

COMING EVENTS

AND

PRESENT DUTIES.

BEING MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS

ON

PROPHETICAL SUBJECTS.

ARRANGED, REVISED, AND CORRECTED, BY

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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.

[“The substance of this Address was originally preached as the Annual Sermon on behalf of the London Society for promoting Christianity among the Jews, at the Rectory Church, Mary-le-bone, in May, 1858.”]

SCATTERED ISRAEL TO BE GATHERED.

“Hear the Word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.”—JER. XXXI. 10.

THE text which heads this page is singularly full and comprehensive. It contains both history and prophecy. It speaks of the scattering of Israel; this is history. It speaks of the gathering of Israel; this is prophecy. It demands the attention both of the Jew and the Gentile. To the Jew it holds out a hope:—“Israel,” it says, “shall be gathered.” On the Gentile it lays a command:—“Hear the Word of the Lord,” it says, “O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, He that scattered Israel will gather him.”

Reader, the whole body of Gentile Christendom is specially addressed in this text. There is no evading this conclusion on any fair interpretation of Scripture. We ourselves are among the “nations” to whom Jeremiah speaks. Upon us devolves a portion of the duty which he here sets forth. The text is the Lord’s voice to all the Churches of Christ among the Gentiles. It is a voice to the Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland. It is a voice to the Churches of Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Holland, Denmark, and America. It is a voice to all Christendom. And what does the voice say? It bids us proclaim far and wide the will of God concerning the Jewish nation. It bids us keep one another in memory of God’s past and future dealings with Israel. “He that scattered Israel will gather him.”

Reader, I ask your serious attention for a few minutes, while I try to place the Jewish subject before you in a connected and condensed form. I propose in this address to show you from Scripture the past, the present, and the future of Israel. I know few texts in the Bible which contain such a complete summary of the subject as the one before you. This text I shall endeavour to unfold.

I entreat you not to dismiss the subject as speculative, fanciful, and unprofitable. The world is growing old. The last days are come upon us. The foundations of the earth are out of course. The ancient institutions of society are wearing out and going to pieces. The end of all things is at hand. Surely it becomes a wise man, at a time like this, to turn to the pages of prophecy, and to inquire what is yet to come. At a time like this the declarations of God concerning His people Israel ought to be carefully weighed and examined. “At the time of the end,” says Daniel, “the wise shall understand.” (Dan. xii.

10.)

There are four points on which I purpose to dwell, in considering the words of Jeremiah which stand at the head of this address.

I. The meaning of the word Israel, both here and elsewhere in Scripture.

II. The present condition of Israel.

III. The future prospects of Israel.

IV. The duty which Gentile Churches owe to Israel

I. *The meaning of the word "Israel."*

The definition of terms is of first importance in theology. Unless we explain the meaning of the words we use in our religious statements, our arguments are often wasted, and we seem like men beating the air.

The word "Israel" is used nearly seven hundred times in the Bible. I can only discover three senses in which it is used. First,—It is one of the names of Jacob, the father of the twelve tribes; a name specially given to him by God. Secondly,—It is a name given to the ten tribes which separated from Judah and Benjamin in the days of Rehoboam, and became a distinct kingdom. This kingdom is often called Israel, in contradistinction to the kingdom of Judah. Thirdly and lastly,—It is a name given to the whole Jewish nation, to all members of the twelve tribes which sprung from Jacob, and were brought out of Egypt into the land of Canaan. This is by far the most common signification of the word in the Bible. It is the only signification in which I can find the word "Israel" used throughout the whole New Testament. It is the same in which the word is used in the text which I am considering this day. That Israel, which God has scattered and will yet gather again, is the whole Jewish nation.

Now, why do I dwell upon this point? To some readers it may appear mere waste of time and words to say so much about it. The things I have been saying sound to them like truisms. That Israel means Israel is a matter on which they never felt a doubt. If this be the mind of any into whose hands this address has fallen, I am thankful for it. But unhappily there are many Christians who do not see the subject with your eyes. For their sakes I must dwell on this point a little longer.

