seen by the prophet himself; whereas the latter part of the book is occupied exclusively with communications to the prophet himself. And there it is that we find, not merely what ought to strike the

natural mind, but the secrets of God that peculiarly affect and interest His people, and hence details also. The external proof of this is, that chapter vi., which closes what I have called the first section of Daniel, brings us up to the close again. "So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." Now this is remarkable, because the next chapter goes back again to Belshazzar. "In the first year of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions of his head," etc. That was long before Cyrus the Persian. Then in Dan. 8, "In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar." And in Dan. 9, "In the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus." So far all is regular. Next, we come down to Dan. 10-12. "In the third year of Cyrus, king of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel," etc. The first part (Dan. 1-6) brings us down to the close in a general way, and the second (Dan. 7-12) with equal order; divided, not merely in this outward manner, but having the moral difference, already explained, i.e. the one external and the other internal. That this is not an unprecedented thing in the word of God is familiar to the reader of Matthew 13. There, we have an orderly setting forth of the kingdom of heaven under certain parables — the first of these being a prefatory one. Now, taking the other six parables (for there are exactly seven in all), you have a division of them into two sets of three, the first of which refers to the exterior of the kingdom, and the last to more inward and hidden relations.

This exactly answers to what we have in Daniel. First, the external history goes down to the close, and then the internal succeeds, or what was of special interest to those that had understanding of the ways of God. This will suffice to show that the book is characterized by that divine method which we ought to expect in the word of God. There is a profound design, which runs through the works of God, and more especially through His word. The finger of God Himself is evident indeed upon what He has made; yet death has come in, and the creature is made subject to vanity. Hence, we hear the groans of the lower creation; and, as you rise in the scale of animal life, the misery is more intense. Man is more conscious and capable

of feeling the wretchedness that his own sin has brought upon the world, and upon that creation, of which he is made the lord. But in the word of God, although there may be slips and errors of scribes, they are for the most part but specks. They may obscure its full light; but they are trifling in comparison with the evident brightness of that which God gives, even through the most imperfect version. In passing through the hands of men, we discover more or less of the weakness that attaches to the earthen vessel; but through the great mercy of God, there is ample light for every honest soul.

But turning to this first great scene, we have the entire failure of the wisdom of the world. Unusual care was taken, at the court of Babylon, to have men trained in all wisdom and knowledge. The time was now come when this was to be put to the test. God was pleased, while the great Gentile king was meditating upon his bed, to give him a vision of the future history of the world: on the one hand, gratifying his desire to see the world's course thence onward unveiled; while, on the other hand, he was made to feel the utter powerlessness of all human resources. It was God's opportunity for displaying His own power, and the perfect wisdom of which even a poor captive was made the channel. This is a signal example of God's ways. Here were these Jews; and the proud king might have supposed that, if God was for them, they could not possibly have come under his hand. But if God's people are guilty, there are none whose faults He so much exposes. How do we know the wrong that Abraham did? or David? Only from God. He loves His people too well to hide their faults. It is a part of His moral government, that He is the very last to put or allow a veil over what displeases Him, in those even whom He loves best. Take a well-governed family. Is it the way of love to cover over the fault of the child, when the child ought to feel it? — and feel it he must if he is to be happy. So with God's people. Israel had abandoned Him — had denied their relationship to Him; and God shows that He felt their sin, and that they must feel it too. He disowned them as His people for a time —

swept them out of the land in which He had planted them; and now they were the slaves of the Gentiles.

But in turn their conqueror must be taught that, after all, the mind — the heart of God, was with the poor captives. The power of God might be with the Gentile for a season, but the affections of God and His secret were with His own, even in the hour of their abasement.

The circumstances through which this was brought out strikingly illustrate the ways of God. The king dreams a dream: the thing departs from him. He summons his wise men, and calls upon them to make known the dream and the interpretation of it. But all in vain. They themselves are so struck with the unreasonableness of the demand, that they say, "There is none other that can show it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh." (Ver. 11) It was impossible to meet the king's request. Thus all was allowed to come out in its reality. Their wisdom proved to be unavailing for what was wanted. Daniel hears of the decree which went forth, that the wise men should be slain. He goes to Arioch, and begs for time to be given him. But mark this — and it is the characteristic of faith — he has confidence in God. He does not wait till God gives him the answer, before he says that he would show the interpretation of the dream. He proffers it at once. He is confident in God, and that is faith — a conviction founded on the known character of God. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and Daniel feared the Lord. Therefore, also, he was not alarmed at the decree. He knew that God who gave could recall the dream. At the same time, he does not in the least degree pretend to answer it himself. We have thus two great things brought out in Daniel: first, his confidence that God would reveal the thing to the king; secondly, his confession that he could not. He goes to his house, and makes the thing known to his companions. He wishes that they also should "desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret." He has exceeding value for the prayers of his brethren — the witnesses

with himself of the true God in Babylon. He gets them on their knees before God, as well as takes that place himself. But Daniel, having special faith, was the one that God therefore honours. "Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision." (Verses 14-19)

Neither does he go directly to the king, nor even to his companions, to tell them that God has made known the dream to him. The first thing he does is to go to God. The God that has made known the secret is the One that Daniel at once owns. He is in the place of one that worships God. And allow me to say, that this is the grand object of all the revelations of God. Do not suppose it is a question of making known to me my sin and a Saviour meeting all the need of my soul. What God works by His Spirit in His saints, is not merely that they should know they are delivered from hell, or that they should walk as His children. There is a higher thing still. God makes His people worshippers of Himself; and, if there is one thing, in which God's children fail more than another, it is in realizing their place as worshippers.

Now, Daniel understood this. Though comparatively young, he was well acquainted with the mind of God. And here we have this beautiful feature. He brings out in his outburst of praise the mind of God; and this, not so much in connection with His power — though it is true that "He changeth the times and seasons; He removeth kings and setteth up kings," etc. — but what his heart specially dwells upon is this: "He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding." I call your attention to the words. It is quite true that the Lord looks with compassion on the ignorant, and shows His goodness to those that have no understanding. But Daniel is speaking of His ways with those whose hearts are towards Him; and in their case the Lord's principle is, "Unto every one that hath shall be given, but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." (Matt. 25:29) Nothing is more dangerous, In the things of God, than to stop short in the path of learn-

ing His ways. What arrests souls is the consciousness that the truth is too practical; and they fear the consequences: for the truth of God is not a thing merely to know, but to live; and the soul instinctively shrinks back because of the serious present results it entails. In Daniel's case the eye was single, and the whole body, therefore, full of light. This is the real secret of progress. Let the desire only be towards God, and the progress is sure and steady.

Daniel then goes in unto Arioch, and says, "Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will show unto the king the interpretation." Accordingly, Arioch brings him in before the king in haste, and says, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make unto the king the interpretation." The king asks him whether it is true, that he is able to make known the dream and the interpretation. Daniel's answer is beautiful. Real, deep knowledge of the ways of God is always accompanied by humility. There is no greater mistake, nor one more unfounded in fact, than the supposition, that spiritual intelligence puffeth up; knowledge may — mere knowledge But I speak of that spiritual understanding in the word, which flows from the sense of God's love, and seeks to spread itself, if I may so say, just because it is divine love. Daniel intimates how impossible it was for "the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers," to show the dream unto the king. "But there is a God in heaven, that revealeth secrets, and maketh known [he does not even say to Daniel, but] to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days." He desired that Nebuchadnezzar should know the interest that God took in him. "As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind, upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and He that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass." But he is not satisfied with that: he adds, "As for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart."

Then he enters upon the dream. "Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible." He had seen the course of empire, not merely in a fragmentary successional manner, but as a whole. In the latter part of the book, we have the succession more minutely marked, and the detailed ways of the different powers towards Daniel's people: but here it is the general history of the Gentile empire.

"This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass." That is, there was deterioration, as the empires departed from the source of power. It was God who gave imperial rule to Nebuchadnezzar. Consequently, that which is nearest to the source is seen as "this head of gold." There comes in a certain measure more of what was human in the Persian empire; "the breast and the arms of silver," an inferior metal, and so on down to the legs, which are of iron, and the feet, part of iron and part of clay. It is quite plain from this, that, as we descend from the original grant of power, there is a gradual debasement.

But it is well, now, to state a principle or two, which I believe to be of importance in looking at prophetic scriptures. One of the commonest maxims, even among Christians, is this: that prophecy is to be interpreted by the event — that history is the proper exponent of prophecy — that when the prophetic visions are realized upon the earth, the facts explain the visions. This is a false principle; it has not one particle of truth in it. People confound with interpretation of prophecy the confirmation of its truth. When a prediction is fulfilled, of course its fulfilment confirms its truth, but that is a very different thing from explaining it. The proper understanding of prophecy is just as difficult after the event as before it. For instance, let any one take the seventy weeks of Daniel. That chapter has furnished occasion for immense controversy and dispute among believers themselves. It is one of their commonest assumptions, that it

is all fulfilled (which is not correct), and yet there is no such thing as agreement among them about its meaning.

Looking again at Ezekiel's prophecy: we find that the difficulty of prophecy arises from a totally different source. The first part of Ezekiel was fulfilled in the then ways of God with Israel; it extended over the time when Daniel lived. But that does not explain it. It is, in fact, more obscure than the closing chapters, which are future.

What, then, does explain prophecy? That which explains all Scripture — the Spirit of God alone. His power can unfold any part of the word of God. Do you ask, if I mean to say, that it is of no importance to know languages, understand history, and so on? I am not raising a question about learning: it has its use; but I deny that history is the interpreter of prophecy, or of any Scripture. And if there are Christians who know the history of the world, or the original tongues of Scripture, it is Christ that has to do with their spiritual intelligence, and not their knowledge or learning. Besides, even if men are Christians, it does not necessarily follow that they understand Scripture. They know Christ, else they would not be Christians. But real entrance into God's mind, in Scripture, supposes that a person watches against self, desires the glory of God, has full confidence in His word, and dependence on the Holy Ghost. The understanding of Scripture is not a mere intellectual thing. If a man has no mind at all, he could not understand anything: but the mind is only the vessel — not the power. The power is the Holy Ghost, acting upon and through the vessel; but it must be the Holy Ghost Himself that fills a soul. As it is said, "They shall be all taught of God."

There is a great difference in the measure of the teaching, because there is much difference in the measure of dependence upon God. The important thing is to bear in mind that the understanding of Scripture depends much more Upon what is moral, than what is of the mind — upon a single eye to Christ. The Holy Ghost can never

give us anything to save us from the necessity of dependence and waiting upon God.

How, then, are we to interpret prophecy? It is entirely independent of history; it was given to be understood before it becomes history. That this is true must be manifest. The great mass of prophecy is about the terrible judgments that are to fall at the end of this age. What becomes of the people who do not profit by the prophecies, till the facts have taken place? It is a serious thing to despise it. The believer that understands prophecy has got special help, which he lacks who neglects it.

Starting, then, with this great principle — that it is the Holy Ghost who gives us to read prophecy, as bearing upon the glory of God, and connected with Christ, who shall yet be exalted, and whose glory shall fill the earth and heavens, all usurpers and pretenders being put down — let us look at this scene, as that which shows us the course of the world, up to that time. First, consider the position of the parties. Here was the proudest king in the world. He had gone forth at the head of victorious armies, before his father's death — before he had properly come into the undivided kingdom of Babylon. And now he has laid open to him a sphere of dominion, perhaps, beyond his ambition. He learns, with certainty, that it was God, in His providence, who had put him in this position. But more than that: he sees brought before him, in a few touches, the whole chart of the Gentile world — the leading features of its history from that day to the day of glory and judgment that is coming. He has brought before him the rise of another and neighbouring power, that had been already alluded to in prophecy; so that there was therefore no difficulty at all in gathering what was meant by it. The prophet Isaiah, who lived a hundred and fifty years before Cyrus was born, had not only referred by the Holy Ghost to the nation and king of the Medes and Persians, but had called him by name.

Again: another empire was foreshown, that was then comparatively in its infancy, or consisting only of so many separate tribes, without any stable bond of cohesion among them — I refer to the Greeks. But, more remarkable still, the kingdom, which is most dwelt upon by the Spirit of God, was then one that was in a mere embryo condition, and probably not even known by name to the king of Babylon. For though that kingdom was destined to play the greatest part ever taken by a kingdom in the history of the world, it was then utterly obscure. It was engaged in home and neighbouring squabbles of the pettiest kind, without any thought of extending its dominion. The more marvellous, therefore, it is to look at that great king, and the servant of God that stood before him, unfolding the history of the world

"Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory." It was not a question of his own prowess, nor special wisdom, that he possessed. If Nebuchadnezzar had been allowed to carry away these captives — to triumph over the power of Egypt, that had wished to dispute the supremacy of the world, it was the God of heaven who had given it to him. "And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven, hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold." Clearly the Babylonish monarchy is meant. God had referred to this by Isaiah. And Jeremiah, who was a contemporary of Daniel's, had brought before him not only the length of period during which the Babylonish monarchy should last, but even the succession. There would be Nebuchadnezzar and his son, and his son's son. This had a remarkable fulfilment. So that we need not go beyond Scripture to understand prophecy. It is the right, spiritual use of what is in the word of God, and I bless God for it. If you find the simplest man who only studies with diligence the Bible, in his mother tongue, and is led by the Spirit of God, he has the elements and the power of a true interpretation. But as sure as a man tries to find an interpretation here and there, by the help of history, antiquities, newspapers,

and what not, he is only deceiving himself and his hearers. Such is the universal moral sentence of God upon the soul that searches, in what is of man, the proper key to God's secrets. I must find it in God Himself, by a right use of what is in His own word.

An early Jewish writer, whose history is everywhere read and valued, Josephus, I had the curiosity to look at, and, finding the common version peculiar, I examined the original Greek of his history, but found the same strange sense still. He makes out that the head of gold means Nebuchadnezzar, and the kings that were before him! Thus, there is an entire want of understanding what the word of God says. The going away from Scripture, and allowing one's own thoughts, always leads astray. Babylon was first made an empire of in the person of Nebuchadnezzar, who here includes, as it were, those that were to follow. "Thou art this head of gold." There is no reference to the kings that were before him. Babylon never was allowed to have the empire of the world till Nebuchadnezzar's day; therefore it was that he, and not his forefathers, formed the head of gold. He was the one in whom the imperial place of Babylon finds its beginning.

In Jeremiah 25 we find not only the epoch of seventy years of captivity, but, farther on (Jer. 27), the succession is mentioned. "All nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come." It happened that, after his son Evil-Merodach was cut off, there was one who took the throne, not in the order of succession, but called to it by the Babylonish people, with a sort of claim through marriage with Nebuchadnezzar's daughter. This man reigned for a time, and after him' his son, who was, therefore, the son of Nebuchadnezzar's daughter, not of his son. It might, so far, then, appear that the prophecy had failed. Not at all. A few months after, Nebuchadnezzar's grandson was called to the throne. "Scripture cannot be broken." It had been said, "Nebuchadnezzar, his son, and his son's son," and so it was. In Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, the whole thing terminated. For

this then Scripture furnishes all the main parts. So that prophecy does, in fact, explain history, but history never interprets prophecy. The man who understands prophecy can open up history; but no understanding of history will enable him to explain prophecy. It may confirm the truth of a prediction, to a doubter, so far as it is clear. Thus, if the history of the taking of Jerusalem, as it is given in the Wars of Josephus, is a true one, it will, of course, coincide with the inspired notice told us by Luke. But it is quite plain, that if I have confidence in the word of God, there I have a much more certain account of it. In a word, the circumstance of being uttered before the event has nothing to do with the matter. The eye of God saw all along, and through the stream of Gentile empire; and the language is as plain in the prophecies of Daniel, as in the writings of the Greek and Latin historians.³ And so true is this that those who have no sympathy with what is of God, even infidels, are obliged to acknowledge, that whatever clearly bears upon the subject coincides with what Daniel had said hundreds of years before the events.

"And after thee shall arise another kingdom, inferior to thee." Not inferior in territorial extent, but in splendour, and perhaps most of all in the admixture of control outside the ruler, instead of a man acting in the conviction that God had put him in his place of authority. Darius (Dan. 6) took the advice of unscrupulous subjects and suffered bitterly for it. Had he felt the sense of immediate responsibility to God, the snare had been avoided. Men naturally shrink from absolute authority, chiefly because it is uncontrolled power in the hands of a weak and erring man. But supposing it was one who had all the wisdom and goodness in his own person, nothing could be happier. This is exactly what will be true in the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, when full authority will be put into His hands, and all will

³ "The four empires are clearly delineated; and the invincible armies of the Romans described with as much clearness, in the prophecies of Daniel, as in the histories of Justin and Diodorus." — Gibbon.

be blessed and according to the will of God, and when the contrary will of men would only be rebellion.

What seems to confirm this, is, that when we come down to the third kingdom, the Macedonian, of which Alexander the Great was the founder, there we have a man, who not merely acted at the suggestion of his wise men, but was controlled by his generals. It became, in fact, a kind of military rule — a less respectable thing than the aristocratic interference of the Medes and Persians, and their inflexible laws.

Then we come down much lower still, and have a fourth kingdom, represented by iron. "And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things; and as iron breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." There, strength is the great feature of the kingdom, and the quality of the metal is consistent with it. But it is of the commonest sort — not one of the precious metals; perhaps, because the Roman empire was distinguished by this, that it was nominally the people that governed. However despotic the emperor, he always pretended, in theory at least, to consult the people and senate. Even under the empire, the Romans had still the semblance of their old republican constitution; whilst, in point of fact, it was but an individual who had clothed himself with all the real power.

Here, then, we have sketched before us the whole course of empire. But it may be asked, How do you know these things? It is not said that the second empire represents Medo-Persia, or the third Macedonia, or the fourth Rome. I think it is. It may not be said here: but Scripture does not always hang up the key exactly at the door. It is not often that we find the explanation of one portion in the very next verse. God wants me to know His word, to be familiar with all that He has written, and to be assured that all is very good. To instruct even the unconverted child in the Scripture is always of great value. It is like laying a fire well, so that a spark alone is needed to

kindle it into a flame. It is a good and wholesome thing for Christians to be most particular in training up their children in a thorough knowledge of the word of God.

But, returning to consider what light Scripture gives, we need not go farther than this Book of Daniel to find the names of these empires. In chapter 5:28, we are told, "Peres: thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." There is the answer at once. We find the Babylonian kingdom just tottering and about to be destroyed. We are told that the Medes and Persians succeed. Nothing simpler or more certain. The only people I ever heard of that found difficulties, were some learned men who strove to make out that the empire of Babylon extends to Persia as well, so as to make Greece the second, Rome the third, and the fourth a distinct and purely future antichristian power. Another class of these scholars have contended that Alexander's kingdom is one thing, and that of his successors another wholly different: in fact, one the third and the other the fourth empire; so as to make even the fifth kingdom (that of "the little stone") a past or present thing. Had Scripture been read and weighed without an object, mistakes like these could never have been made. But the believer, instead of seeing in history things to perplex his mind, takes up his Bible, and finds the solution before he leaves the prophecy itself. For it is plain from Daniel 8:20, 21, that the empire of the united Medes and Persians gives place to the Grecian kingdom, with its fourfold division at Alexander's death. This again is succeeded by the fourth, or Roman Empire, the peculiar feature of which is, that in its last stage it is seen divided into ten separate kingdoms. (Dan. 7) Was this ever the case with the successors of Alexander? His kingdom was divided into four, never into ten. Thus we have prophecy explaining history; while the general use that mere learning makes of history is to obscure the brightness of the word of God. But let us understand the word of God first; and then, if we turn to history, we shall find it comes in as a human witness, and confirms, with its feeble voice, the divine testimony. It is obliged to do so. Thus, the man that does not know history stands

upon at least as good ground as those who are learned, but find difficulties. He is not perplexed as others are, who look through the mist of their own speculations.

In the third kingdom a feature is introduced which is not in the second. It was to "bear rule over all the earth." How remarkably this was fulfilled in the Macedonian or Grecian kingdom! Because, although Cyrus was a great conqueror, it was altogether in the region where he lived. He overcame the whole of those parts to the north of Media and Persia, and also southward, as well as the west. All that was true; but he never went outside, so far as I know, the bounds of Asia.

But now we see a kingdom marked by extraordinary rapidity of conquest. One might challenge all ages to show anything that fulfils this prophecy, as the kingdom of Alexander did. In the course of a few years, that remarkable man overran almost the whole of the then known world. He even lamented, as we know, that he had not another world to conquer. This is a striking commentary upon what we have here. Do we need to go to history for it all? No. We find in this very book the explanation. In Dan. 8:20, 21, the third empire is shown to be the Grecian. "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia." There you have also a confirmation of what I said before, as to the second kingdom. But when this ram was there, a fierce goat came that had a notable horn between his eyes. With the single horn that he has in his head, he butts against the ram, who represented these kings of Media and Persia. Here we have the third kingdom, that was to "bear rule over all the earth." What is its name? The 21st verse gives the answer. "The rough goat is the king of Grecia, and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king." We do not need history to explain prophecy. We have here the distinct, positive answer from the word of God, as to what the third kingdom is; and all real research you may make in history will only confirm this, but you do not need it. If you take your stand upon the word of God, you are upon a ground

that no history can touch for a single instant. God, who gives the only sure account, shows that the Medo-Persian Empire is followed by the Grecian. The sole great horn of the latter is broken, and "for it came up four notable ones, towards the four winds of heaven." The kingdom of Alexander, at his death, was broken up into four great parts, which his generals fought for. You have their comparative littleness in the presence of Alexander. He was the great horn, the first king and representative of the third kingdom. The next question is, What was to follow that? What other great empire was to succeed: and that, the last empire before God should set up His kingdom? The Old Testament history closes before the third empire begins. The last facts historically stated are in the Book of Nehemiah, while the Persian was still the great king, i.e. the second empire was yet supreme. But the New Testament history opens, and what is found there? I have only to read the beginning of Luke, and I hear of another great empire then ruling. "It came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." There we have, at once, the fourth kingdom, without requiring to ask history for it. There is a fourth kingdom, and the word of God shows it to be universal; it summons men throughout the world to be enrolled in its register, and God takes care that there should be a legal acknowledgment even of His own Son's having been then born.

The fourth kingdom, then, was the Roman Empire. When I know that from Scripture,⁴ I can go to history, which tells me that it was the Roman Empire which crushed the power of Greece. They got the Greeks first to join them in beating the Macedonians, and then they turned upon the Greeks, and soon put them down.

⁴ I have no doubt that, in "the ships of Chittim" (Dan. 11:30) we have a reference to the naval power of Rome which interfered with Antiochus Epiphanes. But as the allusion is less explicit than Luke 2:1, Luke 3:1, Luke 20:22-25, John 11:48, John 19:15, I add the direct proof from the New Testament.

Afterwards, the Romans extended their conquests all over Asia. What does God say about it? "The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces . . . and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." And if people do call in history, can they see things more clearly? Where can they show as just a description of that empire as that which God gives here? One well-known historian, when speaking about the empires, describes them in the liveliest imagery, derived from these very symbols of Daniel the prophet. He could find no figures so apt as those which the Spirit of God had consecrated to their use already, though every one knows it was from no lack of imagination, any more than from the wish to accredit Scripture.

Even this is not all that God gives us. "Forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise." Never was a description more exactly to the point. I could quote passages from the old Roman writers, which show that they themselves gave an account of their own empire and policy, in terms substantially similar.

But there was something they could not tell, and that was beyond what man could foresee. That power that above all other was distinguished for its strength in warring down every one that rose up against it, whatever its kindness to those who stooped to the conqueror — that very power is described here thus: — "And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided." The Romans do not tell us this. History is not always a truthful speaker. Those who describe their own country's statecraft are not in general very trustworthy. If there was that which threatened extinction, they are as glad to hide it as they were ready to boast in whatever evidences their boldness, strength, and glory; but God tells all out; and we find that the same empire, that was to be so celebrated for its amazing strength, is to exhibit also the greatest inherent weakness. "There shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with

miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay."

The iron was the original element; the clay was brought in subsequently, and properly did not belong to the great metal statue: it was a foreign ingredient. When and whence did it come? I believe that the Spirit of God in using the figure of clay refers not to the original Roman element, which had the strength of the iron, but to the barbaric hordes, which broke in at a later period, weakening the Roman power, and forming by degrees separate kingdoms. I can, however, only state this as my own judgment, founded upon the general use of Scripture language and ideas. We have what was not properly and originally Roman, but was brought in from elsewhere: and it is the mixture of the two elements that is productive of the weakness, and that finally leads to division. These hordes of barbarians, that forced themselves in at first, professed not to be conquerors, but guests of Rome, and finally settled themselves within its limits. This it was that subsequently led to the division of the empire into a number of separate independent kingdoms, when the power and pride of imperial Rome was broken. Charlemagne, later on, cherished the desire of universal empire, which he laboured hard to realize; but it was a failure; and all that he acquired in his life was separated in his death. Another man attempted it in our own days; I mean, of course, the exile of St. Helena. He had at heart the same universal monarchy. What was the issue? His success was still more short-lived. All was completely broken up into its original constituents before he had breathed his last. And so it will continue in the main, until the moment spoken of here, but more fully entered into in the Book of the Revelation.

This is, I believe, what Scripture lays down about the matter. There will be, before the age closes, the most remarkable union of two

apparently contradictory conditions — a universal head of empire, and separate independent kingdoms besides, each of which will have its own king; but that one man will be the emperor over all these kings. Till that time comes, every effort to unite the different kingdoms under one head will be a total failure. Even then, it will be not by fusing them together into one kingdom, but each independent kingdom will have its own king, though all subject to one head. God has said they shall be divided. This, then, is what is shown us. "They shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." And if ever there was a portion of the world that has represented this incoherent system of kingdoms, it is modern Europe. As long as the iron predominated, there was one empire: but then came in the clay, or foreign material. In virtue of the iron there will be a universal monarchy, while in virtue of the clay there will be separate kingdoms.

"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." Mark those words, "in the days of these kings." They are a complete answer to those who have tried to make this the birth of Christ, and the introduction of what they call the kingdom of grace. At the time here spoken of, the empire is broken up and divided. Was that the case when the Lord was born? Could it be said then "in the days of these kings"? Nothing of the sort. Rome was then in its fullest power; there was not the smallest breach apparent throughout the empire. There was but one ruler, but one will predominant. It was not therefore "in the days of these kings." What then does the verse refer to? I believe to the closing scene of the Roman Empire: not to the time when Christ was born, but when God "bringeth in the First-begotten into the world" — when the Lord Jesus is brought in, not as the Nazarene to suffer and to die, but when He comes with divine power to judge. The "stone cut out without hands," though in a sense applicable to Him at any time, applies really and fully then. We have the interpre-

tation here. It does not refer to His person, so much as to the kingdom that the God of heaven shall set up in Him and by Him. No doubt He is the stone; but this is a destructive stone extinguishing the kingdoms of the earth. Can any one deny it? The stone was "cut out of the mountain without hands, and it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold." There was the crash of all the image. Was that the case when Christ was born Did Christ attack the Roman Empire? Did He destroy it? On the contrary, Christ was killed, and it was its minister that was the official means of His crucifixion. The image, we may say, smote Him, instead of His smiting the image. Such an interpretation is unworthy of serious attention.

The stone falls upon the feet of the image, the toes of which were part of iron and part of clay; that is, upon the last condition of the Roman Empire. After all the division, the stone smites it. Thus its action is not grace, but judgment. It is not a sower sowing seed, to produce life; still less is it leaven diffusing itself over certain limits. Its blow falls destructively upon the image and shatters it completely. It is evident, then, that the first coming of Christ is not the question here. His birth is wholly passed by. It took place during the course of the Roman Empire and in no way destroyed it. Whereas what will deal with the Roman Empire yet, is the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in a day that is future.

But some will say, How can that be? There is no Roman Empire now. But let me ask, How does this show that there is not to be a Roman Empire? Can you prove that the Roman Empire is not to revive? What is given me here is that the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold were broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors.

Further, we are told in the Revelation that the beast, representing the imperial power of Rome, is remarkably characterized as "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." (Rev. 17:8) The last clause,

which in the English version is so obscurely rendered "and yet is," should be "and shall be present."⁵ There is no doubt about this at all: no man that knows the Apocalypse properly would dispute it. If so, it follows that the beast, or empire that existed, when John was there, was to be in a state of non-existence, and then to appear again, ascending out of the bottomless pit. That is, it will be the power of Satan that will accomplish the reunion of the fragments that make up the Roman Empire. And it is remarkable that when the beast is seen again, this chapter shows that there will be ten kings who will agree to give their power to "the beast," or person then raised up of Satan to organize and govern the empire. He will use this vast power against God and the Lamb; every appearance of Christianity will be destroyed, idolatry will be restored, and Anti-christ set up. Then God, as it were, will say, I will endure this no longer; My hour is come. The Lord Jesus will leave the right hand of God, and will execute judgment upon these vile pretenders.

"In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom . . . it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." The first action of that stone is to destroy. It is not a question of saving souls; it is judgment and destruction: putting down kingdoms and everything that exalts itself against the true God.

But a difficulty may arise here as to how it is that, when this destructive blow falls, we have the gold, the silver, and the brass all jumbled together, with the iron and clay — as if these successive empires existed together at the end. The truth is that though Babylon, for instance, lost its imperial place, it existed subordinately under the powers that succeeded; and so with each following empire till Rome. (Comp. Dan. 7:11, 12) So that when the final judgment of the fourth empire takes place, there will still be the representatives of its three predecessors, distinct from itself. And this makes evi-

⁵ It depends on an indisputably good various reading.

dent that by the last empire is meant what is exclusively western, and not that which had belonged to the previous empires.

Thus it is the great seat of modern civilization (i.e. the ten kingdoms of the beast) that will be the scene of this tremendous apostasy. And this will be allowed in the judicial wisdom of God, because men have not received "the love of the truth that they might be saved." God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: "that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." I have not a question that this is the future history of the world, on the authority of the word of God. This remarkable prophecy brings us down from the first beginning of imperial power, and finally shows us in the last days, before God sets up His kingdom, the judgment of the world as it is, when God will deal with the quick, not with the dead merely. "He will judge the [habitable] world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

Daniel 3

The chapters which fill up the interval between Dan. 2 and 7 are devoted to the statement of historical facts, and therefore might not seem, at first sight, to have a prophetical character. But we must bear in mind that Scripture in general has an infinitely larger scope than the bare statement of circumstances, be it ever so instructive and important morally. Indeed, this is true of all the Bible. Take such a book, for instance, as Genesis. Though it is clearly historical, and one of the simplest narratives in the Bible, yet it would be wrong to strip it of an outlook into the most distant future. We have the Spirit of God in the New Testament referring over and over again to its most significant facts. Thus, in the incident of Melchizedek; we see the bearing that is given it by the Holy Ghost in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the allusion to it in other parts of Scripture. A priest and king, two characters that were often united in those days, meets Abraham on his return from the slaughter of the kings, brings forth suited refreshment for the victors, pronounces blessing in the name of Him whose priest he was, and receives tithes as well from Abraham. Yet we must remember that the word of God reasons on this, as indicative of a vast change which has already come in, and leaves open a good deal more, looking onward to the day of Christ, as I conceive. In the Hebrews, where the subject of Christ's priesthood, as now in heaven, is discussed, some important features of the type are barely alluded to, not applied. The primary drift there is to show, from the Jewish Scriptures, a higher character of priesthood than that of Aaron — a priesthood that was not derived from any predecessor, nor handed down to a successor. I only refer to this to show that Scripture gives a typical (and what is that, in other words, but a prophetical?) value to what might appear to be an authentic account of an historical event. Such a character I claim for these facts in the Book of Daniel. For it is plain that, if in the most unvarnished books of inspired history, such as Genesis or Exodus, where prophecy is not the ostensible object or peculiarly marked feature, you have incident on incident, clearly used in the New Tes-

tament, as foreshadowing good things to come, we may still more strongly infer that, in a prophecy such as this of Daniel, we are to read not only the visions as directly prophetic, but also the facts connected with them as instinct with a kindred spirit. It were easy to produce analogous examples from elsewhere. Let us look for a moment at the prophecy of Isaiah. There, after a long series of prophetic strains, you have a break. Certain well-known historical facts are related — the invasion and destruction of the Assyrian; and as to Hezekiah, his sickness and his recovery, the wonder done in the land, and the visit of the embassy from the king of Babylon. Then you have the prophecy recommencing, and following on its course. It could be readily proved that the facts related of Sennacherib and Hezekiah have a definite and most instructive bearing upon the prophecies in the midst of which they are imbedded. So that merely to regard them as facts introduced historically into such a connection, and, with no further or deeper reason, dividing one half of the book from the other, would be to deprive them of at least half their value. Am I too bold, therefore, in assuming it as a general truth, applicable to the word of God as a whole, that Scripture is not to be lowered down to the mere recital of the facts it records; but that those facts were chosen expressly in the wisdom of God, and were given in an orderly manner, for the purpose of representing the awful ways of man and Satan, and the glorious scenes before the mind of God Himself, that are to be re-enacted in the latter day? And if this be the case with the strictly historical portion of God's word, it is only reasonable that it should be emphatically true of a prophetic book such as this.

The evidence, however, of this will much more appear as we follow the facts as they are given here. We shall then see what is the connection, and what the special bearing, of the chapters themselves, better than by more laboured presumptions than one might gather from other parts of the word of God. For that is and must be the grandest testimony of all to the real meaning of Scripture. Revealed truth is like the light. It is not that which requires illumination from

without in order to let us know what it means, but it displays itself. You do not need a taper or a torch from man to find out the light of day. The sun, as it wants none, entirely eclipses all such artificial helps; it shines for itself and rules the day. So it is that, wherever you find a man capable of seeing, the truth commends itself. He has, what the evangelist Luke calls, "an honest heart," and what other scriptures speak of as "a single eye." Wherever the truth is really brought to bear upon a man who is open to receive it as the precious light of God in Christ, they answer mutually to each other. The heart is prepared for it — desires it; and when the truth is heard, bows, receives, and enjoys it. When the heart, on the contrary, is occupied with itself, or with the world, there is no truth that can possibly bend it. The will of man is at work; and that is the constant, unvarying enemy of God. Therefore it is said (John 3) that no man can see or enter the kingdom of God without being born again — born of water and of the Spirit. That is, there must be a direct, positive work of the Holy Ghost, dealing with the soul, judging it and giving a new nature, which has as decided an affinity for the things of God as the old life has for the things of the world. The Spirit acts upon the new creature, and gives intelligence; and the truth is, we may say, its natural sustenance.

