

Man in History and Prophecy

A BIBLE OUTLINE

BY

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FOREWORD.

THOUGH we are expressly forbidden to fix upon dates for the effluxion of prophetic times, we are encouraged to exercise ourselves to discern the signs of those times, and to recognise the moral and other characteristics of the prophetic seasons or dispensations. To this end some knowledge of the history of the human race, and of the authoritative forecast of its future, presented in the Bible, is necessary. And if the Bible does not provide this guidance no light is to be looked for elsewhere. If the "apocalyptic" element in Holy Writ is merely speculative, then in what does it excel the vaticinations of poets, mystics, and philosophers, ancient and modern? The alternative is clear cut. From the Bible we may learn what is to befall the human race, or we may not know anything at all. And for this reason. What the Bible declares concerning the future it declares as revelation from God. It is this or it is nothing. There is no middle course. Compromise is ruled out by the claim of Scripture to be the only communication that God has made to men by means of words, and that has been preserved. In creation is revealed that God is. In the Scriptures is revealed what He is, what He has done, and what He purposes to do.

This, then, is the presupposition of the following pages, and their aim is to trace, in broad and general outline, the history of the human race, and then to describe, in the same general and broad way, the developments that await it up to the destined consummation under the Lord Jesus Christ.

The reader will not look here for detail. It is not that much has had to be omitted, but that only the barest essentials could be given place in such a pamphlet as this. But even a brief outline may not be without its usefulness to those into whose hands, in the providence of God, this booklet may fall.

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MAN IN HISTORY AND PROPHECY: A BIBLE OUTLINE.

THE Hebrew poet, the writer of the Eighth Psalm, extolling the excellency of God, enhances his theme in a brief series of contrasts. There is the lofty vault of Heaven which declares the glory of the Lord, and there are the tongues of babes that lisp His praise. There is the majesty of the sun, the moon, and the stars that roll on in their endless course; and there is man and the son of man, feeble in himself, fugitive in his successive generations. This contrast is further accentuated when man's place in the scheme of nature is defined. Made but little lower than the angelic hosts, and designed to have dominion over the works of God on the earth, the insignificance of his person and of his powers stand over against the magnificence of his authority. This was the purpose of God:

“Thou madest him to have dominion
over the works of Thy hands;
Thou hast put all things under his feet”.

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Centuries later the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quoted these words and added a significant comment: "But now we see not yet all things subjected to him" (ch. 2. 8). The fact is obvious enough; man does not now exercise the authority to which, according alike to the historian (Gen. 1. 27, 28) and to the poet in this Psalm, he was originally appointed by God. On the contrary, the limited control he does exercise over the animal world is secured to him only by force or by guile. He is at enmity with his inheritance, as his inheritance is at enmity with him. Nor could the case be otherwise, since man is at enmity with himself; man with man waging internecine and interminable strife; man preying upon man, family at feud with family, clan with clan, nation with nation, race with race; man's inhumanity to man making mourners of mankind.

The opening words of the Bible state, without embellishment of any kind, that when the Heaven and the earth had their beginning it was God who created them. The remainder of the chapter, however, is better read, not as an account of the creation of the world in six days (language which is nowhere used in Scripture) but as the story of how God restored the earth from the chaotic condition into which it had fallen as the result of a catastrophe not specified,

but implied in the language of the second verse. The purpose of this rehabilitation of the earth was that it might become the proper sphere for a new kingdom under the lordship of man. And concerning His work, including the creation of the first man, Adam, God declared His satisfaction, "it was very good". Turning for a moment from the opening of the Scriptures to their close, the ultimate goal of the creation, its final and permanent condition, is described in the pregnant words, "God . . . all in all" (1 Cor. 15-28).

The Integrity of the Bible.

Thus the beginning and thus the end; the termini are in complete harmony. Such an end to such a beginning seems inevitable, indeed, but just here we are brought face to face with the actual condition of the world, intimated in the words: "We see not yet all things put under him", *i.e.*, under man. On the contrary, we see such a condition as that which is lightly sketched in the opening paragraph above. Two questions here force themselves on the mind. From the condition of excellence implied in the Creator's expression of satisfaction in His handiwork, how came this deterioration and confusion about? How is the ultimate state of harmony and efficiency, implied in the words "God . . . all in all", to be evolved from the present

