LETTERS

TO

A MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL,

ON

HIS AND OTHER INTERPRETATIONS

OF OUR

Saviour's Predictions of His Return,

RECORDED

MAT. XXIII. XXIV. XXV.

CONTAINING

A MINUTE EXAMINATION OF THESE PROPHECIES,

AND EXHIBITING

THE EVIDENCE THEY CONTAIN

THAT

CHRIST'S COMING IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN

IS

PERSONAL, AND NEAR AT HAND.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God." 1 John iv. 1.

"For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." Luke xxii. 35.

By JAMES A. BEGG.

PAISLEY,

PUBLISHED BY ALEX. GARDNER:

M. OGLE, W. COLLINS, J. REID & CO. AND G. GALLIE, GLASGOW;
W. OLIPHANT, WAUGH & INNES, W. WHYTE & CO. J. LINDSAY & CO.
EDINBURGH; J. ANDERSON, DUMFRIES; BROWN & CO. ABERDEEN;
W. M'COMB, BELFAST; R. M. TIMS, AND W. CURRY, JUN. & CO.
DUBLIN; AND JAMES NISBET, LONDON.

1831.
In the character of the Son of man, the Son of God has gone "into a far country to receive a Kingdom, and to return." Ere he left this lower world, He communicated his purpose to those whom he honoured with his love, and who were the chosen companions of his toil. In the prospect of his absence, He consoled them with the promise of the Spirit as the Comforter till his return, and animated their hearts with the prospects of glory which then awaited Him and them. With feelings which once characterized all the followers of Jesus, but which ignorance of their Master's will has now weakened greatly, these tried and faithful friends on a particular occasion addressed to him an inquiry respecting His Coming. With endearing condescension did the Saviour at once comply with their request, giving them an Extensive Prediction of events from that time forward till the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. On this object of their peculiar desire he particularly enlarged, presenting a detailed account of the circumstances by which it should be attended, as well as a summary of events in the History of his church by which it should be preceded.

Regarding this magnificent Prediction of our blessed Lord, there has been a most unhappy discordance among Scripture Expositors, which, considered apart, might suggest an idea of great ambiguity as to its meaning. But a careful if not an unbiassed examination produced an impression on the mind of the author of these pages, that the lamented dis-
crepancies were less occasioned by any difficulties contained in the prediction itself, than they were the result of certain preconceived opinions concerning Christ's return, with which its very pointed statements would in no way accord. This conviction was greatly strengthened by that series of Discourses which more especially called forth the present production. The palpable inconsistencies into which an analytical exposition of the prediction betrayed their esteemed author, in endeavouring to support a figurative coming, as it is usually termed, and the benefits derived from the close and repeated investigations of the prophecy which these discourses naturally induced, suggested the idea that a full exhibition of particulars, and a contrast of statements, might, by the blessing of God, be rendered useful in recalling the church to her former standing on the subject of her Lord's return.

Sanctioned though they have been by men of superior discernment and Christian attainments, the Expositions now generally offered of the Saviour's prediction of his coming seem destitute of all that should command the submission of a faithful and intelligent inquirer. Harsh as such a judgment may seem, it is not uttered unadvisedly, nor is the accusation preferred without an effort dispassionately to establish its truth. Various theories of interpretation have been controverted on grounds which lie within the range of the most ordinary understanding, and although the statements and arguments contained in theological writings of high repute have been unhesitatingly rejected, the reasons are uniformly exhibited on which their accuracy is questioned. Let not those whose faith is thus impugned seek to put away from them the imputation, till able to satisfy themselves, at least, of its being unfounded; but, as they would value their Lord's approbation, let them receive from His mouth a knowledge of the time of his glorious return,
and yield to his intimations that implicit submission which the sacredness of his character imperiously demands.

These Letters have been more immediately addressed to the reverend gentleman by whose Expositions they were suggested. But although that view contained various peculiarities, there exists such a similarity and necessary connection as naturally elicited the animadversions offered on those by whom the Coming of the Son of man is misapprehended in its nature, even when it has not also been misplaced in point of time. In adopting this method, the author feels satisfied that ample justice has been done towards those from whose Interpretations he is compelled to dissent. Although the Discourses to which these Letters owe their origin, formed part of a regular course on the Gospel according to Matthew, the particular views therein maintained have especially been combated with every circumstance in their favour, which ability, care, and deliberation could afford. They were advocated by a reverend gentleman of acknowledged piety and talent—not in a few casual, hasty, or unstudied observations; but in a long series of above twenty Lectures on the Prophetic part of the Saviour's Discourse to his disciples, with few interruptions extending over a period of several months—in the composition of which he could avail himself of the aids of all preceding Commentators of similar sentiments—and delivered after attention had been loudly called to the doctrine of the Speedy Advent of the Redeemer, by numerous publications advocating Millenarian views; several of which he had perused, and some of the arguments of which he publicly aimed at refuting.

Of these Discourses the author of the following Letters took and preserved very copious notes, the principles of his former work on this subject being thereby assailed. These principles he deemed capable of ample vindication, and
conceiving that an important service might be rendered to
the cause he has espoused, by a full and deliberate exam-
ination of our Saviour's predictions, he readily accepted of
the call then made, that any farther evidence in favour of
the premillennial Personal Advent be produced. Believing
that much has been exhibited, it is now, with gratitude,
committed into the hand of that blessed Spirit who alone
can render it of any avail for producing conviction. The exec-
ution of his purpose has been unavoidably delayed long
beyond what was originally designed; but the subject, in-
stead of diminishing in interest, is one possessed of growing
importance. If the Return of Christ was that to which
the faith and the hopes of believers were almost uniformly
directed by the apostles, and generally cherished by Chris-
tians long after the decease of these inspired teachers, cer-
tainly it ought not now to be esteemed more lightly, when
we have arrived so much nearer to its glory, and when the
manifest signs of its approach follow each other in rapid
succession. While, therefore, the author desired much to
have submitted his remarks immediately upon the close of
that series of Discourses by which they were elicited, he
regrets the less that frequent interruptions from an impaired
state of health have prevented the accomplishment of his
design, till his views have acquired additional confirmation by
those stupendous events of which the world little knows
the issue.

Paisley, September 20th, 1831.
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LETTERS,
&c.

LETTER I.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST'S RETURN, AND THE DUTY OF INVESTIGATION.

Reverend Sir,

It is with no feeling of levity that I thus address you. It can indeed yield me no delight to believe you are in error, nor have I any desire to triumph over the mistaken views of him to whom, under Christ, I have been most indebted for the precious communications of divine truth, and to whom I am also under obligations of a personal nature. The resolution of endeavoured to disprove your statements and to invalidate your arguments, was not formed without reluctance, nor has it been carried into execution without many a painful emotion. Whatever may be the opinion of others, with the testimony of an approving conscience I can confidently aver, that had there been no higher motive by which to be actuated than an ungodly desire of signalizing my prowess, or of displaying skill in argumentation, I should not on the present occasion have presented myself to your notice. Indeed the relation in which we stand, would, in all probability, have deterred me from animadverting on your opinions and ministrations, on any subject of less moment than that which I feel imperatively called thus to discuss.

But renewedly and increasingly impressed with the conviction that the Archangel's Trump shall sound ere long over an ungodly world, if not in the ear of an unthinking church, I felt not at liberty to abstain from again lifting up the voice of warning. While I unwillingly testify to your great
worth, and acknowledge with pleasure how much I have been indebted to your ministrations, I should have profited little by your instructions, were I yet ignorant of the duty you so strongly inculcate, of bearing testimony for God, unbiassed by the partialities of friendship, as well as unawed by the frowns of opposition. Often indeed have I been reminded by yourself of the obligations under which every Christian is laid of extending, so far as in his power, the knowledge of the truth revealed unto himself; and it would, in reality, be an improper requital of services received, did I not wish to correct your views where I deem them erroneous.

With such feelings, it ought not to be regarded as unkind or invidious to point out the mistakes into which you have fallen, or to exhibit how untenable are the opinions you have sought to promulgate. In the spirit of gratitude, therefore, as well as of Christian love, I pray the Lord whom we serve to bless to your soul what truths he may thus enable me to discover, to correct the errors into which I may have fallen, to supply what I may have omitted, and to give you such clear conceptions of his holy word, that you may feel constrained, as I have been, to proclaim His Speedy Coming, at the hazard or with the certainty of dissolving ties of long-endeared relationship, and of weakening bonds of Christian love. It is indeed with ardent desires of being made instrumental in bringing more fully to your notice the meaning and design of these predictions, I now address you. But it is also with the assured hope that others may profit, by seeing brought to the test of heavenly wisdom, those opinions on which so many confidently rely without examining for themselves the doctrines of God's holy word, or appreciating aright the glories reserved for His Son.

Such considerations diminish, but do not wholly remove, the difficulty and disagreeableness of the task of exhibiting the unscriptural nature of the expositions you have recently given of an important prediction of the Saviour's future purpose of condescending love. Still I am by no means ignorant that such a course, notwithstanding of these explanations, may very probably expose me to the suspicion of unworthy motives, on the part of those who can ill appreciate the influencing power of truth; but the vindication of such a doctrine must be regarded as of sufficient value to warrant,
in its defence, even the hazard of such an imputation. The time indeed for temporizing is now past, if it could ever have been excused; for the full understanding of the predictions here referred to becomes daily more valuable, as it must teach more imperatively the duty of weaning our affections from the engrossing concerns of an evil world, and of continual watchfulness for the Glorious Advent of the Son of Man. If, by the blessing of God, I shall succeed in convincing you of this precious truth, I know I shall yet receive your thanks, as having conferred a favour of no trivial value. But whatever may be the issue in this respect, I never can divest myself of the incumbent obligation of seeking to vindicate the truth and testimony of God.

The question concerning the premillennial Coming of the Lord, ought not to be esteemed by the Christian as one of minor importance. It involves the honour of his God—the triumph of his Saviour, and the reward of His work—the resurrection of the saints who sleep in death, and the glorious transformation of those who shall be alive, personally to participate in all the joys of Millennial bliss. The annunciation of these forms the great burden of ancient prophecy; they were frequently referred to by our Lord himself, and are much insisted on by his apostles. Such considerations gave to the doctrine of the Glorious Advent an importance in the eyes of primitive believers, of which it has been wholly divested by Modern Theology. Rarely as it finds a place in our pulpit discussions, the slightest attention will demonstrate, that there are few doctrines so frequently referred to in the word of God as the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, and the glory which shall then be revealed. To one conversant with his Bible no proof of this should be required; yet it may not be wholly without advantage to call your attention to a few passages confirmatory of the statement. In doing so I will not carry you back to the writings of Old Testament prediction, or refer to the hopes of those who lived in ages prior to the incarnation of the Redeemer. Numerous and clear as I regard the proofs which might thence be derived, it would require argument to remove your objections, without which you would question their admissibility as evidence. But this is at present unnecessary, since it will be sufficient for our purpose to cite a few from the New Testament Scriptures, which will not
require the aid of argument to prove, even to the most prejudiced, their proper application. Even with such a limitation, we hope to be able to show that the future Coming of the Lord in glory is often stated as an important fact—that our special attention is demanded unto it—that it is used to urge to repentance—that it is addressed to Christians for their consolation—is referred to as a motive to duty—is presented as the period of our great reward—and that it is anticipated by the inspired penmen as the era of the Saviour's brightest triumph and of their own glorious destiny. And if it was so viewed, and if such were the uses to which it was formerly applied, it should not now be regarded as unimportant to the Christian, nor a Scriptural knowledge of the time of this event be considered as a matter of very trivial value.

With a frequency which forbids quotation, did our Lord himself intimate his future Coming in Glory, and enjoin upon all the duty of watching for His Return. In one form or in another, this event is introduced in nearly all His discourses on record. By parable and by precept, by comparison and by contrast, in terms more or less direct, it is strongly enforced and many of its circumstances are fully illustrated. Equally did the Saviour inculcate this doctrine on friends and on foes; on the disciples whom he loved, and on those before whom he was arraigned. He taught it in private, and in public; in the guest-chamber, to the select few, and openly in the temple to the assembled multitudes; in the seclusions of Olivet, and at the bar of his unrighteous condemnation. And to all, the unvarying tenor, and not unfrequently the language of his admonition was, "Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."

After the ascension of the Saviour, the same doctrine continued to be taught in like manner by His apostles. They urged it with equal frequency, and that also for the inculcation of the same holiness of heart and of life. It runs through all their addresses with which we have been favoured, whether delivered orally or by epistle. In the very First Sermon which was preached after our Lord had left the earth, Peter reminded his countrymen that David "being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according
to the flesh, **He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.** Acts ii. 30. And on this very ground he urged them to repentance; "**For,**" says he, "**the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call.**" ver. 39. Again in the Second Sermon on record, delivered also by Peter after the cure of the lame man, the apostle, again addressing the Jews, calls upon them to repent "and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out when the Times of Refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, and **He shall send Jesus Christ,** which before was preached unto you." Acts iii. 19, 20.

The same doctrine which the apostles began thus early to preach unto the Jews, they continued also to teach among the Gentiles. Of this their epistles contain abundant evidence, not only in the allusions which these contain to doctrines they had previously declared, but also in the statements they directly make upon the subject. Paul thanked God on behalf of the church of Corinth for the attainments they had made, of whom it was his praise, "So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. i. 7. The believing Jews were taught that "as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and, unto them that look for Him, shall He appear the Second Time, without sin unto salvation." Heb. ix. 27, 28. The Coming of the Lord, with its attendant glories, was regarded formerly as the Christian's "blessed hope," the contemplation of which should promote every holy principle in the soul. Thus Paul writing to Titus, says, "the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, has appeared unto all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world; **looking for that blessed hope, and the Glorious Appearing of the Great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.**" Titus ii. 11—13. And the power and importance of this doctrine may be inferred from what the apostle immediately adds, "**these things speak, and exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.**" ver. 15.

In the view of his own dissolution, the apostle's great consolation still was the prospect of glorious reward at the
Coming of the Lord: "I am now ready to be offered," he says, "and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." 2 Tim. iv. 6, 8.

Thus "forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," he elsewhere says, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" and all this he states, was, "if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead,"—the "resurrection of the just," there can be little reason to doubt. Phil. iii. 11—14.

