

COMING EVENTS

AND

PRESENT DUTIES.

BEING MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS

ON

PROPHETICAL SUBJECTS.

ARRANGED, REVISED, AND CORRECTED, BY

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LONDON:

WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY,

HOLLER STREET, CAVENDISH SQUARE.

IPSWICH : WILLIAM HUNT, TAVERN STREET.

1879AD.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION.

IN sending forth a new and enlarged edition of this volume, I have nothing to add or withdraw.

I see nothing in the state of the Church or the world to make me alter the opinions on prophecy which I expressed twelve years ago.

I can only say, that I am more and more convinced, as I grow older, that to keep our eyes steadily fixed on the second coming of Christ is one great secret of Christian peace.

If this volume helps any one reader to cultivate the habit of looking at Christ's coming again, as well as Christ crucified, and Christ interceding, I shall be satisfied.

J. C. RYLE.

*Stradbroke Vicarage,
October, 1879.*

PREFACE.

THE volume now in the reader's hands requires a few introductory words of explanation.

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

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

If anyone asks me what my prophetic opinions are, I am quite ready to give him an answer. Cautious and doubtful as I feel on some points, there are certain great principles about which I have fully made up my mind. I have held by them firmly for many years, and have never had my opinion shaken about them. I have lived in the belief of them for more than a third of a century, and in the belief of them I hope to die. The older I grow, the more do I feel convinced of their truth, and the more satisfied am I that no other principles can explain the state of the Church and the world.

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

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

I. I believe that the world will never be completely converted to Christianity by any existing agency, before the end comes. In spite of all that can be done by ministers, churches, schools, and missions, the wheat and the tares will grow together until the harvest; and when the end comes, it will find the earth in much the same state that it was when the flood came in the days of Noah. (Matt. xiii. 24-30; xxiv. 37-39.)

II. I believe that the wide-spread unbelief, indifference, formalism, and wickedness, which are to be seen throughout Christendom, are only what we are taught to expect in God's Word. Troublous times, departures from the faith, evil men waxing worse and worse, love waxing cold, are things distinctly predicted. So far from making me doubt the truth of Christianity, they help to confirm my faith. Melancholy and sorrowful as the sight is, if I did not see it I should think the Bible was not true. (Matt. xxiv. 12; 1 Tim. iv. 1; 2 Tim. iii. 1, 4, 13.)

III. I believe that the grand purpose of the present dispensation is to gather out of the world an elect people, and not to convert all mankind. It does not surprise me at all to hear that the heathen are not all converted when missionaries preach, and that believers are but a little flock in any congregation in my own land. It is precisely the state of things which I expect to find. The Gospel is to be preached "as a witness," and then shall the end come. This is the dispensation of election, and not of universal conversion. (Acts xv. 14; Matt. xxiv. 14.)

IV. I believe that the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is the great event which will wind up the present dispensation, and for which we ought daily to long and pray. "Thy kingdom come,"—"Come, Lord Jesus,"—should be our daily prayer. We look backward, if we have faith, to Christ dying on the cross, and we ought to look forward no less, if we have hope, to Christ coming again. (John xiv. 3; 2 Tim. iv. 8; 2 Peter iii. 12.)

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

VI. I believe that after our Lord Jesus Christ comes again, the earth shall be renewed, and the curse removed; the devil shall be bound, the godly shall be rewarded, the wicked shall be punished; and that before He comes there shall be neither resurrection, judgment, nor millennium, and that not till after He comes shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. (Acts iii. 21; Isa. xxv. 6-9; 1 Thess. iv. 14-18; Rev. xx. 1, etc.)

VII. I believe that the Jews shall ultimately be gathered again as a separate nation, restored to their own land, and converted to the faith of Christ, after going through great tribulation. (Jer. xxx. 10, 11; xxxi. 10; Rom. xi. 25, 26; Dan. xii. 1; Zech. xiii. 8, 9.)

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

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

X. I believe that the Roman Catholic Church is the great predicted apostasy from the faith, and is Babylon and antichrist, although I think it highly probable that a more

complete development of antichrist will yet be exhibited to the world. (2 Thess. ii. 3-11; 1 Tim. iv. 1-3.)