apparently purposeless welter of strife and misery? The answer to these questions is supplied in the Bible, in its outline of the history of mankind upon the earth, and in its forecast of the future of the race. The purpose of this paper is to endeavour to trace, in its broadest features, the course of history and prophecy. Incidentally it will become plain that while the Bible partakes of the character of a library on account of the variety of its authorship, the range of its subjects, the diversity of its literary forms, and because of the extent of the time that elapsed between the inception of the work and its completion; yet the unity of purpose, the sometimes hidden, sometimes evident, harmony of its parts, the correspondence of the end with the beginning, the interrelation of the separate links that unite these in such a way that the latter is the adjusted, though not artificially produced, climax to the former, give the impression that a single superintending mind is ultimately responsible for the whole. It is to be feared that to many readers the Bible is simply a fortuitous accumulation of the records of the aspirations, the hopes, the religious discoveries, the moral convictions of unequally enlightened, but on the whole devout men, mingled in parts with grosser and more dubious matter. On the other hand, there are many to whom the Bible is more or less a

miscellaneous collection of comforting promises, of illuminating religious epigrams, combined with some stories of ancient worthies, and, above all, with the story of the Cross as the means whereby men may be saved. Now, of the two, the latter is to be preferred as beyond measure the more worthy way of approach to the Sacred Volume. Yet there is a way more worthy still whereby the defects of both may be corrected. For the Bible is a record of the ways of God with man in His revelation of Himself to them, and the forecast of human history and of the destiny of the race contained therein is authoritative inasmuch as it proceeds from Him. This point will not be referred to further, none the less one of the objects in view is to illustrate the integrity of the Bible, and the presence in it of a plan for the accomplishment of a purpose worthy of God, and necessary to be accomplished if this earth is ever again to become the scene of efficiency and felicity, a place worthy of its Creator.

Part I.—HISTORY.

The Constitution of Man.

Man as he proceeded from the hand of his Creator is a composite being, formed by the union of spirit with matter, the former related to the latter as the tenant to the tenement. The material part of man, his body,

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is formed from, and retains its community with, the earth as it is written: "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3. 19). Man is thus doubly dependent; by the produce of the ground his body is nourished, and by God, from Whose imparted breath his spirit at the first was given, that spirit is maintained in life (Gen. 2. 7). Work was provided for him that his physical frame might be properly employed under the guidance of his mind; he was to till the ground (v. 15). Shortly after his creation Adam is found exercising his intellectual faculties in distinguishing the different members of the animal kingdom, to which he himself, as to his body, belongs (v. 19). There is provided for him, too, a suitable companion, a help meet for him, and an adequate object for that power of affection which was not the least of his varied and rich endowments.

His Crowning Gift.

The supreme gift bestowed on man by God must be allowed brief mention here, for its peculiar quality made his subsequent history possible. Man was not created an automaton. His was not a merely mechanical constitution, bound to work in an inevitable way in response to impulses imparted from without. God endowed him with a will, the power of choice and of pur-

pose, and the responsibility to use it. Man was not left to the guidance of instinct, that compelling desire to satisfy natural appetites which marks the animals, and for which no moral blame can attach to them where the rights of others are invaded in the pursuit. Animals are non-moral, without a sense of right and wrong; man is furnished with such a sense, making him responsible for the control of his actions in every sphere. Plainly this high endowment involves a risk, risk that was not incurred in the creation of animals less favoured and intended for lower and transient ends. Used in conformity with the purpose for which he was brought into existence, man's will and his moral nature are his greatest glory; they bring him near to God. Used without regard to the purpose of his being, and in defiance of the will of God, they become his shame and his danger, and bring him into community with those forces of evil which have set themselves to mar the harmony of the universe, to overthrow the Throne of God, and to plunge all that exists into chaos. This higher element in the nature of man was soon subjected to a test as simple as it was adequate. One tree in the area in which he had been placed was taboo. Whereas all other trees, and all other products of the ground, were placed at his unrestricted disposal, this was rigorously forbidden him under no less a penalty than

death. The narrative does not suggest that the tree was in itself harmful; on the other hand, Adam was entirely free from any economic necessity to eat of that particular tree, for every need was already abundantly supplied from equally accessible sources.

His Fall.