Peter also, when admonished by the Lord that he "must shortly put off his fleshly tabernacle," writes an epistle, the whole subject of which is to urge attention to the "sure word of Prophecy," and to instruct concerning "the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved," which he enjoins them to be "looking for, and hasting unto," since they had been taught to expect "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," according to the promise of God concerning the Millennium, by Isaiah. 2 Pet. iii. 12, 13. Is. lxxv. 17.

For the church at Thessalonica Paul gave God thanks, that they had been "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven." 1 Thess. i. 9, 10.

He consoled believers of that church, bereaved of Christian friends, by the assurance of their being brought back again at the Coming of the Lord: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.... wherefore comfort one another with these words." He reasoned with the Colossians for purity, on the ground of future glory: "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the
earth." Col. iii. 2—4. Under oppression James exhorts believers to wait for the Coming of the Lord, as the period when all their wrongs shall be redressed; "Be patient, therefore, brethren, unto the Coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts; for the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh." James v. 7, 8. This was also Paul's consolation under all the trials and afflictions to which he was exposed: "For, if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him." And on this the apostle grounded an important admonition to Timothy as a minister of the gospel. "Of these things," says he, "put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. Study to show thyself unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Tim. ii. 12—15. Even the apostle's commendation of the Thessalonian church, which he praises beyond any other, testifying that their "faith greweth exceeding, is made to bear on the same doctrine: "We ourselves," says he, "glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure; which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God for which ye also suffer: seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled, rest with us when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punised with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." 2 Thess. i. 3—10. The contemplation of this happy time to which the apostle had often called their attention, was calculated to produce the most lively emotions of delight. They anticipated with rapture the bright era of the Saviour's triumph and of their own reward. In the eagerness of desire, these holy saints
could have wished, as they indeed expected it to be "instantly," and the apostle having shown that it will not be till the destruction of the Man of sin, therefore prays, "the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for of Christ." 2 Thess. iii. 5.

Such was the primitive desire for our Lord's Return, and such was the apostolic use of it. Surely a doctrine so much and so often insisted on in the word of God, is not one of such inferior importance to the Christian that it should engage little of his attention, or rarely be made matter of serious reflection—a doctrine to be stated, perhaps illustrated, once in a life-time, or merely to be alluded to once in a year. No; by the Saviour and his apostles its belief is evidently regarded as the existence of a living principle, abiding and operative. To it they appeal under every variety of circumstance and condition; and He who knows so intimately the mind of man, must have been well aware that such appeals find a ready response in every believing heart; and those who enjoyed his immediate tuition, under the guidance of the Spirit afterwards followed in precisely the same path.

Oh what a loss has Modern Theology sustained by the almost total exclusion of a doctrine which gave such a pathos to the addresses of the Saviour and the epistles of his apostles!—which ministered consolation under adversity, taught moderation in prosperity, and which served as a salutary corrective to every evil that arose. The prospects which this doctrine reveals to the believer, armed him with a holy heroism which no sufferings could subdue, infused additional efficacy into reproof wherever it was required, and powerfully strengthened the whole tone of Christian morality.

Contrary to the present prevailing practice, the passages already cited, prove that the Coming of Christ was urged by the apostles, not in the way of information of its being a very distant event—an event before which many ages of uninterrupted tranquillity and bliss must certainly elapse—but as one for which they were constantly required to be looking and waiting. As if the church could have no deliverance till her Lord's Return, their views were carried forward to that event as the end of all their sufferings and peril; and they lived with an ever-present impression of its glory as soon to be revealed. Waiting with anxiety for their Master's hon-
our and their own reward, they would have been loath to think it distant by many years. They manifested a different spirit from those who seem as if they would gladly postpone, for a thousand years, a weight of glory they might be unable to bear, if they do not estimate lightly the promised enjoyment. Now, that we have evidently arrived at the very eve of that time for which the primitive church so anxiously longed, and to which they so earnestly looked, many of the people of God appear as if they would have preferred to live in earlier times, and that instead of obtaining a glorious transformation, they would rather have submitted their mortal frame as a prey to the Devourer. Had believers in the first ages of the church been made aware, not merely of the events first to occur, but also of the time they should occupy, (for their great mistake arose from their ignorance of the duration of Antichristian domination,) they would have burned with impatience, and grieved for the delay. They, indeed, needed to be often reminded of the duty "of the patient waiting for of Christ," a frame of mind, which it is now little necessary to inculcate. Nor is it difficult to discover the reason. Their attention was constantly directed to the Return of Him who is the object of faith, and its importance exhibited. For, from the citations already made, more than the importance to the Christian of the doctrine of Christ's Coming in glory may surely be distinctly inferred. They do more than prove the frequency with which it is urged and referred to; they prove that it was much looked and longed for, that it was the frequent subject of fervent prayer, and that it was made available for every holy use, by the inspired apostles. How otherwise is it with the church in the present day! Seldom is the doctrine at all introduced; and if now, since attention was called to this fact by Millenarian authors, the words of such texts are sometimes introduced, it is often obviously with reluctance. And well it may, until a change of views is enjoyed: for that it is inconsistent is too easily perceived, to speak of constantly looking for the glorious appearance of the Redeemer, and to press as a duty "the patient waiting for of Christ," while at the very moment it is believed, if with the same breath the conviction be not expressed, that that Coming will not be till a thousand years after. In other cases also where the language is supposed to be less
IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT,

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explicit, or where by detaching a phrase from its context the meaning of the words can be more easily concealed, you will bear me witness that it is not uncommon to connect them with expressions concerning temporal judgments or the death of individuals, with the design of confounding such events with the Coming of the Lord. Of the disingenuousness of such a practice I do not now speak; but oh is it becoming in Christian ministers so to deal with God’s most holy word and Christ’s most blessed promise?

But much as these things are to be regretted, since their tendency is not only to destroy the meaning of language, but to weaken the impression which ought to be produced by inspired testimony, they have been so long prevalent that it is not perhaps very surprising that in the present day they should have taken deep hold of the minds of those who minister in sacred things. Taking much the assistance of those who have made it the business of their lives to present to the church expositions of the Holy Scriptures, they have been by them led into views which of themselves few would have adopted. But evils once admitted, often wax worse, and an erroneous principle when introduced, is frequently carried to a degree of excess not originally contemplated. This remark is fully verified in the case of many, who having adopted, in particular instances, the views of eminent Expositors, afterwards apply the principle to an extent which would have alarmed him to whom they have originally been indebted for the suggestion.

But besides the fact that Commentators themselves depend much on each other, in modern times their systems have generally been formed upon a principle which admits of no interpretation which would place the Coming of the Lord before the Millennium. With very few exceptions, all our Systematic Theology has presented a different view of the question; and much as we must deplore the means by which these views are upheld, to the systems in which they are maintained may easily be traced the present opinions of the church upon the subject. In no former age, perhaps, has Theology been so completely systematized, or such implicit trust been reposed in the uninspired writings of men approved for talents, piety, and Scriptural research. Not unfrequently, this veneration amounts to little less than idolatry; and to venture to dispute the Scriptural authority of
any opinion, having such a sanction, is regarded by many as almost profane.

Thus we may account in some measure for the present disrepute of the doctrine of the Redeemer's Speedy Personal Return. Several of the Commentators most in request, are deeply embued with a principle of hostility to such a view—an hostility which, if not always sustained with ability, is at least sufficiently manifested in the sedulous care they evince to find for the multiplicity of passages which refer to the Coming of the Lord a meaning of an opposite nature. Should this, however, be found impossible, every effort is put forth to get it at least misplaced in point of time. In either case the desired result is not unfrequently obtained by a sacrifice of all consistent interpretation, and with utter disregard of the rules of ordinary propriety.

The varying forms which error has assumed in the interpretation of Scripture, is well exposed by the learned Bishop Horsley in the following passage on the very doctrine in question. "Time was," says he, "when I know not what mystical meanings were drawn, by a certain cabalistic alchemy, from the simplest expressions of holy writ,—from expressions, which no allusion could reasonably be supposed to any thing beyond the particular occasion upon which they were introduced. While this phrensy raged among the learned, visionary lessons of divinity were often derived, not only from detached texts of Scripture, but from single words—not from words only, but from letters—from the place, the shape, the posture of a letter: and the blunders of transcribers, as they have since proved to be, have been the groundwork of many a fine spun meditation.

"It is the weakness of human nature, in every instance of folly, to run from one extreme to its opposite. In later ages, since we have seen the futility of those mystic expositions in which the school of Origen so much delighted, we have been too apt to fall into the contrary error; and the same unwarrantable license of figurative interpretation which they employed to elevate, as they thought, the plainer parts of Scripture, has been used, in modern times, in effect to lower the divine.

"Among the passages which have been thus misrepresented by the refinements of a false criticism, are all those
which contain the explicit promise of the 'Coming of the Son of man in glory, or in his kingdom;' which it is become so much the fashion to understand of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman arms, within half a century after our Lord's ascension, that to those who take the sense of Scripture from some of the best modern expositors, it must seem doubtful whether any clear prediction is to be found in the New Testament of an event in which, of all others, the Christian world is the most interested.'"  

Sermons, pp. 1, 2.

While examining the authority for your own interpretation, it may be serviceable to inquire also into that of others, that by exposing their inconsistency with the divine standard, Christians may be led to inquire for themselves what is taught in that "sure word of Prophecy" which God has given for their guidance. The duty of investigation daily grows in importance, yet few comparatively are to be found with inquiring diligence seeking to ascertain the ground of their trust. While such unbounded confidence is reposed in those who minister in sacred things; awful is the responsibility which those incur, who give any encouragement to unchristian indifference, or who may lull to rest by their delusive interpretations. 'Think, I entreat of you, what may be your own feelings if very soon an astounded world should witness the Glorified Redeemer revealed from heaven in flaming fire, while you are still leading forward the views of your people to the successive generations which you say we are assured must first arise. I speak with plainness but in sincerity, and I dare not conceal the fears I entertain of the guilt of those whose business it is to declare the whole counsel of God, who yet from negligence or by design, conceal a doctrine of such transcendent importance as the revelation of the Son of man, when on the very eve of being manifested to all, 'as the lightning which cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west.'

It is painful so to speak of men who are or may have been regarded as the brightest ornaments of the Christian church. But however painful, it is much more dangerous to be silent, while, by their words or their works, they mislead those who implicitly trust in them. By the very sanction of their names, good men may stamp a degree of credit upon error, so as seriously to affect the interests of truth, and
which on that very account calls the more imperatively for rigid examination.

The necessity for such remarks in reference to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus, will hardly be questioned by those who have given much attention to the innumerable and contradictory and perplexing views offered by Expositors of many of the Scripture precepts, promises, and predictions. Much that is clear they have enveloped in darkness, and few who have had occasion to consult them often, will boast much of their assistance in elucidating what is really obscure. "The labours of Expositors and Commentators," says Bishop Newton, "which were designed for a remedy, are now become a part of the disease. The case is the same with the laws of God as with the laws of the land. Read a statute and you will think you understand it, but afterwards hear the opinions of counsel upon it, and their explanations, and they will explain the meaning quite away: In like manner, many a text of Scripture seemeth plain enough to a man upon his reading it by himself, and comparing it with the context; but upon consulting the tribe of Paraphrasts and Annotators, he scarce knoweth what to think; and instead of that one genuine sense which he conceived, he hath ten or twenty senses offered to him, or rather no sense at all. Commentators are a kind of necessary evil; there is no doing well without them or with them. The truth is," the Bishop too truly adds, "men interpret Scripture according to their opinions, and frame not their opinions according to Scripture." With so much evidence of the truth of such remarks, we cannot but love the piety and admire the sagacity displayed by Luther, when he expressed "his fear lest the vast increase of books should in a short time obscure the doctrines of truth, so that the Bible itself should be again 'hidden under a bushel.'"

It may, I think, be safely affirmed, that no doctrine of Scripture has received more of such treatment than that of the Coming of the Lord; and of all the passages in which it is declared, none so conspicuously as that prediction which forms the subject of our more immediate investigation. By supposing that when our Lord foretold His Coming with the clouds of heaven He spake of entirely different events, incalculable mischief has been occasioned. Men's minds
have thus been altogether led away from the consideration of that doctrine which the prophecy was designed to teach. The evil is not confined merely to the view taken of the prediction itself; but in every passage which speaks of the Coming of the Lord, the mind which has fully imbibed the view condemned, must feel itself at perfect liberty, and be ready at once to reply to the arguments or remonstrances or cautions they suggest, that if in a prediction of such seeming importance as that delivered by our Lord himself, nothing more was meant than the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, then may we easily understand in a similar manner, and as meaning nothing more, those which less formally and with less circumstantiality inculcate the same doctrine. And good reason there were for such indifference if the expositions on which it rests were correct. But this opinion may have been received by many who have attended little either to the grounds on which it is formed or to the consequences to which it naturally leads. To expose therefore the inconsistency and impropriety of such interpretations, and to point out some of their injurious effects, will, in dependance on that blessed Spirit whose aid I implore, in some future Letters, be the object of,

Reverend Sir,

Yours very faithfully, &c.

LETTER II.

A FULL AND COMBINED VIEW OF THE SAVIOUR'S PREDICTION OF HIS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN, AS RECORDED BY THE DIFFERENT EVANGELISTS, WITH THE VARIOUS INTERPRETATIONS OF EXPOSITORS.

Reverend Sir,

Having in the preceding Letter endeavoured to show the importance to the Christian of the Doctrine of Christ's Return in Glory, and having urged the Duty of Investigation, I proceed to consider one of our Lord's own Predictions concerning that event. Fre-
quently as the Saviour discoursed of His Coming, there is only one Prophecy recorded at length in which the time and circumstances are minutely specified. On the occasion alluded to, however, these are particularly narrated; and, with a care proportioned to the importance of the subject, has the Spirit employed three of the evangelists to embody it with considerable fulness in their respective Gospels. The account furnished by Matthew, which lately formed the subject of a series of Lectures by yourself, is the most particular; but, in the inquiry into its full meaning, we will be greatly aided by having before us at one view all the circumstances related by the evangelists severally, as each of them supplies information not furnished by the others.