For many centuries there has prevailed in the Churches of Christ a strange, and to my mind, an unwarrantable mode of dealing with this word "Israel." It has been interpreted in many passages of the Psalms and Prophets, as if it meant nothing more than Christian believers. Have promises been held out to Israel? Men have been told continually that they are addressed to Gentile saints.—Have glorious things been described as laid up in store for Israel? Men have been incessantly told that they describe the

victories and triumphs of the Gospel in Christian Churches.—The proofs of these things are too many to require quotation. No man can read the immense majority of commentaries and popular hymns without seeing this system of interpretation to which I now refer. Against that system I have long protested, and I hope I shall always protest as long as I live.

I do not deny that Israel was a peculiar typical people, and that God's relations to Israel were meant to be a type of His relations to His believing people all over the world.

I do not forget that it is written, "As face answereth to face, so does the heart of man to man" (Prov. xxvii. 19), and that whatever spiritual truths are taught in prophecy concerning Israelitish hearts, are applicable to the hearts of Gentiles.

I would have it most distinctly understood that God's dealings with individual Jews and Gentiles are precisely one and the same. Without repentance, faith in Christ, and holiness of heart, no individual Jew or Gentile shall ever be saved.

What I protest against is the habit of allegorizing plain sayings of the Word of God concerning the future history of the *nation* Israel, and explaining away the fulness of their contents in order to accommodate them to the Gentile Church. I believe the habit to be unwarranted by anything in Scripture, and to draw after it a long train of evil consequences.

Where, I would venture to ask, in the whole New Testament, shall we find any plain authority for applying the word "Israel" to anyone but the nation Israel? I can find none. On the contrary, I observe that when the Apostle Paul quotes Old Testament prophecies about the privileges of the Gentiles in Gospel times, he is careful to quote texts which specially mention the "Gentiles" by name. The fifteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans is a striking illustration of what I mean. We are often told in the New Testament that, under the Gospel, believing Gentiles are "fellow-heirs and partakers of the same hope" with believing Jews. (Ephes. iii. 6.) But that believing Gentiles may be called "Israelites," I cannot see anywhere at all.

To what may we attribute that loose system of interpreting the language of the Psalms and Prophets, and the extravagant expectations of universal conversion of the world by the preaching of the Gospel, which may be observed in many Christian writers? To nothing so much, I believe, as to the habit of inaccurately interpreting the word "Israel," and to the consequent application of promises to the Gentile Churches, with which they have nothing to do. The least errors in theology always bear fruit. Never does man take up an incorrect principle of interpreting Scripture without that principle entailing awkward consequences, and colouring the whole tone of his religion.

Reader, I leave this part of my subject here. I am sure that its importance cannot be overrated. In fact, a right understanding of it lies at the very root of the whole Jewish subject, and of the prophecies concerning the Jews. The duty which Christians owe to Israel, as a nation, will never be clearly understood until Christians clearly see the place that Israel occupies in Scripture.

Before going any further, I will ask all readers of this address one plain practical question. I ask you to consider calmly what sense you put on such words as "Israel," "Jacob," and the like, when you meet with them in the Psalms and Prophecies of the Old Testament? We live in a day when there are many Bible readers. There are many who search the Scriptures regularly, and read through the Psalms and the Prophets once, if not twice, every year they live. Of course you attach some meaning to the words I have just referred to. You place some sense upon them. Now what is that sense? What is that meaning? Take heed that it is the right one.

Reader, accept a friendly exhortation this day. Cleave to the literal sense of Bible words, and beware of departing from it, except in cases of absolute necessity. Beware of that system of allegorizing, and spiritualizing, and accommodating, which the school of Origen first brought in, and which has found such an unfortunate degree of favour in the Church. In reading the authorized version of the English Bible, do not put too much confidence in the "headings" of pages and "tables of contents" at beginnings of chapters, which I take leave to consider a most unhappy accompaniment of that admirable translation. Remember that those headings and tables of contents were drawn up by uninspired hands. In reading the Prophets, they are sometimes not helps, but real hindrances, and less likely to assist a reader than to lead him astray. Settle it in your mind, in reading the Psalms and Prophets that Israel means Israel, and Zion Zion, and Jerusalem Jerusalem. And, finally, whatever edification you derive from applying to your own soul the words which God addresses to His ancient people, never lose sight of the primary sense of the text.