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

The student of prophecy will see at a glance that there are many subjects on which I abstain from giving an opinion. About the precise time when the present dispensation will end,—about the manner in which the heathen will be converted—about the mode in which the Jews will be restored to their own land,—about the burning up of the earth,—about the first resurrection,—about the rapture of the saints,—about the distinction between the appearing and the coming of Christ,—about the future siege of Jerusalem and the last tribulation of the Jews,—about the binding of Satan before the millennium begins,—about the duration of the millennium,—about the loosing of Satan, at the end of the thousand years,—about the destruction of Gog and Magog,—about the precise nature and position of the new Jerusalem,—about all these things, I purposely decline expressing any opinion. I could say something about them all, but it would be little better than conjecture. I am thankful that others have more light about them than I have. For myself, I feel unable at present to speak positively. If I have learned anything in studying prophecy, I think I have learned the wisdom of not “making haste” to decide what is true.

I am well aware that the views I have laid down appear to many persons very gloomy and discouraging. The only answer I make to that charge is this:—Are they Scriptural? Are they in accordance with the lessons of history and experience?—To my mind they certainly are. I see human failure and human corruption stamped on the conclusion of all dispensations preceding our own. I see much in the present state of the world to make me expect that the present dispensation will not end better than those which have gone before. In short, there seems an inherent tendency to decay in everything that man touches. There is no such thing as creature perfection. God is teaching that lesson by all His successive modes of dealing with mankind. There will be no perfection till the Lord comes. The Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian dispensations all tend to prove this. Those words of Scripture shall yet be verified, “I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him.” (Ezek. xxi. 27.) When the Lord Jesus comes back to earth, and the tabernacle of God is with men, then will there be perfection, but not till then God will have all the glory at last, and all the world shall confess that without God man can do nothing. God shall be “all in all.” (1 Cor. xv. 28.)

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

been published in vain.

If anyone ask me why I have chosen this particular period for the re-publication of these prophetic tracts, I think it is sufficient answer to point to the times in which we live. I do not forget that we are poor judges of our own days, and are very apt to exaggerate their importance. But I doubt much whether there ever was a time in the history of our country, when the horizon on all sides, both political and ecclesiastical, was so thoroughly black and lowering. In every direction we see men's hearts "failing for fear, and for looking for those things that seem coming on the earth." Everything around us seems unscrewed, loosened, and out of joint. The fountains of the great deep appear to be breaking up. Ancient institutions are tottering, and ready to fall. Social and ecclesiastical systems are failing, and crumbling away. Church and State seem alike convulsed to their very foundations, and what the end of this convulsion may be no man can tell.

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

J. C. RYLE.

*Stradbroke Vicarage,
August, 1867.*

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

“AND SO ALL ISRAEL SHALL BE SAVED.”

“*And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.*”—ROMANS XI. 26.

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

To a plain man, untrammelled by traditional interpretation, the words of this prophecy appear very simple. It is not like the temple which Ezekiel saw in vision: a dark and obscure thing, of which we may say as Daniel said of another vision, “I heard, but understood not.”—It is not presented to us under the veil of emblems, like the seals, trumpets, vials, and beasts in Revelations, about which men will probably never be of one mind till the Lord comes, and the wisest commentator can only conjecture. Nothing of the kind! The sentence before us is a simple categorical proposition, and I firmly believe it means exactly what it appears to mean. Let us analyse it.

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

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

“*All Israel,*”—that means the whole people or nation of the Jews. It cannot possibly mean a small elect remnant. In this very chapter the Israelitish *nation* and the *election* out of Israel are mentioned in contradistinction to one another. “Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” (Rom. xi. 7.)

“*Shall be saved*”—that means, shall be redeemed from their present unbelief, and have their eyes opened to see and believe the true Messiah,—

shall be delivered from their low estate and restored to the favour of God, and shall become a holy nation and a blessing to the world.

So much for the interpretation of our text. I shall now proceed to invite the attention of my readers to four points respecting Israel, which every friend of the “Jews” should endeavour to keep always fresh and green before his mind. Trite and familiar as they may seem to some, they are overlooked and forgotten by others. But I do not hesitate to say that a firm grasp of these four points is the foundation of any real and abiding interest in the Jewish subject and cause.

I. I ask you, then, in the first place, to consider *the very peculiar past history* of this Israel, which is one day “to be saved.”