In consequence, however, of the diversified representa-
tions of the inspired penmen, there will be, in the order of arrangement in any such attempted harmony, variations in the allocation of certain particulars, suggested by the general views entertained of the whole prediction. Your ideas of the time and nature of the Coming of the Son of man with the clouds of heaven will therefore lead you to object to any harmony which I can form; but as the fol-
lowing has not been adopted without a careful comparison, my grounds of preference, and its accordance with the Sa-
crated narratives, will more obviously appear in course of the argument, in cases where you would at present propose a different arrangement. Although wholly in the words of our authorized version, which have been adhered to even in cases where the connecting of the statements of the different Evangelists might have required slight modification, to avoid very frequent citation it has been formed into paragraphs, with the combined references appended to each.

On various occasions our Lord had intimated to his dis-
ciples that He should not only be put to death and rise again, but that he should leave them altogether for a time. Nor were these intimations wholly confined to his disciples, but were even made to the Jews in general. A prediction delivered in the temple, and which contained the latter important circumstance, appears to have occasioned those inquiries by the apostles, in answer to which our Lord delivered that enlarged prophecy which is now to be the subject of investigation. In order therefore to the right
understanding of its meaning, it will be necessary to have in view not only the prediction itself, but also the circumstances out of which it arose.

In denunciations of wrath upon the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, our blessed Lord said unto them,

"Behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill, and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your House is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that Cometh in the name of the Lord." Mat. xxiii. 34—39.

"And Jesus went out, and departed from the Temple; and His disciples came to him, to show him the buildings of the Temple. And as he went out one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here; how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts. And Jesus answering said unto him, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, the days will come in the which there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." Mat. xxiv. 1, 2. Mark xiii. 1, 2. Luke xxi. 5, 6.

"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, over against the Temple, the disciples came unto him; and Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, asked Him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy Coming and of the end of the world?" Mat. xxiv. 3. Mark xiii. 3, 4. Luke xxi. 7.

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and the time draweth near; and shall deceive many: go ye not therefore after them; but when ye shall hear of wars, and rumours of wars, and commotions, be not terrified or troubled; for all these things must first come to pass, but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and great earthquakes in divers places; all these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted; and they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, and kill you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and to councils, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake, for a testimony against them; and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake, and it shall turn to you for a testimony. But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate what ye shall answer; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, speak ye, for it is not you that speak
but the Holy Ghost; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.” Mat. xxiv. 4—9. Mark xiii. 5—11. Luke xxi. 8—15.

“And then shall many be offended and betray one another, and hate one another; and ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death; the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake; but there shall not an hair of your head perish; in your patience possess your souls; he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.” Mat. xxiv. 10—14. Mark xiii, 12, 13. Luke xxi. 16—19.

When ye, therefore, shall see the Abomination of Desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place where it ought not, (whoso readeth let him understand,) when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto; for these be the days of vengeance that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days, for there shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Mat. xxiv. 15—19. Mark xiii. 14—17. Luke xxi. 20—24.

But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day, for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the creation which God created unto this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except the Lord had shortened those days, there should no flesh be saved; but, for the Elect’s sake whom He hath chosen, He hath shortened those days. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo here is Christ, or lo He is there, believe it not; for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. But take ye heed, behold I have foretold you all things. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold He is in the desert; go not forth: behold He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the Coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” Mat. xxiv. 20—28. Mark xiii. 18—23.

But in those days, immediately after that tribulation, there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars...
shall fall from heaven, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; and He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect, from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven, from one end of heaven to the other. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh. Now learn a parable of the fig-tree, and all the trees; when the branch is tender and putteth forth leaves, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So ye, in like manner, when ye see all these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven; neither the Son, but the Father only. Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is; and take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For, as a snare shall it come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.\(^{7}\) Mat. xxiv. 29—36. Mark xiii. 24—32. Luke xx. 25—36.

Such is a view of this extensive and magnificent prophecy, derived, by a combination of the circumstances, from the several narratives of the three evangelists. It will not, I think, be questioned by any one, that it appears, at least, to have two great prominent objects, the Destruction of Jerusalem, with the consequences which flowed directly from it, and the Coming of the Son of man in glory. The former is clearly, and at considerable length referred to, but it seems no less evident, that the evangelists also foretell, and that with still greater minuteness, the Second coming of Christ, for which all of them proceed farther to inculcate the duty of watchfulness, by a variety of parables descriptive of the state of the church and of the world, at the time of His Return. To these we shall afterwards have occasion to advert, with the view of more fully demonstrating, that our Lord, by the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, means His Personal Appearance. At present, however, we proceed to notice a few of the inter-
pretations which have been given of this portion of Scripture.

Whatever may be the difficulties which the prediction itself involves, these, instead of being diminished, have been prodigiously increased by learned and pious Expositors. It may indeed with truth be affirmed, that more contradictory, confused, and inconsistent opinions have never been presented of any portion of the divine word, than have been given of this sublime prediction, even by friends of the Redeemer. Its meaning begins now indeed to be more clearly perceived, and more correct expositions are offered, and its circumstances are more generally understood than perhaps at any former period. A few eminent men there have been, in different ages, whose views of the time and nature of the coming of the Son of man we deem correct—understanding it not only to intimate the overthrow of the Jewish polity; but also the Personal Return of the Lord Jesus Christ, at the Restoration of Israel, at the close of the times of the Gentiles. But, by a misconception of the Saviour's meaning in the 34th verse, it has most usually been supposed, that our Lord affirmed, that the whole prophecy should have received its accomplishment before the generation of men then living had ceased to exist. This is your own idea of the words referred to, as it has been that of many eminent men who have gone before you. This opinion has, however, given much ground to the enemies of the Saviour to triumph in His supposed failure as a prophet, and has perplexed and afflicted others, whose views of the endowments of the Saviour for the Prophetic office would not admit of the ready reception of any interpretation which seemed inconsistent with matter of fact. "The near approach of this wonderful event," says the infidel Gibbon, "had been predicted by the Apostles; the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples; and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ Himself were obliged to expect the Second and glorious coming of the Son of man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished which had beheld his humble condition upon earth. Yet," he adds, "the revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the language of Prophecy and Revelation." Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. I. pp. 470, 471.
That the Coming of the Son of man in glory was continually urged upon the attention of Christians by the apostles, my former Letter demonstrates; and that it was constantly expected by primitive believers, History fully testifies. But that our Lord affirmed, that it would take place before those alive had departed, is an idea which I utterly reject. It appears to have arisen from attaching a wrong sense to a word used by the Saviour, and woeful have been the consequences which have resulted from it.

On the above passage from Gibbon, Dr. Thomas Edwards, the author of a series of Sermons preached before the University of Cambridge in 1790, says, "The various and opposite methods which Theologians, have adopted to remove an objection which is too obvious to be overlooked, form, it must be confessed, a very considerable presumption, that an adequate solution of the difficulty has not hitherto been discovered, and that the objection [of the infidel] is founded on the basis of truth." In confirmation of this opinion he farther adds, that "some interpreters imagine that the Prophecy relates entirely to the ruin of the Jewish nation: others, by the convenient introduction of types and double senses, preserve in it a reference throughout to the consummation of all things. Some have contended that it partly belongs to the former, and partly to the latter; but what portions of it are applicable to the one, and what to the other, they cannot ascertain;—while a few have ventured to assert, that it represents the final judgment as immediately subsequent to the Jewish Calamities." pp. 18, 19. And inconsistent as these views appear, they embrace all the interpretations offered by Antimillenarian expositors of the present day, whatever modifications there may be of parts of inferior moment, of which there is indeed no inconsiderable variety.

But, after such an exhibition of inconsistent and conflicting expositions, it is not a little remarkable to find this learned preacher assert, that our Lord really did predict the Advent of "the Son of man descending visibly from heaven, before the generation then existing was totally extinguished"!! p. 23. And again, he says, "our Lord, in the xxivth of Matthew, decisively foretells, that the generation then existing should not be totally extinguished till it had witnessed his Second and glorious appearance in the clouds of heaven"!! p. 19. He thence concludes, that "the records
of History do not authorise us to believe that this prediction was accomplished at the destruction of Jerusalem.” pp. 19, 20. And he further states, that “this awful prediction is not recorded among the stupendous prodigies of the Jewish war.” p. 23. Who could hesitate for a moment in placing his own interpretation among the number which have presented no adequate solution of the difficulty? And who does not perceive that the great stumbling-block has been, the idea attached to “this generation”? Mr. Faber, an eminently learned living author, who has devoted much attention to the study of prophecy, while he places the coming of the Son of man at the close of the times of the Gentiles, and not only regards it as an event yet future but as near at hand, denies it to be the personal return of Christ. While he rejects as a “vulgar error” that interpretation which makes this event a Figurative Advent at the destruction of Jerusalem, he not much less inconsistently with the whole object and scope of the prediction, still understands it to be a Figurative Advent at the restoration of Israel!

But a still more remarkable view of this important prediction is that given by Mr. Houghton, the author of two sermons on the subject. Having, as he conceives, discovered discrepancies in the sacred narratives, he says, “From these differences among the Evangelists, it is evident that they spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the end of the world promiscuously, and consequently that they considered these two advents as one and the same”!!! p. 225. Again he says, “Mark and Luke, while evidently discoursing of the calamities of the Jews, seem to rise by a sudden transition from the period of the Jewish state to that of the world itself, and describe the coming of our Saviour in terms nearly similar and equally sublime with those of Matthew, yet all with one consent refer the whole to that present generation.” p. 226.

When such views are put forth by Christian authors, who can wonder at the charges of the Infidel Historian, or condemn as uncalled for the sneer they elicit? It is not at all surprising, that the enemy of our religion should continue dissatisfied, although as he says, “Erasmus removes the difficulty by the help of allegory and metaphor, and
the learned Grotius ventures to insinuate, that for wise purposes the pious deception was permitted to take place."

On the same ground, namely, the supposed necessity of finding the fulfilment of the whole prophecy during the lifetime of at least some of those alive when it was delivered, many have conceived the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven to have taken place after the destruction of Jerusalem, by the preaching of the gospel, or otherwise. This was the view which you yourself sometimes avowedly took; but it was so mixed up, in a manner not very easily understood, or rather at different times you took such different views of the words, that any attempt at reply must embrace the whole. At one time you represented the coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven to be the destruction of Jerusalem itself by the Romans; at another time it became the overthrow of the Jewish polity, which followed that event; and at a third time it was represented as the successful propagation of the gospel by the apostles; and again all of these were introduced as if all equally the one event of the Coming of Christ;—and, finally, there was occasionally the opinion given, that it still had a leaning and looking forward to the Personal Return of the Saviour; while there was, nevertheless, a constant and undeviating assertion, that all had been fulfilled during the life-time of some of those who were the contemporaries of our Lord.*

Such a variety of interpretations of one glorious event, given in language perfectly precise, and having a definite time appointed for its accomplishment, seems not very

* Among the multitude of astonishing interpretations which have been offered of Mat. xxiv, there is yet one worthy of being put upon record. It was delivered in your own pulpit, since the publication of the first edition of my "Connected View," by a person then a probationer, but who now has the spiritual oversight of a Christian congregation. Evidently regarding his affirmation as of more consequence than the multiplicity of evidence produced for the premillennial return of the Redeemer, he at once set aside both your interpretation and mine, by an emphatic "I say it contains a Prophecy concerning the church, from the time that she came out of the Garden of Eden, till the end of time"!!! Any remark on this felicitous discovery is not more unnecessary than it would be unappreciated by its author. Scriptural argument were useless, where "I say," is preferred to "thus saith the Lord."
unlike the solutions sometimes presented by pupils to whom has been assigned the task of proving certain problems by every variety of computation, for the purpose of exercising them to ingenuity. The comparison would indeed appear in favour of the latter. For, while it must be confessed that probably nine-tenths of the ingenious calculations are neither designed to be repeated, nor perhaps ever will be in actual business, yet they have all had the merit of at least leading to the right conclusion; but it is obvious that in every case in which predictions referring to one event are applied to a number of very different events,—and events of an opposite nature,—not more than one can be correct. And, in the enumeration above referred to, the interpretations are evidently altogether wrong, having excluded the only event to which the prophecy can refer—the personal Coming of the Son of man at the close of the times of the Gentiles.

The following remarks of Dr. Benson appear to me to state accurately the duty of a Commentator, to which it is much to be regretted that more attention is not given, rather than to discover by ingenuity in how many ways the text may be confused and a reader perplexed, by having his attention forced from the obvious meaning of the divine annunciation made: "It is the business of the Commentator to find out the one true sense of Holy Scripture, and to set it before his reader in as clear a light as he can." Again, the Doctor says, "It appears to me that a Critical Interpreter of Holy Scripture should set out with this as a first principle; viz. that no text of Scripture has more than one meaning; that one true sense he should endeavour to find out, as he would find out the sense of Homer or any other ancient writer. When he has found out that sense, he ought to acquiesce in it, and so ought his readers too, unless by the just rules of interpretation, they can show that he has mistaken the passage; and that another is the one, just, true, and critical sense of the place."

This unity of sense it will be my object both to exhibit and vindicate, satisfied that thus only is the true meaning of the prediction to be obtained, and convinced that God is more to be glorified by it than by any scheme, however well designed, which is destitute of his sacred sanction. Before, however, proceeding farther, it will be proper to
endeavour to remove the obstacle which has been supposed to lie in the way of consistent interpretation, and which has occasioned such absurdity, confusion, and contradiction. This will, therefore, form the subject of the following Letter, by

Reverend Sir,
Yours very sincerely, &c.

LETTER III.

ON THE PRECISE SIGNIFICATION OF THE WORD TRANSLATED "GENERATION."

Reverend Sir,

In all the extracts contained in the preceding Letter, very pointed reference is made to the words "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." The arguments which have been founded upon them, and the interpretations to which they have given rise, render necessary, therefore, a more careful examination of their meaning. More correct acquaintance with their precise signification will be of the highest importance to the right understanding of our Lord's whole prophecy concerning His Return; for should it be proved that the idea which you and others have attached to them is not the only one of which they can admit, it necessarily follows that any interpretation dependent on that idea will be deprived of its support. And, with Mr. Faber, I am firmly convinced that "the passage where it occurs has been the chief ground of those erroneous expositions which would confine one of the most magnificent prophecies of Holy Writ to the mere destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by Titus." (Sacred Calendar of Prophecy, vol. I. p. 262.) It forms the ground of Gibbon's insinuation; it is expressly assigned by the writers formerly quoted for all the absurdities into which they have fallen, and on it you took your stand for affirming, that the whole of the predictions preceding are necessarily confined to the term of existence of
those who were the contemporaries of the apostles who then listened to our Lord. On this you founded the necessity of making your particular application; although, in not a few instances, was it evinced that your interpretation was adopted as one rather of imagined dire necessity, than of obvious accordance. But before affirming that the Son of man was seen coming in the clouds of heaven, and sending his angels to gather together his elect at the destruction of Jerusalem—an idea which it is not very easy for an unprejudiced mind to adopt—would it not have been proper farther to examine whether no other signification could be found for the expression which seemed to impose such a necessity? Had this been done, some explanation might have been discovered—as more than one have been suggested—which would wholly have freed you from the necessity of adopting an interpretation so strained and inconsistent with the express terms of the prediction itself, concerning the previous fulfilment of the times of the Gentiles.