II. The second point in the text on which I proposed to dwell, is *the present condition of Israel*

The expression used by Jeremiah describes exactly the state in which the Jews are at this day, and have been for nearly eighteen hundred years. They are a "scattered" people. The armies of Assyria, Babylon, and Rome, have, one after another, swept over the land of Israel, and carried its inhabitants into captivity. Few, if any, of the ten tribes appear to have returned from the Assyrian captivity. Not fifty thousand of Judah and Benjamin came back from the captivity of Babylon. From the last and worst captivity, when the

temple was burned, and Jerusalem destroyed, there has been no return at all. For eighteen hundred years Israel has been dispersed over the four quarters of the globe. Like the wreck of some goodly ship, the Jews have been tossed to and fro on all waters, and stranded in broken pieces on every shore.

But though Israel has been “scattered,” Israel has not been destroyed. For eighteen hundred years the Jews have continued a separate people, without a king, without a land, without a territory, but never lost, never absorbed among other nations.—They have been often trampled under foot, but never shaken from the faith of their fathers.—They have been often persecuted, but never destroyed. At this very moment they are as distinct and peculiar a people as any people upon earth, an unanswerable argument in the way of the infidel, a puzzling difficulty in the way of politicians, a standing lesson to all the world. Romans, Danes, Saxons, Normans, Belgians, French, Germans, have all in turn settled on English soil. All have in turn lost their national distinctiveness. All have in turn become part and parcel of the English nation, after the lapse of a few hundred years. But it has never been so with the Jews. Dispersed as they are, there is a principle of cohesion among them which no circumstances have been able to melt. Scattered as they are, there is a national vitality among them which is stronger than that of any nation on earth. Go where you will, you always find them. Settle where you please, in hot countries or in cold, you will find the Jews. But go where you will, and settle where you please, this wonderful people is always the same. Scattered as they are, few in number compared to those among whom they live, the Jews are always the Jews. Three thousand years ago Balaam said, “The people shall dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations.” Eighteen hundred years ago our Lord said, “This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.” We see these words made good before our eyes. (Num. xxiii. 9; Luke xxi. 32.)

But by whose hands was this scattering of Israel wrought? The text before us today declares expressly that it was the hand of God. It was not the armies of Tiglath-Pileser or Shalmanezzer, of Nebuchadnezzar or of Titus. They were only instruments in the hand of a far higher power. It was that God who ordereth all things in heaven and earth, who dispersed the twelve tribes over the face of the earth. It was the same God who brought Israel out of Egypt with a high hand and mighty arm, and planted them in Canaan, who plucked them up by the roots, and made them “wanderers among the nations.” (Hosea ix. 17.)

And why did God send this heavy judgment upon Israel? To what are we to attribute this marvellous dispersion of a people so highly favoured? The inquiry is a very useful one. Let us mark well the answer.

The Jews are a “scattered” people because of their many sins. Their

hardness and stiffneckedness, their impenitence and unbelief, their abuse of privileges and neglect of gifts, their rejection of prophets and messengers from heaven, and finally their refusal to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, the King's own Son,—these were the things which called down God's wrath upon them. These were the causes of their present dispersion. The vine which was brought out of Egypt bore wild grapes. The husbandman to whom the vineyard was let out, rendered not of the fruit to the Lord of the vineyard. The people that were brought out of the house of bondage rebelled against Him by whom they were set free. Hence the wrath of God rose until there was no remedy. Thus He says, "You only have I known among the inhabitants of the earth, therefore I will punish you, because of your iniquities." (Amos iii. 2.) "They killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets: they persecuted the apostles: they pleased not God: they were contrary to all men: they forbade us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved; and therefore the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." (1 Thess, ii. 15.)