This world and the human race by which it is inhabited are but a part of the universe. How far that universe extends, what the character and powers of other sentient beings that people it may be, we know but little. This much is clear, however, that mankind is in contact with, and is influenced by, intelligences of an order at least as high as his own, some of them good, some evil; and that these intelligences desire equally to control the destiny of the human race. It was at the suggestion of the leader of "the world rulers of this darkness", "the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places", that man fell. Under the aspect of a serpent, or at any rate in close association with a serpent, he approached the woman, Eve, instilling into her mind a doubt of the benevolent purpose of God in the prohibition of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil", and arousing her curiosity about that forbidden knowledge. From this attractive realm, Satan suggested, God had shut out His newly formed creatures for some selfish purpose of His own. Eve,

who was entirely deceived, promptly disobeyed the command of God; a command which she both knew and understood, as her language testified. Adam was now in a dilemma. To remain loyal to God meant the loss of the companion God had provided for him. To follow Eve in her disobedience involved the unknown penalty denounced upon that disobedience. The issue was not obscure; he chose with his eyes open. Deliberately, and with full knowledge of the wrong he did, he defied the ordinance of God (1 Tim. 2. 14). Immediately this step was taken the eyes of both were opened to the realities of their new condition. Soon the voice of conscience was corroborated by the voice of God, and they were expelled from the favourable environment of Eden. A curse was pronounced upon the ground for man's sake; yet not with consequences wholly evil to him, for toil and weariness are not unmitigated evils, they disguise blessings.

The effects of the fall soon become manifest. In His primal ordinance concerning man, God had ordained the sanctity of the life of the individual and of the institution of the family, in order to ensure the preservation and continuance of the race. One of the sons of Adam murdered his brother, thus breaking down the first of these. Cain, who, since the human race is descended from one pair of parents, must, in the nature

of the case, have married his sister,* founded a family, and in the course of a few generations there appears the name of one of his descendants, Lamech, who was a bigamist. Thus the second of these primitive safeguards of human welfare was broken down.

Lamech is one of the most significant characters in early history. It is not too much to say that mankind has lived in his unhappy shadow; that in him, so far as the record goes, were first manifested certain tendencies that have proved disastrous to subsequent generations. He refused the prerogative of God, and declared himself his own judge and vindicator. What need for him to submit his cause to any? His new-found might was henceforth his right.

Primitive Man.

Cain was the first agriculturalist, Abel the first pastoralist. As man and beast multiplied, the pastoralist led his flocks afield in order to find sufficient pasture. Of these nomads, Jabal, Lamech's son, was the first. "He was the father of such as dwell in tents, and have cattle." Jubal was the first musician; in him the line of the fine arts was founded. Yet another son, Tubal-

* Long subsequently Abraham married his half sister, and, later still, a similar marriage was deemed possible in the family of David (2 Sam. 13. 13). In the Egyptian royal family the marriage of the heir with his sister was customary at least up to the opening of the Christian era.

cain, was the first of the artisans, the metal workers. It is probable, in the nature of the case, that he discovered metal ore by the action of fire upon stone, perhaps when he had built a fireplace in the open. To judge from the remains of the early ages embedded in the surface of the earth, prior to this time man's weapons, whether for hunting the animals for food and covering, or for conflict with his fellows, had been of wood—clubs, or of wood strengthened and made more effective by flints—spears, and axes. That men had already begun to prey upon each other is evident from Lamech's song; where force is the arbiter the older men fear the younger, the inferior in strength holding the stronger in well-founded dread. Tubal-cain having made his discovery of metal, speedily learned that it was possible to give it a purposed shape and an edge. Thus the first sword came into the hands of men. Lamech perceived its significance. It made him superior to his contemporaries; it made him more than the equal of the generation succeeding him, redressing the advantage vigour gives to youth. The sword chant of Lamech is the oldest on record:

“ I will slay a man for wounding me,
And a young man for bruising me”.

It is the song of the ages that hushes all other singing; the old song that will not

cease until the new song peals out from around the Throne of God.

The enterprise and imagination of the young lead to discovery and invention. The experience and riper reflective powers of the old enable them to apply to effective ends the inventions and discoveries of youth. The moral character of the world does not change. Lamech's "generation" (cp. Matt. 24. 34) has not passed away. As with the discovery of metal at the beginning, so with modern inventions, of which the aeroplane is a characteristic example. Men think in the first place, not of the beneficent possibilities of the new power, but of its capacity for destruction. Accessions to his powers are used not for the welfare of the whole, but to enable him to impose his will upon his neighbour.

The Flood.