I do not doubt, therefore, that we shall find, in this third chapter of Daniel, as in the three which follow, that each has its distinctive features; and that these were not merely seen in what was passing in the days of Daniel, but that they were registered by the prophet to indicate the course now past, and the future destiny of the great Gentile powers. We are to view them in the light of the prophecies that surround them — to take them, not as facts put down, as any man might do it, at haphazard. In short, God has given them here, linked in the most intimate way with the prophecy where they are found.

In Dan. 2 we saw God's sovereign dealing with a man, raised up from among the Gentiles, to be the minister of His authority. This

takes a new form, in consequence of the people of Israel and their kings having definitely proved themselves unworthy of God's purpose and calling. Thereon God introduces the imperial system of government in the world. It was not merely allowing a single nation to grow in power, and be the terror of its neighbours; or creating a blessed example of the ways of God. One ruler is allowed to be the master of the world — one great sovereign, not only himself mighty, but a ruler of kings, who were but subordinate or satellites. This began with Nebuchadnezzar, and it characterizes the Gentile empires. An objection might be raised, that we do not find any such power existing now. That is true. There exists no such imperial rule in the world, nor has there been since the fall of Rome; though there have been certain pretenders to it. But it has failed. The Book of the Revelation shows us this suspension. There was such a ruler once, while imperial Rome subsisted — one who had kings for his servants. But now there is an interval, when all that is over. Still it is to be revived. And this, I believe, is one great fact that awaits the world at the present time. It will take men by surprise; and when accomplished, it will be the means of concentrating the power of Satan, and of bringing about his plans on the earth.

All this has a very serious interest for us. We stand near the crisis in the world's history; and even those who look for signs own that we are drawing near the close of the age, and of the times of the Gentiles. The reorganization of the empire is not far off. And it is solemn to remember that, when revived, it will not be a mere repetition of what has been done before; but the power of Satan will be put forth in a way never yet witnessed. God shall send strong delusion that men should believe a lie, because they "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Very many of my Christian brethren may cry out that I speak uncharitably. The word of God, however, is wiser than men. It is not a thought of mine, nor of any other man. None would have gathered such a prospect from their own minds. But God has most clearly revealed it. People may plead the wonderful works of God of late in one distant country and another;

and the answer of blessing that is, as it were, echoing back from some quarters near us. But these things in no way contradict what has been stated. We may always see these two things going on together, when men approach the verge of some mighty change. On the one hand, the general power of evil increases, and the pride of man swells to an unprecedented height. On the other hand, the Spirit of God works energetically, winning souls to Christ, and separating those that are to be saved from the destruction which is the necessary end of sin and pride. Hence, I believe, when any crisis of evil is at hand, what we ought to expect is this increase of blessing from God, during the time of suspense which immediately precedes judgment.

But, turning to the immediate subject of the chapter, imperial power is in the hands of the Gentiles; and the first thing told of that power, is, that it was used to set up idolatry — abused, rather, to give a splendour to idolatry unexampled in the old world. And a most humbling consideration it is: the evident connection between the golden idol that Nebuchadnezzar set up in the plain of Dura, and that image which he had seen in the visions of the night. It is true that the image he had made was not an exact copy. Still, is it not grave to find that the first thing that Nebuchadnezzar does, as far as Scripture gives it to us, is to command a golden image to be set up, that all the peoples, the nations, and the languages, might fall down and worship it? One thing, at least, is plain: that whether the golden head of the great image had suggested the thought or not, at any rate it did not hinder him. On the contrary, here we find that the authority which God had put into his hands, is turned to this frightful use. The reason, I believe, was this: Nebuchadnezzar was a man as wise according to the flesh as he was wilful. He stood most evidently in a place that no man had ever occupied before. Not only the sovereign of a vast kingdom, but the absolute master of many kingdoms, speaking different tongues, and having all sorts of contrary habits and policies. What then was to be done with them? How were all these various nations to be kept and governed under a sin-

gle head? There is an influence that is mightier than any other thing, which, if common, binds men closely together; but which, if jarring, on the contrary, more than anything else, arrays people against people, house against house, children against parents, and parents against children, nay, husbands and wives against each other. There is no social dislocation to be compared with that which is produced by a difference of religion. Consequently, to avert so great a peril, union in religion was the measure that the devil insinuated into the mind of the politic Chaldean as the surest bond of his empire. He must have one common religious influence in order to weld together the hearts of his subjects. In all probability, to his mind it was a political necessity. Unite them in worship, unite all hearts in bowing down before one and the same object, and there would be something that would give the hope and opportunity of consolidating all these scattered fragments into a whole. Accordingly, he projects the idea of the gorgeous image of gold for the plain of Dura, near the capital of the empire: and there it is that he summons all the leading men, the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, all in power and authority, to come together to the dedication. He surrounds it, too, with everything that could attract nature and act upon the senses. All kinds of music must contribute to the scene. When the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, etc., was heard, this was the signal for the representatives of that vast realm to "fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up." Man can but make an idol; he cannot even find out the true God. If it is a question of having the world's homage, the only thing that will carry away men on a vast scale must be something of this creation, something adapted to the nature of man as he is. You cannot unite hearts that are true with such as are false. But if the true God is shut out, Satan is there to find something which, if introduced by the authority of man, may command all but universal acquiescence. So it was here. The authority, therefore, of the empire was put forth, and all were commanded to worship the golden image on pain of death. "Whoso

falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

"Therefore, at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up." (Verse 7)

But there were some apart from that idolatrous throng; very few, alas! though, no doubt, there were others hidden. We may be bold enough to say there was one not mentioned here — Daniel himself. However that be, his three companions were not there; and this made them obnoxious to others; especially as their position, exalted as it was in the province of Babylon, exposed them to more public notice. Of course they were singled out for the king's displeasure. "Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near and accused the Jews." Then they remind the king of the decree that he had made, and add, "There are certain Jews, whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. These men, O king, have not regarded thee; they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. Then Nebuchadnezzar, in his rage and fury, commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," etc.

Now this appears to me a fact of very great importance. The use which the Gentile makes of his power is to set up a religion connected with the polities of the kingdom, a religion for present earthly purposes. Where this is the case, religion cannot be left between God and the conscience. It is no longer a question of having a real conviction as to God and His truth, nor is there liberty to judge the imposture. The worship devised by the Gentile king is bound down upon the subject under penalty of death.

There may be certain things which hinder, for a season, the natural results of the world's will in having its religion condemned. And this has been the case for some time. For the last fifty years and more,

every one knows there has been a certain system of opinion, commonly called "liberalism." This has got hold of men's minds. In no way does it respect God and His word as such. Its great stock-in-trade is the rights of man. Its cardinal virtue is, that all should be left free to think, act, and worship as they please. As long as the idea of man's rights is allowed to have play, the mercy of God turns it into an occasion for Christians, having a conscience towards Himself, to pass quietly through, and worship God according to His will. And as it was always unquestionable that God claimed the right over His own people; as His revealed will alone can rightly govern them; so, as the Father, He now seeks His children, that they may worship Him in spirit and in truth. The renewed heart and conscience delight in His will and find the chief blessedness here in exalting Him. To the believer, that will is more peremptory than the absolutism of the heathen king. Liberalism really dislikes this exclusive claim over the conscience. Still, it has led to a sort of calm in the world; and the full exercise of its authority, as to religion, is in abeyance for the time. For, apart from temporary circumstances, none can deny that, wherever there is a religion introduced by the monarch, for the guidance of his realm, necessarily it does not admit of difference, contradiction, or compromise. This would defeat the purpose for which it is imposed. But it is to fight against God. The monarch himself may have a conscience, and he is, of course, bound to worship God according to His will. But the using the authority of the realm to coerce others is the denial, practically, of God's direct control over the individual conscience.

The lesson, then, that we have here, is that, at the very outset, this was what the Gentile made of the power God gave: to set up his own religion, and bind it upon the whole of his subjects. That is, all his authority from God was turned to deny the true God, and to compel universal obedience to his own idol, with a frightful death held up as the immediate forfeit in case of disobedience. This was the great characteristic of the first of the Gentile empires.

But the evil of man and the craft of Satan only serve to bring the faithful into view. The king commands them to be cast into the burning fiery furnace. He first, no doubt, remonstrates, and gives them the opportunity of yielding. "Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now, if ye be ready, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, etc., . . . ye fall down and worship the image that I have made, well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace: and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" It is solemn to see how evanescent was the impression made upon the king's mind. The last act recorded before this image was set up, was his falling down on his face before Daniel, paying him all but divine honours. He had even said, "Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret." But it was another thing, when he finds his power disputed, and his image despised, spite of the burning fiery furnace.

It was all very well to acknowledge God for a moment when He was revealing a secret to him. That was plainly decided in Dan. 2. And Daniel there represents those who have the mind of God and who are found in the place of fearing God. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

But God had delegated power to the head of the Gentiles, Nebuchadnezzar. And now that these men had dared to brave the consequences rather than worship the image, he is filled with fury, which vents itself in scorn of God Himself. "Who is that God," he says, "that shall deliver you out of my hands?" The consequence was that it became now a question between him whom God had set up and God Himself.

But a most beautiful and blessed feature comes out here. It is not God's way, at the present, to meet power by power. It is not His way

to deal with the Gentiles in destruction, even where they may be abusing power against the God who has set them in authority. And I call your attention to this, believing it to be an important thing practically. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego do not in any way take the ground of resisting Nebuchadnezzar in his wickedness. We know afterwards that his conduct was so evil that God stripped him of all glory, and even intelligence as a man, for a long time. But still these godly men do not pretend that he is a false king because he sets up and enforces idolatry. For the Christian, the question is not about the king, but how he ought to behave himself. It is not his business to meddle with others. He is called to walk, relying on God, in obedience and patience. In the great mass of everyday obligations we can obey God in obeying the laws of the land in which we live. This might be the case in any country. If one were even in a popish kingdom I believe that, in the main, one might obey God without transgressing the laws of the land. It might be necessary, sometimes, to hide oneself. If they were coming, for instance, with their processions, and required a mark of respect to the host, one ought to avoid the appearance of insulting their feelings, while, on the other hand, one could not acquiesce in their false worship.

But it is extremely important to remember that government is set up and acknowledged of God, and it has, therefore, claims upon the obedience of the Christian man wherever he may be. One of the New Testament epistles takes up this question, the very one that, more than any other, brings out the foundations, characteristics, and effects of Christianity, as far as regards the individual. I allude to the Epistle to the Romans, the most comprehensive of all the Pauline epistles. There we have, first of all, man's condition fully developed; then the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. The first three chapters are devoted to the subject of man's ruin; the next five to the redemption that God has wrought as the answer to the ruin of man. Then, in the three chapters which follow, you have the course of the dispensations of God — that is, His dealings, on a large scale, with Israel and the Gentiles. After that, we have the practical, or, at

least, the preceptive part of the epistle: first, in Romans 12, the relations of Christians, one to another; and then, after a gradual transition, to enemies at the close; and, next, their relation to the powers that be. (Rom. 13) The very expression — "the powers that be" — seems intended to embrace every form of government under which Christians might be placed. They were to be subject, not merely under a king, but where there was another character of sovereign; not only where the government was ancient, but let it be ever so newly established. The business of the Christian is to show respect to all who are in authority, to pay honour to whom honour is due, owing no man anything save love. What makes this so particularly strong, is, that the emperor then reigning was one of the worst and most cruel men that ever filled the throne of the Caesars. And yet there is no reserve or qualification, nay, the very reverse of an insinuation that, if the emperor ordered what was good, the Christians were to obey, but, that if not, they were free from their allegiance. The Christian is always to obey — not always Nero or Nebuchadnezzar, but always to obey God. The consequence is, that this at once delivers from the very smallest real ground for charging a godly person with being a rebel. I am aware that nothing will of necessity bar a Christian from an evil reputation. It is natural for the world to speak evil of one that belongs to Christ — to Him whom they crucified. But from all real ground for such an accusation this principle delivers the soul. Obedience to God remains untouched; but I am to obey "the powers that be" in whatever is consistent with obeying God, no matter how trying.

The light of these faithful Jews was far short of what the Christian ought to have now: they had only that revelation of God which was the portion of Israel. But faith always understands God: whether there is little light or much, it seeks and finds the guidance of God. And these men were in the exercise of a very simple faith. The emperor had put forth a decree that was inconsistent with the foundation of all truth — the one true God. Israel was called expressly to maintain that Jehovah was such, and not idols. Here was a king who

had commanded them to fall down and worship an image. They dare not sin; they must obey God rather than man. It is nowhere said, that we must ever disobey man. God must be obeyed — whatever the channel, God always. If I do a thing, ever so right in itself, on the mere ground that I have a right to disobey man under certain circumstances, I am doing the lesser of two evils. 'The principle for a Christian man is never to do evil at all. He may fail, as I do not deny; but I do not understand a man quietly settling down that he must accept any evil whatever. It is a heathenish idea. An idolater that had not revealed light of God could know no better. Yet you will find Christian persons using the present confession of the condition of the Church as an excuse for persevering in known evil, and saying, Of two evils we must choose the lesser! But I maintain that, whatever the difficulty may be, there is always the path of God for the godly to walk in. Why then do I find practical difficulty? Because I wish to spare myself. If I compound for even a little evil, the broad way of ease and honour lies open, but I sacrifice God and come under the power of Satan. It was just the advice that Peter gave our Lord when He spoke of being put to death. "Far be it from thee — pity thyself, — Lord." So with the Christian. By doing a little evil, by compromising the conscience, by avoiding the trial that obeying God always entails, no doubt a person may thus often avoid a good deal of the world's enmity, and gain its praise, because he does well to himself. But if the eye is single in this, God always must have His rights, always be owned in the soul as having the first place. If God is compromised by anything required of me, then I must obey God rather than man. Where this is held fast, the path is perfectly plain. There may be danger, possibly even death staring us in the face, as it was on this occasion. The king was incensed that these men should dare to say, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter." Not careful to answer him! And what were they careful for? It was a question that concerned God. Their care was to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." They were in the very spirit of that word of Christ before it was given. They had walked dutifully in

the place the king had assigned them: there was no charge against them. But now there arose a question that deeply affected their faith, and they felt it. It was God's glory that had been interfered with, and they trusted in Him.

Accordingly they say, "If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace." How beautiful this is! In the presence of the king, who never thought of serving any but himself, and who saw none but himself to serve, they say, "Our God, whom we serve." They had served the king faithfully before, because they had ever served God: and they must serve God still, even if it had the appearance of not serving the king. But they have confidence in God. "He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king." This was not the mere abstract truth: it was faith. "He will deliver us." But mark something better still. "But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Even if God will not put forth His power to deliver us, we serve Himself; we will not serve the gods of this world. Oh! beloved reader, in what a place of dignity faith in the living God puts the man who walks in it. These men were at that moment the object of all the attention of the Babylonish empire. What was the image then? It was forgotten. Nebuchadnezzar himself was powerless in presence of his captives of Israel. There they were, calm and undaunted, when the king himself showed his weakness. For what can be more evident weakness than to yield to a fury that changes the form of his visage, and that utters menaces which utterly failed of their purpose? The furnace was ordered to be heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated. The mighty men, the king's agents to cast them in, were themselves devoured by the flames.

And now, when the deed is done, a new marvel passes before the eyes of the king. It was no vision now, but the manifest power of God. When the sword of the king was drawn out against God, how miserably futile it was! In the midst of this burning fiery furnace was

a sight which arrested him. Astonished, the king "rose up in his haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt." What was to be said of the power of Nebuchadnezzar now? What did it avail to be the mightiest monarch of the world, surrounded, too, with all that constituted the sinews of his force and the grandeur of his empire? There were these men, who had been bound and cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace, apparently the most pitiable case in his realm. But now he is obliged to behold their bonds burnt, and themselves only set free by what he meant for their destruction. But not this merely. There was another to be seen, and that other he can but say is like the Son of God. "Lo, I see four men loose . . . and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

Just as God might use a Balaam or a Caiaphas to speak the truth when they little thought of it and had no communion with Himself in it, so, in this expression of the king's, "the Son of God," there seems to be amazing propriety. We cannot suppose that he entered into its meaning with intelligence. Still there was striking propriety in this respect. There are other titles he might have used. He might have said, "Son of man," or "the God of Israel," or many more. But "Son of God" seems exactly suited to describe the scene: and therefore, I think, the overruling power of the Spirit of God was manifest in leading the king to use this expression. In the New Testament, where all truth comes out with distinctness we find our Lord Himself referring to these two titles, both of which occur in Daniel — Son of man and Son of God. Son of man is the title of Christ in His judicial glory. He is Son of man "because all judgment is committed to Him." As Son of God He gives life: He quickens in the midst of death. As Son of God, He frees those that were bound: and "if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." That verse seems to me a doctrinal commentary upon this very scene. There was the Son, and

He was making the prisoners free. Man had bound them, had attempted to execute his threat of vengeance against any who should acknowledge the true God. These three men had jeopardized everything upon the truth of God Himself against all rivals and images; and God had come in for them with delivering power. The proud king not only owns his word changed, but associates their names with the most high God, who was not ashamed to be called their God.

The Gentile dominion is not over yet. And I believe that the close of it will bring in the same thing with as great force as ever. The Book of the Revelation shows us that the last great Gentile king will employ all the authority of his government to enforce what might be called the "religion" of that day. And then God will put forth His power miraculously to preserve His witnesses for their appointed work. There may be some that will suffer unto death, there may be differences in the ways in which God will act. But the Revelation shows us that there will be persons preserved in the midst of the power that enforces idolatry in the last days.

When this takes place, we shall not be upon the scene. Hence the mention of the Jews is emphatic at the time of the last great tribulation. For while men in general will be forced at the end to acknowledge the true God, before that there will be a fiery persecution put forth. There will be such a thing as "glorifying God in the fires"; an expression decidedly used about the remnant of Israel in the last days. The wonderful hand of God will be at work, but it will be with the Jews, not with Christians. As far as we are concerned, tribulation is our constant and proper portion in the world. The New Testament shows this from beginning to end. Nothing is plainer than that the Holy Ghost never acknowledges the Christian in any way except as separate from the world, the object of its animosity and persecution, cast out, despised, unknown by the world. That is our place as recognized by the word of God. It is for Christians to account for the fact, that they have lost it; for clearly, what I have

been describing, somehow or another, does not apply at the present time. Is it that the world is getting better, or that they themselves have become worse? Conscience ought to answer, and God will use it, if upright, as the means of bringing one back to the place that ought never to have been left. All through the time of the Gentile supremacy, the Christian's place is obedience. For the most part what the power insists upon is that which the Christian can render with a ready mind; but when there comes a collision between the world's authority and God's, we must obey God rather than men, let the consequences be what they may. This is the only thing that God owns in His people.

The chapters that follow have each of them an increasingly marked connection with the course of the Gentile empire. But this is sufficient to bring out the fact, that idolatry — worldly religion — a religion that is intended for every one, and bound down upon all, under pain of death — is the first great feature recorded of the Gentile empire, and will be found, more or less, to run through the whole of it. As this was the first exercise of authority, so it will be at the end of the age. The Book of the Revelation shows us the last stage of the last Gentile empire; and there we find that what it began with, it will end with: that the same compulsion used here, to make all its subjects bow down and worship in a way of its own setting up, will re-appear at the close.

But we find another analogy. God at that time had His witnesses. And as the Jews were the persons that then withstood Gentile idolatry, they will come again upon the stage of God's dealings, and will be especially the witnesses that God will put honour upon. This godly remnant of Israel is represented by the disciples in the days of our Lord's earthly ministry. They will be a godly seed, cleaving to Him and loving His name; and this, because they will have got hold, with more or less light, of the Messiah. These persons will be found waiting for Jesus to come and take His kingdom, after the Church,

properly so called, has passed out of the scene of God's dealings on the earth.

Thus, then, as Gentile authority began with this idolatry forced upon all, and the only witnesses for God were among the Jews; so, at the close, idolatry will reappear, and God will have a faithful remnant again among that poor people — a testimony for Himself in the midst of apostasy.

But I hope, in looking at future chapters, to enter a little more into details. May we remember, that what we have been now seeing is not merely for that day, nor does it concern the witnesses of that time only! If God will have a faithful people among the Jews then, may we who are Christians not be found disobedient unto the heavenly vision! We have a brighter prospect than any which Daniel saw. He was not privileged to see Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. He could testify, on the one hand, of the rejection of Messiah, and, on the other, of His universal and everlasting dominion. Between the one past and the other future, we know other and higher glories in Him now, and Himself, in whom these blessings are treasured up. We know that "He is the true God and eternal life," and ourselves blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him. We are called out from this world to follow Him and be the sharers of His heavenly glory. It is but "a little while, and He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry." And if this is so, how ought we to be apart from this present evil world! How ought we to keep clear of its attempt to put on the appearance of reverence for the name of Jesus! Alas! how often people get perplexed, and ask, Where and what is the world? The truth is, that all this is a lamentable proof that they are so mixed up with the world that they do not know it. The Lord grant that we may have no difficulty in knowing where the world is, and where we are. The Jew was obliged to enter it with the sword in his hand, executing judgment. But that is not the place of the Christian. We began with the sword against Christ, and Himself bowing to it. We began

and should go on with the cross, looking for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. All our blessedness is founded on the cross, and all our hopes centre in His glory, and His coming again for us.

The Lord grant that we may live thus, in the increasing knowledge of the Blessed One, with whom we have to do, and to whom we belong. Whatever, then, may be the danger and trial, we shall have the Son of God with us in it.

May we know more and more what it is to walk with Christ in liberty and joy! So shall we have Christ with us in every time of need.

Daniel 4

We have seen, after the vision of the great image, that a chapter followed, presenting at first sight little appearance of connection with the prophecy, but which, I trust, was shown to have a very important bearing upon it. For in Dan. 2 we had merely the general history of the Gentile powers, not their moral qualities. Empire after empire rose on, and disappeared from, the scene of God's providence. But what was the character of these empires, how they used the power that was given into their hands by God, we saw not. These historical incidents were introduced purposely between the first grand outline in Dan. 2 and the details which follow from Dan. 7 to the end of the book. They show the conduct of the empires while in possession of supreme authority from God in the world. The first picture of their moral ways was given in Dan. 3: religion, such as it was, rendered compulsory by the Gentile power, irrespective of the claims of God and the conscience of man.

The principle of this from the first runs through the times of the Gentiles. No doubt it seemed necessary, in consequence of the immense extent of the empire, to have some one controlling religion that would bind together the various lands and subject nations. What a return for the place of honour in which God had put Nebuchadnezzar! Nevertheless, it only gave occasion for God to display His power, even in the Jewish captives now under the control of the Gentiles. In the chapter before it was plain that the wisdom of God was found among them. All the lore of the Babylonish empire was completely at fault. Daniel alone, could explain the visions. But although divine wisdom was there, power is another thing and God took advantage of the terrible punishment, as it seemed, of the three Hebrews, and showed Himself most conspicuously as the Deliverer of the faithful in the hour of their need. The beginning of Gentile empire is only the foreshadowing of what will be the closing scene. And as there was then deliverance by divine power at the beginning, so there will be by-and-by: and this specially found in

connection with the faithful of Israel, the Jews. I do not mean, of course, with the Jews in their present state; because, now, a Jew remaining such is an enemy of God. But that will not always be the case. The time is coming when the seed of Abraham, without ceasing to be Jews, will be converted to God — will receive the Messiah, according to the prophecies. I do not mean the Jew will enter into the same blessed knowledge and enjoyment that we have now; but that he will be among the faithful to be found in the latter day, as is predicted in many prophecies. Of course, a very important change is supposed, which is to take place in the history of the world; or rather, God will remove from the world that which is not of the world, in order that He may resume His interest in what is taking place upon the earth. Because, at the present time, God's work is not immediately connected with the movements of the world. Its stages of progress and decline are not the expression of His will, although He always exercises a providential control over them.

But there was a time, we know, in the world's history, when God took a direct and immediate interest in what was going on among men. Even their battles were said to be the Lord's battles; and their defeats, famines, etc., were sent as a known infliction from God for some evil that He was dealing with. Now, while it remains perfectly true, that there is no war or sorrow of any kind that happens without God, and all is decidedly under His sovereign control, it is not in the way of the same direct government. So that a person cannot now say, This war is at the word of God; or, This famine is a chastening for such and such an evil. That would be indeed both ignorance and presumption. No doubt there are persons quite ready enough to pronounce as to these matters. Their mistake arises from not appreciating the great change that has taken place in God's government of the world. As long as Israel was the nation in which God was displaying His character for the earth, these things were found directly and immediately from God. But from the time God gave up His people Israel, it has been merely the indirect, providential control of a general kind, that God exercises over human affairs.

Another thing has come in. When the true Christ was rejected by Israel, and Israel thereby lost their opportunity of being restored to their place of supremacy, God, we may say, took advantage of this to bring in another thing — the calling of the Church. It was no longer God governing a nation like Israel under His law; nor was it simply an indirect government of the Gentiles; but the revelation of Himself as a Father to His children in Christ, and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, not only to act upon their hearts, but to dwell in their midst, and to baptize them, Jew or Gentile, into one body, the body of Christ the Head in heaven. That goes on now. And therefore God has no particular relations with the Jews now: He does not deal with them any more than with others, save that they have a sentence of judicial blindness upon them. They were blind before. God did not oblige them to refuse Christ. He never makes any person blind in that sense: only sin thus blinds. But when men refuse the light of God, and obstinately reject its every testimony, He may and does give up sometimes to a total darkness, in the sense of its being a judicial one, added to what is natural to the human heart. The nation of Israel is under that judicial blindness now. But while this is the case with the great mass, it is not so with all. There is always to be a remnant of Israel. They are the only nation indeed of which that can be said — the only nation that God has never absolutely given up. Other nations may know God visiting them for a time, and visiting them remarkably in grace. Our own country God has most marvellously blessed — given men His word freely, and many other privileges. But while such is the case, there is no obligation on God's part always to keep England in that position. If the country show a deaf ear, turning away from the truth, and preferring idolatry, which is not at all impossible, it will certainly be given up, and will fall under the delusion which God will send upon the world by-and-bye. But God bound Himself by special promise to Israel, and He will never give them up entirely. In Israel there will always be a holy seed in the very darkest times. And this is connected with a remark that I made before. While God is occupied with the work of gather-

ing out the Church, there cannot be any special relation with Israel in bringing them out as His people, and delivering them out of their distresses, and the like. But when God is pleased to remove the Church out of this present scene, Israel will come forward again; and it is in that day, when their hearts are touched by the Spirit of God, that there will be the fulfilment of a deliverance, the type of which we see in the end of Dan. 3.

Upon that occasion, I may just observe, the king was so far moved, that he commanded, as a sort of ordinance of his realm, that the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, should be honoured; and that any person who attempted to speak against that God should be cut in pieces, and their houses made a dunghill. But we do find this: that, whether it was the special honour that he paid to Daniel, in Dan. 2, or the command that his subjects should honour the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in Dan. 3, it had but little permanence. It was merely a passing feeling, which, like the morning cloud, faded away from the mind of the king. He himself records in this chapter how little the ways of God had reached his heart, however he might for the moment have been struck with the display of His wisdom. It is one thing to show honour to a prophet, and to compel the subjects of his realm to honour the God who delivered as none other could. But how was it with Nebuchadnezzar himself? "I, Nebuchadnezzar," he says, "was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace.

Thus, you see, it is plain, from his own account, although he gives it to show the mercy manifested towards him, that, after all the wondrous transactions of the previous chapters, Nebuchadnezzar was just the same man at bottom still. There was no thorough change in his soul — no such thing as his heart brought to God. He was at rest in his house and flourishing in his palace. As the man of the earth, all that God had given into his hands only fed his pride and self-complacency. In this condition God sends him a fresh testimony. "I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed

and the visions of my head troubled me." Therefore he makes a decree, commanding to bring in all the wise men of Babylon, that they might make known the interpretation of the dream. It was in vain. They came, and he told the dream. But he says, "They did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof. But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god," etc. To him he speaks with confidence. "O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof." He may speak to him in a heathenish style; the wisdom of the Most High God in him he may attribute to his own gods; but still he does acknowledge that there is something special and peculiar in Daniel. He also alludes to the vision in the same style. Daniel, when he hears the dream, and realizes its meaning, was troubled and amazed for one hour. Nor must we confine this to the story of Nebuchadnezzar. Just as we saw in Dan. 2 that the king was said to be the head of gold, so in this chapter he was the tree. But in Dan. 2 it was not the king personally alone, but his dynasty that was represented by the head of gold. In a certain sense, what was true of Nebuchadnezzar would characterize the Gentile empire to the close. So in this present scene. Daniel had the pain and horror of seeing what awaited Nebuchadnezzar. And this, alas! too plainly foreboded the issue of this new system that the God of heaven had set up.

But following simply the chapter before us, Daniel explains the vision. "My lord," said he, "the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth . . . It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong." Every one must be familiar with the way in which troth the psalms and prophets use the figure of the tree to describe the position assigned by God to Israel, as well as to other people. Thus, the vine in Ps. 80. is clearly what Israel was

intended to be in the purpose of God. But there was total failure. And so we see in Jer. 2, Ezek. 15, etc., God's purpose seemed to be broken. But He never gives it up. He may repent of creation. But wherever there is that, which is not barely the work of His hand, but the fruit of the action of His heart, — and that His purpose is, — God never abandons it. Where He merely calls into being that which did not exist before, a change may come in. But there is no change where God sets His love upon a person, and gives certain suited gifts. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." (Rom. 11:29) This is a very important thing, as connected with individual souls. Doubt the faithfulness of God in any one respect, and you weaken it as to everything else. If God could call His people Israel, and afterwards give them up absolutely, how could I be sure that God would keep me always as His child? For if ever it was tried, it was in Israel. If I believe in the faithfulness of God to myself, individually, why doubt it as to Israel? The question always is, Is God faithful! Has He departed from His purpose, or withdrawn His gifts? If not, whatever appearances may say for a time, God will vindicate His truth and mercy in the end.

But to return, the figure of the cedar-tree in Ezek. 31:3, may yet more help to illustrate what we have in Daniel. "Behold the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs." Then later on we find "the cedars in the garden of God could not hide him." Those were the other powers in the world. "The fir-trees were not like his boughs," etc. And, further still, we find that there is an allusion to Pharaoh king of Egypt. (Verse 18) But I will not dwell upon it further. My desire has been to prove, from these various passages, that it is a common thing in Scripture to use the tree, either as the symbol of fruit-bearing or of a place of high dignity and importance. In the New Testament the figure extended to that which for a season supersedes Israel Matt. 13 shows us that the dispensation of the kingdom of heaven is, in one of its phases, compared to a tree sprouting up from small beginnings. The Lord

unfolds the history of professing Christendom. In Matt. 12 He had given His sentence upon Israel. The last state should be worse than the first. Such will be the state of the wicked generation of Israel, that put the Lord Jesus to death, before God judges it. Then the Lord turns to Christendom, and shows, first of all, His own work on earth. He sows seed. In the next parable an enemy appears upon the scene, intrudes into the field, and sows bad seed. It is the inroad of evil into the field of Christian profession. The parable following discloses that what was little in its commencement grows into a vast towering thing in the earth. The little mustard-seed becomes a great tree.

Now, we may see by these passages that in every case, whether it be an individual as expressive of power, as Nebuchadnezzar, or a nation, which takes the ascendant, or a system of religion, as in Matt. 13, the symbol of a tree points to greatness in the earth, unless fruit be the object. Such is its universal teaching. Of course I am speaking now not so much of those trees, that were merely for bearing fruit, as of such as were chosen for their size and stateliness also. Earthly power is clearly meant by the tree in Daniel. (Dan. 4:21) "In it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth." This tree was the admiration of men. There was everything that gratified the heart: its own magnificent proportions, the beauty of its boughs and leaves, the abundance and sweetness of its fruits, the kindly shadow, under which all these creatures, the beasts of the field and fowls of heaven, found protection. All this and more was found in it, and such were man's thoughts about it. But what was God's estimate? "And whereas the king saw a watcher and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down and destroy it." Observe, it is merely a destruction for a time; there is no such thing as annihilation in any one thing in the mind of God. "Yet leave the stump of the roots

thereof in the earth." There must be means used of God to maintain it alive. Leave it, therefore, He says, "with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him." "This is the interpretation," he says, "O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which is come upon my lord the king." And then he gives its personal application to Nebuchadnezzar. In this case all was perfectly simple. Nebuchadnezzar was warned of what was to come upon him. He was to be driven from men, and his dwelling was to be with the beasts of the field. But more than that, he himself was to be reduced to their condition. "They shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven." And this for a certain defined time. "And seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." We need not dwell upon this history of Nebuchadnezzar. No simpleminded believer would be disposed to raise difficulties about it. Men have done so, explaining it as a mere delusion in the king's mind. But these are not questions that a Christian ought even to consider, except for the good of another. The word affirms that king Nebuchadnezzar was, by God's power, reduced in appearance to a bestial condition. If we own that God could and did set aside the laws of nature, giving some to walk unhurt in the fiercest of fires, and preserving another intact in a den of lions, we must feel that it is a mere question of His will and word whether Nebuchadnezzar was brought into this terrible debasement; hunted about among the beasts of the field, and made to eat grass like the oxen. The man that believes the one must believe the other. God's power alone could so work, and God's word is the warrant for all.

But while that is plain and simple enough, we have a further image of the Gentile power, its self-exalting character, and the judgment of God upon it. I apprehend that Nebuchadnezzar, personally, only showed what would be the general tendency of the Gentiles, as having power given him from God. He would admire and exalt him-

self; turning all the greatness that God had conferred upon him to his own credit. He was clearly shown the judgments that would come upon him; but the warning was unheeded. Therefore, "all this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee." The sentence was executed. Exactly so have the Gentile powers acted with regard to God. I am not now speaking of individuals who may arise from time to time. Godly persons may have been in the position occupied even by Nebuchadnezzar; but, as a general rule, his successors, from that day to this — those that have had the supremacy of the world, and the world's glory — have used it in the main for themselves. I do not now speak so as to allow a feeling of disrespect towards these powers for a moment; but am only stating the well-known facts of Gentile rule. They were heathen for many centuries down to Christ, and after Christ; and when Christianity was accepted by Constantine, and its profession was by degrees taken up by the empire, no one can suppose that it was more than a system of religion adopted. But this did not hinder the general course of things. The only difference was: that the heathen profession, which was dominant before, was put down, and Christianity, which was trampled down before, was set up. Heathenism and Christianity changed places. Constantine may have thought it right to put down the heathen and show honour to the Christians; but there was no such question as his taking the Bible and inquiring, What is the will of God about me? How shall I show my obedience to God? That never has been the case, since Nebuchadnezzar's time, with any one that has swayed the world's destinies. It could not be. I speak of the great masters of the world, when the empire was an unbroken thing. And even since that, though there may have been exceptional cases of kings who have had the fear of God before them, yet even then it has not been in

their power to change the substantial course of policy in their kingdoms. Those who have attempted to do so have completely failed. God's authority in the world is one thing, and God's having a soul obedient to Him as His servant is quite another.