Israel was "scattered" to be a perpetual warning to the Gentile Churches of Christ. The Jews are God's beacon or pillar of salt to all Christendom, and a silent standing lesson which all who profess to know God ought never to forget. They proclaim to all Christians God's hatred of spiritual pride and self-righteousness,—God's high displeasure with those who exalt the traditions of men and depart from the Word,—God's hatred of formality and ceremonialism. If any man desires to know how much God hates these things, he has only to look at the present condition of the Jews. For eighteen hundred years God has held them up before the eyes of the world, and written His abhorrence of their sins in letters which he who runs may read.

I cannot pass away from this part of my subject without entreating all who read this address to learn a practical lesson from the scattering of Israel. I entreat you to remember the causes which led to their dispersion, and to beware of the slightest approach to their peculiar sins. I am sure the warning is needed in these latter days. I am sure that the opinions which are boldly broached and openly maintained by many religious teachers in all Churches of Christendom call loudly on all Christians to stand on their guard. It is not without good reason that our Lord said, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Sadducees and Pharisees." (Matt.xvi. 6.) Look to your own heart. Beware of tampering with false doctrines. Churches are never safe unless their members know their individual responsibility. Let us each look to ourselves, and take heed to our own souls. The same God lives who scattered Israel because of Israel's sins. And what says He to the Churches of Christ this day? He says, "Be not high-minded, but fear. If God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee." (Rom. xi. 20, 21.)

III. The third part of the text on which I propose to dwell is, *the future prospects of Israel*.

In taking up this branch of my subject, I feel that I am entering on the region of unfulfilled prophecy. I desire to do so with all reverence, and with a deep sense of the many difficulties surrounding this department of theology, and the many diversities of opinion which prevail upon it. But the servant of God must call no man master on earth. Truth is never likely to be attained, unless all ministers of Christ speak out their opinions fully, freely, and unreservedly, and give men an opportunity of weighing what they teach.

Reader, however great the difficulties surrounding many parts of unfulfilled prophecy, two points appear to my own mind to stand out as plainly as if written by a sunbeam. One of these points is the second personal advent of our Lord Jesus Christ before the Millennium.—The other of these points is the future literal gathering of the Jewish nation, and their restoration to their own land.—I tell no man that these two truths are essential to salvation, and that he cannot be saved except he sees them with my eyes. But I tell any man that these truths appear to me distinctly set down in holy Scripture, and that the denial of them is as astonishing and incomprehensible to my own mind as the denial of the divinity of Christ.

Now what says our text about the future prospects of the Jews? It says, “He that scattered Israel will gather him.” That gathering is an event which plainly is yet to come. It could not apply in any sense to the ten tribes of Israel. They have never been gathered in any way. Their scattering has never come to an end.—It cannot be applied to the return of the remnant of Judah and Benjamin from the Babylonish captivity. The language of the text makes such an application impossible. The text is addressed to the Gentiles, “the nations.” The declaration they are commanded to make is, “to the isles of the sea.” In the days of the Babylonish captivity, the “nations” of the earth knew nothing of the Word of the Lord. They were sunk in darkness, and had not even heard the Lord’s name. If Jeremiah had told them to proclaim the return of the Jews from Babylon under such circumstances it would have been useless and absurd. There is but one fair and legitimate interpretation of the promise of the text. The event it declares is yet future. The “gathering” spoken of is a gathering which is yet to come.

Reader, I believe that the interpretation I have just given is in entire harmony with many other plain prophecies of Scripture. Time would fail me if I were to quote a tenth part of the texts which teach the same truth. Out of the sixteen prophets of the Old Testament, there are at least ten in which the gathering and restoration of the Jews in the latter days are expressly men-

tioned. From each of these ten I will take one testimony. I say “one” testimony deliberately. I am anxious not to overload the subject with evidence. I would only remind the reader that the texts I am about to quote are only a small portion of the evidence that might be brought forward.

(1) Hear what *Isaiah* says: Isaiah xi. 11, 12. “It shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

(2) Hear what *Ezekiel* says: Ezek. xxxvii. 21. “Thus saith the Lord God: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land.”

(3) Hear what *Hosea* says: Hosea i. 11; iii. 4, 5. “Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.”—“For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.”