For the facts of that history I shall simply refer you to the Bible. Whatever modern scepticism may please to say, the story of Israel which that venerable old Book records is as trustworthy as the story of any ancient nation in the world. We have no more warrant for disputing its accuracy than for disputing the accounts of Egypt, Assyria, Persia, and Greece, related by Herodotus. On the contrary, there is continually accumulating evidence that the Old Testament memoirs of the Jewish people are thoroughly trustworthy and true.

Israel, then, we find, for nearly 1,500 years was more favoured and privileged by God than any nation in the world. David might well say, “What one nation in the earth is like Thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to Himself?” (2 Sam. vii 23.) It was the only nation in the earth to which God was pleased to reveal Himself. “To them were committed the oracles of God.” (Rom. iii. 2.) While all other nations were suffered to walk in their own ways, and to live in moral and spiritual darkness, the Jews alone enjoyed an immense amount of light and knowledge. The humblest priest in Solomon’s temple was a far better theologian than Homer. Daniel, and Ezra, and Nehemiah knew more about God than Socrates, and Plato, and Pythagoras, and Cicero, all put together. The Jews were brought out of Egypt by miraculous interposition, planted in Palestine, one of the choicest comers of the earth, and fenced off and separated from other nations by peculiar customs and ceremonies. They were supplied with a moral law from heaven so perfect, that even to this day nothing can be added to it or taken from it. They were taught to worship God with ceremonial rites and ordinances, which however burdensome they may seem to us, were admirably adapted to human nature at that early stage of man’s history, and calculated to train them for a higher dispensation. They were constantly warned and instructed by prophets, and protected and defended by miracles. In short, if mercies and kindnesses alone could make people good, no nation on earth should have been so

good as Israel. While Egypt, and Babylon, and Greece worshipped the works of their own hands, the Jew alone was a worshipper of the one true God.

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

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

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

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

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

I assert then that the Jews are at this moment a peculiar people, and utterly separate from all other people on the face of the earth. They fulfil the prophecy of Hosea: “The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice.” (Hosea iii. 4.) For 1,800 years they have been scattered over the globe, without a country, without a government, without a capital city, strangers and aliens everywhere, often fiercely persecuted and vilely treated. Yet to this moment they continue a distinct, isolated, and separate nation, far more so than any nation on the earth. The wonderful words of that strange prophet Balaam, which God obliged him to speak, are still literally true: “The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” (Num. xxiii. 9.)

Of what nation or people on earth can the like be said? I answer, confidently, none. When Nineveh, and Babylon, and Tyre, and the hundred-gated Thebes of Egypt, and Susa, and Persepolis, and Carthage, and Palmyra were destroyed, what became of their inhabitants and subjects? We can give no answer. No doubt they were carried away captive and dispersed. But where are they now? No man can tell. When Saxons, and Danes, and Normans, and Flemings under the persecution of Alva, and Frenchmen after the edict of Nantes, settled down in our own England, what became of THEM? They were all gradually absorbed into our own population, and have generally lost all their national distinctions, except, perhaps, in some cases, their names. But nothing of the sort has ever happened to the Jews; they are still entirely distinct and never absorbed.

Even in matters of comparatively minor importance, there is to this very day an extraordinary separateness between the Jews and any other family of mankind on the face of the globe. Time seems unable to efface the difference. At the end of eighteen centuries they are a separate people. *Physically*, they are separate. Who does not know the Jewish type of countenance? Even a man like Mr. Lawrence, in his work on physiology, is obliged to admit that “the Jews exhibit one of the most striking instances of national formation unaltered by the most remarkable changes.” (p. 468, ed. 3.)—In *customs and habits* they are separate. The tenacity with which they still keep to their Saturday Sabbath, and the feasts of their law, might put Christians to shame. Even in their *political influence* they are strangely separate. The extraordinary financial power which they exercise in all the money-markets of the world, enables them to sway the actions of Governments to an extent of which few have any conception. In short, if there ever was a people who are distinct, marked, cut off and separate from others, that people is Israel. Though they have dwelt among the Gentiles for eighteen centuries, they are still as distinct from the Gentiles as black is

distinct from white, and seem to be as incapable of mixture or absorption as oil is incapable of being absorbed into, or mixed with, water.