This chapter shows us, then, the turning of all the power, and authority, and glory that God gave men, into a means of gratifying their own pride. The consequence of this is, that all understanding of God's mind would be taken from them. Nebuchadnezzar had remarkable visions and revelations from God. But what did they avail? He had had this warning, the most personal one of all. But what did it avail? Daniel had counselled him to break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. He heeded it not. Twelve months passed away, when, in pride of heart, he attributed all the greatness and splendour, with which he was surrounded, to himself and the work of his own hands. That great Babylon was what he had built "for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty." At once the sentence takes effect upon himself; and what was then literally true of him individually, was morally true of the Gentile powers as a whole. The character of the Gentiles all through would be without intelligence of God and without subjection to Him.

"The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." In verse 16, it had been said, "Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him." All thought of God was entirely lost. He had no more idea about God than the beast of the field. Even a natural man has a conscience in him. But Nebuchadnezzar lost all thought; he was reduced to the non-intelligence of a beast. Man was formed to be the being on earth that looked up to God, and stood in dependence upon Him. That is his glory. A beast enjoys, so to speak, what is its own sphere of enjoyment, according to the capacity that God has

conferred upon it naturally, but it has no idea of the God that made it and all things. Man has. That is, recognition of God is the great essential difference between a man and a beast, if one may speak now in a sort of practical way of the truth intended to be taught by the history. I apprehend that we are shown by this history, if we read it typically, that the Gentile powers would give up the recognition of God in their government. They might use His name outwardly, but as for any owning of God as the source of all they possessed, it would completely pass from their minds; and so it has.

But there was a physical change, which was what really took place in Nebuchadnezzar's case. Reduced to the condition of a beast, he lost what characterizes a man — all recognition of God. He had a beast's heart, as it is said here. He had nothing of the character and glory of a man. Man is put here below as the image and glory of God. He is responsible to make God known; and he can only do it because he looks up to God. There are those that have an outward semblance of man, but "man that is in honour and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish." This received its most remarkable confirmation in the case of Nebuchadnezzar; but the same thing is true, in principle, of every man that has got self and not God before his eyes. That was exactly true of the Babylonish king. He understood not. He attributed all to himself and not to God; and so, by a terrible retribution, he is reduced to the most abject state. Never had a Gentile possessed such glory and majesty as Nebuchadnezzar; but in a moment all is changed. In the height of his pride the sentence of God falls upon him. "He was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen," etc. But all this had its limit. It was to be "till seven times had passed over him," "Times" may have been used rather than years, perhaps, because this judgment of Nebuchadnezzar is the type of the condition to which the Gentile powers are reduced during the whole course of their empire. Hence a symbolic term may have been chosen rather than one of ordinary life. The Gentiles, spite of God's gift of supreme power, would be without any adequate recognition of Him in their government. They would use

their power for their own ends and interests As to really and honestly conforming themselves to the will of God, when was such a thing ever heard of as the great object of any nation's policy since they got their power? I am not aware that it was ever even thought of. So truly does this figure apply to the whole course of the Gentiles.

Let us look a little at the effect of the judgment on Nebuchadnezzar. The seven times passed over the king. "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up my eyes unto heaven." Then was the first great sign of returning intelligence. A beast looks downward. He never looks upward, in the moral sense of the expression. Man, acting morally as man, acknowledges in his conscience One from whom he has derived all, and One whom he is bound to honour and obey. Nebuchadnezzar, when the term of the judgment was passed, lifted up his eyes unto heaven. He is taking the true place of a man. "And mine understanding returned unto me." What was the consequence? "And I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever." Mark the difference. On previous occasions, he might have bowed down before the prophet, and commanded sweet odours to be offered to him: he might send out statutes and decrees that the God of the Jews should be honoured by all his subjects. But what does he now? He drops all others for the moment, and bows before God. Nebuchadnezzar is not occupied with compelling other people for good or ill, but himself, blessing, praising, and honouring the Most High. Observe, too, the expression, "Most High"; because it is used here with particular emphasis. "I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou? "

When the times of the Gentiles close, the stump will assert its vitality, which was left in the earth protected by divine providence, and allowed still to be a stay in the midst of the anarchy that would otherwise have overspread the earth. We must remember, that the world's government is a signal mercy for the earth compared with having no government at all. Yet, while God has controlled it and kept it in His providence for the good of the world, there is a time coming, when it will sprout up again and will be found really fulfilling the object for which God has established it in the earth. And when will this be "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." When everything that has come from God will really be accomplished according to His will — when man will be blessed fully, and will no longer be as the beasts that perish — when Israel will not any more be found rejecting their own Messiah, nor the Gentiles arrogating to themselves the power conferred on them by God, in His sovereign bounty. That same day will see all these glories shining out; but it can only be "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear," and when we shall "appear with Him in glory." It is reserved for Him to be the head of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews. All nations and tribes and tongues shall serve Him. For God can only be known where Christ is known — can only be seen in His goodness and glory where Christ is recognized as the expression and substance of it. And so it will be in that bright day. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself will come and establish, in perfection, everything that has only crumbled under man's hand, and had, at best, only a negative effect in the world, staying the evil here and there, but far short of the full means of blessing that God intends. When that day comes, it will be seen that Gentile government, not in its present corrupt state, but cleared of evil, and expanded according to the thoughts of God, will flourish in the earth, and be the channel of nothing but blessing. It is only sin which has hindered God's mercy in it hitherto. Thus, when the grand fulfilment will take place of this typical history of Nebuchadnezzar — when the time of the "beast's heart" towards God, caring only for self, gratifying pride and lust of power, shall have passed away, God will take

the reins into His own hands as the Most High God, and Gentiles shall bow in praise and thankful joy.

When that expression, "Most High God," first occurs, there is a very striking scene. And in Scripture we must often recur to the first use, in order to get the full meaning. "Most High God" appears first in the case of Melchizedek, when Abraham was returning victorious from pursuing the kings who had taken Lot prisoner. So it will be at the close of this dispensation, when there will be not only victory over all the powers that assemble against God's people, but the answer to the blessed scene that followed. Melchizedek meets Abraham, and Abraham gives him tithes of all, and receives his blessing. And Melchizedek is the type of Christ in this, that He unites the kingly glory with the priestly. He was the King of Salem, and his very name was King of righteousness. Then will be the day of peace founded on righteousness. But he was the priest of the Most High God also. It is not the offering of sacrifice or of incense that characterizes his action, but the bringing out of bread and wine for the refreshment of the conquerors. He blesses, and pronounces the blessing of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. For in that day, there will be no longer a moral chasm between heaven and earth, but complete union. It will be no confusion or amalgam of the two, but a link of most intimate harmony; and the Lord Jesus will be that uniting bond. The Head of those that belong to heaven, He is also the King of kings, and Lord of lords — the sovereign Disposer of all earthly power. To Him all will bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and things infernal too. This will be the full epoch of the restoration of Gentile intelligence and blessing.

If any persons are called to honour the truth of God, and to walk in the intelligence of His ways, it is His own children who enjoy the consciousness of their Father's love. And may we, understanding this our place, be enabled to remember what will be the end of all things, as far as man is concerned! That day of judgment approaches which is coming upon the world, and the weight of which will fall

upon the Jew and Gentile, both in a state of apostasy. Still, we know that it will see a remnant of both brought out to shine with greater blessedness than ever — the Jews exalted, the Gentiles blessed, in their true places. No longer a poor, mutilated stump, but again sprouting up into its normal strength and majesty, under the dews of heaven. The Lord grant that we may expect good from God, remembering that in the midst of judgment there is mercy that triumphs over judgment in every case, save in that which utterly rejects Christ — which lives, refusing His mercy — which dies, counting itself unworthy of everlasting life. Remember, that no soul that hears the gospel is lost simply because it is evil. There is a sure remedy for all we are. Men are lost because they reject and despise eternal life, pardon, peace, everything, in the Son of God.

Daniel 5

Dan. 5 and 6 form a part of the series of, what we may call, moral chapters. They are historical, but withal stamped with the character of a foreshadowing of the future, receiving light from and casting light upon the prophecies which precede and follow them. Of these practical illustrations of the Gentile powers we have had already two following the dream of Nebuchadnezzar. We are now to enter upon the first of two more, before we examine the more precise communications made to the prophet himself in Dan. 7. Dan. 5 and 6 have this peculiarity, that they bring out, not so much the general characteristics of the Gentiles, as certain particulars to be found in them at the close, the forerunners of speedy destruction. In short, they typify special acts or outbreaks of evil, rather than what pervaded their whole standing and history. Nevertheless, there is a marked difference between each of these chapters, and we must now proceed to look briefly at the first of them.

"Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." It was a scene of gorgeous, and perhaps unwonted, revelry. The sacrilegious king, "whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels. . . . They drank wine. and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass; of iron, of wood, and of stone."

History may tell us that it was an annual festival, when a loose rein was given to licentiousness; and that thus was furnished a favourable opportunity for the besieger to seize an unguarded moment, and turn his vast preparations to account. Scripture shows us that the king, wrapped in that false security which precedes destruction, used the occasion for insulting the God of Israel. Rash, blinded man! It was the eve of his ruined dynasty, and of his death.

For Belshazzar, the past was a profitless blank. for him it was a lesson, unheard and unlearned, that God had in His providence made his

forefather to be the instrument of just but terrible judgments. The city, the holy city of God, was taken, the temple burnt, the vessels of the sanctuary, with people, priests, king, carried into the enemy's land. It was an astonishment to men everywhere when Israel thus fell. The importance of the fact was entirely out of proportion to the number of the nation or the extent of their territory. For poor as they might be individually, the halo encircled them of a God who had brought them of yore out of Egypt, through the Red Sea — who had fed them with angels' food for many a long year in the dreary desert — and who had shielded them for centuries, spite of sad ingratitude, and a thousand perils in the land of Canaan. Was it not a strange sight for the world, when God gave up His own elect and favoured people to be swept out of their land by a Chaldean king, the chief of the idolatry of that day? For Babylon was ever famous for the multitude of her idols.

Nebuchadnezzar, in all the pride of successful ambition, had not been so insensate. He had bowed to the wonderful truth, that the God of heaven, who had abandoned Israel for their sins, had raised himself in His sovereignty to be the golden head of Gentile empire. He had owned the God of Daniel to be a God of gods and a Lord of kings; he had confessed the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be the Most High God — a deliverer and a revealer of secrets beyond all others. Nebuchadnezzar had been guilty of much sin — had been proud and self-complacent, spite of warning, and had been abased as no king nor man ever was because of it; but he had acknowledged throughout his wide realm his own sin and the mighty wonders of the King of heaven — all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment. But before this bright end, even in his most reckless days, (when all trembled before him, and "whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down,") never had he proceeded to such an act of contemptuous profanity as that now perpetrated by his grandson.

But the sentence of instant, inevitable judgment at once made itself heard. For the cup of iniquity was full; and long had the mouth of the Lord proclaimed the punishment of Babylon's king. (Isa. 13; Jer. 25, etc.) Yet, even the stroke does not fall without a solemn sign from God. "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote."

It was no dream of the night now; but a silent monitor of awful omen in the midst of their wild revelry and impious defiance of the living God. The hour of the execution of wrath was now come. Bel must bow down, Nebo stoop before an indignant but most patient God. The king needed no intimation from another. His conscience, corroded with depravity, trembled before the hand which traced his doom, though he knew not a word that was written. Instinctively he felt that He whose hands none can stay, was dealing with him. "Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another." Forgetful of his dignity in his fright, "the king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers." But all was vain. The highest rewards are offered; but the spirit of deep sleep closed all eyes. "They could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof."

In the midst of the still-increasing alarm of the king and astonishment of his lords, the queen (doubtless the queen-mother, if we compare verses 2 and 10,) comes into the banqueting-house. Her sympathies were not in the feast, and she reminds the king of one who was yet more outside and above it all — a total stranger in person to the impious king. "There is a man," etc. (Verses 11-14)

This fact of Daniel's strangership to Belshazzar is one that speaks volumes. Whatever the pride and audacity of the great Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel sat in the gate of the king — ruler over the whole

province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men. His degraded and degenerate descendant knew Daniel not.

This reminds me, by the way, of a well known incident in the history of king Saul, the moral force of which is not always seen. When troubled by an evil spirit, a young son of Jesse was sought out, whose music God was pleased to use as a means of quieting the king's mind. "And it came to pass when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him." (1 Sam. 16:23) Not long after, Saul and all Israel were in sore dismay when the giant of Gath challenged them in the valley of Elah. God's providence brought there, in the humble path of unwarlike duty, a youth who heard the vainglorious words of the Philistine with different ears. Instead of terror, his feeling was rather amazement that the uncircumcised should dare to defy the armies of the living God. The victory was no sooner won than the king turns to the captain of the host with this question, "Whose son is this youth?" And Abner confesses his ignorance. Here was a strange case: the very youth who had ministered to him in his malady unknown to king Saul! The interval was certainly not long; but Saul knew not David. This has perplexed the critics immensely; and one of the most distinguished of Hebraists has tried to make out that the chapters must have been shuffled somehow, and that the close of 1 Sam. 16 should follow the end of 1 Sam. 17; so as to remove the difficulty of Saul's ignorance of David after he had stood in his presence won his love, and become his armour-bearer. But I am convinced that all this arises from not apprehending the very lesson that God teaches in the scene. The truth is, that Saul might have loved David for his services: but there never was a particle of sympathy; and where this is the case we readily forget. Strangership of heart soon ends in actual distance, when the service of the Lord comes in. It is the very spirit of the world towards the children of God. As John says, "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." They may be acquainted with many things about Christians, but they never know

themselves. And when the Christian passes away from the scene, there may be a passing reminiscence, but he is an unknown man. Saul had been under the greatest obligations to David. But although David had been the channel of comfort to him, yet all knowledge of David completely passed away with the service that he had rendered. So of Daniel the queen could say, "In the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers." Yet there was no thought about him now. He was comparatively unknown by those at the feast. The only one who thought about him was the queen, and she was only there because of their trouble.

Accordingly Daniel is brought before the king, and the king asks him, "Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry?" Then he tells him his difficulty, and speaks of the rewards he is prepared to give to any who should tell the interpretation of the writing. Daniel answers as became the occasion. "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known unto him the interpretation." But first he administers a most painful word of admonition. He brings before him in a few words the history of Nebuchadnezzar, and God's dealings with him. He reminds him withal of his own entire indifference; nay, of his reckless insults against God. "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven . . . and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." He brings before him what that scene was in the eye of God. For this is what sin, what Satan, seeks ever to hide. Before the Babylonish court, it was a magnificent feast, enhanced by the memorials of the success of their arms, and the supremacy of their gods. But what was their gorgeous revelry in the eye of God? What was it to Him that the vessels of His service were brought up so

proudly to vaunt the triumph of Babylon and her idols? To one who knew Him it must have been a most painful moment, however sure and speedy the issue. Yet there are scenes that take place in the world now that give forebodings of a character at least as grave. The question is, Are we in the secret of God so to read His judgment on all these things for ourselves? We may readily and without cost pronounce, in a measure, on the presumption of Nebuchadnezzar and on the open impiety of Belshazzar; but the great moral criterion for us is this: Are we discerning aright the face of the sky and of the earth in this our day? Are the lowering aspects of this time lost upon us? Are we identified simply and solely with the Lord's interests at the present time? Do we understand what is going on in the world now? Do we believe what is coming upon it? Clearly the king and his court were but the instruments of Satan; and the contempt they showed for the God of heaven was not the mere working of their own minds, but Satan was their master. And it is a true saying that wherever you get the will of man, you invariably find the service of Satan. Alas! man knows not that the enjoyment of a liberty without God is and must be to do the devil's work. King Belshazzar and his lords might think that it was but celebrating their victories over a nation still prostrate and captive in Babylon; but it was a direct, personal insult offered to the true God, and He answers to the challenge. It was no longer a controversy between Daniel and the astrologers, but between Belshazzar himself and God. The command to bring the vessels of the house of the Lord, might seem but a wicked drunken freak of the king's; but the crisis was come, and God must strike a decisive blow. Depend upon it, these tendencies of our day, although not met at once by God, are not forgotten; there is a treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath. The present is not a time when God lets His judgments fall. Rather is it a day when man is building up his sins to heaven, only so much the more terribly to fall when the hand of God is stretched out against him.

But there is even then a warning, solemn, immediate, and before all. And observe, as to this writing seen upon the wall, what was the

great difficulty of it? The language was Chaldean, and those who saw the hand and the characters were Chaldeans. We might have judged then, that the mere letters must be more familiar to the Chaldeans than to Daniel. It is not the way of God, when He communicates anything, to put it in an obscure form. It would be a monstrous theory, that God, in giving a revelation, makes it impossible to be understood by those for whom it is intended. What is it that renders all Scripture so difficult? It is not its language. A striking proof of it is found in this: — if any one were to ask, what part of the New Testament I conceive to be the most profound of all, I should refer to the Epistles of John; and yet if there be any part, more than others, couched in language of the greatest simplicity, it is these very Epistles. The words are not those of the scribes of this world. Neither are the thoughts enigmatical or full of foreign, recondite allusions. The difficulty of Scripture lies herein, that it is the revelation of Christ, for the souls that have their hearts opened by grace to receive and to value Him. Now John was one who was admitted to this pre-eminently. Of all the disciples he was the most favoured in intimacy of communion with Christ. So it was, certainly, when Christ was upon earth; and he is used of the Holy Ghost to give us the deepest thoughts of Christ's love and personal glory. The real difficulty of Scripture, then, consists in its thoughts being so infinitely above our natural mind. We must give up self in order to understand the Bible. We must have a heart and an eye for Christ, or Scripture becomes an unintelligible thing for our souls; whereas, when the eye is single, the whole body is full of light. Hence you may find a learned man completely at fault, though he may be a Christian — stopping short at the Epistles of John and the Revelation as being too deep for him to enter into; while, on the other hand, you may find a simple man who, if he cannot altogether understand these Scriptures or explain every portion of them correctly, at any rate he can enjoy them; they convey intelligible thoughts to his soul, and comfort, and guidance, and profit too. Even if it be about coming events, or Babylon and the beast, he finds there great principles of God that, even though they may be found in what is

reputed the obscurest of all the books of Scripture, yet have a practical bearing to his soul. The reason is, Christ is before him, and Christ is the wisdom of God in every sense. It is not, of course, because he is ignorant that he can understand it, but in spite of his ignorance. Nor is it because a man is learned, that he is capable of entering into the thoughts of God. Whether ignorant or learned, there is but one way — the eye to see what concerns Christ. And where that is firmly fixed before the soul, I believe that Christ becomes the light of spiritual intelligence as He is the light of salvation. It is the Spirit of God that is the power of apprehending it; but He never gives that light except through Christ. Otherwise man has an object before him, that is not Christ, and therefore cannot understand Scripture which reveals Christ. He is endeavouring to force the Scriptures to bear upon his own objects, whatever they may be, and thus Scripture is perverted. That is the real key to all mistakes about Scripture. Man takes his own thoughts to the word of God, and builds up a system which has no divine foundation.

To return, then, to the inscription upon the wall, the words were plain enough. All ought to have been intelligible, and would have been, had the souls of the Chaldeans been in communion with the Lord. I do not mean that there was not the power of the Spirit of God needed to enable Daniel to understand it; but it is an immense thing for the understanding of the word, that we have communion with the God that is making known His mind to us. "Therefore," said Paul to the elders, "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace."

Daniel was entirely outside the revellings and such like. He was a stranger to those that were at home there. He was called in from the light of the presence of God to see this scene of impiety and darkness; and coming, therefore, fresh from the light of God, he reads this writing upon the wall, and all was bright as the day. And nothing more solemn. "This is the interpretation of the thing." (Verse 25-28) He at once sees God in the matter. The king had in-

sulted God in what was connected with His worship. "TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians." It was not that anything appeared then; nothing was seen at the time that made it even probable. And I call attention to this, because it is another proof, how utterly false is the maxim, that we must wait till prophecy is fulfilled before we can understand it. If a man is an unbeliever, to see the fulfilment of prophecy in the past, is a powerful argument that nothing can surmount. But is that what God wrote prophecy for? Was it to convince infidels? No doubt God may use it for such. But was that what God intended the writing upon the wall for on that night? Clearly not. It was His last solemn warning before the blow fell, and the interpretation was given before the Persians broke into the city — when there was not a sign of ruin, but all was gaiety and mirth. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old." In short, Babylon was judged.

Daniel 6

We have now another and final type of the Gentile powers brought upon the scene. But in looking at types we must always bear in mind that the question is not about the personal character of him that affords the type. Thus, Aaron officially was a type of Christ, but we are not therefore to suppose that his ways were like His. In some respects he was a very guilty man. It was he who made the calf of gold and who even sought to deceive about it. But this does not disqualify him from being a type of Christ. He was a type of Christ in spite of all that, not in that. David typified Christ, not as a priest but as a king — as a suffering and rejected king first, and then as one reigning and exalted. There are two parts in the life of David. First, the time when he was anointed king but when the power of evil was still allowed and he was hunted about and persecuted; and secondly, when Saul died, he takes the throne and puts down his enemies. In both respects, David was a type of Christ. But there was manifestly also the contrast of Christ in the failure of king David, and the dreadful sin into which he fell.

But if on the other hand, we find a type here, as I believe there is, of an awful scene, that closes the present dispensation, we are not to suppose that it cannot be its type, because there were good qualities in the king. King Darius, rather than Belshazzar, foreshadows the way in which man will take the place of being God. It was what Darius did, or suffered to be done, that sets this forth in principle. While Belshazzar was one of the most degraded of the human race, Darius was a person who, in his own character and ways, had much that was exceedingly amiable, if not something better. But I am not now raising a question of Darius personally. We have had the type of Babylon's fall, and the judgment of God that will come down upon it, because of its wickedness in insulting and profaning what belongs to the true God, and in mixing up its own idols, and giving its praise and worship to them, in indifference to the sorrows of God's people. This will be verified a great deal more in future history.

There is that upon the earth which takes the highest place as being the church of God. There is that, which boasts of its unity, of its strength, and antiquity; which boasts of its uninterrupted lineage; which takes credit to itself for sanctity and the blood of martyrs. But God is not indifferent to its sins, which have been going on increasing and deepening from generation to generation; and they are only awaiting the day of the Lord to come, for judgment to be executed and to receive the sentence that is due to them. In the Revelation there are two great objects of judgment — Babylon and the beast. The one represents religious corruption, and the other violence; two different forms of human wickedness. In the latter form of it, we see a man, urged on by Satan, presuming to take the place of God upon the earth. Now this is what Darius permits to be done. He might not know it himself, but there were others around him that led him to the dreadful deed.

The historical circumstances that led to it were these: — They wanted an occasion against Daniel, and they well knew that it was impossible to find one except they found it against him "concerning the law of his God." So they put their heads together, and taking advantage of the usage of the Medes and Persians for the nobles to form the law and for the king to establish and sign it, they devise a decree that it should be lawful for none to ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days save of the king. What was this but for a man to take the place of God? That no prayer was to be offered to the true God, and that every prayer that was offered at all was to be offered to the king: if that was not giving the rights of God to man, I know not what is. The king fell into the trap, and signed the decree.

But now we have to mark the beautiful conduct of Daniel. There is no intimation that the decree was a secret to Daniel. On the contrary, he was perfectly aware (v. 10) of what had passed into law. But, on the other hand, he could not compromise his God. His course, therefore, was taken. He was an old man, and the faith that had burned within him from early days was at least as bright as ever. So

when he knew that all was signed, and sealed, and settled, as far as man could, and that the unchangeable law of the Medes and Persians demanded that no knee of man should bow down to God for thirty days, — knowing it all, he goes to his chamber. There is no ostentation, but he does not hide it. With his windows open, as usual, toward Jerusalem, he bows down before his God three times a day, and prays and gives thanks as he had done aforetime. He gives his enemies the occasion that they sought. They at once remind the king of the decree that he had made, and proceed to arraign Daniel before him. "That Daniel," they say, "which is of the captivity of the children of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day." Then the king "was sore displeased with himself," and labours in vain till the going down of the sun, to deliver the one whom he respected at least. Miserable though he was, yet, on the appeal of the nobles to him on the ground of the immutability of the laws of the Medes and Persians, he sins again. He gives up the prophet to the rage of his enemies, to be cast into the lions' den, with the hope, which perhaps he scarcely allowed himself, that his God would deliver him. And God appears for His servant. God does deliver: and the dreadful fate, that was intended for the prophet, fell upon those who had accused him to the king. "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken. The Lord is known by the judgment which He executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands." (Ps. 9:15, 16) Nothing can be plainer than the bearing of this on the deliverance of the godly remnant at the close by the outpouring of wrath and destruction upon the traitors within and the oppressors without of the last days. The end will be as here — the acknowledgment on the part of the Gentiles, that the living God is the God of delivered Israel, and that His kingdom shall not be destroyed.

Here we have then, in Daniel 5 and 6, the combined types of that which will close the present dispensation. For if you look later on in this Book of Daniel, you have a person introduced called "the king."

(Dan. 11:36, etc.) You have there a direct prophecy of similar deeds. "The king shall do according to his own will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods," etc. Not that Darius personally did these things. I am speaking of what his act or decree meant in the eye of God. The question is, what God thought of the sin Darius had been drawn into, and this, as a type of the future.

It is said, further, of "the king," in Dan. 11, "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers . . . for he shall magnify himself above all." In the New Testament we have this alluded to in more than one place. A person might say to me, That is about the Jews, and does not concern the present dispensation. Well, then, taking up what does refer to it, I would cite in proof 2 Thess. 2:3, 4: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [that is, the day of the Lord's judgment upon this world] shall not come except there come a falling away first, [strictly, it means 'the apostasy first,'] and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." Now, it is plain, that what Darius did was in effect to exalt himself above all that is called God or is worshipped. Because, to forbid prayer to God, and to demand that the prayer that was offered to God usually should be offered to himself, only for a certain space of time, was nothing more nor less than the type of him who would take this place in a far more dreadful and gross and literal way. We have clearly a New Testament proof that these days spoken of in Daniel, and typified then, are yet to come; that this person, who is looked forward to by prophecy, is one who is to set himself up as God, not as the vicar of Christ merely, having persons ready to bow before him and kiss his foot. All this is wicked and superstitious; but it is not a man saying that he is God, setting himself up in the temple of God, and saying, There is no prayer to be offered except to myself. Whatever be the evil of Popery and the presumption of the pope, there is a great deal worse to come. And the solemn thing to

remember is this, that it will not be merely the issue of Popery, but of Popery AND Protestantism, etc., without God. Not even the spread of truth will be an infallible preservative against it. Most guilty and foolish were those who once fancied, that because Israel had the ark of the covenant of the Lord, they were necessarily safe in the conflict with the Philistines! The ark returned in triumph, but where were they?

Beware of the fond conceit that, because of religious zeal, no harm can befall this country. Rather be sure of this: the more light, the more Bibles, the more preaching, the more of everything that is good there is, if men are not conformed to it, and not walking in it, the greater the danger. If they treat it as a light thing, and despise it; if they have no conscience about practical bowing to the light of Scripture, they are most sure to fall under one delusion or another. For who is to say what is not of importance in Scripture, or by what means the devil gains power over the soul? Wherever the soul commits itself to a refusal to listen to God, gives itself up to disobedience to God in anything, who is to say where it is to end? There is no security except in the path of holy dependence upon God and obedience to His word. We are not to be choosing one part of Scripture above another because we get more comfort from it. There is no security save as we take all Scripture. It is very sweet to be enjoying the presence of the Lord, but; more than that, it is a fearful thing to be found in disobedience to the Lord. Disobedience is as the sin of witchcraft. There is nothing more terrible. To disobey God is virtually to destroy His honour. It was so in Israel, and yet there is much worse to come, arising out of the lax and evil state of Christendom.

We have first, then, the apostasy. Christianity will be given up, and the more light, the more certainly it will come for the mass who refuse that light. There never was a time in Israel that appeared so promising as the day when our Lord was upon earth, never such a time of religious activity, the scribes and Pharisees compassing sea

and land to make one proselyte. They showed zeal, apparently, in the reading of the Scriptures. They had the priests and Levites; there was no idolatry, nothing gross. They were a Bible-reading people, and a Sabbath-keeping people; they called our Lord Himself a Sabbath-breaker, so rigid did they appear outwardly to observe the day. All this was going on, but what did it end in? What did they do? They crucified the Lord of glory, and they rejected the testimony and the gracious working of the Holy Ghost, so that the end was that the King sent forth His armies, destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. Nor was it that there was no conversion going on. God put forth His power and they were converted by thousands. James says, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands [rather myriads] of Jews, there are, which believe." There were, then, thousands and tens of thousands converted after the cross of Jesus, and people might think that all Israel and the world were going to be converted. But what was the fact?, God was merely gathering out these thousands in His grace to leave the rest to be destroyed in the judgment that fell upon Jerusalem. That is a little foreshadowing of the judgment which is to fall upon the world by-and-bye. And if God is now putting forth His power and gathering out souls everywhere from the world, it is a solemn question for every one whether they are converted or not. And if they are converted, it is a call to them to be walking in the path of obedience, submitting in all things to the word of God, and looking for Christ. The idea that some have of universal conversion is a delusion. Babylon or the beast: these will be the two great snares of the latter day. The one will be the source of corruption coupled with religion and a profaning of all things holy. The other will be characterized by the last degree of pride and violence. It will appear that Christianity has been a complete failure, and men will think they have a new panacea for all the ills and miseries of man better than the Gospel. And they will praise up their idols of gold, and silver, and brass, glorying in the fact that Christianity, save the outward form, has disappeared from the face of the earth. Then will come the judgment.

Rev. 17 shows us that as with Babylon in Daniel, so it will be with the New Testament Babylon, the corrupted form of religious apostasy. Man will be used as the instrument of the downfall of Babylon, the woman drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. We have men wreaking their vengeance upon her. She is no longer seen riding upon the scarlet-coloured beast, but trampled upon, hated, and desolate. And then what do we have? Not Christianity everywhere overspreading the world. On the contrary, the beast fills the scene, and assumes the place of God. Instead of merely having an intoxicating, debased Christianity, it will then be man that sets himself up in proud defiance of God. He takes God's place upon the earth. I do not pretend to say what space of time will elapse between the destruction of Babylon and the fall of the beast. Rev. 17 proves that so far from the destruction of Babylon making the world to be an improved scene, we have only bold evil in place of hypocritical evil; and instead of religious corruption, you have irreligious pride and defiance of God. "The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings for one and the same time with the beast. These have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast" — not to God. All is given to the beast for the purpose of exalting man. The hour will have come for man to have the supreme place in the world. But, contrary to the ambition of man generally, there will be the giving up of their own will to the will of another — the desire to have some one very high and exalted, to whom all must bow. When this is achieved, "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them." That this follows the destruction of Babylon is plain. For it says afterwards, "The ten horns which thou sawest, and the beast [so it ought to be read], these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked." This is exactly what answers to the type of Darius. Darius comes in and destroys Babylon and takes the kingdom immediately; and the next thing is, he is led on by his courtiers to take the place of God Himself. He passes a law, or confirms one, that no prayer shall be offered to any save to himself, for thirty days. That is, he as-

sumes, in effect, to be the object of all worship; he arrogates that which is exclusively due to the true God.

These two types are highly instructive, as closing the general history of the Gentiles. They show, not what had characterized them from the beginning and during their progress, but the main features of evil at the close. There will be destruction falling upon Babylon, because of its profaneness in the religious things of God; and then the height of blasphemous pride to which the head of empire will rise by assuming the honour and glory due only to God Himself. I was anxious to connect the two things together, because we cannot otherwise get the true force of them so well.

We have now concluded what I may call the first volume of Daniel, because it divides exactly into two portions at the close of this chapter; and that is one reason why it is mentioned that Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. In the next chapter we shall find that we come back to the reign of Belshazzar, when Daniel is again brought before us. But this I must leave, only praying that this sample of the great importance of reading Scripture typically, where it is so intended to be read, may stir up the children of God to see that there is much more to be learnt from Scripture than what appears on the surface at a first glance. What God says has got a character about it that is infinite. Instead of being exhausted by a draught taken from it here and there, it is the well itself; the constantly flowing spring of truth. The more we grow in the truth, the less we are satisfied with what we have got, and the more we feel what we have yet to learn. It is not to affect words of humility, but the real, deep feeling of our own total insufficiency, in presence of the greatness and goodness of our God, that has taken such poor worms as we are to set us in His own glory — for such indeed are the mighty ways of His grace.

Daniel 7

We enter now upon the second great division of the book. The Spirit of God gives us here not merely the history or visions of heathen, such as Nebuchadnezzar or others, but communications from God to the prophet himself. Hence what related to the Jews as the object of God's special favour at that time, and more particularly what was in store for them in a blessed day that is coming, are the uppermost thoughts in the mind of the Spirit. Daniel was the fitting channel for such revelations. Accordingly, the Spirit again goes over the ground of the four great Gentile empires, as well as the fifth empire, the kingdom of heaven, to be introduced by the Lord Jesus. But all is presented, though of course with perfect consistency, from a different point of view. It is not now a great image beginning with that which was gorgeous, the gold and the silver, and descending, with evident deterioration of splendour, to the belly and thighs of brass, and the legs of iron and feet of clay. Here we have ravening wild beasts. The very same powers are meant, but it is another aspect of them. Most fitly was the figure of the image presented to the eye of the great head of Gentile empire, their changes and relations to each other; but it is now God's view of these same powers, and their relation to His people.

Thus we have in this simple consideration the key to the different way in which these powers are depicted. We shall find also in the details that wisdom which we may always look for in what comes from the mind of God.