(4) Hear what *Joel* says: Joel iii. 20. “But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.”

(5) Hear what *Amos* says: Amos ix. 14, 15. “And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.”

(6) Hear what *Obadiah* says: Obadiah i. 17. “But upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall he holiness: and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.”

(7) Hear what *Micah* says: Micah iv. 6. 7. “In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted: and I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in Mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever.”

(8) Hear what *Zephaniah* says: Zeph. iii. 14-20. “Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of

Jerusalem. The Lord hath taken away thy judgments, He hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing. I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden. Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame. At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the Lord.”

(9) Hear what *Zechariah* says: *Zech.* x. 6-10. “And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the Lord. I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased. And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them.”

(10) Hear, lastly, what *Jeremiah* says: *Jer.* xxx. 3 and 11. “For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.”—“For I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee; but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.”

Reader, I place these texts before you without note or comment I only wish that they may be weighed and examined, and the several chapters from which they are taken read carefully. I believe there is one common remark that applies to them all. They all point to a time which is yet fixture. They all predict the final gathering of the Jewish nation from the four quarters of the globe, and their restoration to their own land.

I must ask you to believe that the subject admits of being drawn out at far greater length than the limits of this address allow. I am resolved, however,

not to encumber it by entering on topics of comparatively subordinate importance. I will not complicate it by dwelling on the *manner* in which Israel shall be gathered, and the particular events which shall accompany the gathering. I might show you by Scriptural evidence that the Jews will probably first be gathered in an unconverted state, though humbled; and will afterwards be taught to look to Him whom they have pierced, through much tribulation.—I might speak of the future glory of Jerusalem, after the Jews are restored, and the last siege which it shall endure, as described by Zechariah and by our Lord Jesus Christ.—But I forbear. I will not travel beyond the bounds of my text. I think it better to present its weighty promise to you in its naked simplicity. “Israel scattered shall yet be gathered.” This is the future prospect of the Jew.

Now is there anything *contrary to this gathering in the New Testament*? I cannot find a single word. So far from this being the case, I find a chapter in the Epistle to the Romans where the subject is fully discussed. An inspired Apostle speaks there of Israel being once more “received” into God’s favour, “grafted in,” and “saved.” (See Rom. xi. 15-32.)

Is there anything *impossible* in this gathering of Israel? Who talks of impossibilities? If an infidel, let him explain the present condition and past history of Israel, if he can; and when he has solved that mighty problem, we may listen to him. If a Christian, let him think again before he talks of anything being impossible with God. Let him read the vision of the dry bones in Ezekiel, and mark to whom that vision applies. Let him look to his own conversion and resurrection from the death of trespasses and sins, and recall the unworthy thought that anything is too hard for the Lord.

Is there anything *inconsistent with God’s former dealings* in the gathering of Israel? Is there any extravagance in expecting such an event? Why should we say so? Reasoning from analogy, I can see no ground for refusing to believe that God may yet do wonderful things for the Jewish people. It would not be more marvellous to see them gathered once more into Palestine, than it was to see them brought from Egypt into the promised land. What God has done once, He may surely do again.

Is there anything *improbable* in the gathering of Israel? Alas! reader, we are poor judges of probabilities. God’s ways of carrying into effect His own purposes are not to be judged by man’s standard, or measured by the line and plummet of what man calls probable. In the day when the children of Israel went forth from Egypt, would anyone have said it was *probable* that such a nation of serfs would ever produce a book that should turn the world upside down? Yet that nation has done it. From that nation has come the Bible.—Four thousand years ago, would anyone have said it was *probable* that God’s Son would come to earth, and suffer in the flesh on a cross, be-

fore He came to earth in glory to reign? Yet so it has been. Christ has lived, and Christ has suffered, and Christ has died. Away with this talk about improbabilities! The ways of God are not our ways.