The early Bible history is extremely condensed. The whole Book, from Genesis to Revelation, covers a period of four thousand odd years; of these Genesis alone accounts for two thousand five hundred, while chapters four and five cover not less than fifteen hundred years. During this period men multiplied upon the earth, and as they increased in number they increased also in iniquity until "the Flood came and took them all away". But "Noah, being warned of God, . . . prepared an ark to the saving

of his house'', and in this ark ''few, that is eight souls, were saved through (the) water'', being preserved therein until the Flood had subsided. These eight persons were Noah and his wife, his sons and their wives. Noah is described as one who trusted God and as a preacher of righteousness (Heb. 11. 7; 2 Peter 2. 5). From this family the earth was repopled. The innate depravity of the nature of man, his inveterate tendency to moral evil, as well as to rebellion against God, soon asserted itself, and the history of the ante-diluvian world was reproduced in that of the post-diluvians.

The Nations.

Very brief space is devoted to the history of the race before the next great epoch is reached; little more, indeed, than is occupied with a skeleton genealogical list of the descendants of Noah's sons. In chapters ten and eleven the chronological order is not observed. In chapter 10. 5 the words ''nations'', ''families'', ''tongue(s)'', ''lands'' are necessary to describe the developments of these centuries. In chapter 11 the writer reverts to an earlier period in order to account for this dispersion of the descendants of a single family. ''The whole earth was of one language (Heb. ''lip'', *i.e.*, all men articulated the same sounds) and of one speech (Heb. ''words'', *i.e.*, the same sounds

everywhere conveyed the same meaning). There were, however, certain dangers threatening, the signs of which were not unobserved by the statesmen of that day. Differences between individuals involved their families; and as related families increased these family conflicts had a tendency to become clan feuds. As the clans grew in numbers and in strength the cleavages became more marked, and the danger of widespread strife and disruption more portentous of evil. The idea of a Tower and a name was conceived, not, indeed, to provide shelter against another flood, for the population of the earth had increased too greatly for such an expedient. Neither, for the same reason, was it intended to provide a place of refuge from their enemies; the Tower was evidently for all, not merely for a part, but as stated in the narrative "lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth". A disruptive power was discerned at work among men, and foreseeing its effects statesmen threw themselves into the struggle against it with all their resources. In vain, for, to their consternation, they found one day that it was no longer possible to communicate one with another as formerly. One consequence of this confusion was that the people were divided according to their tongues. The entirely unexpected thing had happened, and, speaking figuratively, the

Tower of Babel toppled to its fall. What it stood for of the peace of mankind was denied them. The hope of racial unity had perished.

Three facts, the recognition of which is necessary to the understanding of the course of human history, emerge here. They are:

First, that sin is a disintegrating force, a dividing and scattering power in the sphere in which it works.

Second, that man is engaged in an age-long struggle against sin, striving to defeat this disruptive power.

Third, that man's struggle against sin is carried on in vain.

World Power.

The attempts of the wise to preserve the unity of the race having been thus frustrated, men were divided under the influence of different natural forces, linguistic, climatic, geographical, social, economic, and other, "in their lands, every one after his tongue; after their families in their nations". But man has not yet owned defeat in his purpose. One, Nimrod, arose who conceived that it might be possible to reverse the defeat of Babel by reuniting the scattered nations under a single ruler. "He began to be a mighty one in the earth." He was the first king, the first man to attempt to dominate his fellows in an area wider than the family or the clan. To him came the vision of a re-

united race, of a world empire; and from his day to our own there never has been lacking a man in the line of Nimrod. Each century has seen the rise—and the fall—of a new candidate for the kingship of the earth. The names that are best known to history are those of the men who, with some measure of success, attempted to realise this ideal. Their ambitions found expression in the language of the proclamations of some of them, as in that of Nebuchadnezzar, addressed “unto all them that dwell in all the earth” (Dan. 4. 1). On this long roll appear such names as those of Philip and Alexander of Macedon, of the Caesars, in more modern days, of Charlemagne, of Louis XIV., and on the threshold of our own times, of Napoleon Bonaparte. Now, in the war deliberately prepared for, and provoked by the Hohenzollern, William II., Emperor of the German people, we are witnessing yet another attempt to realise the vision. And while it is true that from the beginning until now each successive attempt to establish world dominion has been made on a larger scale than that which preceded it, yet in each there has always been lacking some element essential to success. Thus, for example, if Napoleon had had the resources of Wilhelm, or if Wilhelm had the genius of Napoleon, the history of the last hundred years would have been different, though the resultant failure would have been equally

assured, if, indeed, only for a reason best expressed in words used in a wholly different connection: "Because that by reason of death they are hindered from continuing". There is, however, another reason, imperative above all the rest, that dooms these ambitions to failure. What that reason is will appear a little later on.