Mr. Cuninghame, who has given much attention to the subject, considers the solution of this difficulty "to consist in a close attention to the word which is supposed to indicate the complete fulfilment of the prophecy in that generation." Considering it rather to signify "commencement running into subsequent continuance of action," he proposes, therefore, as the more correct rendering of the verse, "this generation shall not pass away, till all these things shall be, i.e. shall begin to be accomplished." Dissertations on the Seals and Trumpets. pp. 241, 242.

This view Mr. Cuninghame still inclines to believe correct, and has adhered to it as one principle by which a consistent interpretation of the prophecy may be given; justifying it in his Letter to the Editor of the Edinburgh Theological Magazine, in 1828, by adducing several passages in which a similar phraseology in the original is supposed to require a translation corresponding to that which, in the verse under consideration, would read, "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilling."

But another, and what I esteem the proper explanation, yet remains to be considered. In the above, as also in all the interpretations which seek to find a fulfilment of the prediction of the coming of the Lord in the events connected
with the destruction of Jerusalem, it is uniformly assumed that the "generation" spoken of, absolutely and only means those alive at the particular time. This does not, however, appear to be always the case, nor to be its only signification. The word used in the original occurs frequently in the New Testament, and is, indeed, generally translated in our authorized version, generation. In many cases, however, this translation, if "generation" is so understood, appears incorrect, and in many the original would probably be better rendered "race," or "people." By the present translation, and the idea usually attached to it, our Lord, during his personal ministry, is frequently represented as condemning with much severity that generation as a whole, when it is evident that he directly referred to that particular people to whom he was more immediately sent, and among whom he lived and laboured. "I am not sent," he said, "but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" and the condemnation which he so often pronounces upon "this generation," is not upon the whole of mankind then alive, but upon that race to whom he was especially missioned, and by whom alone he had hitherto been rejected.

Now this, you are aware, is the sense in which I apprehend we are to understand the word when our Lord said "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled," regarding Him to intimate, not the continuance of those alive, or any part of them, till the accomplishment of all he had predicted, but rather as foretelling the preservation of the Jews as a people, even in the most peculiar circumstances, till His Return. This view has been taken of the verse by many eminent men. Although Mr. Cuningham, as already noticed, adopts another explanation, he yet admits that when "the great and justly celebrated Mede," in maintaining that here the word translated generation "does not mean a generation of co-existing men, but a race or nation, and the nation spoken of he takes to be that of the Jews," and that when Mede "refers to the declaration of God in Jeremiah xxxi. 35, 36. as being parallel thereto," he considers such a view as admissible, adding, that the word "is sometimes used in this sense both in the Greek version of the Old and New Testaments, is shown by Mede in the passages of his works referred to." Dissertations, p. 240. The peculiar force and beauty, as
well as the propriety of this translation, is well urged by Mede. These he considers obvious when we regard it as our Lord’s design “to assert the continuance of the Jewish nation. Verily, I say unto you—the Jewish nation, even to the wonder and astonishment of all who consider it, remains a distinct people in so long and so tedious a captivity, and after so many wonderful changes as have befallen the nations where they live.” And after stating that the word used in the original signifies not only an age, but also a people, a nation, a race, he adds “no one can deny but this is one of the native notions of the Greek word translated ‘generation,’ yea, and so taken in the Gospels as in the foregoing chapter, (Mat. xxiii. 36,) ‘Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this nation.’ So Beza renders it twice in the parallel place, Luke xi. 50, 51, and seven times in this gospel. Again,” Mede continues, “Luke xviii. 25, ‘the Son of man must be first rejected by this nation.’

Nor is it only in these instances referred to by Mede, that Beza has so rendered γενεα, the word translated “generation” in our Lord’s prediction. Of thirty-nine instances I have examined, in which this word occurs in the Greek New Testament, twenty-two are in Beza’s Latin translation, rendered either by gens or natio, words always signifying a people or nation. This is not an unimportant testimony in favour of the proposed reading of the disputed verse; since, of Beza’s Translation of the New Testament, Horne, in his Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, says, “On account of its fidelity it has always been highly esteemed by Protestants of every denomination.”

Still I do not quote Beza as an infallible guide, but I do appeal to him as, in this case, a valuable and unbiassed witness to the real meaning of the word. He must be allowed to have been a very competent judge, and he cannot be suspected of adopting generally a rendering suitable to his views of the passage in question; for although in more than twenty instances he has translated this word in the Greek by that which signifies “a nation,” in our Lord’s prediction itself he has rendered it by a word really signifying, in the disputed sense, “a generation.” But it is not to his opinion of this or any other particular passage I now refer, but
to his understanding of the general signification of the word. And on his testimony the more reliance may certainly be placed, that contrary to his prevailing practice he has made this one of the exceptions to his more uniform translation; because so far from his being a witness objectionable on account of partiality, it is thus shown that his tendencies, if they operated at all, must have been to give the other rendering a preference. If then, a witness so well qualified and so unexceptionable, intimates his conviction of the meaning of the word to be that of a nation or people, by so translating it in a majority of the cases in which it occurs, he has, in so far as the mere words are concerned, and to the extent that his authority is regarded, removed all ground of complaint that it in any degree does violence to the language of our Lord, so to understand it in this prediction,—which, as I shall afterwards show, necessarily requires some such extended signification, by its including within it events posterior to the fulfilment of the times of the Gentiles, which you admit to be still future.

But such an interpretation has not been confined, even among Scripture Expositors, to Mede and Beza. While the first edition of my “Connected View” was passing through the press, a dear friend put into my hands a Millenarian work published in 1770, by the Rev. S. Hardy, Lecturer at Enfield, Middlesex, in which nearly the same view is given of our Lord’s whole prediction. On the word translated “generation,” in addition to the sanction of Beza and Mede, he refers, as authority in support of the substituted rendering, to Chrysostom, Erasmus, and Pasor. I have since ascertained, that the same interpretation of the passage has been offered by many others.

Indeed, although in our Authorized version the word is almost uniformly translated “generation,” this rendering is rather to be viewed as intimating the translators’ sense of the passages in which it occurs, than as demonstrating their conviction, that this is the unvarying signification of the word. In Philippians, ii. 15 (“in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,”) they have themselves translated it by the very word contended for by Mede, and adopted by Beza, and received by Hardy, and which I regard as that which ought to have been used in the translation of our Lord’s prediction. Now I do not contend that our Translators are right in
their rendering in the particular instance, but I again cite this passage as containing evidence unbiased by Millenarian tendencies, that *nation* is really one of the significations of the word. If, in every case where such a translation would bear *directly* in favour of the view I am now defending, they have adopted one that is different, it certainly strengthens much the argument to be derived from any admission they may indirectly make. Here then, I again remark, as in the case of Beza, the rendering of our Translators in this particular instance proves unquestionably *their conviction*, that the word really has such a signification. Nay, the very impropriety of the translation in this case, if you choose to regard it in that light, only proves more decidedly that such a rendering must have been easily admitted by them as correct, if adopted without their having been compelled to have recourse unto it by the obvious sense of the passage.

It might be highly useful, but would occupy much space, to examine with minuteness many of the passages in the New Testament in which this word is used, apparently in the sense of people or nation. Two or three cases may, however, be noticed.

In that discourse in the temple which led to the delivery of the magnificent prediction now under consideration, the Saviour had denounced vengeance on the Jews as a rebellious people. On the Scribes and Pharisees wo after wo was pronounced, for their hypocrisy, the last of which is in these words: "Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because ye build the tombs of the *prophets* and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our *fathers* we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves that ye are the *children* of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your *synagogues*, and persecute them from city to city; that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacha-
arias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation." Mat. xxiii. 29—36.

The last word in this passage is the same which occurs in our Lord's subsequent prediction; and it can scarce be doubted, that here it refers to the Jews only, and not to the whole generation of living men. It has the Saviour's previous denunciations of wo upon that people all included, when he says, "all these things shall come upon this generation." It was they who were "the children of them which killed the prophets;" and to them the Saviour said, "Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers." It was them the Saviour still addressed, as those who should kill His disciples in their "synagogues." In all these circumstances, there is a reference to the Jews, and to them only; and it was upon this guilty people,—and not upon the whole living race of men,—that wrath was now denounced for such enormities; "Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation," this race, this people. My idea is farther confirmed by what follows; for the Saviour immediately takes up a lamentation for the punishment entailed by the guilt of "this generation." And does this pathetic address apply to the circumstances of mankind generally? Not at all; its expression of His grief and sympathy is wholly expended on the Jewish people; and instead of embracing the whole generation of living men over a wide world, his apostrophe only is, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem."

Farther, I would ask, is it true that all that Christ now denounced came upon "this generation" in the limited sense for which you contend? Is it not the punishment of those very crimes specified by our Lord that the Jews are still suffering? "Behold your House is left unto you desolate." It has continued desolate for many generations, and is so still, and therefore "all these" things did not come upon that generation, but it has all come upon that people who were addressed.

In another prediction of His Return, our Lord "said unto the disciples, the days will come when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it. And they shall say to you, See here! or see there! go not after them nor follow them. For as the lightning
that lighteth out of the one part under heaven; so shall also \textit{the Son of man be in his day}. But first must \textit{He suffer many things and be rejected of this generation.} Luke xvii. 22—25. It is not my intention at present to insist on the beautiful harmony which there is between this prediction and that which forms the particular subject of immediate investigation; but to confine my attention to what is said of his rejection, as confirmatory of the idea attached to \textit{this generation}. That here also it is the Jewish \textit{people} to whom he refers will appear by attention to several circumstances.

Before this day of the Son of man desired by his disciples, \textit{He must first be rejected of this generation.} Now, that he was and is rejected by \textit{the Jews as a people}, admits not of doubt. But, rejected as he was by that \textit{nation}, he was not more rejected of \textit{that generation of Jews} than any which has succeeded, but \textit{much less}. We read of \textit{the many thousands of Jews who believe}, when Paul came up to Jerusalem—\textit{nay of the myriads} of them. Has the success of the gospel been so great among the Jews in any subsequent age, that it would warrant the idea of his having been \textit{peculiarly} rejected of that generation then living. \textit{Or is it said the \textit{generation} is to be understood more generally, and instead of confining it to \textit{the Jews} to extend it to the whole of mankind then alive?} In this sense will your idea of the word better accord with matter of fact? Not at all. So far from the Saviour having been peculiarly rejected of the whole Gentile world in that age, was not the gospel extensively preached, and preached with power—preached with a degree of zeal and success which has not since been equalled? Instead of that generation having \textit{rejected} the Saviour in any peculiar degree, you have once and again recounted the \textit{triumphs} of the cross as being then the most obvious, when you would maintain that our Lord's prediction,—which I regard as even yet unfulfilled,—that the gospel should \textit{be preached in all the world} for a witness before \textit{the end} came, had its fulfilment before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Having thus seen the inapplicability of the words to \textit{that generation} in such a sense, observe now its perfect application and beauty when understood of the Jewish \textit{race} or \textit{people}. By them he was indeed rejected—rejected by
them as a nation, and for eighteen hundred years, which have since elapsed, he has continued to be rejected by that people of whom our Lord appears to speak. The parallel passage in another gospel proves, indeed, that it is in this sense we are here to understand "this generation." And "he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and of the chief priests and scribes." Mark viii. 31. That is, he was to be rejected of the Jewish nation, for these were the supreme authorities among the Jews, constituting, therefore, the representatives of that nation. Now the evangelists, by their severally using the term generation and the Jewish representatives in expressing our Lord's idea, show clearly that "this generation" is used in a sense synonymous with "this people," else the expressions could not have been given as recording the same statement.

Our Lord's language here seems also to imply, that when the rejection of this generation shall cease, that then will his glorious coming be visible to all "as the lightning." Now, as this rejection is predicted to cease just at the commencement of the Millennium, it intimates clearly that his Coming will be at the conversion of Israel, when they shall return to their allegiance. And the whole passage may surely be regarded as additional evidence, that the Saviour referred to the continued existence of the Jewish people even till his Return, when he said, "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." I shall refer to only one other passage in which I think our Lord obviously means the Jews, when, using the word under consideration, he speaks of this generation. It was on an occasion when the Jewish "people were gathered thick together, He began to say, this is an evil generation; they seek a sign and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. Luke xi. 29, 30. In these words our Lord appears expressly to compare the Ninevites with the Jews. It is not the whole people living in the days of the prophet Jonas compared with the whole people living when our Lord thus spake. The comparison evidently is between the Ninevites to whom Jonas was sent, and that people who were now tempting the Saviour by asking a sign.
These various passages, in which the word is obviously used in the sense of nation or people, do therefore support the idea that the Saviour, in Mat. xxiv. 34. foretells the preservation of the Jews as a distinct people till His Return.

Although Mr. Faber denies the Coming of the Son of man with the clouds of heaven to be the Personal Return of Christ, he has done much to correct the misapprehension so generally entertained respecting the Time to which the prophecy relates, and also concerning the meaning of this 34th verse. When, in the First edition of the "Connected View," I expressed my conviction that the word translated "generation" ought to be here rendered "nation" or "people," I was quite unaware that precisely the same view was maintained by this eminent critic, or by any other in the present day. In that author's "Sacred Calendar of Prophecy" it is, however, distinctly and accurately stated: "The original word," he says, "which our translators have rendered generation, has been commonly supposed to denote the then existing generation of men or the generation of men who were contemporary with the Apostles. But the primary meaning of the word is a race or family or nation: it is only in a secondary sense that it acquires the signification of a single generation of contemporaries. Let it, then," he adds, "in the present passage, be understood in its primary and proper sense, and the whole difficulty will vanish; for, in that case, our Lord's declaration will run as follows:—Verily, I say unto you, this nation shall not pass away, until all these things shall have been fulfilled."