The prophet, in the vision, sees a mass of waters, agitated by the winds of heaven. Out of this troubled sea four wild beasts emerge, successively I may add; for it is very plain that, as in the empires set forth by the metals, etc., in Dan. 2, so in the same powers here, we have to look at empires not contemporaneous, but succeeding each other in rule over the world under the providence of God. "The first

was like a lion, and had eagle's wings." There, beyond question, we have the empire of Babylon. Nor is it at all a novelty to find the Holy Spirit applying the figure of a lion to Nebuchadnezzar, nor of an eagle either. Jeremiah has already employed the same. "The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way." (Jer. 4:7) Ezekiel, as well as Jeremiah, represented him also under the figure of an eagle. Indeed, he is mentioned both as the lion and the eagle in Jer. 49:19-22. In the vision of Daniel the Holy Ghost combines the two figures in one symbol, in order fitly to represent what the Babylonish empire was in the mind of God.

But, besides these symbols of grandeur and rapidity of conquest, we have the sign of a remarkable change that was to pass over this beast, and one of which there was no appearance, humanly speaking, at that time. But all was open to the eye of God, whose object in giving prophecy is, that His people should see beforehand what He sees. God has been pleased, in the perfect wisdom and goodness that belong to His nature, to impart such a measure of knowledge of the future as He sees to be for His own glory; and an obedient child hears and keeps the words of his Father.

Now He brought before the prophet the knowledge that the Babylonish empire was to be humbled. It was not to be absolutely destroyed as a nation, but completely put down as a ruling power in the world. This was what was signified by the wings being plucked, and the animal made to stand upon the feet as a man, which would of course destroy its strength. For however proper such an attitude may be to a man, it is plain that to a ravening beast it would be rather a humiliation. In accordance too with this, "a man's heart was given to it." There may be in this a sort of contrast with what was actually done in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, who had a beast's heart given to him. The proud king was not looking up to God, which clearly is the bounder duty of every soul of man. He is not properly a man who does not recognize the God that brought him into being, and that watches over him and abounds in beneficence towards him

every day: the God that claims the allegiance of the conscience and that alone can convert the heart. In Nebuchadnezzar's case man was occupied with himself. The very gift of universal dominion from God was perverted by the power of Satan, so as to make self and not God the object of his thoughts. In the emphatic phrase of Scripture, his was not a man's heart which looks up, owning One above him, but a beast's that looks down in the gratification of itself and the pursuit of its own instincts. This was the case with Nebuchadnezzar, and therefore a most solemn and personal judgment was executed upon him. But the mercy of God interposed after a certain time of humiliation, and he was restored. This was a token of the condition to which the Gentile powers were to be brought from not recognizing the true God; but there was also the witness of their future blessing and restoration, when they shall own the kingdom of heaven by-and-bye. In the case before us, the lion was reduced from its power as a beast to a position of weakness. This actually took place when Babylon lost its supremacy in the world, which seems clearly the meaning of the latter part of the verse. We have first, Babylon, in the fulness of its power, and then the great change that occurred when it was stripped of the empire of the world.

In the next verse (verse 5) there is a description given of the Persian empire, which had been represented in the great image as "the beast, etc., of silver." "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side," — a remarkable feature, which, at first sight, might not be obvious, but which is soon explained. It was an empire not so uniform as the Babylonish. It consisted of two peoples joined under one head. Another remarkable feature is this: it was the inferior of the two kingdoms that prevailed. The Persian takes the upper hand of the Mede. Thus we saw in Dan. 5 that Darius the Median took the kingdom; but Cyrus soon followed, and from thence onward it was always the Persian that governed, and not the Median. We have in this circumstance a fresh instance that we do not really need history for the understanding of prophecy. Inattention to this plunges people into uncertainty. We

may have recourse to history as a sort of homage paid to prophecy, but the historical confirmation of fulfilled prophecy is a very distinct thing from its interpretation. Prophecy, like all Scripture, is explained only by the Spirit of God; and He need not leave the written word for human help to explain what He has inspired: only He who is the author of Scripture is really capable of explaining it. I ought not to have to press this, as it is a first principle of truth; but we have to insist on first principles of truth quite as much now as ever.

Here then Scripture furnishes us with the evident fact, that while the second empire consisted of two parts, and while the Medes were the elder branch of the empire, yet it was Cyrus the Persian that was to be most prominent. This was the side that raised itself up. "It had three ribs in the mouth of it, between the teeth of it," clearly, I think, the sign of the extraordinary rapacity that would characterize the Persian empire. If we were to see presented to us, in a kind of panorama, different beasts, and if one of the animals were painted with a quantity of prey and actually devouring it, at once we should have the idea of a singularly voracious appetite. Such was the case with the Persians. There were frequent outbreaks which they had to encounter, because of their extortion and cruelty. It is true that God wrought providentially through them in behalf of the Jews; but this only made the contrast with their ordinary ways the more striking. For while the Persians were excessively hard upon others, there was leniency and favour shown towards Israel; but this was only the exception. In general, as depicting their character, a rapacious wild beast sets it forth. Hence the bear is said to have three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. It was in the very act of showing its ravening propensities. "And they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh." That was the explanation in words of the vision: it referred evidently to its predatory habits.

In the third case, we have a leopard, with some notable features about it, though we are not to look for the regularity of pictorial consistency. There are certain truths intended by every figure; but if

men try to put all the particulars into a formal harmony, they will not hold together. In the present case there was nothing in nature like this leopard; but God takes from different things that existed in nature features that were necessary to give a combined idea of this new empire. Hence, while the leopard is remarkable for its agility in pursuing its prey, yet, in order to give something beyond nature, we hear that it had "upon the back of it four wings of a fowl." If ever there was a case in which impetuous courage in pursuing great designs and speed in achieving a succession of conquests were united, we find it in the history of Alexander the Great. The Macedonian or Grecian kingdom has a character of swiftness attached to it that no other empire ever had; and hence the leopard, on the one hand, and the four wings of the fowl on the other. But, besides that, "the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it." There you have not so much what was found in Alexander himself, but rather in his successors. The four heads refer to the division of his empire into four different parts after his death. It is not, therefore, merely a symbol of what the Greek empire was in its first origin, but it presents thus its future also. It is emphatically the empire that separated into four distinct divisions. Not that there were only four, because it is clear that at one time there was a sort of division among his generals, six of whom reigned over different parts, but they gradually subsided into four. This we know from the next chapter: there is no need to go to history for it. All facts, all science, must confirm the word of God; but the word of God does not need them to prove that itself is divine. If it did, what would become of those who understand nothing of science and history? Persons who dabble much in either one or other for the purpose of confirming the Scriptures, have never reaped anything but the scantiest gleanings, as far as the Scripture harvest is concerned. It is another thing if a person feeds upon the word, grows in the knowledge of the Scripture, and then is called on, in the course of duty, to take up what men say about it: he will find that there is nothing, even down to the most recent discoveries of science, that does not pay unwitting obeisance to Scripture. The man that takes his stand upon Scripture,

looking up to God, and using whatever means are given through the word and Spirit of God, has the real vantage ground: his confidence is in God, and not in the discoveries or the thoughts of men. The man that is searching here below is subject to all the uncertainty and mists of this lower world. He who derives his light from the word of God has a sun brighter than that at noon-day; and, therefore, just as far as he is subject to it, he will not, cannot, stray. And the Spirit of God is able and willing to produce this subjection in us. We all do stray, more or less, as a fact; but the reason is not from any defect in the word of God, or any lack of power to teach on the part of the Holy Ghost. We err because we have not sufficiently simple faith in the perfectness of Scripture, and in the blessed guidance which the Spirit loves to exercise in leading us into all truth.

Vers 7

The next verse (ver. 7) is the opening of another vision. For, properly speaking, from the first verse down to the seventh is one section or vision, each being introduced by the words, "I saw in the night visions." Daniel first beheld the four beasts in a general way; if any were particularly specified, it was the first three. But the fourth beast was evidently that which more peculiarly occupied the mind of the Holy Spirit, and the prophet, therefore, gets a fresh view of it. "After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth." Here is, clearly, a prophetic figuration of the fourth or Roman empire. I will not now enter into the many proofs of it. Hardly any person who reads these pages is likely to combat the thought, that in the four well-known empires we have the statue of Dan. 2, and the beasts of Dan. 7. Some have denied this, but it is such an eccentricity that one need say no more about it.

Admitting this, then, we have in the fourth beast the Roman empire plainly set forth. What marks it politically is all-overcoming strength. It is represented by a monster to which nothing in nature can be

found to answer. We have a fuller account of it in the Revelation; because the Roman empire, being then established, and its future destiny carrying us on to the end of the age, it became the exclusive object of attention — the beast. Accordingly we have a description of it in Rev. 13, where we find it represented as a leopard, the "feet as those of a bear, and its mouth as that of a lion." And this composite creature is further distinguished (verse 1) by having seven heads and ten horns, and upon its horns ten crowns. That was the power under which John was at that very time suffering in the isle of Patmos; and as greater sufferings were in reserve for God's people, and blasphemy against God, we need not wonder that we have a minute account of it.

Here it is seen as "a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it." That is, there was unexampled power of conquest and aggrandizement, and what it did not incorporate into its own substance, it stamped upon and thus spoiled for others. "And it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it." It was an empire that maintained a strong feeling of the will of man — of the people. It combined certain republican elements with as iron a despotism as ever ruled in this world. These two things were brought into distinct, but apparently harmonious play. Besides this, there is another and most distinctive mark: "it had ten horns." In other empires it was not so. The Greek empire gradually devolved, after its founder's death, into four heads; but the peculiarity of the Roman is the possession of ten horns. Yet we are not to look for the actual development of history in this vision. Had this been the case, it is clear that the ten horns would not have been seen in the Roman beast, when it first met the eyes of the prophet. In fact, it was not until hundreds of years after Rome had existed as an empire, that it had more than one ruler. The Spirit of God clearly brings into the very first view the features that would be found at the close, and not at the beginning. It was strong and fierce; it was one that devoured; it stamped the residue with its

feet; it was diverse from all others. Rome may have been all this during the time of the Caesars; but it had not then ten horns. There can be no possible pretence for such a notion until the empire was broken up; and after that, properly speaking, the Roman empire ceased to exist. There might be the keeping up of the name and title of emperor, but it was the emptiest thing possible. How, then, could this prophecy be accomplished if, as long as there was an undivided empire, there were no horns; and if, on the other hand, the empire, as such, expired when once broken up into separate kingdoms? How are we to put these two facts together? Because it is clear from what is given us here, that a beast is a totally different thing from a horn. A beast represents imperial unity. But in Rome, as long as the empire subsisted, there were no "ten horns": and when the divided kingdoms sprang up, there was no such thing then as imperial unity.

How, then, are the two things put together in the prophecy? The Spirit of God was, I believe, looking onward to the last stage of the Roman empire, when both features shall reappear, and that together. This last stage ends in a divine judgment; as it is written a little after, "I beheld till the thrones were set up" (for so it ought to be, instead of "cast down"; and this is not merely my opinion, but the uniform way in which it is understood in the best ancient and modern translations of Scripture), "I beheld till the thrones were set up, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire." There you have evidently a figure of the divine glory in judgment, not some mere providential dealing on the earth, but the process of judgment that God Himself will institute. "A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." At whatever time this may be supposed to take place, it is manifest that it is a divine judgment. "I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I be-

held even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." The horn alluded to here is the eleventh one, the one that came up among the ten. And it was this little horn that began with small beginnings, that, by some means or another, managed to root up three of the first horns, and that subsequently became the guide and governor of the whole beast. "I beheld because of the great words which the horn spake," not "till the horn was put down," but "till the beast was slain," so that it is implied that this little horn had managed to govern the entire beast. This verse shows that there was to be a divine judgment that would deal with the little horn and with the beast, and destroy them. Has that taken place? Clearly not.

It is plain, that whatever has fallen upon the Roman empire in past times, has been the ordinary course and decline of a great nation. Barbarian hordes tore it up, and separate kingdoms were formed. But prophecy tells us of another thing altogether. It warns of a judgment that disposes of the beast in a totally different way, and in contrast with the others. "I beheld till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time." That is, the remains of the Chaldeans, or of the races that were called so, we have still. Persia abides a kingdom, and the Greeks have lately become one. They exist, therefore, though not as imperial powers. We have these races of men, more or less, representing those powers; smaller, it is true, and no longer having dominion as empires. This is the meaning of ver. 12. Their dominion was taken away as rulers of the world, but "their lives were prolonged for a season and time." In this last empire, when the hour of its judgment comes, the fact is far otherwise. In the case of the first three beasts, they lost their imperial dignity, but themselves might be said to exist. But in the case of the fourth empire, the hour when its dominion is destroyed is the same hour in which it is itself destroyed. "The beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." Who can doubt

that this is the same scene that we have alluded to in Rev. 19, where we are told, "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army"? The prophet had come to the last beast. Further back in divine revelation we had the other three beasts; they had had their day, and there only remained the last. Consequently, when John says "the beast," we are to understand the Roman empire. This beast, then, and the kings of the earth, are warring against the Lord. "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both [mark] were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Now, this is very remarkable; because here we have the lake of fire, which answers to the judgment of the burning flame in Daniel: only it is a fuller statement. It was not a mere control of circumstances, but a divine power that casts straight into hell without the necessity of a previous judgment. For it was perfectly plain what they were about. They were found in open antagonism to the Lord of glory, and were cast into the flames. Has that ever been verified in the Roman empire? Clearly not. What then follows? The Roman empire has passed away; for the last thousand years and more it has had no existence, except as an unmeaning title, which has been the object of contention among ambitious men. Separate kingdoms have taken the place of the undivided Roman empire.

But what have we here? The Roman empire reappearing. And this exactly agrees with other parts of the word of God. For there is a remarkable expression in the Revelation, that has been alluded to more than once. It is Rev. 17:8, etc., "The beast that was, and is not, and shall be present." I do not know how persons could have used the expression, "and yet is." It is not even sense, and the real thought is particularly simple. No enigma is meant here. The Roman empire was to have three stages. The first is its original imperial form, when John suffered under the last of the Caesars. Then next is

its condition of non-existence, from about the fifth century, when the Goths, and Vandals, etc., broke it up; in that condition it is now. But then there is a third stage, and it is in that last condition that it is to be found in open opposition to God and the Lamb. This is the future of the Roman empire. It is to be reorganized, it is to come out again as an empire, and in this last phase it will fight against God to its ruin. And mark how this leaves room for the point which I wished to illustrate. We could not in the past have had ten horns as well as the beast; in the future we can, and that is what the scene in Rev. 17 shows. "The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet." But it is added, "They shall receive power as kings one hour with the beast." So that when the beast should make its reappearance, there would be this singular feature: that while there would be a great head of imperial unity, it would not be to the exclusion of separate kings. There would still be the kings of France, Spain, etc. Let none suppose that to say this is prophesying. The true way to be kept out of that presumption is to study prophecy. In the one case you are learning what God says; in the other you are but giving out your own thoughts. In this passage the point is, not an empire alone without the ten kings, nor the ten kings without the empire, but the union of these two things. There is the imperial unity, which answers to the beast; at the same time there are these separate kings. It is their co-existence which will mark the Roman empire in its last phase. To that everything is tending now.

The prophet saw the last condition of this empire with its ten horns. "I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." (Verse 8) Men used to apply all this to the pope. No doubt the Roman pontiff was extremely obnoxious to every one that valued the word of God. But we must always take care, when we read Scripture, not to be too anxious about applying the word of God to what is in our way, or to

what we may think extremely evil — as no doubt the pope and popery are. But we must seek to understand what God means by His word. Granted that there is a remarkable analogy between the papacy and the little horn. It may have been intended to be applied by the children of God in different ages, who were suffering through the papacy, for their help and encouragement. The changing of times and laws (verse 25), as well as his great words and persecution of the saints, may have been accomplished in its canons, bulls, and political influence. But it remains to be inquired, Is that the full meaning and the proper design of the prophecy? Take an example from Matt. 24. There was the beginning of sorrows; then the abomination of desolation set up in the holy place, and a warning to flee from Jerusalem; unexampled tribulation, etc. I can understand all this having a measure of application to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. But who will say that this is the end of all, and that the full meaning is realized there? It is impossible that any one can think so who examines it attentively. When God gives a prophecy, He very often allows that there should be a sort of earnest in the accomplishment of it; but we are never to take that as the full thing. The Roman Empire has fallen, and, out of the fall of that empire, a new and singular power, with divine claims, has started up and set itself against God. But to say that this is the full accomplishment of the prophecy, would be as great a mistake as to suppose that God never alluded to it at all. There was to be Mahommedanism in the east, and the papacy in the west; but still the question recurs, Is that all that the Holy Ghost meant? I say, No, for the reason already given — that if the history of the papacy be looked at, the beast was gone, properly, when the pope took his place.

More than that. The pope has never acquired three of the ten kingdoms. He might receive Peter's patrimony, but it has always been a petty power politically, of no consequence as to territory. Instead of acquiring three of the ten kingdoms, all its weight has arisen from its spiritual delusion over the souls of men. Clearly, then, a power, small in its beginnings, is to rise and put down three of these greater

powers, acquiring all their dominion. The pope never has done any such thing. So that, although there has been a measure of likeness, there is enough difference to make their distinction quite plain.

The empire is in full force at the time that these ten horns and the little horn appear. This last subsequently aggrandizes itself, and rules the whole beast. Instead of this, the pope has long lost almost the half of his influence in Europe, and has been of late stripped of the chief part of his dominions in Italy; and what may be the end of agencies now at work no man can say.

We have here a most vigorous power, that has the ten horns in subjection to itself. The Revelation tells us that all the ten kings conspired to give their power and strength unto the beast. God has given all up, because it is the time when there shall be strong delusion, and men will believe a lie. I gather from that, not that this has no bearing upon the papacy, but that its full accomplishment is in the future. Scripture is explicit that the Roman Empire, which has ceased to exist, will be reorganized, and will be the instrument, under the direction of the false prophet, for carrying out the last great effort of Satan against the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Daniel we find that this little horn overthrows three powers. Then we have its moral characteristics. It has eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. It is marked by immense intelligence — not by brute force. The description of it contrasts with that of the Lord, the Lamb that was slain, who is characterized as having seven horns and seven eyes — that is, the perfection of intelligence and of power. In this case it is not so. The power outwardly looks much greater. It has ten horns instead of seven — a monster instead of perfection. The result is a sort of grotesque exaggeration of the power and wisdom of Christ that wretched man, energized of Satan, will arrogate to himself. Then comes the overthrow (verse 11) because of its fearful blasphemy against God.

Verses 13.14

A new vision follows (verses 13, 14,) in contrast with the powers that were represented by ravening beasts. The new and prominent object is "one like the Son of man." Just as in the second chapter it was an insignificant stone that struck the great image, and all crumbled to pieces from head to foot. Here the Son of man "came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him." The Ancient of days represents God as such, "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity."

In the Revelation the two glories are both united in the Person of Christ. Rev. 1 shows us one like the Son of man: but when we find the description of Him, some of the features are exactly the same as are attributed here to the Ancient of days, whose garment is said to be as white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool, etc. The Jewish prophet sees Christ simply as man. The Christian prophet sees Him as man, but as God withal.

"And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." There will be no such thing as its being taken from Him, or as another power succeeding Him. It will be everlasting in the sense of as long as the world shall endure. But, strictly, this is not an eternal scene. The Jewish prophets show you the millennium; but they do not unfold, as the New Testament does, that when all things are subdued to God, even the Father, God shall be all in all. This was reserved for another day; and the Revelation follows it up in the most blessed manner, in Rev. 21:1-8.

Just mark, by the way, a feature of some importance. The latter part of the chapter consists of explanations; but we are never to suppose that the explanations of Scripture merely refer to what has already been given. This is the case in human writings, but in God's explana-

tions there is always further truth brought out. This is of moment. Through not understanding it, the kingdom of Christ has been supposed to be merely the ascendancy of His saints. There will be the kingdom of the Son of man and the kingdom of His people, but we are assuredly not to suppose that thereby is meant the reigning of the saints in a figurative way to the exclusion of the Son of man. The explanation brings out the saints, which the vision does not. It is no less than denying the personality of the reign of Christ, if you make the explanation merely tantamount to the vision. But the principle is false, and so is the deduction.

In verse 17, the person to whom the prophet appeals tells him, "These great beasts, which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth." Their origin was purely earthly. There is no contradiction at all between this and the fact that we are told in verse 2 that they came up from the sea. The reason why they are said to rise thence is that the sea represents a mass of men in a state of political anarchy. It is out of this troubled state of peoples that empires arise. Take the French Empire for example. A revolution broke up the old system of government. Then followed a state of confusion, like the sea torn with the winds, and out of it all emerged an empire. From such a state of things in the world the four great empires arose. It was, too, very much about the same time that the beginnings of the four great empires were laid. There was an immense difference in the degree of development in the East as compared with the West. The Western powers were comparatively only in the cradle; but the beginning of these various powers was traceable to much the same date and the same state of confusion and anarchy. That seems to be what is meant by their coming up out of the sea. But in verse 17 they are said to arise out of the earth. They have not a heavenly origin. The force of the sea was merely to show that it is out of a previously troubled state of society that they grew. Such was their providential origin. But here their moral origin is looked at as being purely earthly, in contrast with the Son of man, who comes in the clouds of heaven.

What makes this still plainer is that in the next verse (verse 18) it is said, "But the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever." The margin says, the saints of the "high ones." It is the origin of the expression in the New Testament, "heavenly places." The phrase is the same whether applied to our blessings, "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," in Eph. 1, or to the foes in "high places," in Eph. 6. The saints of the heavenly places (that is, probably, of God in connection with the heavenly places) "shall take the kingdom." This gives the contrast. As for these four great powers, the best that could be said of them, if you look at their political origin, was that they arose out of a confused and tumultuous state of things in the world; or, if at their moral origin, it was not from heaven. If, on the other hand, you look at the saints of the heavenly places, they are those destined to take the kingdom, which they possess for evermore. This adds an important truth to the fact of the Son of man's getting the kingdom. When dominion is given Him, He will not take it alone. All that have ever waited for this kingdom, in all ages, will come along with Him. It will be the time when He will manifest His risen ones, when Abraham, Enoch, David, no matter who they may be that have known Him by faith, will be there in their changed and glorified bodies, and will reign along with Him. "Know ye not," the apostle says, "that we shall judge the world?" That clearly must mean in this kingdom of the Son of man. Because if it were merely a question of going to heaven to be with Christ, that is not judging the world. So that, while it is true that we are to go up to heaven, it is not all. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" If we have not known it, how comes it to pass? Some truth has been let slip, if we have not looked for such things. And mark the practical importance of it. The very fact that you do not know it proves that you lack something that God makes a great deal of. And how does God use it in the Epistle to the Corinthians? It was to reproach those saints for carrying their questions before the world. Do you not know, he reasons with them, that you are called to this place of dignity? It is not

merely that you will have it by-and-bye; but God makes it known and true to faith now. Just as the heir to the kingdom is instructed and fitted for the throne that he is to occupy, so God is educating His saints now to share the kingdom of the world which is to belong to Christ. It is a revealed truth of God that the kingdoms of the world shall become that of our Lord and of His Christ; but when He does reign, the saints will reign also. The saints of the heavenly places — who are they? Those whose hearts are with Christ above, those who will be converted before Christ comes, and will govern a people gathered upon the earth; those who have in past ages died in Christ, or who are now waiting for Christ; those too who will pass through the great tribulation: all these are saints of the Most High. They are in contrast with others. For there will also be saints when Christ comes to reign, who will be blessed upon the earth. There will be a great harvest there. The Lord will bring those saints into all the promised blessings of His kingdom. But we are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and shall reign over the earth. That is distinguished from the kingdom and dominion under the whole heaven. There are certain saints that are in the heavens; but there is another class spoken of that is here below. The kingdom shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High. Those are some of the persons that the saints will reign over. "Know ye not," urges Paul, "that the saints shall judge the world?" Accordingly, here we have "the people of the saints of the Most High" as a distinct class.

There are many details in this chapter that I have not entered into. But there is a description of the evil conduct of the little horn that I must say a few words upon, although a little out of order. It is said (verse 20) that "it had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." Then, in the further account, it is said (verse

25) that this little horn "shall speak great words against the Most High' and shall wear out the saints of the Most High [referring to his persecutions], and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." It is necessary to understand what the little horn will do. The meaning is, that he will destroy the Jewish worship, at that time carried on upon the earth. By the "times" is meant their festivals or feast-days. He will interfere with these as Jeroboam did; "and they shall be given into his hand," etc. It has been often supposed that "they" means the saints. But this is a total mistake. It is "the times and laws" that are to be given into his hand, for a certain limited period of time. God will allow him to have his way. He shall think to do it. And the fact that they are to be given into his hands shows that he succeeds for a time in carrying out his desires. But God will never give His saints into the hands of His enemies, even for a time ever so short. He always keeps them in His own hands. Job was never more in the hands of God than when Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat. The sheep are in the hands of the Father and the Son, and none shall ever be able to pluck them thence. There is no such thought in the word as God leaving or forsaking them. Here it is simply the outward arrangements of worship, of which the Jews will be the representatives on the earth ; and they will be allowed for a time to fall under his power. For it is plain that at that time there will be Jewish saints owning God and Jesus, too, in a measure: as it is said (Rev. 14), "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." These saints will be in a very peculiar position. There will be a sort of combination of the law with a recognition of Jesus to a certain extent. During this state of things, they will come under the power of the little horn, "for a time, times, and the dividing of time" — that is, for three years and a half, closed by the coming of Christ in judgment.

Daniel 8

There is a remarkable change which takes place at the point where we are now arrived, and it may not be known to all readers of the Book of Daniel. The language in which the Spirit of God reveals this vision, and those that follow, is a different one from that in which He had conveyed the previous portions of the book. From the early part of Dan. 2 up to the end of Dan. 7. the language was that of the Babylonian monarch — Chaldee: whereas from Dan. 8 to the close, it is Hebrew — the ordinary language of the Old Testament. Now this was not without purpose. And I think the clear inference that we are to gather from it is this: that what particularly concerned the Gentile monarchies was given in the language of the first great Gentile Empire. They were immediately concerned in it: and, in fact, as we know, the first vision (of the image) was seen by the Gentile king himself — Nebuchadnezzar. From that to the end of Dan. 7 is in his own tongue.

But now we are about to enter upon visions which specially concern the Jews. Dan. 8, e.g., alludes to the sanctuary, to the holy people, to the daily sacrifice, and a number of other particulars, which would hardly have been intelligible to a Gentile, and which had no sort of interest for him. But although they may even be little in our eyes now, although it may seem only something of the past, concerning a people broken to atoms, scattered over the face of the earth, yet, nevertheless, it has a real and enduring interest in the mind of the Spirit. For the Jews are not done with yet. Far from it. The Jews have known, throughout their whole history, the misery of attempting to deserve the promises that were given to the fathers; and they have been allowed to work out the terrible experiment of the folly and ruin that necessarily follow man's attempting to earn what the grace of God alone can bestow. That has been, and is, the whole secret of their past and present history. They were brought out from Egypt by the power of God; but at Sinai they undertook to do all that the Lord spoke unto them. They did not say one word

about what God had promised. The Lord alluded to it. But in no way did they remind Him that they were a stiff-necked nation — a rebellious, unbelieving people. And when God proposed that they should obey Him, instead of acknowledging their utter incapacity, instead of throwing themselves only on His mercy, their answer betrayed, on the contrary, that boldness which always characterizes man in his natural state. "All that the Lord hath spoken," say they, "will we do, and be obedient." The result was that they did nothing that the Lord had said. They were disobedient at every turn, and God was obliged to deal with them as they deserved. No doubt there was divine goodness in it all; and every step even of their failure only brought out, through God's grace, some type or shadow of the blessings that God will give them by-and-by, when, cured by His mercy of this fatal mistake of the flesh, and being disciplined in suffering and trial and that fearful tribulation through which they are destined yet to pass, they will then fall back upon the Blessed One whom their fathers despised and crucified, and will own that the mercy of God alone can give them any blessing, and that it is His faithfulness which will accomplish all that He had spoken to their fathers. This we saw beginning to dawn in a particular way in the prophecies of Daniel. For although in the previous parts there had been types of it — Daniel himself in the den of lions — or as interpreter to the king — the three Hebrew children who refused to worship idols — all these things foreshadowed what God will work in the latter day for Israel, in a little seed that He will reserve for Himself. But they are not types so clear, but that many Christians now would think it fanciful to consider them as such at all. We are now about to find what none ought to gainsay for a moment. Yet there are many true Christians who take these prophecies as finding their only answer in what concerns the Christian Church. Such suppose that the little horn of Dan. 7 is the papacy. And in this chapter many have been disposed to find Islamism, the scourge of the eastern world, as the papacy is of the west. Whatever may be the analogies that would readily occur to any thoughtful mind, and that I by no means denied as to the little horn in Dan. 7, I admit there are the

same with regard to Mahommedanism in the east. But what I would desire to bring out clearly is the direct intention of the Spirit of God in these scriptures. It is all very well to find that there are seeds of evil germinating in the world, and that the horrors of the last days have their heralds — admonitory signs that arise ever and anon over the surface of the world, to show us what is coming. But in looking at the word of God, it is of importance to be divested of any desire to find the answer to prophecy in the past or present. The great thing is to go to it with an unbiassed mind, desiring nothing but to understand what God is teaching us. Therefore, whether it be about the past or the future, just as about the present, the chief requisite is, that we should be subject to God and to the word of His grace. I desire, in this spirit, to endeavour, as far as the Lord enables me, to explain the meaning of our chapter.

As in Dan. 7, so here, the vision was during the reign of Belshazzar; whereas the subsequent visions were after the power of Babylon was overthrown. But up to this time there was no judgment of Babylon. Notwithstanding, the very place where the new vision was seen prepares us for a certain change. It was in the east — still farther east — "at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam." Elam is the Hebrew name for Persia, or one of the names, at any rate. "And I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai." I only mention this to show that we have certain clues as to the bearing of the prophecy that follows. He lifts up his eyes and sees a ram — a well-known symbol, used in Persia itself, and very familiar in its monuments and public documents. "Behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last." Clearly the allusion is to the composite character of the Persian Empire. There were two elements in that empire, as distinguished from others — the Medish, which was the first, and the Persian, which was the younger element of the two. But the younger becomes in course of time the greater. Therefore it says that one horn was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. Although Darius the Mede

takes the kingdom on the fall of Babylon, yet Cyrus the Persian is the one who acquires the supremacy in due time, and after that it is always the Persian that is more particularly mentioned. But still earlier even, in the language of the nobles to Darius, we find them saying, "the law of the Medes and Persians." The ram had two horns.

"I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward" — that is, the direction of the various conquests of the Persian Empire — "so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great." We find as to this how entirely all profane history is obliged to bow to the word of God. But we need not go farther than Scripture itself. Let any one read the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, etc., and he will see how wide and undisputed was that dominion. Even in profane history this was the term used about them — "the great king" — emphatically so about the Persian monarchy. It is manifest how entirely this goes along with the prophetic account given of them here. "He did according to his will, and became great."

"And as I was considering, behold, an he-goat came from the west." Now this was the first inroad that the west had ever made upon the eastern world. And nothing seemed more improbable, because the east was the cradle of the human race. It was in the east that man was put when he was first made. It was in the east that he began his second history in the world — I mean in the world after the flood. It was from this centre that the various races of men, after the Lord had confounded their language at Babel, spread themselves all over the world. It was also in the east only that there was any considerable development of civilization, for hundreds of years before the west had emerged from barbarism. Yet here we find, from this striking prophetic figure, that when the Persian kingdom was still without a rival, not declining, but in the very plenitude of its power, there suddenly comes from quite another quarter a power represented in the vision as a he-goat — a western adversary. And this

power advances with the greatest possible swiftness; as it is said here, he "touched not the ground." No person of the least openness to conviction could question for a moment what is meant, even supposing he had not a divine interpretation of it in the chapter. There was but one ancient empire that it could be conceived to set forth — the Grecian Empire — and the great horn in its head was clearly its first chief, Alexander. "And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns." Here we have the Spirit of God giving in a few words what all history confirms. A new empire should rise after the fall of the Babylonian, symbolized by the ram, peculiar in this, that it had two different peoples which composed its strength. This empire might go on in fulness of power for a certain time; but then, from another quarter, where there had been no kingdom of any note known before, comes a power of amazing swiftness in its progress, led on by a king of extraordinary courage and ambition. And this personage smites the Persian Empire so completely that "there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand." "Moved with choler" is said more particularly about the Greek Empire and Alexander. The Greeks had a ground of hatred against the Persians, which was not the case with the other empires. There was much of personal feeling in it, and this is admirably expressed by the word choler here. Why so? We do not read of that in the attacks of the Persians on the Babylonians, ferocious as they might be, or in those of the Romans upon the Greeks; but it was peculiarly true of this Greek inroad upon the Persian Empire. The Persians had before invaded Greece, and thus had roused the strongest feeling against themselves. This traditional resentment descended from father to son, so that the Greeks considered themselves the natural enemies of the Persians. Such was the provocation that the Persians had given to the Greeks, who were but a petty nation at that time, and who

had not at all sought to extend their bounds beyond their own native country. Now the moment was come that this blow should be returned, and the Persians attacked in their own land: and the he-goat with this notable horn in its head comes, moved with choler, and smites the ram and breaks his two horns, casts him down to the ground and stamps upon him. Nothing can be clearer, nothing more exactly descriptive as giving an idea of the relative position of these two powers to one another. If you were to read history all your life, you could not have a more vivid picture of the Persian downfall than what the Spirit of God has furnished in a few lines.

In this case it was rather less than three hundred years from the time of Daniel till these great events took place — a time long enough to show the wonder of God's perfect wisdom and the way in which He unveils the future to His people, but a comparatively short space in the history of the world; yet this is not His great object. The Spirit always looks forward to the close. He may introduce what is to be fulfilled in a comparatively brief time, but His main attention is directed to the end of this age, and not to those events that actually surround the parties of the world. God has a people that His heart is set upon: a people, it is true, who, through their own folly and want of leaning upon God, have been most feeble and failing, and who are, to this day, the scorn and by-word of the nations, according to the word of God. But whatever might be the apparent might of Persia, if not of Greece, and the importance of their controversies as filling up the history of the world, God thinks but little of them. He disposes of the records of centuries in a few words. The point to which God hastens forward might be small then in the eyes of the world, but being connected with the interests of His king, and His people, He goes on to the great events connected with them in the last days. This gives the key to the verses that follow. Their importance is because of their connection with Jewish history, and because they reflect what is to take place before the great day of the Lord come.