Now how shall we account for this extraordinary state of things? How shall we explain the unique and peculiar position which the Jewish people occupies in the world? Why is it that,—unlike Saxons, and Danes, and Normans, and Flemings, and French,—this singular race still floats alone, though broken to pieces like a wreck, on the waters of the globe, amidst its 1,500 million of inhabitants, and after the lapse of 1,800 years is neither destroyed, nor crushed, nor evaporated, nor amalgamated, nor lost sight of; but lives to this day as separate and distinct as it was when the arch of Titus was built at Rome?

I have not the least idea how questions like these are answered by those who profess to deny the Divine authority of Scripture. In all my reading I never met with an honest attempt to answer them from the unhappy camp of unbelievers. In fact it is my firm conviction that among the many difficulties of infidelity there is hardly any one more really insurmountable than the separate continuance of the Jewish nation. It is a burdensome stone which your modern sceptical writers may affect to despise, but cannot lift or remove out of their way. God has many witnesses to the truth of the Bible, if men would only examine them and listen to their evidence. But you may depend on it there is no witness so unanswerable as one whom he always keeps standing up, and living, and moving before the eyes of mankind. That witness is the Jew.

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

I assert that the peculiar position which Israel occupies in the earth is easily explicable in the light of holy Scripture. They are a people reserved and kept separate by God for a grand and special purpose. That purpose is to make them a means of exhibiting to the world in the latter days God's hatred of sin and unbelief and God's Almighty power and Almighty compassion. They are kept separate that they may finally be saved, converted, and restored to their own land. They are reserved and preserved, in order that God may show in them, as on a platform, to angels and men, how greatly He hates sin, and yet how greatly He can forgive, and how

greatly He can convert. Never will that be realized as it will in that day when “All Israel shall be saved.”

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

The singular condition of the Jews at the present time, we have seen, is most painful and instructive. They are still lying under the just displeasure of God. Because they despised His prophets and rejected His messages, because they “would not believe the voice of His Scriptures read to them every Sabbath day,” because they killed the Prince of life and were His betrayers and murderers,—for all these reasons His wrath is come upon them to the uttermost, and for a time they are cast off and rejected. Like Cain they slew their holy Brother, and like Cain they are fugitives and vagabonds on earth, and bear the mark of God’s displeasure. The blood of the Messiah whom they murdered is upon them and their children. And their eyes are yet blinded. The veil is still upon their hearts. They stand before the world at this moment, like a beacon at the top of a hill, a perpetual witness that nothing is so offensive to God as unbelief, formalism, self-righteousness, and abuse of privileges. Such is their present position. But what are their future prospects? Let us turn once more to the Bible and see.

The history of Israel then has not yet come to an end. There is another wonderful chapter yet to be unfolded to mankind. The Scripture tells us expressly that a time is coming when the position of Israel shall be entirely changed, and they shall be once more restored to the favour of God. For what saith the Scripture which cannot be broken? What is written in that Book of which no prediction shall ever fail? I read that when the heart of Israel “shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.” (2 Cor. iii. 16.) I read that a day is coming when God says, “I will pour upon the house of *David*, and upon the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.” (Zech, xii. 10.) I read that in that day “there shall be a fountain opened to the house of *David* and to the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* for sin and uncleanness.” (Zech. xiii. 1.) I beg you will remember that the primary application of these prophecies of Zechariah belongs literally to the JEWS.—I read, furthermore, that God says in Ezekiel to Israel, “I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart

of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. Thus saith the Lord God; in the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the Lord build the ruined places and plant that that was desolate: I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of ISRAEL, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the Lord.” (Ezek, xxxvi. 24–38.) Once more I remind you that this wonderful passage *primarily* belongs to the JEWS. No doubt the Church of Christ may *secondarily* make a spiritual use of it. But let us never forget that the Holy Ghost first caused it to be written concerning Israel.

But time would fail me, if I attempted to quote all the passages of Scripture in which the future history of Israel is revealed. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Zechariah,—all declare the same thing. All predict, with more or less particularity, that in the end of this dispensation the Jews are to be restored to their own land and to the favour of God. I lay no claim to infallibility in the interpretation of Scripture in this matter. I am well aware that many excellent Christians cannot see the subject as I do. I can only say, that to my eyes, the future *salvation* of Israel as a people, their *return* to Palestine, and their national *conversion* to God, appear as clearly and plainly revealed as any prophecy in God’s Word.