Predecessors of Antichrist.

Wilhelm is not the last of Nimrod's line, though he may prove to be the immediate predecessor of the last. Whether he will be succeeded by others before the final usurper of world power appears we may not determine. That there remains to be made the ultimate attempt by the Antichrist, who will more nearly approach success than any of his predecessors, seems plainly taught in Scripture. We must be content, however, to leave the subject in the meantime for such further exposition as may be necessary for our purpose in another connection. So much for the development of nationalities upon the earth.

The Nation.

Returning now to Genesis 11, the latter part of the chapter relates the inception of another new thing that God began to do upon the earth. In it Abraham, in whom the line of faith was founded, is first mentioned. He belonged to a family of idolaters, ignorant

of the one God, Whose voice reached him under circumstances that have not been made known to us (Joshua 24. 2). To this voice he responded in the spirit of confident trust. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, went out not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11. 8). Thus he and his were brought into the land of Canaan, later the country of the Israelites, the modern Palestine. Mere mention of his son Isaac, and of his son Jacob, is sufficient for our present purpose. To Jacob twelve sons were born, and in the course of time, through a variety of circumstances, Jacob and his family, his children and their children, are found in Egypt; one of them, Joseph, occupying an exalted office in the government of that country. The family fortunes did not continue favourable for long, and, owing to dynastic changes and other causes, its succeeding generations fell into a condition of virtual slavery to the Egyptians. These proved themselves to be hard taskmasters, treating the Israelites with cruel severity, even to the extent of laying plans for their extermination. In this they were far from successful, for the stock exhibited marvellous vitality, increasing and multiplying with celerity and vigour. When a couple of hundred years had elapsed God brought the Israelites out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses, a general and statesman of the first rank. After many vicissitudes,

the generation subsequent to that which left Egypt with Moses settled in Palestine under the leadership of his successor, Joshua. Nearly five hundred years later they demanded a king for themselves. The petition was granted by God after full warning of the disabilities attaching to such a monarchy as they desired (1 Sam. 8. 10, 22). The first king was a man after their own heart, Saul, head and shoulders above his fellows, a courageous soldier and successful general. There followed him David, a no less brave and successful warrior, a poet, and, with all his failures, a man of deeply religious character. He was succeeded by his son Solomon, during whose peaceful reign the nation reached the zenith of its prosperity. Early in the reign of the fourth king, Rehoboam, the force that divided the race into nations effected the division of Israel. Sin again asserted itself as a disintegrating force in national affairs, and from that day until the present the history of the nation has been as the history of the nations; a history of dividing and scattering, and of the attempts of men to reunite the scattered people and to restore them to their lost land.

Nearly four hundred years after Rehoboam's time the northern kingdom, Israel, was conquered and its inhabitants deported. A century or so later the same fate overtook the southern kingdom, Judah. Since then

the Jews have been wanderers on the face of the earth, resident in many countries, intimately associated often with the economical and political life of the nations in the midst of which they have dwelt, but as often ostracised, or persecuted and expelled. From the days of the Maccabees (whose heroic history is to be found among the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament) onward, there have been many false messiahs, men who sought to realise the ancient hope that Israel should be restored to their own land, and take once more a leading place among the nations of the earth. But all these attempts have failed. Israel remains a scattered people, unique among the nations in that they have not lost their identity though they have lost their home.

The Advent of the Saviour.

The Jews had long been dispersed, though many of them had been restored to their own land and were living there under the yoke of Imperial Rome, when "the fulness of the time" for the appearance of a Redeemer for Israel arrived. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was born at Bethlehem, a little Judæan town. They would have none of Him. "He came unto His own (land and throne) and His own (people) received Him not" (John 1. 11). He Himself summed up the history of the nation in its relation to