"Therefore the he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken." This was exactly the case with Alexander. He was cut off, while quite a young man, in the midst of his victories. "And for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven." There was a certain time that elapsed after the death of Alexander, when his generals were squabbling together, and trying to set up a number of kingdoms; but the end of all was that there were four kingdoms formed out of the proper dominions of Greece. So that I do not question that the allusion here is to the well-known division of Alexander's empire, into four kingdoms, which took place about three hundred years before Christ.

"And out of one of them came forth a little horn," otherwise called in Scripture the king of the north. Being in the north, he pushes his dominions down "toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land." My reasons for so thinking, beyond that of the direction of his conquests (which shows where his own power lay, and the point from which he started), will more particularly appear when we come to verse 11. What we have here is the succession of these two empires — Persia first, and then Greece. For out of one of the fragments of the Grecian Empire there sprang a king that was afterwards to play a most important part in connection with the land and people of the Jews. This is the great point of the chapter.

Here then we find that this little horn "waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them." Thereby is meant, I apprehend, those that were in a position of honour and glory before the Jewish people. Thus, stars are used, in the New Testament, as the symbol of those who are set in a place of authority in the Church. Just so, I conceive, the "host of heaven" here alludes to persons that held a place of authority in the Jewish polity. It is the key-note to all this part of the prophecy. The importance of all that affects Israel is now more and more coming into view. Hence you find

an expression used that may seem strong — "the host of heaven." But we must not be surprised at this. God takes the utmost interest in His people. Bear in mind that this does not imply that His people were in a good state. On the contrary, in judging of failure, we must take into consideration the position the people occupied, and for which they are responsible. If you look at Christendom you must remember that all who profess the name of Christ, whether truly or falsely — every baptized person — every person that has come under the outward recognition of the name of Christ, is in the house of God. People fancy that it is only those who are really converted that have any moral obligations. This is a total mistake. A new kind of responsibility, no doubt, flows from the fact of conversion and the relationships of grace.

But there is a responsibility that involves a vast accession of guilt when men are in any place of privilege. This is a very solemn truth, and God attaches importance to it. Look at the Second Epistle to Timothy. God's house is there compared to a great house among men, and in it there are vessels to dishonour as well as to honour. The former are not converted at all; they might be altogether bad people, but still they are said to be vessels in the house of God The Church, that which bears the name of Christ upon the earth, is always responsible to walk as the bride of Christ. Yet you cannot allude to such a privilege and responsibility as that, without seeing the utter ruin, and failure, and declension of what bears His name. And this is the practical importance of keeping in view the position which God has assigned us. We never can judge how low we have got till we see the place in which God first put us. Supposing I have to examine my ways as a Christian, I must bear in mind that a Christian is a man whose sins are blotted out; that he is a member of the body of Christ, and loved with the same love wherewith the Father loved the Son. Some are accustomed to think that, if a man is not a Jew or a Turk, or heathen, he must be a Christian. But when a believer hears that a Christian is one who is made a king and a priest to God — a purged worshipper, having no more conscience of sins

— he becomes anxious, and feels that he has not one right or full idea of his own calling and responsibility. He then begins to find a different standard of judgment in Christ, to measure how he ought to feel, and work, and walk for God.

The same thing applies to Israel here. Those that held this place of responsible authority in Israel are alluded to here as the host and stars of heaven. They were put in a place of authority by God. For we must remember, in connection with Israel, that they are the people that, in the mind of God, have the first place upon the earth. They are the head, and the Gentiles the tail. This, I am aware, is a new thought to persons who are wont to look at Jews with an air of contemptuous pity, only judging of them by their present degraded condition. But, in order to judge rightly, we must look at things with God, we must feel with God; and God uses this strong language in regard to persons put of old in a position of outward authority among the Jews. Commentators have supposed that, because certain were spoken of in such exalted terms, Christians must be meant. But, as God's nation, Israel held the first place in His mind in the government of the world. That is their calling; and "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." God will never give up the great thought, that He has called Israel into this place; and they are judged according to it. This vision is while the power of Babylon is not yet judged. It gives you a view of what will be realized in the last days with regard to Israel, before the power that began with Babylon has been completely set aside.

This little horn waxed great, and cast down some of the host and stars of heaven, and stamped upon them. That is, certain Jewish rulers are overthrown that were in this place of great authority; treating them with the utmost cruelty, and degrading them "Yea, he magnified himself even to the Prince of the host," which, I suppose, means the Lord Himself. The marginal note is right in the next clause. "From him the daily sacrifice was taken away." This at once makes it all plain. On the contrary, it introduces the utmost confu-

sion to take "by him" to mean the little horn, and then "the place of his sanctuary" to mean that of the Prince of the host. The person that was represented by this little horn is to magnify himself even to the Prince of the host. "And from him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression." And then we go back to the little horn again. "And it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered." In other words, the 11th verse and the first half of the 12th form a parenthesis. Then in the latter part of the twelfth verse we again have "it," which designates the little horn of verse 10. The "it" takes up the horn that was to appear and deal in a cruel way with the Jewish people, and with their rulers, in an aggravated form.

Then we have, as the prophet says, "one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." I strongly suspect that, in the main, what we have here, save the portion which is marked parenthetically, has had a partial accomplishment in the past. We shall read of a personage in Dan. 11 where the characteristics alluded to here, as marking this little horn, are still more minutely stated. He is called, in profane history, Antiochus Epiphanes, and was a particularly bad man. If you have read the Books of the Maccabees (which, though not Scripture, are in the main historically true, at least two of them), you will know that they describe this king of Syro-Macedonia, and show the dreadful feeling he cherished against Israel. He attempted to force heathen worship upon them, especially that of Jupiter Olympus; and he put to death all the Jews who resisted his designs, till at last, partly by the Romans and partly by the force and courage of the Maccabees themselves, he was repressed and defeated, and the temple was once more cleansed again, and the Jewish worship resumed. No doubt, this was the per-

son meant historically by the little horn. But he shows the same kind of features, which will reappear in another great leader of the last days, and I think that this will be made evident from the last part of this chapter. For when the prophet is spoken to by the angel Gabriel, he says, "Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision."

The statement denotes, that what he is going to explain more particularly looks onward to that time. But it gives me the opportunity to repeat a remark which has been before made — that we are never to suppose that the explanations of a vision in Scripture are merely a repetition of what has preceded. They allude to the past, but they add fresh features not given before. This is particularly plain in the present case. The past portion of the vision (that which had already been seen by the prophet) has been in the main accomplished; whereas the explanatory part adds fresh information that looks onward to the last days. Nevertheless, there is an explanation in measure of what is gone before. But it is observable how frequently, in the explanations of the angel, the last days are brought before us.

"And he said" (verse 19), "Behold I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be." There can be no question, if we are at all familiar with the prophets, what this means. Take the first of them. There I find this very expression, "the indignation." In the end of Isaiah 5, and then in Isa. 9, Isa. 10, this word, "indignation," is repeated over and over again. The prophet shows, that, in consequence of the idolatry of Israel, and especially of their kings, God's indignation was roused against His people. He sends a chastening upon them. But, whatever the first effects of the chastening might be, the evil burst out again with fresh fury, as evil always does, unless it is put away. Therefore sounds forth that terrible word, "For all this His anger is not turned away; but His hand is stretched out still." His wrath burns again and again. Then, in Dan. 10:25, we find the Lord saying His "indignation

shall cease." But wherein? There is a personage brought forward there, called the Assyrian; and this scourge of Israel was set forth in measure by Sennacherib, the then king of Assyria. He was the first who was particularly mixed up with the affairs of Israel, or rather of Judah. And what do we learn? The Assyrian there is to be used as the rod of God's anger; but when God has performed His whole work upon Mount Zion, and on Jerusalem — when He has allowed, as it were, the indignation to burn out, it will cease in the destruction of the Assyrian himself, because he forgot that he was merely a rod in the hands of the Lord. He flattered himself that it was all his own wisdom and might; but the Lord says, that He will deal with the rod itself, and destroy it. Accordingly, that very chapter shows us the indignation of the Lord ceasing in His destruction. The indignation is solely connected with His people Israel.

It is evident to me, that this confirms what was before said, that here we are upon Jewish ground. It is not a question of what popes or Moslems may do, nor about the inroads of the eastern or western apostasy. It concerns Israel — the last indignation of God against Israel. But it may be asked, Why is not the fourth empire introduced here? The reason is this: that while the dominion of these empires is taken away, upon which we have the successive rise of a new empire, yet the body remains in existence. Because it is out of the third empire, and not out of the fourth, was to rise this power that plays so important a part in the last days. So that we must remember, that the little horn of Dan. 8 is an entirely distinct power from the little horn of Dan. 7. That of Dan. 7 is the last leader of the Roman Empire, who arises out of the fourth empire when it is divided into ten kingdoms; whereas this power rises from the third empire, wherein there was a division into four parts — not into ten. Nothing can be more distinct. Although the chief dominion of the world has passed away from the third to the fourth empire; and although we have had in Sennacherib a representative of the third empire, yet in the last days there will also be an inheritor of the third empire, who will meddle with Israel in a particular way. As

there will be a grand leader in the west, so there will also be one in the east, springing out of the Greek Empire. Further, we must remember, that, although being the Grecian Empire, it was west in comparison with Babylon and Palestine, it was east in comparison with Rome. This little horn we shall see more of afterwards.

In verse 20, the ram with two horns is explained to represent the kings of Media and Persia; and, in verse 21, "the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king." Then, in verse 22, we have the breaking up of the Grecian Empire; and in verse 23, it is added, "And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up." This, I think, does not refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, but to the person whom Antiochus typified. Mark the expression again, "In the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full." "And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power": a remarkable word, which is not said at all about the little horn of Dan. 7. There, I apprehend, it was by his own power. Satan might give him power, too; but in his own person he wielded the force of the Roman Empire. But, in the case of this ruler, though his power will be mighty, it will not be by his own power. He depends upon the strength given him by others. He will be the instrument of foreign policy and power, not his own. "And he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and destroy the mighty and the holy people." That is, we find that he is principally and expressly mentioned in connection with the Jews as a people. Observe here, that you have not the saints of the Most High. What we find now is merely a figurative expression of the great men of the Jewish people, and this, as contrasted with Gentiles. There is no allusion to their character personally; that does not come into view in chapter 8.

This king shall meddle with them, and destroy the mighty and the holy people. "And through his policy also he shall cause craft to

prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many." That is, he will take advantage of their being in a state of ease and unprepared for his wily encroachments. "He shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand." He will be utterly helpless in this last struggle; as in another scripture it is said (Dan. 11:45), "He shall come to his end, and none shall help him."

Let me point out scriptures that will make the importance of this clearer than by confining ourselves to Dan. 8. Is there light from other passages as to who this personage is and what he will do? I answer, Yes. He is the same person that is spoken of, in various parts of the word of God, as the "Assyrian," or "king of the north." He is always described as the great foe of the Jews in the last days. The Jews at that time will be exposed to two evils. They will have an evil within in their own land — the Antichrist setting himself up as God in His temple; and they will have another evil from without — the Assyrian. He comes up as an enemy against them; and he is one also marked by a subtle policy. It is not merely by warlike power that he is distinguished. He is, no doubt, of fierce countenance, but he understands dark sentences. He will take the place of a great teacher, which would naturally have much influence over the Jewish mind; for they have always been a people given to research and intellectual speculations of all kinds. Of late years, the mass of them have been too much occupied with money-getting to pay much attention to these things; but there have been constant representatives of the intellectual class among the Jewish people. And over such the influence of this king will be immense, when they are re-established in their own land, and are becoming important again, as the objects of the dealings of God in the way of judgment. For the indignation will not have ceased. Thus it is that these two evils will afflict the Jews. The Antichrist, or the wilful king, will take the place of the true Messiah in the land of Israel. For, it is plain, that if any one assumes to be Messiah, it must be in the midst of the Jewish people, and in the land of the Jews; whereas the Assyrian is one

who is opposed to them as an open enemy. This I take to be the king alluded to by the other prophets as the king of the north.

I would now refer to a few Scripture proofs, that the Assyrian and Antichrist are totally distinct and opposed powers. The Assyrian will be the enemy of the Antichrist: the one will be the great self-exalting man inside, and the other the leader of the enemies outside. Isaiah 10 gives us the first plain intimation that we have of him in the prophets. "Wherefore it shall come to pass that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." Many persons will tell me, the Assyrians are all gone; there is no such nation existing. But, I ask, has the Lord performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem? No! Then the Assyrian is not all gone. The Lord tells me here, that when He shall have performed this whole work, He will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria. But the Jews are not in their land, and Jerusalem is still trodden down of the Gentiles. Who knows it not? But does it prove that the Jews are not to be in their land again, nor Jerusalem to be delivered from Gentile bondage? When the power of God gathers the Jews back into their own land, that same providence will bring out the representative of the Assyrian in the last days. And as the Assyrian was the first great enemy of Israel, so he is the chief one at the last. He it is that will come up for his judgment, when the Lord shall have performed His whole work upon Zion and Jerusalem. God has not performed the whole. He has performed a part of it, but His indignation still continues against Israel. This is the reason why they are not in their land. Even when they do get back, the indignation will still break out. There will be a return of the Jews in unbelief; and then will come this great crisis; and God will gather the scattered ones that remain, and set them in their own land; and the Assyrian will be judged. There is a certain great personage, typified by the Assyrian in the past, that will reappear in the last days. He is spoken of as this redoubtable king. He will govern in the very quarter where this little horn had its

power — Turkey in Asia. Whether the Sultan will be the then possessor of these dominions, I do not pretend to say; but, whoever he may be, he is the person referred to by our prophet (Dan. 11) as the king of the north. He will come down towards the pleasant land and will attack the Jews; but will afterwards be broken to pieces. "He shall come to his end, and none shall help him."

Look again at Isaiah 14. And what makes it remarkable is this: that, in the beginning of that chapter, you have the king of Babylon spoken of. (Ver. 4) "Take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased!" The king of Babylon does not represent the Assyrian. Babylon and Assyria were two distinct powers. Babylon was only a little province when Assyria was a great empire. And when the Assyrian was in ruins, Babylon rose to an altogether new rank, as an imperial power.

Isaiah 14 opens by showing, that "the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place," etc. It proves the intense interest that God will give the people of the world in seeing them back in their place. "And the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids." The Gentiles, instead of being masters, will be glad to be servants in those days. "And they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors. And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased! the golden city ceased! The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers." There evidently you have what has never yet been accomplished. No person with knowledge of Scripture can suppose that ever, from the time of Babylon's supremacy, Israel had been in a position to take up such a proverb as that. The "times of the Gentiles" began with the Chaldean power

being established over the Jews. And Jerusalem is, to this day, trodden down by the Gentiles. One power after another has taken possession of the city. Now, in these last days spoken of here, we have the Jews putting these Gentiles under them — making them their servants. And when that time comes, and not till then, they will take up this proverb, "How hath the oppressor ceased!" etc. And this prophetic strain looks at the king of Babylon, of whom Nebuchadnezzar was the type — the last holder of that same power that came in with Babylon. Who is this? The beast — the last inheritor of the power that commenced with the king of Babylon, whose strange destruction calls forth the joy and triumph of Israel. When the king of Babylon got this power, where was the Assyrian? Gone — broken. The empire of Babylon, that had been a little power, rose upon the ruins of the Assyrian. But mark, in this chapter, verse 24, "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand: that I will break the Assyrian in My land, and upon My mountains tread him under foot: then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth." There, evidently, we have the fact, that when the day of Israel's restoration comes, not only will they triumph in the fate of the king of Babylon, but the Lord will put down the Assyrian. How can this refer to the mere historical Assyrian of the past? He was already gone when Babylon came into power: so that he can only have been a type of a power yet to come. This shows that there will be two great powers in the latter day — the beast, represented by the king of Babylon, who at that time will be the enemy of the true-hearted Jews, though he purports to be the friend of the nation, that is, of the ungodly mass; as the Assyrian, on the contrary, will be the leader of the openly adverse coalition of the Gentiles against Israel.

Other scriptures prove the same thing. Thus in Isaiah 30 you will find the same two powers coming into view again. In verse 27 it is said, "Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with

His anger And the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of His arm For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod" — (evidently alluding to his being the instrument of the Lord's chastening His people, as in Isa. 10:5); "And in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared: He hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, shall kindle it." This shows that it is not merely a judgment of the earth, but a deeper thing. Tophet, or the pit, is ordained of old. "For the king also" is the true meaning of the next clause. Tophet is not merely for "the Assyrian," but also for "the king." There are two distinct personages referred to, as we saw also in Isa. 14. "The king" will be in the land of Israel, and will reign there, under the auspices of the inheritor of the power of Babylon in that day. He will there assume to be the true Messiah. Tophet is prepared for him — but also for the Assyrian. They will be both consigned to divine judgment. I need not refer to all the passages that refer to them; but you will find a great deal that is deeply interesting in Isaiah and other prophets as to "the king."

But so far is it from being true, that Antichrist, or "the king," most occupies the mind of God, that, on the contrary, the prophets speak far more of the Assyrian. Christians are not generally aware of the large extent of prophecy. One of the most important powers in it is hardly thought of by them. If you look at the minor prophets — for instance, Micah 5 — you will find an allusion to the same ruler, which is very plain. The chapter opens with a call. "Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek." There is the rejection of the Messiah. Then the second verse is a parenthesis, which shows us who the Judge of Israel is. "But thou Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of

Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel." They may smite Him upon the cheek; but, after all, not only is He to be the Ruler, but He is the everlasting God, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." Then he resumes, in connection with verse 1, "Therefore will He give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth": that is, till the great purpose of God come to pass about His people. "Then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord.... And this man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land." Mark that — "when the Assyrian shall come," and "when he shall tread in our palaces": a thing that never has been accomplished yet. When the Assyrian came of old into the land of old, it is clear there was no such fact as this Judge of Israel there, nor had Israel been given up at that time; but the Assyrian of that day was only the type of the great heir of the same name and power of the last days. And then will the Judge of Israel go forth on behalf of His people. The Judge, that was once smitten upon the cheek, will be received by His people, when God's great purposes are accomplished. "This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land." Then we find (verse 6), "Thus shall He deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he "treadeth within our borders. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord . . . and the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep; who, if he go through, both "treadeth down and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver." So that it is very plain, that we have the encroachment of the Assyrian and his final overthrow in connection with the final deliverance of Israel.

I have endeavoured to show, that while Antiochus Epiphanes was the type of this Assyrian, yet that after all it was only in a very small part indeed that he meets the requirements of the prophecy; which, while it makes use of him, as a type, looks onward to the latter

times of the indignation of God against Israel, when their foe comes up to receive his judgment from God. You will see how important it is to keep clearly in mind, that God has these great purposes about Israel, and that what man makes so much of — the episode of Popery now or of Mahommedanism — is passed over very slightly indeed. I acknowledge, that we find a certain measure of accomplishment in both, but the Church is never allowed by God to be an earthly people. When the Jews again come into view, then we have the importance of what touches them, and the Assyrian will come down from without, at the same time that there will be "the king" within: and both will fall under the unsparing judgment of God who will put down all enemies. And His people, purged by their trials, and looking to Jehovah-Jesus, will be thus made meet for the purposes of God in mercy, and goodness, and glory, throughout the world to come.

The Lord grant that we may know His purposes about us. We have nothing to do with this world, being strangers in it. We are entitled to read all these visions in the light of heaven. It is not said that Daniel did not understand them: the others did not. But, whatever may have been the case then, we, by the Holy Ghost, are entitled to understand these things now. And the Lord grant, that our minds may be heedful of what He puts before us as to our own path.

Daniel 9

The fall of Babylon was connected, in the prophecies of Isaiah, as well as in those of Jeremiah, with brighter hopes for the Jew. The partial restoration, that took place in consequence, furnishes the type of the final ingathering of Israel. This accounts for the notion, which has prevailed among some Christians, that what happened then is all that we are to look for in behalf of Israel as such, and that their subsequent sin in rejecting their Messiah, and the mercy of the gospel to the Gentiles, has involved them in irreparable national ruin.

Although there are true elements in such thoughts, they are very far indeed from being the whole truth. God does not abandon the people that He called. Never does He give a gift of grace and then withdraw it utterly. For the same grace which promised deals with the person and heart of the believer, and works till it is brought home morally by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus, along with the mercy, whether to an individual or to a people that He calls, there is also the long-suffering faithfulness and power, which in the end always triumph.

The history of the past, no doubt, has been a total failure. The reason of this was because Israel chose to stand upon their own strength with God, and not upon the goodness of God towards them. This is always and necessarily fatal for a time. "This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." That is, all that was threatened and predicted must yet befall the generation of Israel, which presumed upon its own righteousness, and which finally showed its real character by rejecting Christ and the gospel. A real sense of moral ruin (that is, repentance towards God) ever accompanies real, living faith. Israel have gone through this phase of self-confidence, or are still going through it. "This generation" has not yet passed away: all things are not fulfilled. They have not yet suffered the full results of their own folly and hatred of God's Son.

They have yet to suffer the severest chastening for it: for, although the past has been bitter enough, there are still more terrible things in the future. But when all has taken place, they will begin a new scene, when it will be, not the Christ-rejecting generation going on, but what Scripture speaks of as "the generation to come": a new stock of the same Israel, who will be children of Abraham by faith in Christ Jesus — children, not in word only, but in spirit. Then will follow the history, not of man's failure, but of a people whom the Lord blesses in His grace; when they will joyfully own that same Saviour, whom their fathers with wicked hands crucified and slew.

This chapter is especially occupied with Jerusalem and the Jews. It is a sort of episode in the general history of Daniel, but by no means an unconnected one. For we shall find, that the closing history of Israel peculiarly connects them with these personages that are yet to figure against God and His people, as we have read in previous chapters. It must be evident to any person who reads the chapter intelligently, that its main object is the destiny of Jerusalem and the future place of God's people. Now Daniel was exceedingly interested in this. He was one that loved them, not merely because they were his people, but because they were God's people. He resembles Moses in this — that even when the moral condition of the people hindered God from being able to speak of them as His people (He might care for them secretly, but I speak now of God's publicly owning them), Daniel still continues to plead that they were His people. He never gives up the truth, that Jerusalem was God's city, and Israel His people. The angel might say, Daniel's people and city — that was all quite true; but Daniel still holds to the precious truth, which faith ought never to give up — Let the people be what they may, they are God's people. For that very reason they might be chastened more and more sorely. In truth, nothing brings more chastening upon a soul who belongs to God, and who has fallen into sin, than that he does belong to God. It is not merely a question of what is good for the child. God acts for Himself and from Himself; and this is the very hinge and pivot of all our blessing. What would it be to us

if it were merely true that God was working for our glory? We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We shall have something far better, because it will be God blessing us according to what is worthy of Himself.

Now Daniel was one that emphatically entered into this thought. It is the prominent feature of faith. For faith never views a thing barely in connection with oneself, but with God. It is always thus. If it is a question of peace, is it merely that I want peace? No doubt I do want it, as a poor sinner that has been at war with God all my life. But how infinitely more blessed when we come to find that it is "peace with God": not merely a peace with one's own heart and conscience, but with God! He gives a peace that stands in His sight. All His own character comes out in giving it to me, and in putting it upon such a basis that Satan shall never be able to touch. It is to deliver me, to break the very neck of sin; and nothing does it so completely as this — that God met me when I deserved nothing but death and eternal judgment, and spent His beloved Son in giving me a peace worthy of Himself. And He has done it; He has given it; and all Christian practice flows from the assurance, that I have found this blessing in Christ.

Here, then, we have Daniel deeply interested in Israel, because they were God's people. He consequently seeks in God's word what He has revealed about His people. This took place "in the first year of Darius, the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes." It was not some new communication. "In the first year of his reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem."

Besides being a prophet, Daniel understood that Israel were to be restored to their land, before the event took place. He did not wait to see it accomplished, and then merely say, The prophecy is fulfilled. But he understood "by books," not by circumstances. No

doubt there were the circumstances in the fall of Babylon; but he understood by what God had said, and not merely by what man had done. This is the true way of understanding prophecy. So that it is remarkable that when we are about to enter upon a very distinct prophecy, occupied almost exclusively with the narrow sphere of Israel, God shows us the true key to the understanding of prophecy. Daniel read the prophecy of Jeremiah; and he saw from it clearly, that, Babylon once overthrown, Israel would be allowed to return. And what is the effect of this on his soul? He draws near to God. He does not go to the people whom the prophecy so intimately concerned, telling them the good news, but he draws near to God. This is another feature of faith. It always tends to draw into the presence of God him who thereby understands the mind of God in anything. He has communion with God about that which he receives from God, before even he makes it known to those who are the objects of the blessing. We have seen the same thing in Daniel before, in Dan. 2. Now, we may observe, it is not with thanksgiving, but with confession. We could understand readily, that if the people of Israel were just going into captivity, he must feel it as a deep chastening, and would be before God to acknowledge the sin and bow under His rod. But now God had judged the oppressor of Israel, and was about to deliver the people. Nevertheless, Daniel draws near, and what does he say? When he does speak to God, it is not merely about their deliverance. It is a prayer, full of confession to God.

As to this, I would make another remark of a general kind. If the study of prophecy does not tend to give us a deeper sense of the failure of God's people upon the earth, I am persuaded we lose one of its most important practical uses. It is because of the absence of this feeling that prophetic research is generally so unprofitable. It is made more a question of dates and countries, of popes and kings; whereas God did not give it to exercise people's wits, but to be the expression of His own mind touching their moral condition: so that whatever trials and judgments are portrayed there, they should be taken up by the heart, and felt to be the hand of God upon His peo-

ple, because of their sins. This was the effect on Daniel. He was one of the most esteemed prophets — as the Lord Jesus Himself said, "Daniel the prophet." And the effect upon him was, that he never lost the moral design in the bare circumstances of the prophecy. He saw the great aim of God. He heard His voice speaking to the heart of His people in all these communications. And here he spreads all before God. For having read of the deliverance of Israel, that was coming on the occasion of the downfall of Babylon, he sets his face unto the Lord God, "to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes. And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments, we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly," etc.

Another thing observe here. If there was one man in Babylon who, from his own conduct and state of soul, might be supposed to have been outside the need of confession of sin, it was Daniel. He was a holy and a devoted man. More than that, he was carried away at so tender an age from Jerusalem, that, it is clear, it was not because of anything he had taken part in, that the blow had fallen. But not the less he says, "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity." Nay, I am even bold to say, that the more separate you are from evil, the more you feel it: just as a person emerging into light feels so much the more the darkness that he has left. So Daniel, being one whose soul was with God, and who entered into His thoughts about His people — knowing the great love of God, and seeing what He had done for Israel, (for he does not keep this back in his prayer,) he does not merely notice the great things that God had done for Israel, but also the judgments that He had inflicted upon them. Did he, therefore, think that God did not love Israel? On the contrary, no man had a deeper sense of the tie of affection that existed between God and His people; and for that reason it was, he estimated so deeply the ruin in which the people of God were. He measured their sin by the depth of divine love, and the fearful degradation that had

passed upon them. It was all from God. He did not impute the judgments, which had fallen upon them, to the wickedness of the Babylonians, or the martial skill of Nebuchadnezzar. It was God he sees in it all. He acknowledges that it was their sin — their extreme iniquity; and he includes all in this. It was not merely the small people imputing their sorrows to the great, nor the great to the small, as is so often the case among men. He does not dwell upon the ignorance and badness of a few; but he takes in the whole — rulers, priests, people. There was not one that was not guilty. "We have sinned, and have committed iniquity." And this is another effect wherever prophecy is studied with God. It always brings in the hope of God's standing up on behalf of His people — a hope of the bright and blessed day when evil shall disappear, and good shall be established by divine power. Daniel does not leave this out. We find it put as a kind of frontispiece to this chapter. The details of the seventy weeks show you the continued sin and suffering of the people of God. But before this, the end, the blessing is brought before the soul. How good this is of God! He takes occasion to give me, first of all, the certainty of final blessing, and then He shows me the painful pathway that leads to it.

I need not enter now upon the thoughts suggested by this beautiful prayer of Daniel, save one thing of practical importance. It is this — that the prophecy came from God as the answer to the state of soul which was found in Daniel. He took the place of humble confession before God, became the expression of the people, the representative of the people, in spreading out their sins before God. Perhaps there was not another soul that did so, certainly there were not many. It is rare, indeed, to find many souls taking the place of real confession before God. How few now have an adequate sense of the ruin of the Church of God! How few feel the dishonour done even by the faithful to the Lord! In Babylon, those who were the most guilty felt it the least; whilst the man, who was the most free from guilt, was he who spread it out the most honestly before God.

In answer to his genuine and deep feeling of Israel's state, God sends the prophecy. The soul that refuses to examine such words of God as these, knows not the loss it thus sustains. And wherever the child of God is kept from what God communicates as to the future, (I speak not now of mere speculations, which are worthless, but of the grand moral lessons contained in prophecy,) there is always feebleness and want of ability to judge of the present.

But there is another thing to notice, before passing to the seventy weeks. Although Daniel spreads out before God their great failure, and falls back upon His great mercies, yet he never pleads the promises that were given to Abraham. He does not go beyond what was said to Moses. This is of interest and importance. It is the true answer to any who suppose that the restoration of Israel, which took place at that time, was the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises. Daniel did not take this ground. There was no such thing then as the presence of Christ among His people as their King. Now, the promises made to the fathers suppose the presence of Christ, because Christ is, in the only full and proper sense, the Seed of Abraham. Without Him what were the promises? Accordingly, with divine wisdom, Daniel was led to take the true ground. Whatever restoration was to take place then was not the complete one. This prophecy does bring us to the final blessing of Israel when the seventy weeks are consummated. But the return, after the fall of Babylon, was the accomplishment of what was partial and conditional, not the fulfilment of the promises to the fathers. This is worthy of observation. The promises made to Abraham, etc., were absolute, because they depended upon Christ, who is the true Seed in the mind of God, though Israel were the seed after the letter. So that until Christ came, and His work was done, there could not be the full restoration of the people of Israel. When Israel took the ground of the law, in the time of Moses, they soon broke it and were broken. Even before it was put into their hands, on the tables of stone, they were worshipping the golden calf. The consequence was, that Moses from that time took a new place — the place of a mediator. He goes

up again into the mount, and pleads with God for the people. God would not call them His people. He says to Moses, "thy people," and would not own them as His. Moses, however, will not let God go, but pleads with Him that, let the people have done what they may, they are "Thy people"; rather let me be blotted out than Israel lose their inheritance. This was what God delighted in — the reflex of His own love to them. You may have got some fault to find with one whom you love, but you would not like to hear another person finding it. So Moses' pleading on behalf of Israel was what met the heart of God. No doubt they had sinned a great sin, and Moses felt and confessed it, but he insists withal that they are God's people.

God draws out the heart of Moses more and more; puts grand things before him, offers to exterminate the people, and make of him a great nation. No, says Moses, I would rather lose everything than that they should be lost. This was the answer of grace to the grace that was in God's heart about His people. Consequently, when God gave the law a second time, it was not given as before; but the Lord proclaimed His name as One that was abundant in goodness and truth, while He showed at the same time that He would by no means clear the guilty. In other words, the first time it was pure law, pure righteousness, which terminated in the golden calf, i.e. pure unrighteousness on the part of the people. And they must justly have been destroyed, but that, on the pleading of Moses, God brings in a mingled system, partly law and partly grace.

This was the ground Daniel takes here. He pleads that, although they had broken the law, God had pronounced His name as "abundant in goodness and truth." He believes that. He does not go back to the promises made to Abraham; on which ground the restoration would have been full and final, whereas this was not. And if you take a man now, who is partly standing upon what Christ has done for him, and partly upon what he does for Christ, will you ever find such a one happy? Never. That was the ground the Israelites were on. Daniel, therefore, does not go beyond it there. Christ was not

yet come. On the other hand, when Christ is born, you will find, if you look at the song of Zacharias (Luke 1) or of the angels (Luke 2), that the ground taken was not what God had said to Moses, but the promises made to the fathers. Up to the moment appointed of God, Zacharias had been dumb, a sign of the condition of Israel. But now that the forerunner is named, on the eve of the coming of Christ, his mouth is opened.

Before we enter upon the prophecy of the seventy weeks more fully, as the Lord may enable us, I would first call your attention to this: — "Whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel." Observe, all his thoughts are about Israel and about Jerusalem. The prophecy is not about Christianity, but about Israel. There is no understanding it, unless we hold this fast. "Whiles I was speaking . . . and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." Then, in verse 24, the prophecy begins. It has to do with Daniel's people — "upon thy people." It speaks of a special period that was defined in connection with Israel's full deliverance. "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city." Any one must see that the Jews and Jerusalem are meant. It is "to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy [or Holy of holies]." From first to last this was a period that was marked out in the mind of God, and revealed to Daniel, touching the future destiny of the city and the people of God here below.

Some are startled, and ask, Have we, then, nothing to do with "reconciliation for iniquity" and "everlasting righteousness"? I ask, Of whom does the verse speak? You will find other scriptures, which reveal our interest in the blotting out of sin, and the righteousness

which we are made in Christ. But we must adhere to this golden rule in reading the word of God — never to force Scripture in order to make it bear upon ourselves or others. When a person is converted, but not yet in peace, if he sees something about "an end of sins," he at once applies that to himself. Feeling his need, he grasps, like a drowning man, at what cannot bear his weight, or at least is not said about him. If directed to the declarations of the grace of God to us poor sinners of the Gentiles, instead of loss, great would be his gain; he would have far more definite Scripture to meet his need, and, if assailed by Satan, he would feel no weakness, nor fear, nor uncertainty. Whereas, if he were taking passages that applied to the Jews, Satan might touch him as to the ground of his confidence, and he would be obliged to say, This is not literally and certainly about me at all. The "seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city." But I do not belong to them. There is the importance of understanding Scripture, and seeing what God is speaking about.

Had this been borne in mind, the greater part of the controversy that has arisen about the passage never could have taken place. People were hasty and anxious to introduce something about themselves as Gentiles or Christians; whereas the attitude of the prophet, the circumstances of the people, and the words of the prophecy itself, exclude all thought, save of what concerns the Jews and their city. We must look elsewhere to find what relates to the Gentiles. Allow me, however, to remark, that the end of sins for that city and people rests upon exactly the same foundation as our own. Thus the apostle John tells us, Jesus died "not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." (John 11:52) There I find two distinct purposes in the death of Christ. This prophecy only takes in the first. He died for that nation — the Jewish nation. But He also, in the very same act of death, made provision, not only for the salvation that God has brought in for sinners, but also for gathering together "the children of God that were scattered abroad."