And, in confirmation of this view, he has appended, as a note, the following satisfactory evidence. "I subjoin the very accurate and satisfactory exposition of the word, which has been given by Scapula.


"To these authorities," he continues, "may be added an equally decisive one from Eschylus. Ὅς ὁμοφθονος δαιμων ἐνίξαν Περσαίν γενεά. Pers. ver. 912, 913.

"The primary meaning, then, of the word is, a race or
family or nation: and, accordingly, it is used in this sense, both by the Seventy, and by the writers of the New Testament. Thus, in Gen. xliii. 7, the Seventy use the word γενεὰ to express what our translators render kindred; and they similarly employ the same word, for the same purpose, in Numb. x. 30, and elsewhere. Thus also, as Beza rightly understands them, the writers of the New Testament use γενεὰ to denote a people or nation, in Matt xxiii. 36, Luke xxi. 32, xvii. 25, and in other places. In like manner Chrysostom uses the same word to describe the whole collective body of Christians. He styles them ὁ γενεὰ ζητούντων τὸν Κύριον, the people or nation of those who seek the Lord. See Mede's Works, book iv. epist. 12. p. 752."


Dr. Adam Clarke also, (a commentator who will not be suspected of accommodating his interpretation to favour Millenarianism,) gives precisely this idea to the word generation, and understands our Lord to say "this race, i.e. the Jews, shall not cease to be a distinct people till all the counsels of God, relative to them and the Gentiles, be fulfilled."

My object, in these remarks, you will perceive, has been to ascertain the precise meaning of that word in the original, which has been translated "Generation." But I have now to remark, that before building so much of your interpretation of our Lord's prediction of His coming in glory upon the verse under consideration, as fixing its entire fulfilment to the days of those then alive, it might also have been proper to inquire whether the word "generation," even in the translation, never admits of another signification. Without insisting at length on this, the citation of a few passages will be sufficient to prove, that it is sometimes used in a corresponding sense with that already noticed. Is not this the case where it is said, "there is a generation that curseth their father, and doth not bless their mother? There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, Oh how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw-teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men." Prov.
xxx. 11—14. The "generations" here evidently mean particular classes of wicked men.

By the Psalmist those who have clean hands and a pure heart—who receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of their salvation, are also called "the generation of them that seek Him." (Ps. xxiv. 4—6.) Again, "God is in the generation of the righteous." (Ps. xiv. 5.) "A seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation," (Ps. xxvii. 30.) And "the generation of the upright shall be blessed." (Ps. cxii. 2.) In like manner the apostle Peter, speaking of those "which believe," calls them "a chosen generation." 1 Pet. ii. 9.

By the prophet Jeremiah, "generation" is used in precisely the same sense, in direct application to the kingdom of Judah. He first addresses them as "Judah," and afterwards beseeches them, "O generation." Jer. ii. 28, 31. The same prophet again uses the same word, in the same sense, when it is said, "This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the Lord their God," and concerning whom it is added, in the following verse, "the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath." And it is again immediately repeated in the next verse, "For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight." Jer. vii. 28—30.

In the song of Moses the children of Israel are expressly called, in prophetic anticipation, "a crooked and perverse generation." He does not, in these words, refer to their condition as they existed at the time he spake, but is avowedly looking forward to their conduct in the latter days: "For I know," says he, "that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord." Deut. xxxi. 29. xxxii. 5. And in this same song of Moses, in the 20th verse of the last-cited chapter, they are again called "a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith;" while, in the 28th verse, they are renewedly called "a nation void of counsel."

In reference to our Lord's prediction of His Coming in the clouds of heaven, surely such multiplied instances are sufficient to prove, not only that the original word on which
the whole difficulty has been founded, may without impropriety be viewed in a sense consistent with its reference to His future Personal Return, but also that the very word by which it has unhappily been translated, is itself occasionally used in a similar sense. These citations prove satisfactorily that the word, both as it occurs in the original and in the translation, does signify a race of men, a people, a nation, and that both are so used in reference to the Jews.

With such proofs, I therefore hold it to be indisputable, that when our Lord says, "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled," he may have intimated that the Jewish people should continue to exist as a separate and distinct race, even while in captivity among the Gentiles, and subjected to every species of oppression, by all the nations among whom they should be mingled. It naturally follows, therefore, that it is not a point to be assumed, that our Lord meant to assert that all He had foretold should be accomplished ere forty or fifty years should have elapsed. For if, as I have proved, the word is really used in different senses, it is necessary to show, that the one in which we find it thus often used is not that in which it is to be understood in the present instance. The fact of Christ's not having been seen coming in the clouds of heaven before the generation of men then living had died, is itself presumptive evidence that such was not our Lord's prediction. And, accordingly, by attending a little more closely to his language we shall find, that it neither was nor possibly could be his meaning.

For, besides the evidence derived from the use of the term in a different sense in the works of Greek authors, and in numerous passages of the New Testament, there is yet another important argument, of which I must still avail myself, against the idea you attach to "this generation." We have still to inquire, whether such a sense as that on which your objection is founded will really accord with our Lord's statements. Is it really true, then, that all he predicted, prior to making that declaration, was fulfilled before the men then living had ceased to exist? *

* The celebrated Mr. Scott, in his Commentary, assumes with marvellous ease, that our Lord here answers only "the former part of the Apostles' question concerning the time when these events
ceptons of Prophecy may be aided by History, as speculative opinions are often corrected by our knowledge of matters of fact. The generation of men who were living upon the earth when our Lord delivered his prediction has long been consigned to the dust—the destruction of Jerusalem has long found its place in the records of past events—and, for 1700 years, the city itself has been trodden under foot of Gentile nations. Is it then true,—without having recourse to an idea of double sense, a scheme for which our Lord himself has made no provision, and which the direct terms of his prediction wholly exclude; a scheme which, even if admitted, is, in so far as the present question is concerned, absolutely self-contradictory,—without such an assumed sense, allow me to ask, Do you, Reverend Sir, believe it to be true—with the historic page in view, do you really think our blessed Lord ever meant it to be understood as true—that his coming in the clouds of heaven would take place before the generation of men then upon the earth should cease to live—that at that time he would be seen so coming in power and great glory by all the tribes of the earth, (or even the Jewish tribes only, if you prefer to have it so,)—and that then also he should send forth his angels to gather together his elect from the four winds of heaven—and do you believe He declared that all this should take place, not before, nor in, nor during the destruction of Jerusalem, but "immediately after" its tribulation?

would take place." By adopting such an idea, I would in this way escape the force of your objection; but although my present inquiry is not relative to the questions of the disciples, but concerning our Lord’s prediction, I must affirm that if our Lord at all answered the latter question of his disciples concerning his Return, and the end of the age, that he did so in the magnificent description of his coming in the clouds of heaven, which occupies so large a portion of the preceding discourse. On what principle then his parabolic illustration, when they "shall see all these things," is to be restricted to "the former part of the apostle’s question" concerning the destruction of the Temple, it is difficult to conceive. However, he proceeds as if this most important point were satisfactorily ascertained, and absolutely settled. But notwithstanding the distinction he has thus made in the prediction, he still regards it as necessary to restrict "the primary interpretation of the prophecy to the destruction of Jerusalem." It is, however, not a little remarkable, that he should thus consider it sufficient to restrict what he calls "the primary interpretation," although our Lord gives not the slightest hint of its having more than one.

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Nay, putting aside for a time the question concerning the Return of the blessed Son of man, permit me to ask, do you believe that all the other events, included in our Lord's prediction, and uttered before he said "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled," were accomplished before those then living had died? There are various statements contained in that prediction, the nature of which you will not dispute, which really were not fulfilled before the grave had received the last survivors. I am perfectly willing that the term of existence allotted them be extended even to that of longevity; but the accommodation will still be insufficient—and that by many hundreds of years—to bring within its little compass the mighty things previously foretold by Christ. Let me then ask if it be true, that within this period the gospel was really "preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations"? With a full knowledge of the explanation usually offered—that in the apostolic age the gospel had made very extensive progress,—yet, keeping in view the design expressed by the Saviour, for which the gospel should be preached, "as a witness," for myself I dare not make the limitation which the offered explanation demands, and have still to ask of you and others, if it be really true, that even yet the gospel has been preached in all the world, for a witness unto "all nations"? and whether the complete accomplishment of this work when performed, will not rather mark "the end of the age"? *

Before uttering the words I have so long been considering, our Lord had also foretold that the Jews should "be carried captive into all nations;" and again I ask, is it true that this also took place before that generation of living men had ceased to exist? Great as was the slaughter of the Jews by the Romans under Titus, and numerous as were his prisoners, it was not until after their revolt, to-

* It is not my part to reconcile your inconsistencies, but I do you no injustice in thus reasoning against what you made your direct exposition, and which is indeed essential to your view of the time of the coming of the Son of man, although there have been occasions in which you have incidentally given opposite interpretations. The above view you have often neutralized; and so late as yesterday (May 1st, 1831,) you, in prayer, expressed it as matter of rejoicing "that the gospel will be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations,"—as if the prediction was still unfulfilled.
wards the end of the reign of Adrian, between 130 and 140 of the Christian era, that this prediction was accomplished. It was not till after this repeated ruin of their nation, that the Jews were "led captive into all nations," and dispersed over the face of the earth. Neither will this circumstance, therefore, come within the time of those living when the prediction of our Lord was delivered.

But there is yet farther evidence in the prophecy itself, that the Saviour, when he said "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled," did not mean to affirm, that the whole prophecy should have received its accomplishment within a single life-time. That prediction previously foretold that Jerusalem shall be "trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Luke xxi. 24—32. Now I unhesitatingly affirm that whatever be the right interpretation of the 34th verse, yours must be wrong; for our blessed Lord never could declare that a prediction of events extending at least over 1800 years, should all be fulfilled before those then living had ceased to exist. Yet your interpretation of the prophecy founded on the verse in question, necessarily involves that absurdity. Endeavour to conceal it as you may, it is not a matter to be questioned, that the words by which you felt constrained to maintain that the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven referred to the destruction of Jerusalem, by the same kind of interpretation will necessarily require it to be believed that the times of the Gentiles should have been fulfilled at the same early period. But the times of the Gentiles are not yet fulfilled, for Jerusalem is still trodden under foot of the Gentiles, and these times will not be fulfilled so long as this is the case, for "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." I therefore appeal to you, and to all who know the Lord, whether He could afterwards mean to affirm in the sense which you attached to His words, "this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled"?

With the same design, I again ask, whether any "Kingdom of God," either spiritual or external, visible or invisible, which was not established prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, has since been erected; so that concerning it our Saviour could have said of the destruction of Jerusalem,
"When ye see these things come to pass; know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand"? Luke xxii. 31. Was there any kingdom which had not been erected when the Saviour uttered the words just quoted—any kingdom that was not erected when, at the day of Pentecost, the disciples first enjoyed those spiritual gifts which were to qualify them for their Master's work—that was not even erected when myriads of Jews embraced Jesus as the promised Messiah, and when the gospel had been so extensively propagated that you have once and again affirmed it to have been preached in all the world?—Was there any "Kingdom of God," which had not been erected even after the spiritual kingdom of Christ had made such triumphant progress, of which our Lord could yet declare that before those then living had died, and at the destruction of Jerusalem, it was only "nigh at hand"?

And farther, What "redemption" was enjoyed, either by the Jews as a nation, or by the disciples of Christ in particular, which could be promised by our Lord as to take place within the term of existence of his contemporaries, and as only drawing nigh when the destruction of Jerusalem began to come to pass? (Luke xxii. 28.) Were the Jews, as a nation, called to look and lift up their heads, while misery and desolation approached? or did his Jewish disciples then enjoy any "redemption" in which they were to exult. No; much they suffered even in that early period, but they enjoyed no such redemption; and in the very destruction of Jerusalem they lost all that they possessed. Compelled to flee in haste to the mountains, they escaped only with their lives. Their whole property was left as a spoil to the Gentile oppressor, or consumed by the devouring flame; and the House of their God, which they held more dear, was laid waste and pillaged by the fierce idolator. They regarded not as their "redemption" an event so disastrous, and which was followed by manifold persecutions and much distress. Their redemption was not, therefore, an event "nigh at hand" at the destruction of Jerusalem, nor has any thing since taken place that can be regarded as that object of hope to which our Lord could allude, when he said, "when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh;" and this having been delivered
prior to that declaration which is the subject of immediate inquiry, also sets aside the force of your objection to a more extended and consistent interpretation of the whole prediction.

From all the circumstances noticed, I therefore infer the absolute incorrectness of that exposition, which would confine the fulfilment of the entire prediction to the term of existence of any of those alive when it was uttered. And not only so; but from the multifarious evidence adduced, I believe our Saviour's meaning in the expression to be, that notwithstanding of his having just predicted unparalleled sufferings to which the Jewish nation should be subjected—of their being carried captive into all nations, and having their capital laid waste and subject to the power of ruthless spoilers—that still as a distinct nation or people, they should yet continue to exist till his return. And as if it were almost incredible that a nation could survive such complicated distress, he adds the assurance, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.'

That the explanation thus offered, in so far as it is agreeable to the mind and word of God, may be blessed to your soul, is the sincere prayer of,

Reverend Sir,
Yours in Christian love, &c.

LETTER IV.

BRIEF EXPOSITION OF THE SAVIOUR'S PREDICTION OF HIS RETURN.

Reverend Sir,
In my last Letter I considered at much length the meaning of the words 'this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.' Having, as I trust, thus completely removed the supposed necessity of limitation on which you insisted for the entire fulfilment of the prophecy many centuries ago, and having shown the inconsistency of such a view with various statements contained in
the prediction itself, may I now solicit your attention while I endeavour to present a brief, but, as I conceive, a more correct exposition of the whole, as narrated by the evangelist Matthew. By the removal of that great obstacle which has so often been put in the way of all consistent interpretation, we will be better prepared for understanding the Saviour's real design, and, by seeing the harmony and distinctness of its parts, you may more readily receive the evidence to be afterwards adduced of its reference to the pre-millennial return of the Redeemer. In this I shall, in so far as necessary, freely avail myself of my own remarks already before the public, with such additions as careful and repeated examinations have suggested.