God, and foretold His own treatment at their hands, in the form of a parable in which God is the Proprietor of a vineyard (Palestine) let to certain farmers (the Israelites) to cultivate on certain conditions, as, for example, that they should worship Him alone, that they should keep His laws, that they should consider their poorer nationals, or, as once summarised, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6. 8). In this they failed, so the Proprietor of the vineyard sent His servants (the Prophets) to bring them to a better mind, but these were ill-treated, some of them were even killed by the wicked husbandmen. At last He said, "They will reverence My Son". But the husbandmen, when they saw the Son, said among themselves, "This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him, and take His inheritance" (Matt. 21. 33-46). And so it fell out. "By the hand of lawless men" (*i.e.*, of Gentiles) they, the Jews, crucified the Lord of Life and Glory, Who was, indeed, their rightful King in virtue of His descent from David, and of the ancient promises of God. But God raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him to His own Throne in Heaven, and shortly thereafter sent His Holy Spirit to the earth, that in His power the apostles and disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ

might preach the Gospel among all the nations of the earth, in order thereby "to take out of them a people for His (Christ's) Name" (Acts 15. 14). Those thus called were to constitute a unique body, inasmuch as though the constituent members were to be drawn from all people and all nations, yet was it to be marked by its evident unity. It is "the Church which is His (Christ's) body" (Eph. 1. 22, 23).

The Church.

Looking around now, after the lapse of so many centuries, it is sufficiently evident that the same disintegrating and dispersive power that manifested itself first among the inhabitants of the earth, dividing them into nations, and then in Israel, scattering it abroad, has been at work among those who confess the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, dividing, separating, scattering them. To speak of the unity of the Church is to invite derision. Nor does it avail to plead that there is a Church within the Church, that it is the mass of profession which is divided, and that the area of reality, which is small by comparison, is unaffected, for plainly the true children of God are to be found distributed throughout the many sections that go to make up that amorphous mass known as Christendom. The divisions are patent; the unity is to seek. For though the inward spiritual

bond, which unites to one another all who are united to Christ, is in its nature inviolable, yet this bond lies beyond the limits of human vision, only the rending and the antagonism appear.

Historical Parallels.

The parallel extends further. The history of the race has been the history of the attempts of men to restore its lost unity. So also has been the history of Israel. And so also has been the history of what has come to be known as "the Church". The disruptive power of sin had begun to manifest itself while the apostles, who founded the churches, were still alive, as witness for example 1 Corinthians 1. 10-17. They themselves from the beginning sought to preserve the threatened unity, but in vain. And because it was made in the region of the spirit, because material interests were not apparently involved in it, and because of the diverse origin of its constituents, nationally, socially, intellectually, it proved more speedily amenable to outward fracture; the lines of cleavage were more numerous than in either of the parallel cases already described. Attempts to remedy this deplorable condition of things, by which the Gospel is robbed of one of its main credentials, have been made along different lines; the effect in most cases, if not in every case, being to emphasise and to

multiply the divisions, and often to bring sorrow and disaster, public and private, in their train. The historical ecclesiastical systems, Roman, Eastern, and Anglican, stand for the ideal of unity; cosmopolitan in the first case, national and federative in the others. Each of these has, in one form or another, associated itself with temporal power in order by this means to secure at least an outward and formal unity. Other attempts have been made along other lines. In some cases only those who make personal claim to membership of the unseen, or, as it is sometimes called, mystical Church, have been contemplated. The actual spiritual union of all in Christ has been acknowledged, and the aim has been to reunite these while merely nominal Christianity was ignored or refused. The same fate has attended them all, whether they have dealt with the mass of profession or with the smaller nucleus of reality. They have accentuated the evil they sought to remedy.

Part II.—PROPHECY.

Principles of Interpretation.

Turning now to contemplate the future, we seek light from the prophetic portions of the Bible. It is not becoming in the expositor of Holy Scripture to adopt the tone of the historian when he deals with prophecy. God

has not been pleased to reveal His mind concerning the future in such a way that the manner of the fulfilment of His Word can be anticipated. In no instance of fulfilled prophecy was it conceived by contemporaries of the event, and much less by those who lived between the giving of the promise and the time of its redemption, how the Word would be fulfilled. Yet when it was fulfilled the fact that the particular event answered to the particular prophecy was unmistakable. This principle is stated by the Lord Jesus Himself in the words, "These things have I spoken unto you, that when their hour is come, ye may remember them, how that I told you" (John 16. 4). Prophecy is not given to enable men to forecast history, but to encourage hope in adverse circumstances, and to bring the believer into fellowship with the mind of his Lord about what is to come to pass. Its end is edification, the strengthening of faith and of the spiritual life; not to enable the reader to foretell future events, but to recognise them when they arrive. Failure to observe this necessary distinction has caused the study of prophecy to fall into disrepute among sober-minded people. With this cautionary word the writer proceeds to state what he has gathered from the Scriptures concerning the future course of human history, in bare outline, indeed, but always with reference made to the particular Scriptures on

which these statements are based, and, as often as may be, in the actual words of those Scriptures.