Thus, if we take the Bible as it is, without being too anxious to find ourselves here or there, instead of losing, we shall always be gainers, in extent, depth, and, above all, in clear firm hold of the blessing; and we shall not feel that we have been taking other people's property, and claiming goods upon a tenure that can be disputed, but that what we have is what God has freely and assuredly given us. This will never be the case, if I take up prophecies about Israel, and found my title to blessing upon them; for they are neither the gospel for the sinner, nor the revelation of the truth about the Church.

This, then, is the proper bearing of the closing verses of the chapter before us. The details of the weeks follow the first general statement. "Seventy weeks," he says, "are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Then, in verse 25, the first particular comes in, after defining the starting-point. "Know therefore and understand, 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." Now, in the Book of Ezra, we have a commandment from the king Artaxerxes, called in profane history Artaxerxes Longimanus, one of the monarchs of the Persian Empire. The first commandment was given to Ezra, the scribe, "in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king." In the twentieth year of the same monarch's reign, another commandment was given to Nehemiah. Now it is important for us to decide which of these two is referred to by Daniel. The earlier of them is recorded in Ezra 7, the second in Nehemiah 2. A careful examination of the two will show which is meant. Many excellent persons have interpreted it in a way which differs from that which I believe to be correct. But Scripture alone can decide the questions that arise out of Scripture. Foreign elements often lead to perplexity. Remark, that it is not

merely a general order to the Jews, like that of Cyrus permitting their return, but a special one to restore their polity. Now, what is the difference between the two in the reign of Artaxerxes? The one to Ezra was mainly with a view to the rebuilding of the temple; the other to Nehemiah looks toward the city. Which is it here? "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." Evidently the city is intended in Daniel; and if so, then we must see which of the two commandments concerns the city. There can be little doubt it was the second, not the first. It was the commission given to Nehemiah in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, not that to Ezra thirteen years before. A comparison with Nehemiah will confirm this.

What led some to take the first of these decrees, as the one meant here, was the idea, that the seventy weeks were to terminate with the coming of the Messiah. But this is not said. Verse 24 gives us much more than the coming of the Messiah. "Seventy weeks are determined . . . to make an end of sins and to make reconciliation for iniquity." There you have at least His work. His suffering and death, we know, are implied. But more than that: "To bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Holy of holies," by which last every Israelite would understand the sanctuary of God. It is plain that all this did not take place when the Messiah came, nor even when He died. For though the foundation of the blessing was laid in His blood, yet the bringing it in was not yet realized for Israel; and these seventy weeks suppose, that Israel will after them be fully blessed. This shows us the great importance of attending to the prophecy itself; not merely looking at the events, but interpreting the events by the prophecy. "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince [without defining what time], shall be" — not seventy weeks — but "seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks"; that is, sixty-nine weeks. There at once I learn that, for a reason unexplained at the beginning of the prophecy, sixty-nine weeks out of the seventy are rent from the last week. The chain is

broken: one week is severed from the rest. I am told that, from the word to restore and build Jerusalem (which is here made the starting-point, or the time from which we begin to reckon the seventy weeks), there are seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks — somewhat separate periods, but making in all sixty-nine weeks to the Messiah, the Prince. There evidently we have a very notable fact. And why, we may ask, are the seven weeks separated from the sixty-two weeks? The next words show: "The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times" The seven weeks, I apprehend, were to be occupied with reconstituting the city of Jerusalem. In the lapse of seven weeks, or forty-nine years (for I suppose no reader will doubt that they are weeks of years), from the point of departure, the building that was begun would be finished. The street was to be built again, and the walls, even in troublous times. Now the accounts of these times of difficulty and strait we have in the Book of Nehemiah, who gives us the latest date that Old Testament history records. Then, taking up the other period, after not only the seven weeks, but the sixty-two weeks, "shall Messiah be cut off."

Before proceeding, I may observe, that there are several little inaccuracies. It is "after the threescore and two weeks." The article is left out in verse 26, where it ought to be inserted, and put, where it ought not to appear, in verse 27. "After the threescore and two weeks" — that is, in addition to the seven weeks spent in building the city of Jerusalem — "shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself." The proper meaning of that last expression, no one can doubt, is "and shall have nothing." The margin is here more correct than the text, and gives it so. The idea is, that Messiah, instead of being received by His people, and bringing in the blessing promised at the end of the seventy weeks, should, after sixty-nine weeks, be cut off, and have nothing. The entire rejection of the Messiah, by His own people, is intimated in these words. And here is the consequence. The key comes in now, and explains the difficulty, stated at the beginning, why the sixty-nine weeks are severed from the seventieth. The death of Christ rent the chain, and broke off the relations of the

people of Israel with God. Hence, the Jews having rejected their own Messiah, the last week is for a time set aside. This week terminates in full blessing; but the Jews are themselves rejected for their sin against their own Messiah. That is the reason why we read, after this, "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 unto the end of the war desolations are determined." He had said before, that seventy weeks were determined to make an end of sins, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, etc.; that is, at the end of this appointed time, full blessing should be brought in. Whereas now we find that, so far from the blessing coming in, they have cut off their Messiah, who has nothing; and the consequence is, that the city and sanctuary are not blessed, but on the contrary, "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary," etc. There will be nothing but wars and desolations upon the Jewish people. The interruption of the seventy weeks takes place after the death of Christ, and the next events related are no accomplishment of that series at all.

None can deny, that a long period elapsed between the death of Christ and the taking of Jerusalem. Until Christ are sixty-nine weeks, and then events occur which the prophecy clearly reveals, but as clearly reveals that they are after the sixty-nine weeks, and before the seventieth. We have another people, belonging to a prince quite different from the already rejected Messiah, and this people come and destroy the city and the sanctuary. It was the Romans who came, spite of the dreadful expedient of Caiaphas — nay, because of it. They came and destroyed the city and the sanctuary. But thus was brought the accomplishment of this part of the prophecy. The Messiah was cut off, and the Romans, whom they had so desired to propitiate, swept them away from off the face of the earth, and there has been nothing but misery in their city up to the present time. Jerusalem was thenceforward to be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. There is a period still going on. Since then Jerusalem has only been changing one

master for another. In our day we have seen a war undertaken about that very city and sanctuary, and none can say how soon there may not be another. The objects of that war have been anything but gained and at rest. The same elements of strife and combustion still exist. It is an unsettled question. Like Jonah in the ship, such will Israel prove to the Gentiles by-and-bye. There will be no rest for them — nothing but storms, if they meddle with that people with whom the Lord has a controversy. The Jewish people are in a miserable state; they are suffering the consequences of their own sin. But those Gentiles will find their danger who mix up with that city and sanctuary, which God does not destine yet to be cleansed. If we are not arrived at that period of blessing yet, it must be granted, that the seventieth week is not yet accomplished. On the arrival of that week, full blessing comes in for Israel and Jerusalem. But no such blessing is realized; and therefore we may be quite sure, that the last of the seventy weeks has not been fulfilled.

The prophecy itself ought to prepare us for this. There is a regular chain up to the close of the sixty-ninth week, and then comes a great gap. The death of Christ broke the bond of connection between God and His people, and there was now no living link between them. They cut off their own Messiah, and have since lost, for a time, their national place. A deluge of trouble broke upon them. "The king sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." The last part of verse 26 shows us the continuous desolation which has befallen their city and race, and this subsequent to the cross of the Messiah: and, as none can pretend that anything like this occurred within the seven years subsequent to the crucifixion, a gap, more or less extended, must necessarily be allowed between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks.

Mark the accuracy of Scripture. It is not said, that the coming prince was to destroy the city and sanctuary, but that his "people" should. Messiah the Prince had already come, and been cut off. Now we hear of another and future prince, a Roman prince; for all know,

that it was the Romans who came and took away both the place and nation of the Jews. It is simply said, "The people of the prince that shall come," implying, that the people should come before a certain prince who was yet in the future. This I hold to be very important. No doubt there was a prince that led the Roman people to the conquest of Jerusalem, but Titus Vespasianus is not the personage alluded to here. If the people come first, and the prince here intended was to follow at some future epoch, nothing more simple. "The end thereof will be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." A long period of enmity and desolation is intimated. This is exactly where Israel are now. They have been turned out of that city and sanctuary, and have never had it since. It is true, they have made a remarkable footing for themselves in most countries of the earth; their influence extends into every court and cabinet of the world; but they have never obtained the smallest power in their own land and city — they are of all persons the most proscribed there. And there we see these desolations going on.

In verse 27 comes the closing scene. "And he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week." The margin gives it correctly. It is not "the" covenant. The little word "the" has misled many. It is "a," or rather the idea is general, meaning to "confirm covenant." If you read it "the covenant," the reader is at once apt to infer, that "the prince" means the Messiah, and that He was going to confirm His covenant. But the passage runs, "He shall confirm covenant [or a covenant] with the many for one week." No doubt the Messiah brought in the blood of the new covenant; but is that meant here? It supposes the desolations going on all this while, after which comes the end of the age, which includes, or occurs in, the seventieth week. The death of the Messiah took place long ago; the destruction of Jerusalem thirty or forty years after. After that followed a long period of desolations and wars in connection with Jerusalem. After all this, again, we have a covenant spoken of. Thus, we must examine the passage to see who it is that makes this covenant. There are two persons mentioned. In verse 25 there is Messiah the

Prince; but He has come and been cut off. In verse 26 there is "the people of the prince that shall come." It is to this future Roman prince that verse 27 alludes. He it is that shall confirm covenant with many, or rather with "the many," i.e. the mass' or majority. The remnant will not have any part in it. Observe that now it is, for the first time, that the seventieth week comes forward. "And he shall confirm covenant with the mass for one week."

Now I ask those who contend for the supposition that Christ was meant, what sense does it give here? One week can mean nothing but a period of seven years. Was the new covenant ever made for seven years? Such a thought involves mere nonsense. Is it not quite plain, that the idea of interpreting this to be the covenant of Christ carries absurdity upon the face of it? For Christ's is an everlasting covenant — this is only made for seven years. When and how did Christ make a covenant for seven years? "And he shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week; and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease." I am aware that persons apply this also to the death of Christ. But we have had Christ's death long ago — before the seventieth week began; then the desolations of Israel flood in after that; and subsequently another prince comes, who confirms a covenant for one week. He, not Christ, makes it with them for seven years. But, in the midst of the term, he puts an end to their worship. They have got sacrifice and oblation again at this time, and he causes all to cease.

But have we not other light upon this passage? Is it only here that we read of such a covenant, and of the sudden termination of Jewish rites and ceremonies by a certain foreign prince? As to the covenant, if we refer to Isaiah 28, it is said, in verse 15, "Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us." And in verse 18, "And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye

shall be trodden down by it." I have no question that this is the covenant referred to here. And the meaning of it is confirmed by another thing: that is to say, that in consequence of this Roman prince having made a wicked covenant with the Jewish people, and then interrupted their sacrifices and brought in idolatry (or what is called in Scripture, "the abomination of desolation"), he will stop the Jewish ritual, and set up an idol, and himself to be worshipped there. When open idolatry is in connection with the sanctuary, God sends a dreadful scourge upon them. They had hoped to escape by making a covenant with this prince they fondly thought, as it is said in Isaiah, to be thus delivered from the overflowing scourge, i.e., I suppose, the king of the north that becomes the great head of the eastern powers of the world arrayed against the western. The mass of the Jews will make a covenant with the great prince of the west, who will then be nominally their friend. And when the half of the time is expired, this personage will introduce idolatry, and force it upon them. Then will come the final catastrophe for Israel.

The stopping of the Jewish ceremonies, be it remarked, does not depend upon this scripture only. In Daniel 7 the little horn is the emperor of the west or "the prince that shall come." Of him it is said that "he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times, and the dividing of times." Mark the analogy between that statement and what we have here. What is meant by "a time and times, and the dividing of time"? Three and a half years, to be sure. And what is meant by half a week? Exactly the same period. In the midst of the term for which the covenant was made with Israel, he will arrest their worship, and will take all their Jewish ceremonials into his own hands. Nor will he allow them to keep their feasts. "They shall be given into his hand" — that is, the Jewish times and laws. God will not own Jewish worship then; and therefore He will not preserve them in it. He will let this man have his own way; who, although he has made a covenant with Israel as a friend, will break it

and substitute idolatry. Then will come the overflowing scourge. "In the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

But I am obliged to claim another and more correct representation of the words that follow. The English translators were very doubtful of its true meaning. There are different ways of taking it, but the literal version is this: "And for [or, on account of] the wing of abominations, a desolator." That is, because of his taking idols under his protection, there shall be a desolator, namely, the overflowing scourge, or the Assyrian. "The prince that shall come" does not desolate Jerusalem. At this time he has made a covenant with them; and, although he breaks his covenant, still, being their head and patron, and having his minion, the false prophet, who will have his seat there as the great arch-priest of that day, he will carry on, with the aid of this false prophet, the worship of his image in the temple of God. Compare the abomination of desolation in the holy place. (Matt. 24:15) In consequence of this, the king of the north shall come down as a desolator. There will thus be two enemies at that time for the righteous Jews. The desolator, or the Assyrian, is the enemy from without. The enemy from within is the Antichrist, or their wilful king, that corrupts them in connection with the Roman prince. Thus, the true meaning of this text is: "Because of the protection of abominations [there shall be] a desolator, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured upon the desolate." Jerusalem is meant by "the desolate." And the whole consummation, or what God has decreed against the Jews, must take its course. "That generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." These will be the last representatives of the Christ-rejecting portion of Israel, and God will allow all His judgments to come down upon them. They will be swept away, and then will remain the holy seed, the godly remnant, whom God will constitute the great nucleus of blessing to the whole world under the reign of the Lord Jesus.

Daniel 10 and 11

It is plain that chapters 10, 11, 12 are one continuous subject, and show us the circumstances in which Daniel received this last, and in some respects most remarkable of all his prophecies. For, in the whole compass of divine writ, there is no such circumstantial and minute statement of historical facts, and that, too, running down from the Persian monarchy, under which Daniel saw the vision, till the time when all the powers of this world shall be obliged to bow to the name of the Lord. Not that the prophecy runs on from the time of the Persian Empire to the reign of Christ without a single break: that would indeed be contrary to the analogy of all the rest of God's word. But we have, first of all, a concise, and, at the same time, clear, statement of the facts, until we come to a remarkable personage, who was the type of the great and notorious leader of the opposition to God's people at the close of the present age. Having brought us up to this, the prophecy breaks off, and then at once spans over the interval, and gives us "the time of the end"; so that we can understand how it is that there is that gap. For the present I must close where the break comes in. Upon a future occasion, I hope, the Lord willing, to take up the antitypical crisis at the close, which begins with Dan. 11:36. We shall find that it is not confined to any particular evil one; but that in the end of the chapter we have the conflicts of the leaders of that day in and round the Holy Land. And then Dan. 12 shows us the dealings of God with His own people, until they and Daniel himself shall stand in their lot at the end of the days: this last — that is to say, the blessing of God's people, or at least of the godly remnant — being the great object of the close.

"In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar," etc. Daniel, we find, had not taken advantage of the decree of Cyrus, which went out two years before, leaving the Israelites at liberty to return to their own land, according to prophecy. Daniel was still in the scene of the

captivity of the Jews. But more than that, the Spirit of God draws attention to the state of the prophet's soul. He was not enjoying himself in a stranger-land, but mourning and fasting; and this, in circumstances where he had all, of course, at his command. He was found, as it is said, eating no pleasant bread, "neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled." Now surely it is not for nothing that the Spirit of God has shown us Daniel, not only before the decree of Cyrus was issued, but afterwards, in such an attitude before the Lord. We can all understand, when the moment approached for the little remnant to leave Babylon and return to the land of their fathers, that he should be found chastening his own soul before God, and passing in review the sin that had occasioned so fearful a chastening upon the people from the Lord — although he was even then doing exactly the contrary of what the flesh would have sought under these circumstances. For when some great outward mercy is vouchsafed, then is the time when man naturally is apt to give rather a loose rein to his enjoyment. In Daniel we see the contrary of this. He took the place of confession; and of confessing the sins, not merely of Israel, but his own. All was before him. None but a holy man could have so deep a sense of sin. But the same energy of the Holy Spirit, which gives real self-abasement, enables one also in love to take in the sad and abject condition of God's people. Such thoughts as these seem to have filled the soul of Daniel when he found out, by the prophecy of Jeremiah, that deliverance was just at hand for Israel. There was no kind of exultation over a fallen enemy — no shouts of triumph because the people were to go free; although Cyrus himself considered it a high honour that God had made him to be the instrument of both. Well might a man of God ponder over what sin had wrought, when the Lord could not even speak of Israel as His people, although faith in Daniel only the more led him to plead that they were.

Here the decree had gone forth according to his expectation. The Persian conqueror had opened the door for the prisoners of hope to

leave Babylon, and those who pleased had gone back to their own land. Daniel was not among these. Instead of now anticipating nothing but bright visions of immediate glory, he is still found, and found more than ever, in a posture of humiliation before God. When the reason of this prolonged term of fasting comes out, we are let into the connection of the world that is seen with that which is unseen. The veil is not merely raised from the future, for all prophecy does this; but the statement of the vision here given us discloses, in an interesting light, what is around us now, but unseen. Daniel was permitted to hear it, in order that we might know it, and might also have the consciousness for ourselves, that, beside the things that are seen, there are things invisible, far more important to the people of God than all man looks upon.

If there are conflicts upon earth, they flow from higher conflicts — the angels contending with these evil beings, the instruments of Satan, who constantly seek to thwart the counsels of God with regard to the earth. This comes out remarkably here. We know that angels have to do with the saints of God; but we may not have discerned so clearly, that they have to do also with the outward events of this world. The light of God here shines upon the subject, so that we are enabled to understand, that there is not a movement of the world but what is connected with the providential dealings of God. And angels are the instruments of executing His will; they are expressly said to do His pleasure. On the other hand, there are those that oppose God constantly: evil angels are not found wanting. Those who are not alive to this certainly lose something, because it gives us a far stronger view of the necessity of having God as our strength. Were it a mere question between man and man, we could understand that one person, in the consciousness of his strength or his wisdom, or other resources, might not fear another. But if it is a fact, that we have to contend with powers that are immensely superior to us in everything of outward intelligence and might (for angels "excel in strength," as we are told), it is clear that we are thrown, if we are to be conquerors, upon the support of Another,

who is mightier than all that can be against us. The faith that thus counts on God is a deliverance from anxiety about all that is taking place in the world. For although there are wicked spirits, and men are only as the pieces that are moved by them in the game of this life, yet, in fact, there is a supreme hand and mind that leads to the moves, behind the scene and unknown to the persons acting. This gives a much more solemn character to our thoughts of all that occurs here below.

Besides these angels, another appears on the scene: "a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz." He, of whom we have so magnificent a description in verse 6, and whom Daniel alone sees, does not appear to have been a mere angel. He may have been seen in some features of angelic glory; but I conceive this is One, who often appears both in New and Old Testament history — the Lord of glory Himself. He appears now as a man — as One, who had the deepest sympathy with His servant upon the earth. All others had fled to hide themselves, Daniel abode: nevertheless, there remained no strength in him his comeliness was turned into corruption. Even a beloved man and faithful saint of God must prove that all his past wisdom was unavailing; for he was now a very aged man, and had been singularly faithful to the Lord. At this very time he was the one who best realized the true condition of Israel. For he saw well that a long time must elapse before the Messiah must come, and the revealing angel had announced that the Messiah should be cut off and have nothing. No wonder, then, that he was mourning. Others might be full of their bright hopes, that the Messiah would soon appear and exalt them as a nation in the world. But Daniel was found mourning and fasting; and now the vision passes before him, and this blessed Person reveals Himself to him. Yet, spite of all the love that rested upon him — spite of his familiar knowledge of God's ways, and the favour that had been shown him in previous visions, Daniel is made thoroughly conscious of his own utter weakness. All his strength crumbled into dust before the Lord of glory. And this has a moral for us of no little

moment. However much may be the value of what a saint has learnt, the past alone does not enable us to understand the new lesson of God. God Himself is necessary for this — not merely what we have learnt already. I think that this is a weighty truth, and most practical. We all know the tendency in prudent men to lay up a store for the time to come. I do not deny the value of spiritual knowledge in various ways — whether in helping others, or in ourselves forming a right and holy opinion of circumstances that are passing round. But where the Lord brings out something not previously learnt, then Daniel, spite of all that he had known before, is utterly powerless. He is most of all prostrated in this last vision, and realizes more than ever the nothingness of everything within him. He is thrown entirely upon God for power to stand up, and enter into what the Lord was about to make known to him. The same thing appears as to John, who had lain in the Saviour's bosom while on earth, and of all the disciples had most entered into His thoughts. Yet, let that Saviour stand before him in His glory, to make known to him His mind about the future, and what was even the apostle John? The Lord has to lay His hand upon him, bidding him fear not. He has to encourage him by what He was himself — the Living One, who had died but was alive again, and had the keys of death and hades. Therefore it was that he was to listen with the most perfect confidence, because this was what Christ is. There was no power but must fail before Him.

Here Daniel, in his measure, enters into this. The death of the flesh must always be realized before the life of God can be enjoyed. This is important, practically. In the grace that brings salvation, it is not that death must be learnt first, and life afterwards. Life in Christ comes to me as a sinner, and that life exposes the death in which I lay. If I must realize my death in order for that life to come to me, it would be evidently man set into his true place, as a preparation for his blessing from God. This is not grace. "That which was from the beginning . . . which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life." That is to say, it is the person of Christ

Himself, who comes and brings the blessing. After that, the soul learns that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." It learns that if we say we have light, or fellowship with Him who is light, and yet walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. All the practical learning of what God is, and what we are, follows the manifestation of life to us in the person of Christ. If you speak of the order as to a sinner, it is sovereign grace which gives life in Another; but if of the order of progress in the believer, it is not so. The believer, having already got life, must mortify all that pertains to him merely in nature, in order that the life should be manifested and strengthened. This is all-important for the saint, as the other is for the sinner. Man in his natural state does not believe that he is dead, but he is labouring to get life. He wants life; he has none. It is Another alone that brings and gives it to him in perfect grace — seeing only evil in him, but coming with nothing but good, and bringing it in love. This is Christ. But in the believer's case, having already found life in Him, there must be the judgment of the evil, in order that the new and divine life should be developed and grow. So that, while to the one it is life, exposing the death, and meeting the man in death, and delivering him from it, to the other it is the practical putting to death everything that has already existence naturally in him. All this must have the sentence of death put upon it, in order that the life be unhindered in its growth and manifestation.

Daniel was proving this, as the practical means of entering into, and being made the suited witness of, the wonders that the Spirit of God was about to bring before him. Hence, whatever might have been the favour in which he stood — and he was "a man greatly beloved" — nevertheless, death must be realized by his soul. "And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words." And then we have an intimation conveyed to him how it was that there had been such a delay. "But the prince of the kingdom of Persia

withstood me one-and-twenty days: but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." Here, I apprehend, we have another person speaking. Not the first and glorious One that Daniel had seen, but one used as a servant — an angel, in fact, that the other employed. The last chapter will prove clearly that there was more than one person sent: and it is plain, from the language of the speaker, that he is subordinate. Daniel is encouraged by learning that, from the first day that he had set his heart to understand and to chasten himself before God, his words were heard. He did not receive the answer the first day nor the second. Not until one-and-twenty days after did the answer arrive, and yet it was sent from God the very first day. Of course, He could at once have given it. But what then? First of all, the terrible struggle, that is always raging between the instruments of God and the emissaries of Satan, would not have been so clearly understood. Then, again, faith and patience would not have had their perfect work.

I am not forgetting, that the Holy Ghost is sent down now to dwell in the hearts of believers in a way not known then. For, although the Spirit of God was always at work in the holy prophets and in holy men, yet the abiding indwelling of the Holy Ghost was that which was not, and could not be, till Jesus was glorified, and the great work of redemption was wrought, in virtue of which the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven to take His abode in the hearts of those that believe, the seal of the blessing which is theirs in Christ. So that, besides the outward providential care of God, so beautifully brought out here, we have that blessed Divine Person constituting our bodies the temple of God. Yet the outward struggles go on. The same thing, that hindered Daniel from having the manifest answer to his prayer, may hinder us from having the answer of circumstances. The answer of faith we ought always to reckon on at once; the answer of circumstances, governed of God, so as to bring out a manifest answer, we may have to wait for. Daniel had to wait, and the reason is given us. From verse 13 we learn, that although God

had sent the answer from the very first day, the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood for twenty-one days — exactly the time that Daniel was kept in mourning and fasting before God. "But, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia." Plainly it is an angel that speaks. It would be derogatory to the Lord to suppose, that He was the One who needed help from one of His own angels. But Michael was mentioned here, because he was well known to be the archangel, who took a special guardian care over the nation of Israel. So that, however people may make a mock at the truth of the interposition and guardianship of angels, yet Scripture is quite clear about it. Romanism, as we know, has made them objects of adoration. But the truth itself is of special interest.

That angels are employed of God in particular services is plain from the word of God. Nor was this merely a new truth. We find that Jude mentions, as a well-known circumstance, the contention of Michael the archangel with the devil about the body of Moses. The same truth comes out again in this. It was Michael's care over the Jewish people. He knew their tendency to idolatry, and that the man, whom they had rebelled against during life, they would make an idol of after his death. And thus, Michael, as the instrument of blessing on God's part to Israel, contends with Satan, so that the body of Moses was not found; the Lord is said to have buried it, though the instrument that the Lord employed was Michael. Now here we have this interesting ray of light cast upon earthly circumstances. The powers of this world may be governing, but angels have not given up their functions. There are the devil and his angels, and Michael and the holy angels with him, brought forward again in the last book of the Bible. The facts of Christ having come, and of the Holy Ghost having been given, do not supersede this. On the contrary, we know that there will be one most tremendous conflict at the close between the holy angels and the wicked ones, when the heavens shall be for ever cleared of those evil powers, which had for so long defiled them. This is most interesting, as showing the per-

fect patience of God. Because we know, that with a word He could put down the devil and all his host. But he does not. He allows Satan even to venture into the lower heavens — nay, still to have possession of them. Therefore it is that he is called "the prince of the power of the air," as he is called elsewhere "the prince" and "the god of this world." But I believe it is only there that he is prince. We never read of such a thing as Satan being prince in hell. It is a favourite dream of great poets, and of small ones too; but we never read of it in Scripture. The Bible shows us, that his real power now is either in the heavens or on the earth; but that when he is broken, both in his heavenly usurpation first, and then in his earthly power, he is cast down to hell; and that, instead of being a king in hell, he will be the most miserable object of the vengeance of God. The solemn thing is, that he is reigning here now, and people do not feel it. His worst reign is that which he acquired — not that which he had before. The death of Christ, although it is the ground on which he will eventually lose all his power, was, nevertheless, the means by which he became the great usurping power, opposing God in all His thoughts about this world. But here is a thought that is of importance for us. If God permits such a thing as this — if He allows the presence of this evil one, the enemy of His Son in heaven itself — if, instead of the crucifixion of Christ leading God to deprive Satan of all his power, we find him after this displaying His greatest long-suffering, what a lesson it all is for us not to trouble ourselves about circumstances! No man has ever trodden these unknown regions; there has been none to tell us about them except the word of God, which lays it bare before us. We do not know all, of course; but we know enough to see that there is this tremendous power of evil opposed to God, and that the power of God is always and infinitely mightier than the power of evil. Evil is but an accident, which has got into the world through the rebellion of the creature against God. By "accident," I mean that it was only the creature's interrupting for a time the purposes of God; while in truth it but served to bring them out with brighter lustre. To bless heaven and earth was the plan of God, and this will stand. Evil will be banished from the scene, and evil men

will suffer the awful consequences of having rejected the only good and blessed One in Christ, the Lord.

But while the certainty of all has been made known to faith before the execution of the thoughts of God, we have the view opened to us of the grave conflict meanwhile that is unseen. This puts faith to the test. Daniel had to go on waiting, mourning, praying, spreading out all before God. We see in him the perseverance of faith — praying always. And how was not his faith rewarded! For when the angel does come, he makes known this at the bidding of the glorious One, who had first appeared to Daniel. It was the prince of the kingdom of Persia who had withstood him one-and-twenty days; but Michael had come to his help.

I may also observe, that we have an important hint, in the next verse, of the main objects to which God had an eye in this prophecy. Only persons who have read much know the torture the chapter has suffered through men bringing their own thoughts to explain it by. The pope, of course, has been very prominently introduced into it. And then the daring soldier of the early days of this century was found in it too: I allude, of course, to Napoleon. In short, whatever has been going on in the world of extraordinary interest persons have tried to find in Daniel 11. Dan. 10:14 puts to the rout all such thoughts. "I am come," says the angel, "to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days." Nothing can be plainer. It is put as a sort of frontispiece to the prophecy to show, that the great thought of God for the earth is the Jewish people, and the main design of this prophecy is what must befall them in the latter days. We have the series of the history almost from the day in which Daniel lived, but the latter days are the point of it. Prophecy in general may afford to give a little earnest close at hand, but we never see the full drift of it, save in the latter day; and then the thoughts and plans of God always have, as their earthly centre, the Jews and their Messiah. I do not mean to deny that the Church is a far higher thing than the Jews, and the re-

lations of Christ to the Church nearer and deeper than His relations to the Jews. But you do not lose Christ and the Church, because you believe in His link with Israel. Nay, if you believe not this, you con-found them with your own relations to Christ; and both are lost, as far as definite knowledge and full enjoyment go. This is for want of looking at Scripture as a whole. If Dan. 10 had been read as an introduction to Dan. 11, such a mistake might not have been made. But some read Scripture very much as others preach it. A few words are taken, and are made the motto of a discourse, which perhaps has no real connection with the scope of that passage — perhaps not with any other in the Bible. The thoughts may be true enough abstractedly, but what we want is a help to understand the word of God as a whole, as well as the details. If you were to take a letter from a friend, and were merely to fasten upon a sentence or a part of one, in the middle of it, and dislocate it from the rest, how could you understand it? And yet Scripture has infinitely larger connections than anything that could be written on our part; and therefore there ought to be far stronger reasons for taking Scripture in its connection than the little effusions of our own mind. This is a great key to the mistakes which many estimable people make in the interpretation of Scripture. They may be men of faith too; but still it is difficult to rise above their ordinary habits. The prophecy before us shows the importance of the principle I have been insisting on. Take the ordinary books on this prophecy — no matter when, where, or by whom written, and you will find that the great effort is to make a centre of their own days, etc. Here is the answer to all. Neither Rome, nor the papacy, nor Napoleon, is the object of the prophecy, but "what shall befall my people [Daniel's people, the Jews] in the latter days."

We then find Daniel expressing in humbleness of mind his unfitness for receiving such communications. First, one like the similitude of the sons of men touches his lips, and he is instructed to speak unto the Lord. He confesses his weakness — that there was no strength left in him. But "there came again and touched me one like the ap-

pearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man, greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong." Men, until they are thoroughly established in peace, until their hearts know the real source of strength, are not capable of profiting by prophecy. Here we find Daniel set upon his feet, his mouth opened, his fears hushed, before the Lord can open out the future to him. His heart must be in perfect peace in the strength of the Lord, and in the presence of his God. Anxiety of spirit, the want of settled peace, has more to do than people think with the little progress that they make in understanding many parts of God's word. It is not enough that a man have life and the Spirit of God; but there must be the breaking down of the flesh and the simple, peaceful resting in the Lord. Daniel must go through this scene, in order to fit him for what he is to learn; and so must we in our measure. We must realize that same peace and strength in the Lord. If I am in terror of the Lord's coming, because I am not sure how I shall stand before Him, how can I honestly rejoice that it is so near? There will be a hindrance in my spirit to the clear understanding of the mind of God on that subject. The reason of this lack of competence is not want of learning, but of being thoroughly established in grace — the want of knowing what we are in Christ Jesus. No matter what other things there may be — nothing will repair this sad deficiency. I speak now of Christian men. As for mere scholars dabbling in these things, it is as completely out of their sphere as a horse would be in being set to judge of the mechanism of a watch. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: . . . neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." It is only a scribe of this age meddling with what belongs to another world, of which he knows nothing.

We have a rapid survey of what was about to befall Israel in the latter days. It is the same speaker here as in Dan. 10. "Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia." There we have the succession of Per-

sian monarchs from Cyrus. Scripture does show us who these were, although their names are not mentioned here. I would refer you to Ezra 4, where will be found these very three kings mentioned. In Ezra 4 the occasion arose out of the attempt of the enemies of Israel to stop the building of the temple; and these hired "counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus, king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius, king of Persia." Now in order to understand that chapter, you must bear in mind that, from the sixth verse down to the end of verse 23, is a parenthesis. The beginning and end of the chapter refer to events during the reign of Darius. But the Spirit of God goes back to show that these adversaries had been working from the days of Cyrus till the days of Darius. Consequently, in the parenthesis, from verse 6-23 inclusively, you have the various monarchs that had come between Cyrus and Darius, whose minds the adversaries had been trying to work upon. "In the reign of Ahasuerus" (i.e. the successor of Cyrus, called in profane history Cambyses), "in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem." Then we have the next king. "And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam," etc. This is a different person from the Artaxerxes mentioned in Nehemiah, who lived at a later epoch, and is called in profane history Smerdis the magician, who by wicked means acquired the crown for a time, and lent an ear to the accusations against the Jews. This usurper was put to death through a conspiracy headed by Darius, not the Mede of Daniel, but the Persian spoken of in the Book of Ezra. Darius Hystaspes was his historical name. He follows immediately. Hence we have these three kings enumerated in Ezra 4, exactly answering to the three in Daniel 11:2. Thus we find one part of Scripture throwing light upon another, without the need of going into the territories of man at all. "Behold there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia." These came after Cyrus, and were called in Scripture, as we have seen, Ahasuerus, Artaxerxes, and Darius; and in profane history Cambyses, Smerdis the magician, and Darius Hystaspes. "And the fourth shall be far richer than they all; and by his strength through his riches he shall

stir up all against the realm of Grecia." It is the celebrated Xerxes, who stirred up all against Greece. This confirms an idea thrown out on a former occasion, that the reason why the he-goat rushed with such fury against Persia was in return for the Persian assault upon Greece. Xerxes was the man who made that great attempt. His riches are proverbially known, and no event made so profound an impression on the world then as that expedition against Greece and its consequences.