For the last time, as we have seen, Jesus being in the temple, exposed with unsparing severity the hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees. He reproves them for their hardness of heart, in persecuting the prophets and rejecting Himself, and denounces upon them coming judgments. He then utters the tender expostulation and lamentation, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! [Observe what follows.] Behold your House is left unto you desolate, for I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Mat. xxiii. 37—39. He shall not be seen of them "henceforth" till a certain time. As they then saw Him personally, so their not seeing Him "henceforth," for a specific period, must be in the same sense, and therefore implies His personal absence in the interim. But the duration of this his absence is coeval with that of the Temple's desolation: "Behold your House is left unto you desolate, For, [the reason or ground of its being so, "for"] I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth." Still, however, this desolation of their House occasioned by the Saviour's absence is only for a limited time, "till they shall call Him Blessed. This clearly refers not directly to the individuals immediately addressed. These were the Scribes and Pharisees, on whom He had just denounced a "woe" of condemnation, as men who could not "escape the damnation of hell." ver. 33. Never, therefore, will such call Him
"blessed." They would not do so at the overthrow of their city; they will not do so when raised to punishment. But they were the rulers, and therefore the representatives of the Jewish nation, who, at their conversion, will, indeed, bless that Saviour they have so long execrated: "ye shall not see me, henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

Having delivered this important prediction to the Jews, of His absence for a time and the desolation of their Temple, the Saviour now departed from its precincts; and, followed by his disciples, (ruminating on the import of the denunciation just uttered,) He retired to the mount of Olives, the place of his frequent resort, and which commanded a fine view of the Temple, being directly opposite the hill on which it stood: "And Jesus went out, and departed from the Temple; and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the Temple." (xxiv. 1.) "Master," said one, "see what manner of stones and what buildings are here"! (Mark xiii. 1.) "Goodly stones" indeed, some of which, as mentioned by Josephus, were of the whitest marble, and upwards of 67 feet long. From its beauty, and the sacred purpose for which it was designed, and perhaps also from its great strength, they were unwilling to believe it would be destroyed. It was indeed a magnificent structure: and, as they contemplated its threatened desolation, they were ready to exclaim, in the pathetic language perhaps, as also in the spirit, of prophetic lamentation, "Our holy and beautiful House, where our fathers praised thee!" They therefore point to its superlative grandeur, as if imploiring its preservation from the impending destruction. This, however, only calls forth a repetition of the afflicting prediction: "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down." ver. 2. This solemn asseveration of their Master at once negatived their hopes, and prevented farther importunity for the preservation of the Temple. Assured with certainty of its fate, and remembering the prediction He had so recently delivered within its walls, they now inquire particularly concerning both the commencement and termination of the predicted desolation: "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately,
saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

By recalling to our remembrance what Jesus had foretold before leaving the Temple—a prediction which would make no transient impression on the minds of His Jewish disciples—we shall be better prepared to understand the important questions now addressed to Him, and the grounds which suggested their combination. Unconnected as these questions must at first sight appear, they are, I humbly apprehend, both naturally and intimately connected. The Saviour had just assured them of the destruction of the Temple; and, as I have already shown, had shortly before predicted its continued desolation till the time of His coming. The disciples, therefore, here first ask "when" its destruction will take place: "when shall these things be?"—when shall the Temple be utterly "thrown down"? and they next inquire concerning the termination of this desolation, inquiring for the sign of the Saviour's "coming," which, from his prediction in the Temple, they had been taught to connect with the close of that desolation: "Behold your House is left unto you desolate, for, I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh." But, in their second question, the disciples also connect the time of his "coming" with "the end of the world"—or age, as you admit the word should be rendered. Nothing had previously been said by the Saviour, at least nothing is here recorded as previously said, of the "end of the age." But the disciples were not ignorant of Prophecy, and they were able to observe and attend to its intimations. And thus it was, I have no doubt, they learned to connect the coming of the Lord with the end of the age. From a prophecy given by Daniel, they had already ascertained the precise era of Christ's appearance in the world; and, by their acquaintance with this same prediction, and the remembrance of what had so recently fallen from their Master's lips, they would be enabled to connect the time of Christ's Return with the end of the age. Daniel had foretold that, after the Messiah was "cut off," the City and the Sanctuary should be destroyed by the people of the Prince who should come against Judea; and that these he should "make desolate, even until the consummation"
or end. Dan. ix. 27. Now, as the Saviour had himself predicted that this desolation would continue till the time of His Return, when the Jews will acknowledge and bless Him as the sent of the Lord, his disciples, equally desirous of information concerning both, ask, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?"

From the 4th to the 14th verse, the Saviour gives them a general outline of what should take place up to "the end" of the age, cautioning them against false Christs who should arise, and warning them against the supposition, that when they should hear of wars and rumours of wars, that this "end" had arrived;—"but the end is not yet." Great as was the distress entailed upon the Jews by the invasion of the Romans, and by the famines and pestilences and earthquakes which occurred at that time, He shows them that this was but the commencement of long continuing affliction to which the Jews should afterwards be exposed,—"all these are the beginning of sorrows." ver. 8. Much was to be endured by the impotent Jews before the end arrived. But upon his own followers our Lord enjoins that for all these things they "be not troubled." In the 9th verse he predicts the persecutions under Pagan Rome: "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you." This being narrated in order posterior to the evils which were connected with the destruction of Jerusalem, related in the foregoing verses, I understand to be the continued chronological order of events, and which form the next great sign. The true friends of the Redeemer were to be persecuted both by Jews and Gentiles, being, as here intimated, "hated of all nations" for the name of Christ. Accordingly, they suffered dreadfully at the hands of the Roman emperors in the noted persecutions of that early period. In the 10th verse, there next appears a prediction of Papal persecutions, as succeeding those of Pagan Rome. "Then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another." This is not the work of avowed enemies, but of professing friends; they betray and hate not mutual and open foes, but "one another." In the following verse I believe the Saviour alludes to the Papal Antichrist, in the continued succession of Popes, as the "many false prophets," who should rise and "deceive
many;" assuming a wicked and idolatrous power in the Church of Christ, and by the establishment of whose abominations "iniquity shall abound," and "the love of many shall wax cold." These "false prophets" are not to be confounded with the "false Christs," mentioned in the 5th verse. Still viewing the prediction as advancing chronologically, I observe that these "prophets" are mentioned as being in the Christian church, while the false Christs deceived the Jews only. In the 13th verse he exhorts to steadfastness in maintaining the truth, and in the 14th adds, "And this gospel of The Kingdom shall be preached in all the world * for a witness unto all nations, [not that it shall have been universally received by them for 1000 years,] and then shall the end come"—the "end of the age" about which they were inquiring.

Such appears to be the natural and proper exposition of this part of the chapter; although you laboured hard to make this end of the world, or age, appear to be the destruction of the Jewish polity. But, besides that Christianity had made considerable progress before the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, there is no authority whatever, for supposing that event the termination of "the age,"—that "consummation" or end being placed by Daniel not at the commencement, but at the close of the desolation of the city and sanctuary, and therefore as preceding the Millennium: "he shall make desolate even until the Consummation." Dan. ix. 27. It is also o be remembered, that in the latter question of the disciples, this end of the age was connected with the coming of Christ: "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?"

Having thus given them a very condensed view of events up to the end of the age, the Saviour, in the 15th verse, returns, and becoming more minute in the specification of particulars, points to the duration of the afflictions upon

* On this verse, the Rev. Mr. Scott remarks, the word rendered world "properly signifies the whole habitable earth, whether inhabited or not; but it is sometimes used," he adds, "for the Roman empire, and is by many restricted to that sense in this place, perhaps improperly." - The view which I take of these verses as a chronological epitome of the great events which were to precede the end of the age, as well as the purpose for which the gospel is to be preached, leave me without doubt that the restriction is improper.
the Jews, and gives farther instructions to be recorded for the guidance and direction of those living in the periods to which His predictions referred, and who were more particularly interested: "When ye, therefore, [this being an inference relative to their conduct drawn from the former chronological part of His discourse—"when ye therefore"] shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whose readeth let him understand,) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains—let him which is on the house-top not come down to take any thing out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days."

The parenthetical injunction for the reader to understand clearly implies a danger of mistake; and the neglect of this very warning has probably occasioned much of the confusion in which commentators have involved the chapter. As the prediction of the prophet, from which I have already quoted, not only shows to what our Lord immediately refers, but will also assist us in another part of the inquiry, I shall now cite fully the passage to which our attention is thus particularly called: "Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven [prophetic] weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troubleous times. And after threescore and two weeks [of years] shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the City and the Sanctuary: and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the over-spreading of abominations he shall make desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate,"—or "desolator." (marg.) Dan. ix. 25—27.

My only remark on this, at present, is, that the prophet evidently refers to the Romans as "the people of the prince that shall come," and to the destruction of Jerusalem and
the temple by that of "the City and the Sanctuary," together with the continuance of their desolation "for the overspreading of abominations." But although the Saviour clearly refers to this destruction of the city, and warns his followers to escape when they should see the period arrive, it is difficult to conceive how any should have thought of applying to that event what He afterwards states respecting his Coming; in answer to the second question of his disciples. Such a misapplication is the more surprising, as He has carefully guarded against false ideas of the nature of his coming. Having predicted a period of the greatest tribulation that ever was or shall be, He warns them, in the 24th verse, against false Christs and false prophets who shall arise, and adds, "Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold He is in the Desert, go not forth: Behold He is in the secret chambers, believe it not; For, [this is the reason why they are not to go into the desert seeking Him, "for"] as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." When He comes, therefore, it will be in no secret influence on the soul; no mere display of power in the infliction of judgments; no coming to be known only in a chamber or witnessed only in a desert—but a bright and glorious manifestation of himself, instantaneous and seen of all,—as the lightning which "cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west."

Having warned them against mistake or deception with respect to the nature of his coming, the Saviour proceeds more particularly to inform his disciples when this glorious event shall take place: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, [or, as in the parallel gospel by Luke, (xxi. 27.) "in a cloud,'"] with power and great glory: and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." His Second coming will therefore be very different from his First appearance.
It will now be with power and great glory, as frequently predicted by the prophets, and by some of them so magnificently described. It is that coming for which his disciples looked with such desire and with such delightful anticipations. His great work of humiliation being past, he now comes to enjoy his visible triumph over Satan, and to share it with his chosen, for “He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

In order, therefore, to know the period of our Saviour’s return, it is only necessary to ascertain when “the tribulation” here spoken of shall cease. For this we are furnished with three keys. The first may be found in the passage already quoted from the prophecies of Daniel. We there learn, that “unto the end of the war desolations are determined,” and that, “for the overspreading of abominations,” the city and Sanctuary shall continue to be made desolate, “even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate”—or, (as corrected in the margin,) “upon the desolator.” It is to this continuance of the desolation, I apprehend, our attention is especially directed by the parenthetical warning of the Saviour or Evangelist, “whoso readeth let him understand;”—the full knowledge of its duration being necessary in order to the understanding of the prediction of his Return, “immediately after the tribulation of those days,” at its termination. The “consummation” has not yet arrived. God’s controversy, or “war,” with his ancient people has not yet ceased; nor has “that determined” been wholly poured upon its objects, whether reading “desolate,” it is referred to the Jews; or reading “desolator,” it is referred to those by whom they have been oppressed. But, as we have already seen, “the end,” or “consummation,” will come when the gospel has been “preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations;” and when the city and Sanctuary cease to be made “desolate.” God’s controversy with his ancient people must cease before the Millennium, for then he shall have returned to them “with mercies;” and this is to be preceded by the infliction of dreadful judgments upon their enemies. The Saviour’s return being “immediately after the tribu-
lation of those days" must therefore be before the Mil-

lenium.

In the 21st verse, we have the second source of evidence, in the extent of the tribulation by which the coming of Christ shall be preceded: "For then shall be great tribu-

lation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be; and except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Now as there cannot be two tribulations, each the greatest that ever was, this period cannot yet have arrived, for we learn from Daniel (xii. 1.) that this greatest tribulation is to be at the period of the restoration of Israel: "And at that time,"—at the destruction of the Ottoman empire, pre-

dicted in the last verse of the preceding chapter,—"And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people, and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book."

Here then we find that the time of the greatest trouble, up to that period, is to be at the time of the restoration of Israel, the children of Daniel's people, when Michael the prince stands up in their behalf. It seems, therefore, a misapplication of our Lord's prediction of this greatest tri-

bulation to refer it to the destruction of Jerusalem, although in Matthew's gospel it may have some appearance of being connected with the prophecy relative to that event. But in the gospel of Luke, to which I shall shortly advert, it is to be observed that the coming of Christ is distinctly placed subsequent to the fulfilment of the times of the Gentiles. I apprehend, however, that our Lord, having foretold the near destruction of Jerusalem and the troubles connected with it, carries forward the views of believers to the day of the Lord,—the long-desired Sabbath,—and to the more dreadful tribulation at its commencement, which he con-

trasts with that at the destruction of Jerusalem. This, I think, is that "Sabbath," and that "winter" or tempest," as the word signifies, (see Acts xxvii. 10.) concerning which the Saviour enjoins believing Jews to pray their flight be not in it. In this as in other cases the prophecy, having
reference to the time of the Saviour's return, is addressed to the disciples for the instruction of their brethren in all ages. The flight to which he refers appears to be that already noticed, when "all nations" shall be gathered against Jerusalem to battle after the restoration of Israel, when, says the prophet Zechariah, "ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake, in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah; and [as in our Lord's own prophecy,] the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." Zech. xiv. 1—5. This being in a time of tribulation so much greater than was even that at the destruction of Jerusalem, the Saviour probably directs His disciples of the Jewish nation—to whom the prophecy was given, and to whose circumstances much of it relates—to pray that they be not involved in it.

There are various reasons which constrain me to think that it is at the 19th verse our Lord concludes his directions concerning the conduct of the disciples at the destruction of Jerusalem; and in the 20th directs attention forward to the greater tribulation immediately preceding His coming. It is at the time of this "winter," or tempest, that "then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be." Matt. xxiv. 20, 21. This time of greatest tribulation, as has been shown, is however to be at the restoration of Israel, (Dan. xii. 1,) and therefore could not be referred to by our Lord, as at the destruction of Jerusalem formerly. It is evidently the same that is predicted, Rev. xvi. 18. It is spoken of by our Lord, as just noticed, to be a time of such great tribulation, that but for the elect's sake, "no flesh should be saved." This, while it accords fully with the predictions concerning the time of trouble at the commencement of the Millenium, does not appear at all to apply to the destruction of Jerusalem, in which the Jews only were involved. Again, the period of trouble referred to by our Lord is to be shortened "for the elect's sake." Neither does this, however, correspond with the circumstances connected with the destruction of Jerusalem, from which the Christians had escaped before its calamities commenced, and whose escape, therefore, (into which it is explained) did not depend on the shortening of that trouble. The "tribulation" of which our Lord speaks, as being
"immediately" preceding His coming, must be still future, and is only referable to the unparalleled troubles at the close of the present Gentile dispensation.