Finally, is there anything *fanatical or enthusiastic* in this expectation that Israel shall be gathered? Why should men say so? Your own eyes tell you that the present order of things will never convert the world. There is not a church, or a parish, or a congregation, where the converted are more than a little flock. There is not a faithful minister on earth, and never has been, who has ever seen more than the “taking out of a people” to serve Christ. A change must come before the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. A new order of teachers must be raised up, and a new dispensation ushered in. These teachers, I firmly believe, shall be converted Jews. And then shall be seen the fulfilment of the remarkable words, “If the casting of them away be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?” (Romans xi. 15.)

I may not dwell longer on this branch of my subject. I leave it with one general remark, which may sound to some readers like a bald truism. Whether it be a truism or not, I believe the remark to be of vital importance, and I heartily wish that it was more deeply impressed on all our minds.

I ask you, then, to settle it firmly in your mind, that when God says a thing shall be done, we ought to believe it. We have no right to begin talking of probable and improbable—likely and unlikely—possible and impossible—reasonable and unreasonable. What is all this but veiled scepticism, and infidelity in disguise? What hath the Lord said? and what hath the Lord spoken? What saith the Scriptures? What is written in the Word? These are the only questions we have a right to ask; and when the answer to them is plain, we have nothing to do but believe. Our reason may rebel. Our preconceived ideas of what God ought to do may receive a rude shock. Our private systems of prophetic interpretation may be shattered to pieces. Our secret prejudices may be grievously offended. But what are we to do? We must abide by Scripture, or be of all men most miserable. At any cost let us cling to the Word. “Let God be true, and every man a liar.”

In all matters of unfulfilled prophecy, I desire, for my own part, to fall back on this principle. I see many things I cannot explain. I find many difficulties I cannot solve. But I dare not give up my principle. I am determined to believe everything that God says. I know it will all prove true at the last day. I read that He says in the text before us this day, “He that scattered Israel shall gather him.” It must be true, I feel, whatever be the difficulties. That Israel shall be gathered I steadfastly believe.

IV. The last point on which I propose to dwell is one purely practical. It is

the duty which Gentile Churches owe to Israel.

Reader, in touching on this point, I would not have you for a moment suppose that the future gathering of Israel depends on anything that man can do. God's counsels and purposes are independent of human strength. The sun will set tonight at its appointed hour, and neither Queen, Lords nor Commons,—Pope, Presidents, nor Emperors,—can hasten, prevent, or put off its setting.—The tides of the sea will ebb and flow this week in their regular course, and no scientific decree nor engineering skill can interfere with their motion. And just in like manner the promises of God concerning Israel will all be fulfilled in due season, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear. When the "times and seasons" arrive which God has "put in His own power," Israel will be gathered;—and all the alliances and combinations of statesmen, and all the persecution and unbelief of apostate Churches, shall not be able to prevent it.

But seeing that we look for such things, it becomes us all to be found in the path of duty. It behoves us to consider gravely the solemn question, What manner of persons ought we to be? and in what way can we testify our full assent to God's purposes about the Jews? Can we in no sense be fellow-workers with God? Should we not remember that remarkable saying of St. Paul,— "Through your mercy they shall obtain mercy." (Rom. xi. 31.) This is the question to which I now desire briefly to supply a practical answer.

(1) I believe, then, for one thing, that it is a duty incumbent on all Gentile Christians *to take a special interest* in the spiritual condition of the Jewish nation, and to give their conversion a special place in our prayers. I say, advisedly, their spiritual condition. I leave alone their civil and political position. I speak, exclusively, of our duty to Jewish souls. I say that we owe them a special debt, and that this debt ought to be carefully paid.

We prize our Bibles, and we are right to do so. A heaven without a sun would not be more blank than a world without a Bible. But do we ever reflect that every page in that blessed book was written under God's inspiration by Israelitish hands? Remember that every chapter and verse you read in your Bible you owe under God to Israel. There is not a religious society that meets in London in the month of May which is not constantly working with Israelitish tools.

We prize the glorious Gospel of the grace of God, and we are right to do so. A land without the Gospel, like Tartary and China, is nothing better than a moral wilderness. See the vast difference between Europe and America with the Gospel, notwithstanding all their vices, and Africa and Asia without it. But do we ever reflect that the first preachers of that Gospel were all Jews?