Concerning *the time* when Israel shall finally be saved, I shrink from offering an opinion. No doubt there are many “signs of the times” which deserve the serious attention of all Christians, and it would be easy to

enumerate them. But, after all, we are always bad judges of anything that happens under our own eyes. We are apt to attach an exaggerated importance to it, for the simple reason that we ourselves are affected by it. Let it suffice us to believe that whatever God has said concerning Israel, God will do in His own good time. Let us not be hasty to fix dates. Those last words of our Master are very instructive, when the disciple said, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" He answered, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father has put in His own power." (Acts i. 6, 7.) To study prophecy is most useful and brings a special blessing. To turn prophets ourselves is not wise, and brings discredit on the cause of Christianity.

Concerning *the manner* in which the complete salvation of Israel shall be effected, we shall do well not to enquire too closely. We must avoid rash speculation and conjecture. If I may venture an opinion, I should say that Scripture seems to point out that Israel will not be restored and converted without an immense amount of affliction,—affliction far exceeding that which preceded their deliverance from Egypt. I see much in the words of Daniel: "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at THAT time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." (Dan. xii. 1.) I believe the words of Zechariah are yet to be fulfilled, "It shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zech. xiii. 8, 9.) But I freely confess that these are deep things. Enough for you and me to know that Israel shall be restored to their own land, and shall be converted, and saved, without entering too minutely into particulars. Let me close this branch of my subject with the Apostle's words: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out." (Rom. xi. 33.) Only let us grasp firmly the great principle laid down by Jeremiah: "Fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid. Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished." (Jer. xlv. 27, 28.)

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

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

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

(1) To whom do we owe *our Bible*? By what hand was that blessed Book written, which is a lamp to so many feet and a lantern to so many paths, that Book without which we could neither live with comfort nor with comfort die? I answer that every book in the Old and New Testament, unless we except Job, was written by Jews. The pens which the Holy Ghost guided to put down the words which He inspired, were held by Jewish fingers. The hands which were employed to forge this matchless sword of the Spirit were Jewish hands. Every time we take up that wondrous volume, that volume whose nature and existence no infidel can explain away,—every time we draw out of it doctrine, correction, reproof, instruction in righteousness, our eyes fall on matter which passed through Jewish minds. The texts which we live upon now, the texts we shall cling to by memory in death, when sight and hearing fail us, the texts which will be a staff in our hand when we go down into the cold river,—these texts were first put down in black and white by Jews. Is this nothing?

(2) To whom do we owe the first preaching of the Gospel? Who were the first to go forth into the world, and proclaim to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ? Again I answer, they were all Jews. The men who first turned the world upside down and deprived heathen temples of their worshippers, and put to silence the philosophers of Greece and Rome,

and made kings and rulers tremble on their judgment seats, and made the name of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth more influential than the name of Caesar, they were all children of Israel. They soon passed away. Many of them died for their preaching. The lamp they lighted was taken up by multitudes of converted Gentiles who walked in their steps. But the fact remains, that the FIRST to begin that blessed work on which the very life of a Church depends at this day, I mean the preaching of the Gospel, were all Jews. Where would Europe be at this moment, if it had not been for an invasion of Jewish preachers who obeyed the call, "Come over and help us"? Surely this also is something.

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

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

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

On the one hand, we may pay our debt *directly*, by using every reasonable effort to bring the Gospel to bear on the minds of our Jewish brethren in every part of the globe. No doubt they need to be approached with peculiar wisdom, delicacy, and care. They are not to be treated as heathen, but as men who already hold half the truth, who believe the Old Testament like ourselves, although they do not see and receive its full meaning. But all experience proves that there is everything to encourage those who endeavour to lead Israel to the true Messiah, the Christ of God, with love and patience.

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

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

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

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

(2) In the next place, take up the Jewish subject *because of the times in which we live*. That man must be blind indeed who does not observe how much the attention of politicians and statesmen in these days is concentrating on the countries around Palestine. The strange position of things in Egypt,—the formation of the Suez Canal,—the occupation of Cyprus,—the project of the Euphrates railway,—the drying up of the Turkish empire,—the trigonometrical survey of Palestine,—what curious phenomena these are! What do they mean? What is going to happen next? He that believeth will not make haste. I will not pretend to decide. But I think I hear the voice of God saying, “Remember the Jews, look to Jerusalem.”

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

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

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