In verse 3, Persia, the ram of Dan. 8, is dropped, and we find the he-goat of that chapter, or rather its horn. "A mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will." This is Alexander. "And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven." That was true at his death: the Greek Empire was then shivered into fragments. "And not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides those." It was not to be a single head getting rid of the family of Alexander, and taking possession of all. His kingdom was to be divided into a number of parts, four more particularly; and out of these four divisions two acquire an immense importance. But what constitutes their chief importance here? When God speaks of things upon the earth, He always measures from Israel; because Israel is His earthly centre.

Hence it is, that the powers which meddle with Israel are those that in God's view are important. This is the reason why the other kingdoms are not noticed; only those of the north and of the south. And why are they so described? Palestine is the place from which God reckons. The king of the north means north of the land that His eyes were upon: and the southern power means south of that same land. These are the countries commonly called Syria and Egypt. They are the two referred to throughout the chapter, the other divisions of Alexander's empire being put aside. Only those are looked at which had to do with Israel. Now we are told that "the king of the south

shall be strong" — he is the person well known as one of the Ptolemies or Lagidae — "and one of his princes" (i.e. of the chiefs of Alexander); "and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion." This is another person, the first king of the north, who rises in strength above Ptolemy. In profane history he is called Seleucus. The descendants of both these and their strife are often spoken of in the history of the Maccabees. There minute accounts are given of the transactions predicted in this chapter; and of the two, what God says in few words is infinitely more to the point than man's elaborate detail.

But let us look a little at some of these events. "And in the end of years they [i.e. the kings of the north and of the south] shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement." One remark before going further. In this chapter it is not the same king of the north, nor the same king of the south, that we have all the way through, but a great many that succeed each other. The same official title runs throughout. As people say in law, The king, or the queen never dies. That is just the way we are to look at it here. This sixth verse is an instance. "In the end of years they shall join themselves together." They are not the same kings of the north and south, who had been spoken of in verse 5, but their descendants. "In the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement." They made, not only an alliance, but a marriage between their families. "But she shall not retain the power of the arm." The attempt to make a cordial understanding between Syria and Egypt, by marriage, would be a failure. Of course, this was exactly verified in history. There was such a marriage, and the king of the north even got rid of his former wife in order to marry the daughter of the king of the south. But it only made matters a great deal worse. They had hoped to terminate their bloody wars, but it really laid the foundation of an incomparably deeper grudge between them. As it is said here, "Neither shall he stand, nor his arm; but she shall be given up,

and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times. But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and prevail." It was not her seed, but her brother — out of the same parental stock. She was one branch, and he another. The brother of this Bernice, daughter of the Egyptian king, comes up to avenge the murder of his sister, and prevails against the king of the north. Here we have the explanation confirmed of what the kingdom of the south is. "He shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north. So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land." There we see Egypt triumphant for a time; but the tide was soon to turn. "His sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come [the other disappeared], and overflow and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress. And the king of the south shall be moved with choler." Now comes another war at a subsequent date; and this time it is the south returning the blow of the north. "The king of the south. . . shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand." There the Spirit of God refers to several notable facts. The two principal actors are the kings of Syria and Egypt. The land of Israel, that lay between them, was a sort of burdensome stone to these kings who made it their battle-field, which ever went to the conqueror. If the king of the north was victorious, Palestine fell under Syria; and in the same way if the king of Egypt got the better. But God never allowed rest to those who took His land. They might intermarry and contract alliances; but it only proved the prelude to graver outbreaks — brothers, sons, grandsons, etc., taking up the quarrels of their kindred. "The Scripture cannot be broken." All was distinctly laid down beforehand.

"And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it." Then we find that the king of the north returns and "sets forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches. And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision." Allow me to call attention to these words. It at once settles the question that might be asked — How do you know that Daniel's people do not mean God's people in a spiritual sense? The answer is given here — "the robbers of thy people." This at once puts aside the plea for a spiritual sense. We could hardly talk about "robbers" in that case. This confirms what ought not to have needed further evidence — that Daniel's people mean the Jewish people, and nothing else. Here we find that some of the Jews form a connection with one of these contending monarchs of the north. These are called here "the robbers of thy people," and take the part of Antiochus, the king of the north, against Ptolemy Philopater, or rather his son; but all came to nought. The Syrian king might hope that, by bringing in this new element, by getting the countenance of the Jews, perhaps God would be with him. But no. They were the robbers of the people — unfaithful to God, and not holding fast their separation from the Gentiles. They, too, might think to establish the vision, "but they shall fall."

"So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand. But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will [that is, the king of the north], and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed." Another remarkable thing that we see here is, that the Spirit of God still holds to the importance of that little strip of land — the territory of Palestine. It was God's gift to God's people. Whatever might be its deplorable condition, it is the glorious

land still. God repents not of His purposes: "He will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land." And if, when it is a question of God's earthly purposes, He thus holds to them, spite of every hindrance, what will He not do for His heavenly people? Who can doubt that He will bring them to heavenly glory with Christ?

"He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him." This is another attempt at marriage; only it is the converse. It is not now the king's daughter of the south coming to the king of the north; but the king of the north gives his daughter Cleopatra to the king of the south, hoping that she will maintain Syrian influence at the court of Egypt. That is what is called here "corrupting her"; because it was plainly contrary to the very essence of the marriage-tie: it was an attempt to use her in order to serve his political purposes. "But she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him." The reasons of state — the innermost secrets of their hearts, alike come out here.

There is another disgrace, which is not only known to God, but is made known to His servants. "After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him." That is, Antiochus meddles with Greece, and takes many of the isles; but this other prince, for his own behalf, takes up the contest against the king of the north. Here we have the entrance upon the scene of a new power — the first allusion to the Romans. A Roman consul is meant by the prince that comes on his own behalf against the king of the north. He will not allow Greece to be touched. It was one of the Scipios who interfered. "Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, — and not be found." He is obliged to return to Syria, but he shall stumble and fall.

"Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom." The Romans, who defeated the father, obliged his son to raise a heavy annual tribute. That was all that the poor man did during his life. "Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes.... but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle." He was killed by one of his own sons. "And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people." This is the man who typifies the last king of the north. Called in profane history Antiochus Epiphanes, he was morally abominable, but most notorious for his interference with the Jews; first by flattery and corruption, and afterwards by violence. This is the man the Spirit of God dwells most on, because he most meddled with Israel, the glorious land, and the sanctuary. He it was who enforced idolatry in the temple itself, setting up an image to be worshipped even in the Holy of Holies. Therefore it is that he acquires importance. Otherwise he was a man little known, except for daring wickedness. Nothing can be more simple. His history consists of intrigues, first against the king of the south, and then against the Jews; and of various expeditions, in some of which he was successful at first but afterwards entirely defeated. "He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers.... And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand." These kings meet and plan against each other, but all is vain. "Both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant; and

he shall do exploits, and return to his own land [ie. in the north]. At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter." Then we have further details.

"For the ships of Chittim shall come against him." There are these indefatigable Romans that come in again. They had dealt with his father when he had made an attack upon Greece; and now that the son had his hand over the throat of his prey, the Roman consul came, and at once forbade his doing anything further. He even drew a circle round him, as is well known, when the artful king wished to gain time to evade. The answer was demanded before he stepped out of the circle, and he was obliged to give it. This was a death-blow to all his policy. He went home a miserable, defeated man, with a heart vexed and infuriate, though putting on a humble appearance before the Romans. What should hinder him from wreaking out the anger of his heart upon the Jews? As it is said here, "Therefore shall he be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant." Poor as the Jews were, they were witnesses for God upon the earth; and Antiochus hastens to pour out his fury upon whatever bore a testimony to God among them. This was his ruin, and brought God's vengeance upon him. "He shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant," i.e. with the apostates of the Jews. "And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate." He will put an end to the Jewish service, and will set up an idol, "the abomination that maketh desolate," in the temple of Jerusalem. It is a mistake to suppose that this refers to the last days. It is only a type of what will take place then. The latter part of the chapter, and the next chapter, do refer to the latter day in the full sense of the word. But here is the step of transition from what is past to the future.

We come down in regular historical order to Antiochus Epiphanes, and then meet with a great break. Scripture itself intimates as much. But Antiochus did on a small scale what the great northern king of the latter day will do on a larger one. It is said (verse 35).... "even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." There God stops. He says, as it were, I have come to the man that shows you in type what is to befall you in the latter days; and so He dwells emphatically upon this king, laying before them the extreme wickedness of his heart and conduct. The Spirit then cuts short the course of the history, and plunges at once into the last scene. This, however, must be reserved for another occasion. What we have seen shows us that whatever may be the general outline of events elsewhere, God can be, and sometimes is, singularly minute in the details of a prophecy, and nowhere more so than in this very chapter. And what is the main objection raised by infidels against it? That it must have been written after the events had taken place! Certain it is, that there is no historian since these times who gives us such an admirable account as we have in these few verses. If I want to know the history of these two contending monarchies, Syria and Egypt, I must look here. How entirely we can confide in the word of God about everything! It may be an exception to His general rule to dwell upon the kings of the north and of the south, but He does so at times. The great thing on which He bestows care is the souls of His people. May our hearts answer to the interest He takes in us!

From the twenty-first verse we have had the account of the king of the north, known in profane history as Antiochus Epiphanes. The Spirit of God has entered into much fuller detail in speaking of his history, because his conduct, specially at the close, in meddling with the Jews, and their city, and their sanctuary, furnished the occasion for a type of the last king of the north, who will be found following in his predecessors' wake, save that his guilt will be incomparably graver in the sight of God — so flagrant indeed, that His judgment can tarry no longer. This accounts for a circumstance that has often perplexed the students of Daniel's prophecy. We read of an

"abomination that maketh desolate" in the predicted account of Antiochus (Dan. 11:31); and it has been commonly supposed that our Lord refers to this in Matthew 24:15. Those who looked for the future fulfilment of this abomination have sought to reconcile it with the facts by the assumption that the Spirit of God must have branched off to the future personage that Antiochus represented. But in my judgment there is no need for anything so unnatural. Antiochus Epiphanes was only a type, and verse 31 does not go beyond his history, save as a foreshadowing.

In other words, to the end of verse 31 all is strictly historical — typical, of course, of the future, but nothing more. And therefore the answer to the difficulty that some find in our Lord's quoting, as they suppose, Daniel 11:31, is really as plain as possible. He does not quote this verse. The passage He refers to is in Dan. 12. In Dan. 12:11, you will find an expression similar to this. "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." There we have a defined date, which connects this last setting up of the desolating abomination with the deliverance our Lord predicts in Matthew 24; for Jacob's most fiery trial is that which just precedes his deliverance.

Now there are more reasons than one for believing this passage in Daniel 12 to be what our Lord cites. Some of them depend upon considerations more fit for the study than for public ministry. But the sum of the matter is, that the expressions the Holy Ghost employs, in Dan. 11:31 and in Dan. 12:11, differ. In Dan. 11:31 it means the abomination of him that desolates, or of the desolator. Whereas, in Dan. 12:11, the true meaning is that which is given in our Lord's words — not the abomination of him that maketh desolate, but the "abomination of desolation"; which is, I suppose, what is meant in the English version by the words, "that maketh desolate." Thus the two phrases are distinct. Although there is a resemblance between them, there is also a difference; and that difference is

enough to show that our Lord spoke not of the abomination set up by Antiochus, but of that mentioned in Dan. 12. Consequently, there is, in fact, no difficulty to be removed; because the desolation spoken of in Dan. 11 is past, and the desolation of Dan. 12, that our Lord draws attention to, is future.

That this is so, will appear from other considerations also. Thus, in the verses that follow, we have a state of things distinct from what will be in the future tribulation of Israel. "Such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." Now we find from the Revelation, and other parts of Scripture which speak about the future of Israel, that the godly remnant could hardly be said to do exploits. They will suffer; but I do not think that deeds of power thus characterize the blessed ones who are to pass through the dreadful crisis of the future. In the days of Antiochus, it was not so much suffering, but being "strong," and doing "exploits" — exactly what was true of the Maccabees and others, who undoubtedly were not so much a band of martyrs as a set of men who roused the spirit of Israel, and resisted the cruel and profane scourge of that day. Again, we read, "And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, many days." There is a long period, observe, of sorrow and trouble, that follows the outbursts of courage and prowess against the desolator, and this is still continued in the following verses. "Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." Clearly, then, these trials are before the time of the end. The Spirit of God is here referring to what has already taken place. Accordingly we have a picture of terrible disaster that goes on, as it is said, "to the time of the end."

From all this, I infer, then, that the Spirit of God singles out the desolation which then befell the people of Israel, and the defiling of the sanctuary under Antiochus or his generals. This brought vividly out the circumstances of the last days; but, along with them, certain other circumstances were added, which ought not to be expected in those days. In other words, we arrive at what may be called the long and dreary blank that severs the past history of Israel, and the struggles in their land against neighbouring aggressors, from the great crisis of the last days. This is where the true break occurs. Certain disasters were to go on "to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed." There is no place in the chapter where the interruption of the history so well fits in as after verse 35.

But now, in verse 36, we have another person abruptly introduced into the scene. We are not told who he was, or whence he came; but the character that is given of him, the scene that he occupies, the history that the Spirit of God enters into in connection with him — all declare, too plainly, that it is the terrible king who will set himself up in the land of Israel in personal antagonism to the Messiah of Israel, the Lord Jesus. He it was of whom our Lord spoke, when He said that, if they refused Him who had come in His Father's name, they would receive another coming in his own name. Nor is this the only passage of Scripture, where this same false Christ, or rather Antichrist (for there is a difference between the terms), is described as "the king." Not only are there different references to him under other epithets, but in the greatest and most comprehensive prophecy of Scripture, Isaiah, like Daniel, introduces "the king," as if he must be known at once. In Isa. 30 we have an enemy of Israel, called the Assyrian. Doubtless, looking at past history, Sennacherib was their great head in that day. But he only furnished the opportunity to the Spirit of God to bring out the future and final adversary of Israel. His fall is here brought before us. "For through the voice of the Lord, shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded star shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in

battles of shaking will He fight with it." After the end of that victory there will be exceeding joy for Israel; instead of the train of sorrow, which most victories bring, there follows unfeigned gladness before the Lord. "It shall be with tabrets and harps." For the enemy there will be proportionate misery. Something still more awful and unending than temporal destruction falls upon the proud foe. "For Tophet is ordained of old: yea, for the king it is prepared; He hath made it deep and large: the pile therefore is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." In our version there is a singular obscurity' remarked by another, in this verse At first sight it might appear that the Assyrian and "the king" were the same person. The true rendering is, "For the king also it is prepared" — that is, Tophet is prepared for the Assyrian, but besides, for THE KING also. Just as in our passage in Daniel, we have the Assyrian or king of the north on the one hand, and "the king" on the other. The same frightful end awaits them both. But I only refer to this now for the purpose of showing, that the expression, "the king," is not unprecedented in Scripture, and that it applies to a notorious personage the Jews were taught in prophecy to expect. God, in judicial retribution for their rejection of the true Christ, would give them up to receive the Antichrist. This is "the king." He would arrogate to himself the royal rights of the true King, the Anointed of God. Tophet was prepared for the king of the north, and also for "the king."

But this is not all. In Isaiah 57 we have him introduced quite as unexpectedly. In Isaiah 55 are shown the moral qualities that God will produce in His people. In Isaiah 57 He shows us the fearfully iniquitous state then also found in Israel. And in that day God will no longer endure anything but reality. Forms of piety, covering uncleanness and ungodliness, will have passed away. There "the king" is suddenly introduced to us. (v. 9) "Thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off; and didst debase thyself even unto hell." To have to do with him was to debase oneself unto hell. No wonder that for

"the king also" Tophet was prepared. This shows that, before the mind of Israel from the first, there was one that the Spirit of God led them to expect to reign over the land in the last days, who is called "the king."

Thus at once is furnished a most important clue to Daniel 11. We are come to the time of the end. The blank is closed — the long dark night of Israel's dispersion is well-nigh over. The Jews are in the land. In what condition? Are they under Christ? Alas! there is another and a terrible scene that must first be enacted there. "The king" that we have read of is there, and the course he pursues is just what we might expect from the landmarks of the Holy Ghost. "The king shall do according to his will." Ah! are any of us sufficiently aware what a fearful thing it is to be the doers of our own will? Here is the end of it. It was the first great characteristic of sin from the beginning. It is what Adam did, and the fall of the world was the immediate result. Here is one who at that day may seem to be the loftiest and most influential of Adam's sons. But he does "according to his will." And nothing worse. Are we to read such a history as this without moral profit to our own souls? To forget what an evil thing it is ever to be the doers of our own will? Let none suppose that, because they may be in a position to rule, they are therefore outside the danger. Alas! it is not so: no one thing so unfits a person for righteous rule as the inability to obey. It is good first to know what it is to be subject. Oh! may it strike deep into all our hearts, that "the king," the Antichrist, is first stamped as one doing his own will. May it test us how far we are seeking ours! — how far, under any circumstances, we are doing, or allowing anything, that we would not wish every soul in this world to see — perhaps even those that are nearest to us. Alas! one knows, from experience and observation, the difficulty and danger in these things from one's own heart. Yet there is no one thing more contrary to that Christ whom we have learnt. We are sanctified "unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." It is not only to the blessing, in the sprinkling of the blood, but to the obedience of Jesus Christ — to the same

spirit and principle of obedience; for that is the meaning of the expression. We are not like the Jews who were put under the law, and whose obedience had the character of obligation to do such and such things under penalty of death. We are already alive unto God, conscious of the blessedness in which we stand, and awakened to see the beauty of the will of God; for His will it is which has saved and sanctified us. This is our calling, and our practical work here below. Christians have no other business, properly speaking, than to do the will of Another. We have to do God's will according to the character of the obedience of Christ — as sons delighting in the will of the Father. It does not matter what we may have to do. It may be one's natural daily occupation. But do not make two individuals of yourselves — with one principle in your business or family, and another for the Church and worship of God. Never allow such a thought. We have Christ for everything and every day. Christ is not a blessing for us merely when we meet together or are called to die; but if we have Christ, we have Him for ever, and from the first moment we are emancipated from doing our own will. This we learn is death; but it is gone now in Christ's death. We are delivered, for we are alive in Him risen. But what are we delivered for? To do the will of God. We are sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ.

As for "the king," you have in him the awful principle of sin which has always been at work, but which here exceeds all bounds. The moment has come when God will remove the providential checks which, up to that time, He will have put upon men, when Satan will be allowed to bring about all his plans; and that, too, in the very land whereon the eyes of God rest continually.

"The king shall do according to his will, and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself" — not only above every man, but "above every god." And it is not only that he takes his place above these so-called gods, but "he shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods." And strange to say (if one did not know the perfect wisdom of God, and could not wait for His counsels to be matured), in spite

of his fearful profanity, "he shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished; for that that is determined shall be done." This clause contains a word that gives us the key to the passage. For some have found immense difficulties in this portion of the word of God. Many have transported into this verse the Pope of Rome, others Mahomet, or Buonaparte. But here we find that "the king" is to prosper till the indignation be accomplished. What, or about whom? Has God indignation against His Church? Never. This is the time, too, of God's patience with man — not of His indignation. With whom, then, is it connected? The word of God is perfectly plain. It is when dealing with Israel that God speaks of indignation: I have already shown this fully from Isaiah 5, 10, 14, and other passages, as it is entirely confirmed by the whole nature of the revelation here. For we read of one that would be the king of Israel — not in Constantinople or Rome, but in Palestine. And the time is a future outburst of indignation against Israel in the promised land. He (the false king) shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished. "Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women." The expression, "the desire of women," clearly, to my mind, refers to Christ — the One to whom all Jews were looking forward, and whose birth must have been above all things desired by Jewish women. It is plain from the connection that such is the true meaning. For it occurs between "the God of his fathers" (Jehovah) and "any god." Nothing is less likely than, if it had merely referred to natural relationships, that it would have been thus placed. It was, probably, from the wish to apply this to the pope that such an interpretation has found currency. But let us only understand that the prophecy concerns Israel and their land, and all is plain. He shall not "regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women." Christ is distinguished from "the God of his fathers," perhaps, because the Son was to become incarnate. But Christ is regarded no more than the God of his fathers — an expression, by the way, which implies that he himself is a Jew. It is "the God of his fathers." "For he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honour the god of forces." It is not that he goes forward as Antiochus did, trying to

force Jupiter Olympus upon the Jews; but he adopts a new superstition. This also disproves the reference to the Syrian king, who was a Gentile. Here it is a Jew, who will take the place of the Christ, and who, of course, regards neither the true Christ nor Jehovah. It is a self-exalting personage who opposes the true God, i.e. who equally sets aside the superstitions of men and the faith of God's people. Self-exaltation is his marked feature.

But this is not all. The Antichrist will be infidel, but not merely infidel. He will have rejected the God of Israel, and the Messiah. Nor will he honour any of the gods of the Gentiles. But even this man, although he sets himself up as the true God upon the earth, will, for all that, have some one to whom he bows and causes others to bow along with himself. The human heart, even in Antichrist, cannot do without an object of idolatry. So, in ver. 38, there is this apparent inconsistency that comes out in the Antichrist. "But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces." He makes a god, as well as setting himself up to be God. "A god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things." It is entirely an invention of his own. More than that. He will divide the land among his adherents. "He shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain." Such, then, is God's account of the king that will be found in Palestine in the last days. And it is plain that this last verse is a most conclusive proof that he is in Palestine reigning. It is "the land." The Spirit of God never so speaks of any other country. It was that land which was nearest to God — a sort of centre for all others.

Then we have a change in the history. "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him." This confirms what was said before — that "the king" is found "at the time of the end." Then "shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships." The Spirit of God had long before spoken about the kings of the north and of the south. It was im-

portant to show, that at the time of the end these powers will have successors, who will make their push at "the king" in the Holy Land. "The king of the south" — that is, Egypt — and the "king of the north" — that is, the holder of the present Syrian possessions of the Sultan — these two persons shall make a movement against "the king" Not that they have a common policy: on the contrary, they seem bitter enemies one of another. But "the king" so exalts himself, arrogating to himself such pretensions in the Holy Land, that God permits the final catastrophe to arrive. The king of the south comes first, and then the king of the north, who it appears will be the great military and naval leader of the east in those days. "The king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land." This can be no other land than that of Israel. The king is there. The northern king is a totally different person, an antagonist of "the king," as well as the king of the south. The Spirit of God having introduced "the king," without telling us whence he came, now drops that personage without telling us what became of him. His frightful destiny is shown us fully in other scriptures. But it was important to introduce him as an episode in Dan. 11, for the purpose of showing the last great conflict between the kings of the north and of the south. Accordingly he drops "the king," and the rest of the chapter is occupied with the king of the north. He not only enters the glorious land, but he goes on with conquests elsewhere. "Many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon." We find from Isaiah 11 that this is a very notable fact. These borderers lived on the outskirts of the Holy Land. God so orders that, if they escape the king of the north, they are to be ravaged by the triumphant Israelites. God will not permit that the early and bitter enemies of Israel should meet with their righteous retribution from the hands of any but the people whom they had so sought to oppose and injure. Accordingly, it would appear from Isai-

ah, that, a very little after, the Israelites execute God's judgment on them.

"He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps." From this we learn, that the king of the north is not acting as a colleague with the king of the south. He proceeds down to the south, where, it would appear (ver. 43), there will be a great development of material prosperity, whether from the resources of the land itself, or more probably from its becoming the great emporium of western and eastern commerce in that part of the world. "But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him" It is when he is down in the south, beyond Palestine, that he hears these rumours of perplexity in the north and east. He had come himself from the north, and was the conqueror over the east also; and now he has tidings from these quarters which agitate him. He hastens back from the land of Egypt and reaches Palestine. "And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas [that is between the Mediterranean and the Dead seas] in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." This is the doom of the once victorious king of the north — not of "the king" who was introduced by the way to show us the occasion of the final struggle between the north and south.

I would now desire to inquire whether there be not other scriptures of interest to connect with what we have just been looking at. In the close of Zechariah, we shall find information of great interest. Just a word or two first on Zech. 11:16. The Spirit of God there says, "Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock!" This I conceive is clearly the Antichrist — "the king." For, looking at verse 16, we learn that this idol shepherd is in the land. "Lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit them that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth

still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces." This utter selfishness, and self-exaltation, and spoiling the flock, instead of feeding it and carrying the lambs in his bosom, is in frightful contrast with Christ, the Good Shepherd. Thus the false shepherd, Antichrist, is to be raised up in the land of Israel, and there he does not spare the flock of God.

But in Zech. 12 we have another power. It is said, in verse 2, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem." There are nations gathering against Jerusalem: just as in Daniel 11, the king of the north comes down, and the king of the south. Nations assemble against Jerusalem while this idol shepherd is there. Jerusalem and the Jews are the object of attack. "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it." Victory seems to incline to the assailants of Israel. But none can then harden themselves against them and prosper, because the Lord will have identified Himself with them in that day. "In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah"; and then we have the way in which the Lord will defend His people in that day. But what may make it still plainer is that which we read in Zech. 14:2, "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." Here we have additional disclosures that you would not have gathered from Zech. 12. Thus we learn that "the city shall be taken and half of the city shall go forth into captivity"; evidently distinguishing this future siege from the past. When the Chaldeans took the city, they carried all away captive. When the Romans took it, all they spared were made prisoners. Here we have another siege, in which half will be taken and the other half not. And if anything can more clearly

mark off the future from the past, it is that the nations, having taken half of the city, will not pursue their victory farther. Why? "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east." Who can pretend that this has ever been accomplished? Who can say that the Lord has thus come and stood upon the Mount of Olives? How can you reconcile the past with such a statement as this? The Lord has never been on Jerusalem's soil as a conqueror since that day. Was it thus when Titus besieged it? Do you try to explain it away as merely a providential deliverance? But, I ask, Were they delivered then? They were taken captive. Jerusalem' to this day, remains trodden down of the Gentiles, and must, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. But the passage indicates the times of the Gentiles closing in, the end of Gentile oppression. When this day is verified, and the Lord goes forth to fight against those nations, His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives. And, as a mark that this is not to be allegorized, we find that the Spirit adds, that the Mount of Olives is to split in twain — an outward physical proof that the Lord God has planted His feet there. "The Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." "Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountain," — that is, it will form a valley between the two — "for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee." There, again, we find a most clear proof that there is a future siege of Jerusalem, and that this siege will be characterized by two attacks. The first attack will be successful against Israel: half the city will be taken, and all the miseries of a frightful siege will follow, as far as half the city is concerned; but the other half is reserved for the Lord, who will bring the third part through the fire. He will put Himself at their head, and crush all the nations of the earth that come together against Jerusalem. Thus the second attack will be to the ruin of those that make it. If we connect this with Daniel, how

plain is the additional light that we get! The king of the north first comes down when the king of the south is pushing at "the king" in the Holy Land. There is a simultaneous assault made upon Israel, to destroy the people in the land, who, alas! deserve it. But in the midst of evil there will be a godly seed. God will employ these assailants to do the work of the executioner. The wicked will be taken away; and, when God has purged those that remain, there will come another scene. The king of the north, having been successful in his first attack, pursues his way towards Egypt, against the king of the south. He comes there, but tidings from the north and east trouble him, and he returns to his own destruction.

Meanwhile, we may ask, what is become of "the king"? Has he been destroyed in the collision between the kings of the north and of the south, that had taken place in the land? No. What then is become of him? How does he fall? "By the brightness of the appearing" of the Lord from heaven. He is reserved for the hand of God Himself. He will be cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. "For the king also it is prepared." Thus we have the Old Testament and the New giving us one concurrent testimony. It will be by no ordinary doom of ruined man that he will perish. It is God departing from all His ordinary ways of dealing with the wicked. Men have been from time to time taken up in the grace of God from this world without passing through death; and there are men for whom it is destined of God to be sent down alive into hell — the terrible contrast of those, who are alive when Christ comes, waiting to be taken up to heaven. It will be so with that wicked one, the idol shepherd — "the king" — and not with him only. The king of the north is a bolder enemy still. "The king" has set himself up in the land, corrupting and apostatizing the people of Israel. He has met with his doom. If only the slightest word of the judgment that had been executed in the land were to reach the king of the north, we can understand how he would be troubled. Whether that is the cause of his hasty return to Palestine, or because the ten tribes were in movement, I do not pretend to say. We are not told. But he comes up to

the Holy Land again; and, this time, it is to fall under the immediate hand of God — not with the sword of a mighty man, nor with the sword of a mean man. Not man, but God, will execute the vengeance upon him. Here we find the reason why there were two attacks. After his first assault on Jerusalem, he has gone down into the south, and has pursued certain conquests there. Excited by the tidings referred to, he hastens to return, hoping now to have it all his own way. "Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle."

But I must also ask you to look, before closing, at one or two other passages. Take Isaiah 28 and 29, where you will find abundant confirmation of all that I have touched upon in this closing scene. In Isaiah 28 you will observe that there are two great powers of evil connected with the land of that day — one "the king," who is in relation with the people, and in the land; the other the king of the north, who comes down as an antagonistic power.⁶ We shall find both these in this chapter. First, Ephraim is mentioned, and the Lord pronounces woe upon "the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower.... Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand." There, I apprehend, you have the inroad of the Assyrian as the dreadful storm from the north, that would break forth upon Ephraim. If we look at the middle of the chapter, we shall find another thing. We have seen what was the condition of Ephraim,

⁶ Mr. Elliott (*Horae Apoc.*, 5th ed., vol. iv., p. 735, note 4,) makes it to be an essential part(!) of the futurist theory that the Antichrist is, during part of the last three and a half years to be occupied in besieging Jerusalem from without. That some writers, ancient and modern, have fallen into this stupendous mistake, is plain enough. but Mr. E's assertion is totally unfounded. The truth is (and Mr E. ought to know it well), that very many authors, both historical and futurist, have been guilty of confounding "the king" with "the king of the north," at the close of Daniel 11, and elsewhere, but it is false that the error is essential to futurism more than to the Protestant school. Not a few beside myself had seen and avoided this confusion before Mr. E's book was written.

who dwelt in the outskirts of the country. But what was the destiny of Jerusalem, the capital? "Because ye have said" (ver. 15), "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement." There we have evidently what is connected with "the king" who will be in Jerusalem, and who will form a compact with "the beast," the great imperial power of that day, to whom Satan will have given his throne. There is full harmony between what we have in Isaiah and Revelation and Daniel. "We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us." Mark that. The overflowing scourge is the king of the north, the outside power that is coming down upon them. They of Jerusalem have made a covenant with death and with hell (that is, with instruments of Satan) in that day: and they hope by this means to escape the king of the north. I have already shown that "the beast," the great power of the west, will be in connection with "the king" at Jerusalem — that the western parts will be the great seat of the beast — that he will command all Europe that properly belonged to the Roman Empire. When that empire is reorganized, he will be the main instrument of using its strength. "The king" will have made a covenant with him; or, as it is said in Dan. 9, he, that is, the Roman prince, will make a covenant with the mass of the Jews. At the close, both are found in Jerusalem, fighting against the Lord and His saints coming from heaven. They will find their supposed strength in this covenant, but it will not stand. The overflowing scourge (the Assyrian) sweeps on, and half the city of Jerusalem is taken. How marvelously does Scripture hang together! Then (Isaiah 28:16) comes in the reference to the Lord's laying a foundation stone in Zion, which is evidently a word for the faithful remnant of that day, however true for us who believe now.

Isaiah 29 is the last portion to which I wish to refer. There we have the closing desolation of the city. "Woe to Ariel, to Ariel, the city where David dwelt! . . . Yet I will distress Ariel, and there shall be heaviness and sorrow: and it shall be unto me as Ariel. And I will

camp against thee round about and will lay siege against thee with a mount, and I will raise forts against thee." This is the siege spoken of in Zechariah. "And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground," etc. That is their condition when they are desolated. But mark, in verse 5: "Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust.... Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of Hosts with thunder, and with earthquake And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision." The Lord has gone forth and fought with those nations as when He fought in the day of battle. Sufficient evidence is thus brought from various parts of the word of God, which entirely falls in with, and throws light upon, the very interesting portion of Daniel now before us. All concur in showing most clearly that there is a terrible future for the apostate Jews and their western associates; and no less terrible for their confederate eastern adversaries. The covenant with hell will not stand. When the great powers of the world will have, apparently, swept all before them, and have gathered for the last great struggle before Jerusalem, God will take that opportunity for dealing with them after His long term of patience. It will be the closing scene. They will think that universal monarchy is to be in their hands; but it will be God's day for summoning them to judgment. Here I speak of a judgment of nations and of kings — not of the dead before the great white throne. (Rev. 20:11-15)

God is about to deal with the earth — with men in the midst of all their plans. The regeneration of the world will be the great day when the Lord, having weeded out of Israel the transgressors, and used "the king" himself, and the judgment that fell upon him, to separate the true ones of Judah from the wicked, will cause the hour to chime when the account must be settled with the nations. This appears to me to be the simple, straightforward statement of the truth of God that we have here. We are not to suppose it is merely a question of one great power only. There will be different principles at work. And it is an awful thing to think that these lands,

where we enjoy such privileges, are to be then overspread with the deepest darkness. The covenant with death and with hell will be because of an alliance made with the highly civilized western world. What a humbling thing for the pride of man! Civilization in a day that is past did not keep the mightiest minds from degrading idolatry and filthiness. Alas! we shall have a still worse scene at the close. Christendom will end in restored idolatry, in novel false gods, in man himself worshipped as God. Such, I believe, is the predicted future of this age. But love can keep the heart the same from being entangled with all that leads to it — Christ Himself. May we be occupied with Him, not building upon men's foundations, not hoping their hope, not trusting to progress, or even to religion, so called! If Christ is my object in everything, safety is found there, and nowhere else.