The men who, at cost of their lives, first carried from town to town the blessed tidings of Christ crucified, were not Gentiles. The first to take up the lamp of truth, which was passed from hand to hand, till it reached our heathen forefathers, were all men of Israel.

We rejoice in Christ Jesus, and glory in His person and work. Well may we do so! Without a living Saviour, and the blood of His atonement once made on the cross, we should indeed be miserable. But do we ever reflect that when that Saviour became a man, in order that, as man's substitute, He might live, and suffer and die, He was born of a Jewish woman? Yes! let that never be forgotten. When "God was manifest in the flesh," and was "born of a woman," that woman was a virgin of the house of David. When the promised Saviour took flesh and blood that He might bruise the serpent's head and redeem man, He took not flesh and blood of any royal house among the Gentiles, but of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Reader, I know well that these are ancient things. They have been often urged, often alleged, often pressed on the attention of the Churches. I am not ashamed to bring them forward again. I say, that if there be such a thing as gratitude in the heart of man, it is the duty of all Gentile Christians to take special interest in the work of doing good to the Jews.

(2) I believe, furthermore, that it is a duty incumbent on all Gentile Christians to be specially careful that they *take up stumbling-blocks out of the way of Israel*, and to see that they do nothing to disgust them with Christianity, or hinder their conversion. This is a matter which is expressly mentioned in Scripture. There we find Isaiah bidding us, "Take up the stumbling blocks out of the way of God's people." (Isaiah lvii. 14.) Truly the Prophet might well speak of this. No man can look round the Gentile Churches and fail to see that he had cause.

What shall we say of the glaring unholiness and neglect of God's Ten Commandments which prevail so widely in Christendom?—What shall we say of the open unblushing idolatry which offends the eye in all Roman Catholic Churches?—What shall we say of the wide-spread habit of Sabbath-breaking which is eating like a cancer into the heart of the Protestant Churches? —What shall we say of the rationalistic mode of interpreting Old Testament history, which has crept so extensively into modern commentaries,—the system of regarding the histories of Abraham, and Jacob, and Joseph, and the like, as so many myths, or ingenious fables, but not as narratives of facts which really took place?— What shall we say of the traditional mode of interpreting Old Testament prophecies, in which so many Christians indulge,—the system of appropriating all the blessings to the Church of Christ, and handing over all the bitter things to poor despised Israel,—the system of interpreting all prophecies about Christ's first advent

literally, and all prophecies about His second advent figuratively, requiring the Jew to believe the first in the letter, and refusing in turn to believe the second, except in what is called, by a sad misnomer, a *spiritual* sense?—What shall we say of all these things, but that they are stumbling blocks—great stumbling blocks,—in the way of the conversion of the Jews? What are they all but great barriers between the Jew and Christ, and barriers cast up by Christian hands?

Reader, we must all do our part in aiding to take these stumbling blocks away. Here at least all may help. Here, at any rate, every Gentile Christian can aid the Jewish cause. The more pure and lovely we can make our holy faith, the more we are likely to recommend it to Israel. The more we can check the progress of the Roman apostasy, and protest against its idolatries and corruptions, the more likely is the Jew to believe there is something in Christianity. The more we can promote the habit of taking all Scripture in its plain literal sense, the more we are likely to remove prejudices in the minds of honest inquirers in Israel, and to make them ready to hear what we have to say.

(3) Finally, I believe it is a duty incumbent on all Gentile Christians, to *use special efforts in order to promote the conversion of the Jews*. I say special efforts advisedly. The Jews are a peculiar people, and must be approached in a peculiar way.

They are peculiar in their state of mind. They require an entirely different treatment from the heathen. Their objections are not the heathen man's objections. Their difficulties are not the heathen man's difficulties. They believe many things which the heathen man never heard of. They have a standard of right and wrong with which the heathen man is utterly unacquainted. Like the heathen they need to be converted. Like the heathen they need to be brought to Christ. But the lines of argument to be pursued with the Jew and the heathen are widely dissimilar. A faithful missionary might do admirably well among the heathen, who might find it difficult to reason with a Jew.