The Church.

The next event which is the subject of a particular prophecy is declared in these words, "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4. 16, 17). Thus will be vindicated the integrity of the Church. Thus will God begin His unifying work. Thus in a moment will be accomplished that manifestation of the unity of all who are in Christ after which men have for centuries striven in vain.

Three things emerge here:

First, that God alone is the Gatherer.

Second, that His Word is the only effective gathering power.

Third, that Christ is His Centre of gathering; God gathers only and always to His Son.

The Nation.

Thereafter is to follow the re-establishment of the nation Israel under their rightful King and in their own land, as set forth in Psalm 50:

“God, even God, the LORD, hath spoken.
Out of Zion . . . God hath shined forth.
Our God shall come, and shall not keep
silence:
Gather My saints together unto Me;
Those that have made a covenant with
Me by sacrifice”.

Who these are becomes immediately apparent,

“Hear, O My people, and I will speak;
O Israel, and I will testify unto thee”.

Thus is Israel to be gathered in His own order; and once more it is seen that God is the Gatherer, His Word the power for gathering, and that His centre of gathering is Christ. Here also, where man has failed in a thousand plans to realise his dream, God accomplishes His counsel by His Word.

The Nations.

Between the “rapture”, or “catching up”, of the redeemed of the past and present dispensations, described in 1 Thessalonians 4. 13, 18, 1 Corinthians 15. 23, and the restoration of Israel under Messiah their King, much, apparently, is to transpire upon the earth. The nations continue to pursue their own ends in ever more determined refusal of God and of His laws, until the last of Nimrod’s line, the Wilful King (Dan. 11. 36) the Lawless Man (2 Thess. 2. 8) the Antichrist (1 John 2. 18) the Beast from

the sea (Rev. 13. 7) as he is variously called, is acknowledged chief of the world powers. In the moment of his apparent triumph, coincident with his final attempt to destroy the Jews, then in their own land, albeit still in unbelief of the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and true Davidic King, the Second Advent comes to pass, "the Revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven . . . in flaming fire, rendering vengeance (lit., justice) to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1. 7, 8). It is of the effect of this "appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" upon Antichrist that the Apostle speaks in 2 Thessalonians 2. 8, "whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nought by the manifestation of His presence"

World Power at Last.

God's purposes for His Son stretch far beyond the limit of the Church and of Israel. All nations are to be blessed in the promised seed of Abraham (Gen. 22. 18). The Church gathered, Israel gathered, now the nations of the earth are gathered to the same Centre and by the same power. "The seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in Heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and

ever. . . . We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, Which art, and Which wast; because Thou hast taken Thy great power and didst reign'' (Rev. 11. 15-18). The secret of the failure of all the aspirants after world dominion, of all attempts to establish a world empire, from Nimrod to the Antichrist, is at last apparent. God has purposed such an Empire, indeed, but He has purposed it for His Son, ''the Second Man'', ''the Last Adam'', for He is ''Lord of lords and King of kings'', the ''Ruler of the kings of the earth'' (1 Cor 15. 47; Rev. 17. 14; 1. 5). ''Unto Him shall the obedience of the peoples be'' (Gen. 49. 11).

The Consummation.

There remains but one question to be asked and answered. The kingdom is the Son's. What will He do with it? It is indeed the final, permanent world economy, a kingdom that will know no end at all, though there must yet be one attempt made to overthrow it before the instigator of all evil, the Serpent that tempted Eve, Satan, the Adversary of the Lord Jesus Christ, is cast to his ultimate doom (Rev. 20. 7-10). The Son ''must reign till He (the Father) hath put all His enemies under His feet . . . for (it is written), He (the Father) put all things in subjection under His (Christ's) feet''. Such was His purpose for man, a purpose that was not

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realised in the first Adam, but that is to be the universal glory of the last Adam. Yet plainly there is an exception to the otherwise unlimited scope of the dominion of the Son. The Father Who Himself subjected all things to the Son is not Himself so subjected. "And when all things have been subjected unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him (that is, the Father) that did subject all things unto Him (that is, the Son), that God (that is, the Triune God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) may be all in all" (1 Cor 15. 24, 28).

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