The return of Christ at the restoration of Israel is rendered farther evident on attending to the parallel passage of the evangelist Luke, who, instead of referring us to Daniel, simply embodies in few words the information we have already obtained from that prophet: "There shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people; and they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." And then follow the signs of Christ's return, and the account of the coming itself as given by Matthew: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Luke xxi. 23—27. Jerusalem still is " trodden down of the Gentiles," and therefore the coming of the Son of man is an event yet future. But we have the full assurance of the Saviour's verity that " immediately after the tribulation of those days," and after certain celestial signs, that then shall be seen the Son of man coming in great glory.

These remarks are designed not merely to direct attention to the precise period of our Lord's return, but also to counteract an erroneous opinion too generally entertained, that Christ Himself, in some sense, applies to the destruction of Jerusalem, what he declares of his Personal Coming in the clouds of heaven, when he shall be seen so coming of all the kindreds of the earth. Such an opinion can only be accounted for on the supposition of the total oversight of those various statements by which it is completely refuted. But indeed the language itself in which the Coming is announced, expressly excludes the possibility of any such construction. Even if the miseries attending the destruction of Jerusalem, rather than any subsequent to that event, had been " the tribulation" here spoken of, it is still to be observed that the coming of the Lord was not to be " in"
that tribulation—not even contemporaneously, but—"immediately after" it, whatever the tribulation itself may be. But, as has been proved, this refers to future times; to which our attention must still be directed as the period immediately after which, or at the Restoration of Israel, when Jerusalem has ceased to be trodden down of the Gentiles, that then the coming of our Lord shall be gloriously realized, as here declared by Himself and uniformly predicted by the prophets.

Again, on the supposition that Christ was not to return till after the Millennium, it might well appear surprising that He should not have included that long term of holiness and happiness among the signs which precede his coming. After the world had for thousands of years been torn by dissension, and been the scene of every wickedness, such a lengthened period of universal purity and peace must have proved a very notable sign. But, as has been observed, the words "immediately after the tribulation of those days," prove that the coming of the Saviour shall precede the commencement of the Millennium, and therefore its existence could not have been given as a sign of his approach.

"Now learn a parable of the fig-tree," said the Saviour: "When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So, likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it [marg. "He"] is near, even at the doors." In these eventful times let not the illustrative warning pass unheeded. While nations are convulsed, and thrones are overturned; while there is "upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity," and the most sagacious politicians are in fear of "those things which are coming upon the earth," let not the Christian lose sight of the pole-star of Prophecy, which alone casts a steady light on the events of futurity—near as they may be and mighty in their result. Let us all observe with interest the Lord's doings on behalf of his ancient people, in whose holy prosperity is bound up the destinies of a regenerated world. Think of the Saviour's gracious assurance unto them, as connected with his Coming. "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," ver. 32—35.

Such is a brief exposition of the prophecy, and some of
the grounds on which it is formed. The principal event it contains is afterwards illustrated by a variety of parables to which I do not, however, at present refer, as they shall afterwards be made the subject of minute investigation.

That the Lord, who has the hearts of all men in his hand, and who alone by his Spirit can convince and illuminate, may lead you into all truth, and give you grace to acknowledge, and fidelity to teach, whatever He imparts, is the sincere prayer of,

Reverend Sir,
Yours very truly, &c.

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LETTER V.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN FARTHER PROVED TO BE AT THE CLOSE OF THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES, OR RESTORATION OF ISRAEL.

Reverend Sir,

In the preceding Letter I presented you with a Brief Exposition of our Lord's predictions, as understood by me, with some few remarks in its vindication. It differs from that given by you in two important particulars, —the time and the nature of the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven. To many important particulars, in reference to both, I have yet to solicit your farther attention, in support of the view already exhibited. The present Letter shall, therefore, be occupied with additional arguments in proof of the Time of that event being the one already stated.

In my Harmonized View of the prediction, as recorded by the different evangelists formerly given, I placed the Coming of the Son of man as subsequent to the times of the Gentiles. In this, you are aware, I followed the arrangement of the evangelist Luke, who, so far from identifying that coming with the destruction of Jerusalem, or placing it either in or at or immediately after that event, in his account, interposes between them a period which he terms "the times
of the Gentiles." Of the duration of this period he does not indeed speak, but information is supplied by which it may now be pretty nearly ascertained. It is a period which may be measured by that of Judah's dispersion and oppression. The times of the Gentiles was to be a period during which the Jews would be subjugated by other nations, and Jerusalem itself, the capital of their land, be degraded and under their control. Now as the evangelist places the coming of the Son of man immediately after this, it is of importance that we examine it with attention.

It is to be remarked, then, that all this followed the destruction of Jerusalem, the desolation of which the disciples were informed should be nigh when they saw it "compassed with armies." ver. 20. There was then to be "great distress in the land and wrath upon this people," and they were to "fall by the edge of the sword," a prediction which, you know, was fearfully realized. Still, besides and after all this, they were to be "led away captive into all nations," and Jerusalem was to be "trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Luke xxi. 24. And on this Scott remarks, "the remains of that devoted nation have been dispersed as captives, or in a most dependent oppressed condition, throughout the kingdoms of the earth; and yet have been preserved a distinct people for above 1700 years." "Jerusalem has ever since been 'trodden under foot,' or governed with despotic sway by the Gentiles; by the Romans, Saracens, Mamelukes, Franks, and Turks, who possess it to this day. A law was made by the Roman victors forbidding any Jew to dwell in their ancient inheritance, or to come within sight of Jerusalem; the foundations of the old city were ploughed up; a new city was at length built by the conquerors, called Ælia, and an idolatrous temple was erected in the place where the temple of Jehovah had stood. In the days of Constantine, and afterwards, the city was indeed possessed by Christians among others; but they were chiefly the Gentile converts, and the Jews were driven thence with great severity." So fully was this part of the prophecy verified!

The times of the Gentiles will, however, come to an end, and when these times are fulfilled, and Jerusalem ceases to be under the oppression and power of the Gentiles, having
been restored to its rightful owners, then arrives the period of the coming of the Lord. But of all this you took no notice, scarcely ever making the least reference to the period at which Luke places the coming of the Son of man. On one occasion only did you even allude to this part of his narrative, and then you asserted that at the Restoration of Israel the times of the Gentiles will not be fulfilled; but that then the Gentile fulness will be brought in. It was indeed a hasty, a very unguarded assertion to make; and shows how little you had availed yourself of aid from the statements of this evangelist, who clearly intimates the contrary. Do you ask any proof? I reply, that as Jerusalem shall continue to be trodden under foot of the Gentiles until their times are fulfilled, that this necessarily implies the fulfilment of these times when that oppression shall have ceased. At the Restoration of Israel, you allow Jerusalem will revert to them, this therefore will be the period "until" which it is trodden down of the Gentiles, and as it is to continue in that state until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, the very regaining of it by the Jews will therefore demonstrate the accomplishment of these times.

But on the occasion alluded to, you also affirmed that it is nowhere said that the Coming of the Son of man was to be subsequent to the times of the Gentiles being fulfilled; but that Luke, after foretelling the continued desolation upon the Jews, goes back to speak of the destruction of Jerusalem as the Coming of the Lord. To this, you are indeed necessarily shut up by the view you have given of the coming of the Son of man. For if it can be proved from Luke that these are two distinct events, then must it follow that your interpretation of the prediction as recorded by Matthew was incorrect. Now let me request you to read again the passage by Luke, and then to say whether such an interpretation has the most distant appearance of propriety. Having in the plainest language referred to Jerusalem's being "compassed with armies," and having enjoined the friends of the Saviour then to leave the city, its desolation being nigh, the evangelist next advances to give directions about their escape; then having foretold the awful afflictions which should be entailed upon the Jews at that time, he proceeds, chronologically hitherto, you will confess, to
predict their long captivity among all nations, which followed the overthrow of their civil polity, and next intimates their continuance in this state "till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." He then gives intimation of signs to be in the sun, moon, and stars, among the heavenly bodies, and distress among the nations on the earth; "and then," he adds, "shall they see the Son of man Coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Luke xxi. 20—27. Now, I ask, who could imagine that the evangelist, in this latter part of the prediction, is not proceeding with his narrative in the same regular chronological order which he follows in what immediately precedes? Still more, may I ask, who can suppose that after he has already given a plain and direct intimation of the desolation of Jerusalem, and after proceeding in language equally precise, with a narrative of events for 1800 years after that catastrophe, and appears to be still proceeding with the narrative of events which follow, that instead of this, he is now returning, and that without any intimation of his design, or any circumstance from which it can at all be inferred—returning to envelope in a figure, if the Coming of the Son of man is to be so named, events which he had already plainly foretold?

That the destruction of Jerusalem was not the coming of the Son of man, is I think thus evident from this fact, that after the former had been predicted, the latter is foretold as something altogether distinct, and with many important circumstances intervening. Nor can the one be considered as an explanation of the other, for they do not occur in connection, but at a distance from each other, without having anything to lead to such an idea, but the reverse. Even were there no evidence directly in proof of the Coming of the Son of man, being at the close of the times of the Gentiles, still your application of it to the destruction of Jerusalem is altogether arbitrary. As well might the captivity which followed, or any other of the events which have since intervened, be called the Coming of the Son of man with power and great glory. There is no reason which can be adduced for referring it to the destruction of Jerusalem that may not, with more than equal propriety, be advanced for applying it to any event which happened "after" it. But no unbiased reader could entertain any other idea, than that the evangelist meant to intimate that the Coming
of the Son of man was an event to succeed the fulfilment of the times of the Gentiles. Besides, it is to be observed, that this is not introduced as an explanation of any thing already declared, but as something additional. This is clearly implied in the use of the conjunction, "AND there shall be signs," &c. which succeed the fulfilment of the times of the Gentiles, and precede the Coming of the Son of man.*

I therefore repeat that there is not a single circumstance in the narrative of this evangelist which can naturally lead to the idea that in predicting this Coming of the Son of man, the Saviour is going back to speak in this new form of the destruction of Jerusalem merely; but that having predicted that event, he carries forward the view in an unbroken chronological order beyond it in the successive calamities which should befall the Jews, and their continued captivity till the Coming of the Son of man with the clouds of heaven. If this were not the evangelist's design, I think his readers must necessarily have mistaken it; since by narrating the preceding events in the precise order in which they have occurred, he, by this very circumstance, leads to the expectation that those succeeding will be so also. Surely in such a case, had he meant to be otherwise understood when he reaches the 25th verse, he would have given some intimation of this; and this idea is greatly strengthened by observing that when he really does make such a departure as you suppose, from this regular order, he gives express intimation of the fact. Observe how carefully this is attended to in the 12th verse, "but before all these, they shall lay their hands on you."

Let us now attend a little more particularly to the time of the Coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven,

* Mede, as quoted by Mr. Cunninghame in his Dissertation on the Seals and Trumpets. (p. 230.) understands the word "and" to be here used for then: "Then shall there be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars;" and it is really so used in the verse immediately preceding; "there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles." Propriety seems therefore to require that we understand the evangelist still in the same sense, when he immediately adds, "And there shall be signs in the sun," &c.
as declared in the gospel by Matthew. As both evangelists were equally inspired, if I be correct in understanding Luke to place that Coming at the close of the times of the Gentiles, then to the same period will it be referred by Matthew, how different soever may be the form in which the intimation is conveyed.

There also we are supplied with a chronology, and in this inquiry, it will be of the very highest importance to keep in view the important fact which I have already illustrated, that Matthew's chronology is given, from the 5th to the 14th verses inclusive, before at all describing the glorious advent of the Saviour. Much as it has been neglected, this I take to be the grand chronological key to the whole remaining portion of this magnificent prediction, in which the various events are so minutely described, and so fully illustrated. The disciples in their second question take for granted that the Coming of Christ is to be at the end of the age, and ask one sign for both. The Saviour having given them intimation of the rise of false Christs, which shortly afterwards occurred, leads on their attention to the rumours of approaching war, which he informs them "must come to pass." And here mark the note of Chronology; "but the end is not yet." The end of the age is the object of the disciples' solicitude, since with it comes their Lord's return; and it is the point to which the Saviour designs ultimately to lead their attention; but lest they should have been in danger of supposing that the approaching war would terminate the age, He warns them that even when this has come to pass, "the end is not yet." ver 4. Having in the next verse made more particular mention of the wondrous events which took place about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, he again cautions them that these did not indicate the termination of the age; on the contrary, all these are only "the beginning of sorrows." ver. 8.

Advancing now in this chronological narrative of events towards the end of the age, our Lord specifies the next important sign after the destruction of Jerusalem. This he again does in terms sufficiently indicating its chronological character, as succeeding the events last specified; "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted." My present object is not so much to refer to the fulfilment of this in the
early persecutions of Pagan Rome, as to point attention to the order in which these events are predicted, and their regular succession as implied in the terms used. Having already foretold the circumstances or signs of one particular period; the next are intimated as "then" to take place. I have, in the Brief Exposition offered of the chapter, referred to the fulfilment of the verse quoted in the precise order which it here occupies in the leading events connected with the church of Christ. Without therefore, further insisting on this, but simply reverting to the chronological note with which it is introduced, I again remark that the next verse is introduced in precisely the same manner: "And then shall many be offended, &c. With what regularity and precision does the Saviour advance in his notification of the successive signs which lead to the termination of the age! Circumstances of prominence and of greatest interest to the church, and accessible to the observation of every individual member, are selected, and their succession marked by special reference, until the whole are set before us, having as the last the preaching of the gospel, "in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and THEN shall the end come."*

Thus in a few verses, by prominent marks which may easily be recognized in the History of the Church, has the Saviour extended his signs over a period of 1800 years. The more I contemplate this part of the Chapter, the more am I impressed with its importance; and the more do I admire the beauty, simplicity, and precision of the statements

* Mr. Faber in one part of his Sacred Calendar of Prophecy, has referred to this preaching of the Gospel to all nations, as accomplished before the destruction of Jerusalem. Vol. I. p. 201. But in the same volume, he very distinctly applies it to present times. He thus paraphrases the verse: "This gospel of the Kingdom must first be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; not merely throughout the Roman empire, but unto every nation of the habitable globe. Then, and not till then, shall come that end of the age, and with it the advent of the Son of man, respecting which you inquire.