Daniel 12

The trouble, of which the prophet speaks, at the beginning of this chapter, is not a thing long after and distinct from the conflicts described at the end of the preceding one, but, as he says himself, "at that time." So that we have now really come, in looking at the closing events of Dan. 11, to the latest period that Daniel brings before us. For it has been often remarked, that Daniel never enters upon the reign of glory, but just brings us up to that point. He shows us that which will introduce it, gives us the execution of judgment previous to it, without furnishing many details, and tells us of the kingdom of heaven, that is to fill the whole earth, but he does not describe it. The "people of the saints of the Most High" (Dan. 7:27), as he calls the Jews, shall have the whole kingdom under heaven. The truth is, that the Spirit of God had already by others most fully entered into the reign of the Messiah over Israel, and the blessedness of their portion; and He was about to predict the same subject by others subsequent to the captivity. And this last was of importance. Because He well knew that many would suppose that the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity was the accomplishment of the prophecy. Therefore great pains were taken in some of the latest prophecies, to show that nothing was farther from the fact, and that the blessing of Israel was yet future. They are described as being in a miserable condition after they return from Babylon; and the Spirit of God launches out into a distant future as the period when Israel are to be really delivered and blessed according to God's mind. The past return was only a pledge of the full restoration which God intended for them. But Daniel does not enter into this time of blessedness. He brings you up to the moment, and then closes. His peculiar object was "the times of the Gentiles." This accounts for the remarkable character of his prophecy. He is simply a prophet of the captivity, and of its end.

In Dan. 12, we have what takes place between the judgment of the Gentiles and the ushering of the Jews into their blessing. We have

seen "the king" and his wickedness in the Holy Land, and have also heard of the kings from the north and from the south. Whatever may have appeared to be the temporary power of the great leader of the north against the Holy Land, "yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." Such was his miserable close.

But now comes an interesting question — What will be the condition of Israel at that time? The answer is given in these first verses: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." This was the people that Daniel was concerned about. He had no idea of what we call now a Christian people — no notion that there was a time coming, already settled in the counsels of God, when there should no longer be any distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and when both would be formed, by the faith of a crucified Christ, into one body by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. All this was unknown to Daniel, and the Lord never even gives him to anticipate such a state. Not one prophecy in Daniel, nor in any other, reveals it, though many intimate certain particulars which are now realized in it, as we see in Romans 9, 10, etc. "Thy people" means, simply and solely, the Jewish people. Daniel was rightly and deeply interested in them, as a true Israelite of God should be, that felt for the glory of God connected with His people. Accordingly, the Spirit of God communicates to him, that at that time there should be a turning-point in Israel's history. Instead of mere providential control — Michael resisting this prince or that, he will stand up for them, undertaking their case and putting down definitely their adversaries ; but, even then, not without a fearful struggle. Their defence was his habitual task. But now he shall stand up to complete the great earthly purposes of God in the deliverance of the Jews.

"And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." There we have the important information that at once dis-

tinguishes this standing up of Michael from all times that had ever been. So far from deliverance as yet, the trouble that fell upon the Jews under Titus was more terrible than that which had befallen them under Nebuchadnezzar. What follows then? That this time of trouble is yet to come. The Spirit of God is here describing that which, having had no answer in the past, must await the future. And, in fact, we have only to look at Jerusalem, and at the present condition of the Jews, to see that this is so. Are they delivered? On the contrary, there is not a country under the sun but what bears its witness, in one way or another, that they are degraded, and out of the land of their glory, where the Lord's eyes rest continually. But their misery ought to tell him who has ears to hear, that Jerusalem must yet be called the throne of Jehovah; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of Jehovah, to Jerusalem; when Gentiles shall walk no more after the stubbornness of their evil heart; and the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, both settled and united in peace and love in the land given of God for an inheritance to their fathers.

There are those who regard what is spoken of here as future, but who say, that it must be taken spiritually, and be interpreted of the Church, or God's people now. But, first, it is enough to answer that we have had a long prophecy which was ushered in by the angel to Daniel with the positive announcement that it was what should befall his people in the latter days. This excludes such ideas. Next, observe throughout the prophecy that none but Jews are spoken of as the objects of God's interest up to this time. The Holy Land was in question, and the conflicts of the north and south around it. Under Christianity, there is no such thing as a holy land. It is mere Judaism or heathenism to regard one place as more sacred than another, now that the full light of Christianity has come in. But if there be a land that is in God's purpose glorious, it is Israel's. Only it loses that character during the Gentile calling. There is the revelation of heavenly things now — not of earthly. And therefore, whatever was holy before, in a mere earthly point of view, is passed away for the pre-

sent, being eclipsed by something brighter. God has other counsels now in view. The ancient people proved themselves to be false and unholy in rejecting their own Messiah. And until they are brought as a nation to Jesus, or, in the words of the Revelation, to "keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" — until a remnant has got some sort of divine knowledge of Christ, God will not own them. Meanwhile, He has turned to another work, that of forming the Church, which is not referred to here. It is a blessed truth that God has gone out in rich mercy to the Gentiles; but what comfort would this be as to what lay so heavily upon the heart of the prophet? Whereas all is suitable and clear, if we see that his own people are described, and their passage through the terrible scene spoken of here, the eve of their deliverance, and this of God. "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered," etc.

I will show that this is not the testimony of one sacred writer only, but of several. Take the sorrowing prophet Jeremiah, Jer. 30. There we have a clear reference to Jacob's great trouble, followed by his mighty deliverance. "These are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah." Who will contest the meaning of that? "Thus saith the Lord, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?" It is a state of things beyond all that is ordinarily reasonable. Men filled with the deepest anguish, depicted even in their faces, and their courage fled in presence of fearful trouble. The seventh verse explains it. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it." As in Daniel, it is a time unprecedented. "It is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." Jacob, "that worm Jacob," is the name used for the people regarded in their weakness, as Israel is their name of power. It is the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it. So far it is the same train of thought, in

the mind of the Spirit, as we have in Daniel. We have Israel and Judah in question, called by the name that expresses their weakness as exposed to every kind of calamity from without. It is a day of unparalleled trouble, and the Israel of that day are to be delivered out of it.

If I were to look through Isaiah, I might show, from the beginning to the end of the book, the same thing, only more diffused. I need not dwell upon passages so well known. (Isa. 1, 2, 10, 14, 17, 22, 24-35, 49-66)

But it may be asked, if there be anything from the New Testament to bring forward. I have been producing passages from the Old Testament. Can I show you something from the New, giving the increased and full light of God through His beloved Son? The thought might arise, as it has indeed, that Christianity sets aside the Jews altogether, not merely during the present economy, but for ever; so that we are to read "the people" merely as the type of those whom God is now forming for His praise. Our Lord Himself decides that question in Matthew 24. He shows us that there is a destiny of Israel which Daniel brings before us and which is not to be applied to any other people under the sun. It is their own portion, both in its sorrows and deliverances. The disciples had said (verse 3), "Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?" Observe here that the end of "the age" is the only proper meaning. It has no reference to the last catastrophe of the world as a material system, but to a certain dispensation running out its course in the world, from which the term *aeon* is totally distinct. The Lord warns them that they were in danger of being deceived; that persons were to come pretending to be Christ; that there were to be outward troubles; that His testimony was in no way to change the ordinary current of human affairs, for nation is to rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and, as regarded the physical state of the world, there would be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes. He is there only preparing them

for a fearful crisis that was coming. "All these are the beginning of sorrows." "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake." Up to verse 15, we have general statements. Then He at once narrows the scene to Jerusalem and to the land of Judæa. He does not continue the account of the gospel of the kingdom traversing the whole world, but shuts up His view to that strip of ground, where God's people dwelt, and to that city near which He then pronounced this very prophecy. "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand)," etc. Here we have positive direction to look at the very book that we are examining. The Lord in this part of His discourse was speaking about the same things that Daniel predicted in his prophecy. "Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains."

I ask, Can there be a question as to the meaning of these verses? Does any one doubt what "the holy place" means? Is it ever used in any other sense than the sanctuary of God at Jerusalem? The holy place, as a spot on earth, is invariably, in Scripture, the Jewish centre for worshipping God. "The abomination of desolation" means an idol which should bring in desolation upon the Jews. When this, then, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stands in the temple, those who heed Christ are to flee. There is not a word about Gentiles here — not a hint about the Church of God as such. Godly people, but Jews, in their own city, are warned, when they see this idol, to flee to the mountains of Judea in the vicinity. "And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day." It is not at all a Christian, but a Jewish scene. The Lord's day is that which Christians observe. It is the great symbol of our recognition of Christ risen, and of our blessing in Him; but the Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel.

"For then" (our Lord says) "shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." Many, I am aware, apply this to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and to the great calamities that then broke up the Jews. But there is one essential point of difference that ought not to be overlooked. The Jewish people were not delivered then. Whereas, when Daniel's prophecy is accomplished, they are, and must be, delivered — not at a subsequent epoch, but at that time. If Daniel is a true prophet (and no one who reveres the Lord, and rightly weighs His words, will question it), it is not that his prophecy failed, but that it remains to be fulfilled. Our Lord distinctly and positively quotes from that prophecy, and from the very chapter (Dan. 12) we are considering. And what does He connect with Israel's deliverance? His own coming as the Son of man from heaven. Who can say that this has been? The Romans, instead of being broken down in the time of Titus, were allowed to enslave the Jews. These were not then delivered, nor, up to the present moment, have they ever been the masters of their own temple, nor allowed to be in their own land, even as ordinary men. If there is one race more peculiarly proscribed in the Holy Land, it is the Jewish. The Turks, the present possessors of it, have held it for many a long year; and all, whether Crusaders or Saracens, have agreed to shut out the Jews. So that there has been nothing like the Son of man coming to deliver Israel. Michael has not stood up for them in that sense yet.

Thus, what I have shown from the Old Testament is amply confirmed by the New. Prophet after prophet, all distinctly furnish the same outline, i.e. a time of trouble, such as never was before, followed immediately by a deliverance such as Israel has never yet enjoyed. It is perfectly plain, as we all believe, that these prophecies are of God, that it is only a question of waiting God's time for Himself to accomplish them to the very letter. As our Lord says in this same chap. 24 of Matthew, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." It is not only that the general strain is true, but not one jot nor one tittle shall pass till all be fulfilled. The

notion that God has cast away His people, Israel, because He is now in mercy filling up the blank season of their rebellion against the Lord Jesus and the gospel, is distinctly treated in Romans 11, as the offspring of Gentile conceit. For not only is God able to graft the natural branches into their own olive tree, but when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, all Israel shall be saved according to clear prophecy. They are to become objects of divine saving mercy at the end, as we now; only in their case it will be in their land. "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion," etc.

If this be so, we have an important key to the prophecy of Daniel. Although the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans was so near, yet the Lord distinctly looks onward to another time. And what makes it the more remarkable is, that one evangelist does give us the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, but also distinguishes it from this future time of trouble. In Luke 21 is the chief reference of a positively prophetic kind to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. And mark the difference of the language: "And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed about with armies." Not a word about the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place. Luke passes over this entirely, and introduces what Matthew does not mention — Jerusalem encompassed with armies. "When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out," etc. That is, the Lord prescribes exactly the same course to be taken by the Jews in Jerusalem, whether at the approaching sack of the city by the Romans (as in Luke), or at the future desolation that should fall upon it (as in Matthew). So far there was an analogy between the two things: the godly were to flee away; they were not to trust to vain hopes of deliverance through some pretended Messiah, but were to know from the lips of the Lord Himself, that Jerusalem was to fall under the hand of the Gentiles. If any wanted to escape, it must be outside Jerusalem. "And let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." No matter what people may say of the necessity of any

keeping their feast, their path of safety is to avoid Jerusalem. There is no deliverance for Israel yet. "For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."

Luke, it will be observed, does not say, This is the time of trouble, such as was not since the beginning of the world. There is the most surprising perfectness of expression. Luke takes up first the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and Matthew nothing but the last siege, before the Jews are delivered. "For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations." This was not, therefore, the time of Jacob's trouble, when he should be delivered. At the time spoken of by Luke, instead of deliverance, they only fell into the trouble of a captivity, after the trouble of the war. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." That is accomplishing to the present hour. "The times of the Gentiles" are going on still. The Gentiles have always lorded it as yet. The Jews have not got a land or a city that they can call their own on the face of the earth. Who has their city and their land? The Gentiles. "The times of the Gentiles" are not expired. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." They are its masters, and, as such, they will tread it down till the allotted times are fulfilled — not for ever. Nowhere is it said that this is to go on till the end of time. On the contrary, Gentile dominion over the Jews is soon to close. We have this in the next verse.

We have already seen a most regular, orderly setting forth of the troubles that were to befall Jerusalem. And the times of the Gentiles have been running on ever since the days of Titus to the present moment. But in verse 25 begins the closing scene, which is the only thing mentioned in Matthew 24, from verse 15 and onwards — and

this, because of the question put by the disciples, "What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the age?" But in Luke they simply ask, "What sign will there be when these things [i.e. the overthrow of the temple] come to pass?" Accordingly, the Lord gives them the coming up of the Romans; and then He goes on, down the Gentile stream of time, till the end. But Matthew confines himself to the close in answer to the question which he records. This is the simple reason, and nothing can be more beautiful than the way in which the truth comes out. After this in Luke we have the great events when the times of the Gentiles close. "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity . . . men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things that are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." All this is kept distinct from the past siege.

People who apply Matthew 24 in a figurative way to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, are obliged to make out that the coming of the Son of man from heaven is a mere figure, representing the providential acting of God through Titus to put down the Jews. But Luke 21 gives a complete refutation to this idea. For here the Spirit of God shows that Jerusalem has been taken, and the Gentile times run on: when they are about to expire, the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory — hundreds of years after Titus. The closing scene is brought in as finishing up, or consequent on, the times of the Gentiles.

But there is more. "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh." And then, a little further on (verse 32), we find this remarkable expression, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." It is a misuse of this term which has led to a good deal of the confusion on the subject. When does the phrase "this generation" come in? After the Son of man has already come

in power and glory — not when they saw Jerusalem compassed with armies. That is an important point to help in determining its true meaning. If "this generation" really meant a man's lifetime, such a place in the prophecy would be incongruous. The vulgar notion might have been reasonable if the phrase occurred just at the compassing of Jerusalem with armies. But it has no sense if put in after the times of the Gentiles are accomplished. So that "this generation," if taken temporally, must plainly embrace a scope of eighteen centuries at the least. What then, is its true force? It means — what it does very often in Scripture — this Christ-rejecting race of Israel, and not a mere period of time. It is used in a moral sense to describe a race acting after a particular way, good or evil. Moses, reproaching them, says, "They have corrupted themselves they are a perverse and crooked generation. And He said, I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation." (Deut. 32) Here, most clearly, their moral condition as a people is meant, and not the time in which this was manifested. In the Psalms we have a further key to the proper meaning. Thus, in Psalm 12, "Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, Thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." If by "generation" were merely meant a term of thirty or forty years, what sense would there be in the words "for ever"? This refers, not at all to a course of a few years, but to the moral state of a people, and that of the people of Israel. In like manner, the force of the words in Luke is quite plain. "This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled." The race of Israel still going on in unbelief and rejection of Christ is what the Lord means. He is saying, as it were, I will prepare you for the terrible truth, that this Christ-rejecting generation is to continue till all these things are fulfilled. Apart from prophecy, how could such an issue have been anticipated? For it might have been supposed that, while Christianity was going over the whole earth, and making conquests everywhere, if one nation more than another was to be brought under the power of Christ, it must be Israel loved for the fathers' sake. But no. The Jews are to proceed in the same unbelief. There might be a line of faithful ones among them, but the wicked

generation which Christ then denounced shall not pass away till all is fulfilled. And what will follow? Even as the Psalms say, "the generation to come." Israel will be born again — will have a new heart given them. Then are they to be the people that shall praise the Lord.

This, I must add, entirely falls in with the rest of Scripture. For the Lord; under the figure of a fruitless fig-tree, had set forth the then Israel. On that tree He consequently pronounced a curse. When it is said in one of the Gospels that the time of figs was not yet, it means the season of their ripeness or of their ingathering was not yet arrived. Hence the figs could not have been taken from the tree. Had it borne any, they must have been there. It was merely when the figs were still unripe, that our Lord came to seek fruit; but there was not one. There was plentiful profession — leaves, but no fruit. Therefore said He, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever!" Such, in figure, is "this generation." But how is that to be reconciled with Israel's being to the praise of the Lord by-and-bye? Israel must be born again. "This generation" will never produce fruit for the Lord. It is to be destroyed under the judgment of God; and a new race will be born. The type of the past makes room for a striking figure of the future.

From these prophecies that we have looked at, two out of the Old and two out of the New Testament, it is clear that the time of trouble of which Daniel speaks, is entirely future; and that Luke distinguishes expressly the time of great distress just about to fall, and which, in fact, has fallen on Jerusalem, from a closing time of far more intense trouble which is yet to come. We now return to Daniel, with the clear light of other scriptures from both Testaments, showing God's word to be positive and precise, that Israel must pass through an unheard-of sea of trouble, but out of that they are to be delivered. It is, in fact, the precursor of their great salvation from God.

Still there was another question unanswered. However important Daniel might feel it to know that his countrymen would infallibly be delivered, yet there was another question: What will be the condition of the Jews who are not in the land? What will become of those not in Jerusalem or in Judaea, who consequently are not the immediate objects of the great deliverance wrought there? The second verse of this chapter answers it. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The verse is constantly applied to the resurrection of the body; and it is true that the Spirit finds the figure, which is here used to foreshadow the revival of Israel, upon that resurrection. But it can be shown that it has not the least reference to a bodily resurrection either of us or of Israel. As this may seem difficult to some, I am bound to produce evidence from Scripture that the Holy Spirit uses resurrection as a figure of a blessed restoration from ruin.

In Isaiah 26 you have what I suppose will not be questioned: an account of Israel's trouble — their trouble under Gentile lords. In verse 13, it is said, "O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us: but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name." That is not said by or about the Church, though it may be applied to us ever so frequently. We have not got other lords over us — the Jews have. They have had masters over them for thousands of years, and they have still. "But by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise." These lords who had dominion over them are gone: they are dead — they shall not rise. Can these words be about literal resurrection? If it were meant, they must rise like others. It is clearly said of their perishing in this world. That is, the figure of the resurrection is applied. They are gone and shall not be lords over Israel any more. "Therefore hast Thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish. Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, Thou hast increased the nation: Thou art glorified." Who can doubt that the passage speaks of Israel only?

"Thou hadst removed it far unto all the ends of the earth." Could that be said about the Church? When the gospel extends itself all over the world, it is the power of love in men — the activity of God's grace going out everywhere. Not so with Israel. They have a central city, where, had they been faithful, God would have maintained them; — so that their removal to the ends of the earth was a divine judgment upon them, not a mission of love. "Lord, in trouble have they visited Thee, they poured out a prayer when Thy chastening was upon them." That was the effect of it. Israel humbles himself. He that had waxed fat and kicked, was now penitent; and the Lord listens to his confession, and looks on his anguish. "Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in Thy sight, O Lord." And then in verse 19, the Lord answers. "Thy dead men shall live, my dead body shall they arise." He claims them as His own, even though they had so sinned and were in that deplorable, degraded condition. "My dead body shall they arise." Mark that expression as connected with Daniel. "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."

Can it be questioned by any one who has followed the reasons already advanced, that the Spirit is not speaking about the Church there, but about Israel, in contrast with their Gentile lords now prostrate, never to domineer again? Israel, on the contrary, though in the most dismal condition, was only as the dead body which the Lord claims as His own, and as pertaining to Him they shall arise. The resurrection of the body, of the dead, is a blessed and fundamental truth which underlies and is assumed in the prophetic imagery. But the passage speaks of the nation as yet to arise according to God spiritually, but withal as a nation, too, as the next chapter (Isaiah 27), which is the conclusion of the strain, makes yet more evident. Use, enjoy, apply this scripture as you will, but deny not its strict and primary force.

Turning to Daniel, now, see what a light is thrown upon the passage. Not only will there be deliverance for the Jews in the Holy Land, who have witnessed all the conflicts between Antichrist and the king of the north, but for many that sleep (that is, many who had not yet come forward, who had been apart from the troubles of their nation, who had been in total obscurity, as it were sleeping in the dust of the earth). "Many of them. . . shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The text shows plainly that it is not the resurrection of the just; because when this takes place, nobody rises to shame and everlasting contempt. The passage has no direct reference to a bodily resurrection, which simply furnishes a figure for the national revival of Israel, who are described as sleeping in the dust, to express the greatness of their degradation. Now they were to awake and sing, according to Isaiah.

But we must turn to another passage — the clearest, perhaps, of any upon the subject. It is in the prophecy of Ezekiel, where, in a most plain prediction of the restoration of Israel, the same figure is used. Isaiah called them a dead body, and spoke of them as dwelling in the dust, from which they were to awake. Daniel also called it an awaking out of their sleep in the dust. Ezekiel goes yet farther, and speaks of them as not only dead, but buried in their graves. Now, if it can be proved that this does not refer to a literal bodily resurrection, but to a national restoration of Israel, the chain of evidence will be complete. That it is so, I doubt not; for in this prophecy we are not left to gather from the context what the meaning is, but there is a divine interpretation. We have not only the prophecy, but the prophecy explained. And the explanation of the prophecy given to and by Ezekiel shuts out every other thought save the one I have been endeavoring to set before you. In the beginning of Ezekiel 37 we find an open valley full of dry bones. "And He said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, Thou knowest. Again He said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus

saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but there was no breath in them." Can any one seriously think this is the way in which the Church will rise from the dead? Is there a soul so deluded as to take this for a description of the order in which our bodies are to be raised? Bones coming together first; then the flesh and skin covering; and then breath put into them? Can it be with sobriety maintained that this is primarily intended as a figure of the work of the gospel in giving life to souls? If so, what is the meaning of the bones first, etc.?

"Then said He unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God; Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. So I prophesied as He commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Then He said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel." What more simple than the explanation God gives of the vision? He applies it to the whole house of Israel, though, no doubt, it was the vision of a resurrection. Ezekiel saw the bones live, and the men stand on their feet. But, then, we have God giving us the real meaning and proper application of it. The resurrection of the body we have most fully elsewhere, as in the New Testament, and in Job also. In the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and the Revelation, we have the resurrection, both of the just and of the unjust — a blessed resurrection for the one, and another resurrection that will have awful consequences of sorrow for those involved. But here we have the same God, using the figure of resurrection to describe the blessing that He is to confer upon the people

of Israel. Similarly the figure is applied in Luke 15 to the conversion of the prodigal son: "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Paul gives us the blessing that will result to the world by-and-bye through the restoration of Israel under the same figure: "What shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15) I maintain, then, that no other interpretation of this passage bears the stamp of the Spirit of God. People may preach the gospel from it, or apply it figuratively: I am not objecting to such an employment of it. But the word of God gives us both the vision and the interpretation. And I have no more reason to believe the one than the other. God says it means the house of Israel; therefore it does not mean the resurrection of the body. When men are raised from the dead in proper physical sense, there will be no such thing as the house of Israel among those so raised. Resurrection terminates all relations of time and the world. Hence, what we have here is simply a figure taken from resurrection, and applied to the future blessing of Israel — then to be a holy nation, but a nation still.

"These bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O My people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." Nothing can be plainer. All the evidence of the chapter confirms the same thing. But more than that: "And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put My Spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord." The next portion throws yet more light upon it. We have another vision connected with this. Two sticks are taken and joined in one, presenting another aspect of the blessing in store for Israel. If all Israel were to be brought out of their graves, the twelve tribes might still have formed two separate parties as in earlier days. But now comes

in a new condition, to show that, when the resuscitation of Israel takes place, their once-divided interests will coalesce. That does not refer to the Church, nor to our condition when raised from the dead. We shall not be planted in the land of Israel under David as our king. Even if we take David as a type of Christ, yet this is not our relationship. We are Christ's body and bride — not a people merely, reigned over by a king.

Thus, by comparing these different portions of the word of God, we have strong proof that the passage in Daniel refers solely to Israel. And as the first verse shows us the deliverance of the Jews in their land at the time of their sorest trouble, the second verse shows us that which is the key to so many of the prophecies — the coming out of the race of Israel from their hiding-places and deep degradation, set forth under the figure of sleeping in the dust, and being raised up out of it. But whether it be those in the land or those who come out of the dust of the earth, or from among the Gentiles, none will be delivered except those that are the objects of the counsels of God, i.e. "found written in the book." Some of them may awake, as the figure expresses it, to take their part in the great struggle at the close; but not being registered in God's book, they shall be abandoned to shame and everlasting contempt. For the rest it is not a mere national deliverance, but much more. Those that are delivered will be truly born of God. A spiritual character will attach to their rise, as well as a national one.

But let us pursue the rest of the chapter briefly. The Spirit of God shows us that some among them will have a remarkable maturity. They are those who are said to be "wise." "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament." These have been distinguished in a time of trouble among the Jews. "And they that instruct the many in righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." We are obliged thus to change the version, because the expression that is used here — "turn many to righteousness" — is unhappy. The real sense is "they that teach righteousness to the many." It is not a

question of their success — whether they actually turn them to righteousness, or not, is not the point; but "they that instruct the many," or the mass of the Jews, are thus promised the blessing. They might, perhaps, have scanty results; but the question is, whether they are labouring for God, and maintaining the authority of His truth. The same Hebrew word is used in other parts of the Scripture, where it no doubt means to justify. The English translators — judging, with good reason, that "justify" would not suit in a clause which describes the action of men, whereas justification certainly belongs to God — have changed it into "turn to righteousness." But I take the liberty of preferring the version already mentioned — "instructing in righteousness." Thus it would appear, that there are certain of the Jews that will have shown comparatively a great degree of intelligence in the mind of God. They are called "the wise." But besides the intelligent, others go out in spiritual energy, as we have seen, to teach the mass of the Jews, who then were, or afterwards fell under the power of Antichrist. "The many" is a technical phrase in Daniel for the faithless mass or those that are lost. They that instruct the many in righteousness are to shine as the stars for ever and ever.

And, further, I must take the opportunity of saying that this is the true meaning of a verse in Isaiah 53, that has amazingly perplexed the critics: "By His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many." No doubt many Christians have connected it with "by His obedience shall many be made righteous." But there is no connection whatever between the two thoughts. Take it as has been suggested in the passage before us, and all is plain. Nor have I the least doubt that such is its true meaning. It is to instruct in righteousness; justification is not the point there. In the Lord's case the instruction of course will be perfect; but even there the object is "many" (not "the many," as in Daniel). Here we find that these godly souls among the Jews have a certain knowledge of divine truth, and they instruct the mass in righteousness. It will not be a question of showing and preaching grace at that day. They will instruct them in right-

eousness. They may bring out the blessed thoughts of God in connection with Israel; but it will be instruction in righteousness. The sense of "justify" would not be true, if we look either at the subjects or the objects of the action. We could understand, perhaps, that of the Lord in Isaiah 53. But even so; ask any person, what is the meaning of His justifying many through His knowledge, and he will have to travel far enough for a probable answer. Some advocates for it may try to understand, "by the knowledge of Him," but that will not stand. The true meaning is that the Lord would use His knowledge as the means of instructing many. In Isaiah and Daniel, it refers to instructing in righteousness, not justifying nor turning to righteousness.

In the next verse comes an important principle, upon which a few words must be said, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Daniel is here informed that the things which he had seen, and the communications which he had heard, though they were, no doubt, of God, were not to be turned to use for the present. All was to be a sealed book until a distant day; in a word, until the time of the end. In a later verse, Daniel puts the question, "What shall be the end of these things!" And the answer is, "Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." Thus clearly are we shown that the understanding of the words of God is a spiritual thing, and not a matter of mere intellect. If it were so, then the wicked might understand as much as the righteous. It is expressly said, that "none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand." That is, these intelligent ones, of whom we have heard before. Mark the importance of this. In the last chapter of the Apocalypse, we have the prophet John addressed at the close of his prophecy. The contrast is most striking. In the last of Daniel, he is told that all is to be closed up and sealed until the time of the end.

In the last chapter of the Revelation, John is told not to seal "the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand." In other words, there is an exact contrast between the injunction given to the two prophets. To the Jewish prophet all is sealed till the time of the end. To the Christian prophet nothing is sealed: all is open. How comes this? The answer is, that the Church — the Christian — is always supposed to be at the time of the end. The gift of the Holy Ghost has changed everything. From that time nothing has been sealed to the Christian. All the mind, the affections, the counsels of God, yea, and His secrets about the world, in the Scriptures of truth, are opened to him by the power of God.

The Christian, even if you take the weak and ignorant, has the Holy Ghost dwelling in him. Therefore, in writing to the babes, does John say, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things." All the learning in the world can never make a man understand the Bible; whereas, if a soul is born of God, he is capable of understanding anything that God reveals: he only requires to be led on, and more perfectly instructed. The apostle is not speaking of the actual requirements of the babe, which might be very slight. In whom, then, do we boast, and ought we to boast? In God, who has given us such an amazing privilege. Whoever has the Spirit of God, has therein a divine capacity of entering into the things of God. He only wants to be in proper circumstances, dependent on God, and valuing His word, and what is of God will be manifest and proved to be divine. This is connected with the fact, that the Spirit of God is given to the Church, in a special sense, which not even the prophets knew. For although they had the Spirit to inspire them, as we, of course, have not, yet we have the Holy Ghost always dwelling in us; one consequence of which is, that we have spiritual intelligence, "the mind of Christ," which they had not. And therefore, as you may remember, the Spirit of God in 1 Peter 1 contrasts the condition of the Christian now with that of the saints, yea, of the prophets themselves, under the Old Testament. He shows us that they were "searching what and what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did

signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that, not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." That is, we stand in the present knowledge and enjoyment of things which, they were told, did not concern them but us of the New Testament. This is very important. They had the promise, and it was salvation to them. But we have much more: we have positive, accomplished blessing — redemption not merely promised, but effected. And the Christian now, relieved by grace from all question about his sins, is free to enter into the blessed things of God.

God accordingly says now, You are not to seal the book. The time of the end is that in which we are contemplated, the end morally being come. And therefore we are waiting for the Lord to come at any time. Where the Jewish thought prevails, people are always looking out for an antecedent time of great trouble. They do not see that God has a purpose about Israel, as well as about the Church; that, when He has removed us to our own proper place in heavenly glory, He will again take up the Jews; and that they, not we, must go through the great tribulation, and see the appointed signs which herald the approach of the Son of man to the earth.

This also serves to explain how it is that we can understand these prophecies. Daniel could not: as he says here, "And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." Then comes in Christianity, and not one of the words is sealed — not one shut up. They are all open. To us the end is always nigh; we are said to be in the end of the world: as it is written in 1 Corinthians 10:11, "These things were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the age are come." And it is always so. "Christ is said to have appeared once in the end of the world, to put away sin by the sacrifice of

Himself." The Church is ever supposed to be in the end, and, by virtue of the Spirit, anticipating the godly, intelligent remnant. Indeed, the Church began with a remnant of Jews that had faith in their Messiah. Thus Pentecost began with that which will be true again after we are removed to heaven. For when God has translated the saints, and the time of the end is literally come, there will once more be a remnant of faithful Jews. "But the wise shall understand." The Church is always supposed to be standing in these privileges, and is essentially above the mere discoveries or progress of the age.

As to the "days" spoken of in the close of the chapter, what is their meaning? In verse 11, it is said, "From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days." It had been previously said in verse 7, by the man clothed in linen, that it should be "for a time, times, and an half" — that is, for 1260 days. Verse 11 adds thirty days, or one month more, to the 1260 days. Then, in verse 12, we find a further epoch: "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days." That is, a month and a half are added still. So that we have, first of all, 1260 days; then 1290 days; then 1335 days. What, we may ask, is the meaning of this? and from what time are we to reckon these days? The answer is, "From the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up."

And now I would make a remark of some importance, as linking together all which had been said, and yielding a conclusive proof of the true interpretation of this prophecy. It is the very verse that our Lord quoted in Matthew 24: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand!) then let them which are in Judea flee into the mountains." The question is, Where does Daniel speak of this? I answer, in verse 11 of this chap-

ter. It is the only verse that properly answers to the one in Matthew.

We are told that from that time there are to be 1290 days; next, a further period of 45 days, and then full blessing. Has that been the case? If you apply it to anything past, as for instance, to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus; when you reckon 1335 days from the time when the Romans took Jerusalem, is the blessing really come? It matters little how you take the days. Let them be conceived to be 1335 years from that destruction of Jerusalem: still have you got the blessing of the Jews and the saint's blessing according to the word of God here? Nothing of the sort. What then follows? That you have dated it from a wrong epoch. "The abomination that maketh desolate" is not yet come; when it does come, in the sense of which our Lord speaks, 1335 days follow, and then will be the full blessing.

But now another word as to these differences: first the 1260, then the 1290, and then, lastly, the 1335 days. I think the reason is, because the blessing of Israel will not be brought in at once. The first great turning-point will be the destruction of "the king." That takes place when the 1260 days expire. But as we saw in Daniel 11, the king of the north has to be disposed of, after "the king." Accordingly, there is another period of delay. But whether that will coincide with the thirty days more (or 1290), or with the subsequent 45 days (1335), I am not prepared to say. Of this, however, we may be assured, that the last of them bring us down to the accomplishment of the whole work: and I am inclined to think that the destruction of the king of the north is rather one of the latest, if not the last, of these acts of judgment before the epoch of blessing begins. In Isaiah 10:12, it is said, "When the Lord hath performed His whole work upon Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." Does not this seem to indicate that it is the last act of the Lord in judgment connected with the blessing of Israel? Thus we have a brief interval or two after the destruction of Antichrist, during which

the Lord is still putting down His and Israel's enemies. "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days."

I now close the book, praying the Lord to make it of real profit as well as interest. One of the most important points of profit will have been this — to deliver God's children from the idea that the Church is everything. That is not a true system. It is to fall into the same sort of mistake that the old astronomers used to make, when they viewed the world as the centre of the solar system, because it was the place where they were living. This always spoils man. He makes himself the centre of everything. The same error is made in theology. The Church, because we are in it, has been made the centre of Scripture, whereas Christ is the true one. He is the centre of heavenly blessedness, and the Church circles around Him; He is the centre of Jewish blessing, and the Jews circle around Him. Therefore, whether in heaven or earth, Christ is the kernel of all God's thoughts of blessing. And when our hearts are fixed in Him, there is peace, progress, and blessing. The reason why souls very often have not peace, is because they are occupied with themselves; for they do not find what they think ought to be in a Christian. Whereas, if I am looking at Christ, there is no difficulty. The question then becomes: Does Christ deserve that such a one as I am should be saved? Can I deny it? The effect of this is that I am happy, and God can use me in His service. But if I am troubled about the salvation of my own soul, how can I be occupied in the service of others? The great question of self never will be settled till Christ is the centre of everything to us. May it be so! He is the centre for all God's thoughts of love and righteousness as well as of glory.