They are peculiar in their position in the world. They are not to be found all assembled together, like the Africans at Sierra Leone, or the Hindoos, or New Zealanders, or Chinese. They are emphatically a scattered people, a few in one country, and a few in another. An effort to get at them, most aim at nothing short of sending missionaries in search of them all over the world.

Circumstances like these appear to me to point out clearly that nothing less than a special effort will ever enable Christians to discharge their debt to Israel. There must be a division of labour in the missionary field. There must be a special concentration of preaching, praying, and loving intercourse on the Jewish people, or the Churches of the Gentiles can never

expect to do them much spiritual good. Without such special effort the cause of Israel will inevitably be lost sight of in the cause of the whole heathen world. Without such *special* effort I cannot see how the command of the text can be rightly obeyed.

Now here lies the claim which the Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews makes on English Christians in the present day for aid. It enables them to make a special effort on behalf of Israel. It supplies them with an outgate for their sympathy, and a faithful instrumentality for sending the Gospel to God's ancient people. It is in this light that I earnestly commend the Society to the support of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and desire to do good in the world.

I am quite aware that it is a common remark, that the Society does nothing. Its results appear to some very small and insignificant. I think, however, that those who make such an objection, have probably never considered the very peculiar character of the work which the Society does. Its field is necessarily a singularly scattered one. Its agents are necessarily scattered widely apart one from another. The work that they do, in the very nature of things, makes far less show than the work of a united hand of missionaries at Tinnevely or Sierra Leone. Tried, I believe, by any fair standard, the work of the Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews has no cause to fear inspection. Its agents are bearing a testimony in some places, and awakening in Israel thought, reflection, and inquiry. In others they are gradually softening prejudices, and inclining Jews to hold discussions or listen to Gospel statements. In others they are calling out a people, and leading them to the foot of the cross. What more do we see going on at home? What greater results than these can be found in any congregation on earth where the Gospel is preached? And, after all, duties are ours, and results are God's.

I leave the whole subject with three remarks, which I pray God to impress on the minds of all into whose hands this address may fall.

(1) For one thing, I charge every reader of this address to remember the special blessing which God has promised to all who care for Israel. Whatever a sneering world may say, the Jews are a people "beloved for their fathers' sake." Of Jerusalem it is written, "They shall prosper that love thee." (Psalm cxxii. 6.) Of Israel it is written, "Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." (Num. xxiv. 9.) These promises are not yet exhausted. We see their fulfilment in the blessing granted to the Church of England since the day when the Jewish cause was first taken up. We see their fulfilment in the peculiar honour which God has put from time to time on individual Christians who have laboured especially for the Jewish cause. Charles Simeon, Edward Bickersteth, Robert M'Cheyne, Haldane

Stewart, and Dr. Marsh, are striking examples of what I mean. Is there any one that desires God's special blessing? Then let him labour in the cause of Israel, and he shall not fail to find it.

(2) For another thing, I charge every reader of this address never to forget the close connection which Scripture reveals between the time of Israel's gathering and the time of Christ's second advent to the world. In one Psalm it is expressly declared, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in His glory." (Psalm cii. 16.) Where is the true believer that does not long for that blessed day. Where is the true Christian that does not cry from the bottom of his heart, "Thy kingdom come"? Let all such work, and give, and pray, so that the Gospel may have free course in Israel, and be glorified. The time to favour Zion is closely bound up with the restitution of all things. Blessed, indeed is that work of which the completion shall usher in the second coming of the Lord!

(3) Finally, I charge every reader of this address to make sure work of his own salvation. Best not in mere head-knowledge of prophetic subjects. Be not content with intellectual soundness in the faith. Give diligence to make your own calling and election sure. Seek to know that your repentance and faith are genuine and true. Seek to feel that you are one with Christ and Christ in you; and that you are washed, sanctified, and justified. Then, whether the completion of God's promises to Israel be near or far off, your own portion will be sure. You will "stand in your lot" safely, when the kingdoms of this world are passing away. You will meet Christ without fear when He comes the second time to Zion. You will join boldly in the song "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." You will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God, and go out no more.