"Now," he adds, "according to such an explanation of the language used by Christ, it is evident, that an universality of the preaching of the gospel is an indication, that the end of the great prophetic age is near at hand: And with this indication, both the Calendar of prophecy, and the present state of the world, exactly agree." Sac. Cal. vol. I. p. 244.
it contains, and of their adaptation to the purpose for which they were given. They are signs of a wide and general prevalence, in or concerning the church; and, being of a moral nature, are within the comprehension of every Christian.

It is not until the evangelist has brought down this summary view of the great leading events to "the end" of the age, that he presents our Lord's specific directions to the disciples concerning their conduct at the destruction of Jerusalem, and gives them minute and specific information of the Coming of the Lord. These are the two great events which the disciples embrace in their questions; and the Saviour having foretold all the signs by which both should be preceded, he now returns to give directions relative to the duties they involve.

You objected to the interpretation I have just given of the first part of the chapter, on the ground that the view offered of the various events specified being successive, destroyed the unity of the prophecy. But how is the unity of a prediction in any way impaired by its being considered chronological in its details? It is no departure from unity that Daniel predicted the desolation of Jerusalem and the Sanctuary as following, in point of time, what he had foretold of the Messiah's being cut off. Dan. ix. 26, 27. Indeed, if to view the events mentioned by our Lord as successive, be destructive of the unity of the prophecy, then is your own interpretation chargeable with this very fault. You yourself do not consider the various signs, of false Christs, of wars, of famines, of pestilences, of earthquakes, of persecutions, of apostasy, of treachery, of hatred, of false prophets, of the abounding of iniquity, of the waning of Christian love, and the universal preaching of the gospel, as events which all happened at one and the same time. You regard them indeed as having all been fulfilled prior to the destruction of Jerusalem; but this is by no means the same thing as if you should assert that they were all fulfilled synchronically. And if the unity of the prophecy is still unbroken, with such a view of succession, then I cannot perceive how it should be accounted so, by a view which merely regards them as continuing gradually to be fulfilled for a longer period of time. The difference between us is, that while you admit of short intervals as having elapsed between the events pre-
dicted, I consider these intervals as having been of more extended duration. And that such extension is absolutely necessary, I hope yet to be enabled more fully to show.

Another important circumstance, which gives much strength to the idea of this being a chronological narrative of events to the end of the age is, the exact accordance of the prediction, not only with the events in former times, but also with those of present occurrence. I have already noticed the harmony which subsists between Historical facts and the order of these facts as here recorded, in so far as relates to earlier times; and a little attention will show how remarkably the correspondence is still maintained. The last sign before "the end" comes, you observe, is the universal preaching of the gospel. This sign has not yet been fulfilled; but that which immediately precedes it, is now so evidently being accomplished as particularly to arrest attention. It is an awful sign, but fearfully applicable to the circumstances of the church and of the world:

"Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Mat. xxiv. 12. "Iniquity shall abound." In all ages it might have been said this sign was more or less applicable; but as a sign it must refer to some time preeminently guilty, and never was it so fearfully realized as in the present day. Iniquity of every description abounds both at home and abroad, in such a manner as to mark this, with peculiar emphasis, as the epoch of the prediction. Iniquities which have borrowed all the aids of civilization and of science to add to their enormity, are daily perpetrated; and atrocities unheard of in any former age, or among the most barbarous of nations, have stamped their infamy on lands which proudly claim the sacred name of Christian. Who can cast his eye over the face of society, or attend for an hour to the daily records of its crime, without perceiving the appalling realization of this prediction? In the proud defiance of all that is sacred—in the blasphemies fearlessly uttered and industriously circulated—in the murders unprovoked, yet extensively committed for the paltry price which the human carcase can command—in the varied forms in which impurity prevails, and the fiendish arts by which lust is gratified—in the daring and dexterous schemes by which fraud is extensively practised and concealed—in the thousand forms which sin assumes, refusing
to be shamed, there is the sad, sad evidence indeed, that we live in times in which, with peculiar propriety, it may be said, *Iniquity abounds.* To this view of the moral aspects of our times, I assuredly expect your assent, and therefore I feel warranted in pressing upon your attention that interpretation of our Lord's prediction with which they so strikingly correspond.

But "*Because iniquity shall abound,*" said the Saviour, "*the love of many shall wax cold,*" and again I calculate upon your acknowledgment of its obvious fulfilment in the state of the church. Perhaps at no former period has real religion been so deplorably low among professors of the name of Christ, as at the present day. A clearer comment is not furnished of the former clause in the aspects of the world, than is presented of the latter in the state of the church. With difficulty indeed can even the broad line of demarcation be drawn; and, worst of all, men "love to have it so." To keep "unspotted from the world" is now no regulating precept of the majority of those called by the sacred name of Christ. His holy institutions are perverted or despised, his choicest gifts are unsought and unprized, and, in frequent instances, the authority of his word holds an inferior place to the opinions and practices of men. The few redeeming qualities, if so they may be called, which lightened the darker shades of the sad picture, are fast passing away, and daily do they vanish with little expression of regret. The noblest of our institutions is much debased, and those by whom it is supported, and those by whom its management is conducted, have avowedly leagued themselves with those who are "denying the Lord who bought them."* Fast indeed is the measure of iniquity being filled up, and a day of retribution is at hand. It has already commenced. The storm of divine indignation has

* It is scarcely necessary to remark that I here refer to the British and Foreign Bible Society. To all their guilt of adulterating the word of God, they have just added (May 7th,) that of a decision by which they formally admit into the management of this institution those who deny the divinity of the Saviour, and have refused to acknowledge God in their meetings, or seek His direction. If "Ichabod" was inscribed upon its front by former unacknowledged guilt, the characters are now retraced and more deeply impressed by these recent transactions.
burst forth, and the nations are writhing in the agonies it has occasioned.

The Coming of the Lord is preceded by a period of awful tribulation, and it is "immediately after" that his Return takes place. I have already exhibited the ground on which I differ from you concerning the time of this unparalleled affliction,—having endeavoured to prove its reference to the close of the times of the Gentiles and the Restoration of Israel. This is the period fixed for it by the prophets, whose expressions admit of no modification. I have already referred to the testimony of Daniel. Precisely similar are the statements of Jeremiah. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him." Jer. xxx. 7, 8. And as our Lord himself says, immediately after the tribulation of those days shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, so the prophet here adds, "They shall serve the Lord their God, and The Beloved their King, whom I will raise up unto them."—"Then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved. But [blessed be God for His promise,] for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened." This prediction by our Lord, of a period when there should no flesh be saved but for the elect's sake, corresponds fully with another in Isaiah, which also refers to the period immediately preceding the time "when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." Between the part of the prediction of our Lord concerning His return, under consideration, and that of the prophet, there is an exact parallel, while the prophet also foretells the awful tribulation by which it is preceded: "Behold the Lord maketh the earth empty.....Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left." Is. xxiv. 1—6, 23.

With a peculiarity of expression and unaccommodating precision, the evangelists thus speak of it as a time of trouble
"such as was not since the beginning of the world to this
time, no, nor ever shall be;" (Mat. xxiv. 21.) and "in
those days shall be affliction such as was not from the be-
ginning of the creation which God created, unto this time,
neither shall be. And except that the Lord had shortened
those days, no flesh should be saved; but, for the elect's
sake whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days."
(Mark xiii. 19, 20.) All this you, however, applied to the
destruction of Jerusalem. To the same period is it reffered
by Henry in his Commentary. Quoting the words, "there
shall be great tribulation," he says, "great indeed, when
within the city plague and famine raged, and (worse than
either,) faction and division, so that every man's sword was
against his fellow," thus endeavouring to prove its fulfilment
in all the predicted magnitude. But he afterwards says,
"the tribulation of those days, includes not only the de-
struction of Jerusalem, but all the other tribulation that the
church must pass through." This is a principle of inter-
pretation which, however accommodating and fitted to re-
lieve from every difficulty, I can by no means adopt.
"Those days" plainly refer to days already spoken of,
and if Henry was right in his first application, to that he
should have felt bound to adhere.

Some eminent expositors, however, among whom are Mr.
Cuninghame and Mr. Faber, consider the tribulation spoken
of, to refer to no particular period, either at the destruction
of Jerusalem or at the Restoration of Israel; but that it in-
cludes all the various calamities in which the Jews were
involved, and thus beginning with the first sufferings of the
Jews, it "extends to the whole time of their captivity, even
to the close of the times of the Gentiles." This explana-
tion, if admissible, would avoid what with many forms a
great difficulty. But as I regard "the tribulation of those
days" to be used more definitely, I cannot avail myself of its aid.

That there is in Matthew's narrative some obscurity,
from the abruptness with which our Lord is represented as
referring to the period of tribulation, is what I have no wish
to deny. But the circumstances most fitted to throw light
upon it have been too little attended to. If it be kept in
view that the gospel by Matthew was written expressly for
the Jews, while that of Luke was written for Gentiles, it
will tend to explain how it is that to us Luke's narrative
appears most distinct.
The Jewish converts, from their acquaintance with the Old Testament prophets, were better qualified for understanding a simple allusion to the great tribulation at the period of their Restoration. When, therefore, Matthew intimates to them the time of Christ's coming as immediately after that greatest tribulation, they would readily recognise his allusion. But for the same reason it was necessary that Luke should be more explicit, since he wrote to those less minutely acquainted with prophecy.

Another circumstance to be attended to, in considering Matthew's reference to the great tribulation is, that he had already given them a chronological view of events up to the end of the age. In that narrative he had distinctly given the various signs by which it and the coming of the Lord should be preceded. And thus it is that in giving directions concerning their conduct, in relation both to the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of the Lord, he is only drawing inferences from what he had previously declared.

But, as already noticed, the extent of the tribulation forms a check which renders it impossible to apply it to the destruction of Jerusalem. It is the greatest which ever was or shall be; and as the greatest that ever was till that same time is at the Restoration of Israel, it necessarily follows that the one to which the evangelist refers must still be future.

And "except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved." Scott on this passage very properly remarks, of the Jews who had embraced Christianity, that "it does not appear that the continuance of this tribulation," referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, "in the smallest degree tended to exterminate them; indeed," he adds, "it is not known that any Christians lost their lives by means of them." But he understands our Lord to refer only to the remnant of Jews "who should in any age of the world embrace Christianity." Still, however, I regard it as being the specification of a particular period, and that also of no very long duration, which seems implied in the Lord's shortening it.

Now this period is expressly called "the winter" and "the sabbath," whatever these may be. I have already remarked that the word translated "winter" may be rendered "outpouring," and have also assigned reasons for regarding it as an allusion to that awful outpouring of the
vials of the wrath of God upon his great Antichristian foes which takes place at the close of the times of the Gentiles, immediately before the Millennium. It may farther be noticed that the word "winter," which, in Matthew, occurs in connection with the Sabbath (the great Sabbatism of the day of the Lord, I think,) stands singly in Mark, and both call it the greatest tribulation that ever was or shall be. Now while these evangelists both place the Coming of the Son of Man "immediately after the tribulation of those days," it is remarkable as confirming the view already offered, that Luke, although he says nothing of "the winter," or outpouring, in that form of expression, gives the very view in other words. Among the last signs by which the Coming of the Son of man is preceded, he predicts "upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity." Now as this is the very idea which I attach to the great outpouring, his placing it before the Coming of the Son of man, and at the close of the times of the Gentiles, tends to confirm the general view already offered. Besides, if the words are to be understood as a reference to the seventh day, or to the natural season, connected with the miseries attendant on the flight from Jerusalem when besieged by the Romans, (and there is no historical fact on record which gives any countenance to that idea,) it is not a little remarkable that Luke should take no notice of them, since by his giving a minute account of these sufferings he might have been expected to be more particular on that point also.

Instead, therefore, of confining this greatest tribulation to the sufferings formerly inflicted on the Jews, I regard it as applying more peculiarly to the Gentiles; and instead of continuing during the whole term of Judah's long captivity, I believe it to be but for a little period, being shortened for the elect's sake; and instead of being at the destruction of Jerusalem, that it will be immediately followed by the coming of the Lord and the glorification of his saints. When in holy vision the beloved disciple "beheld, and to a great multitude which no man could number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb," he was informed that "these are they which
came out of the great tribulation,' (THΕ ΘΛΙΨΕΩΣ,) Rev. vii. 9, 10, 14. Not that they were those who had, in the course of ages, been subjected to various tribulations, from which they had successively been redeemed. They had not merely come out of "tribulation," which is all our translation intimates, but they came out of a particular and definite tribulation, which is expressively designated "the great tribulation." This tribulation I believe to be the same of which our Lord and the prophet Daniel speaks. That predicted by the prophet, is followed by the resurrection—that declared by our Lord, "immediately after" by His return, and sending his angels to gather together his elect—and out of that referred to by John, the elect are declared to have come.

This tribulation unparalleled in its extent, I believe we have already entered upon. It is the effect of the outpouring of the seventh vial; and the character of the times correspond in every respect with the predictions concerning it. And do not these present doings among the nations also correspond with such fearful declarations? Is not the Lord giving them blood to drink profusely, and sending among them a spirit of confusion and convulsion? Within a year * what changes have taken place on the Continent of Europe! An extensive region in Northern Africa, made a conquest by the arms of France—France herself also revolutionized, and Paris deluged with the blood of her citizens; their King being dethroned and banished—a revolt in Belgium, which, though thousands have fallen in the conflict, may yet lead to farther commotions—An insurrection in Italy, which, though suppressed by foreign arms, has left the stormy spirit still unquelled—A desolating war in Poland, in which the contending parties have acted as God's avenger on each other, still leaving little hope that the sought-for independence of the Poles is thus to be obtained—Commotions in Switzerland, and various changes among the minor states of Germany—In the East Indies a formidable war waged by one of the native Kings, and in our West India Islands, a revolt among the slaves, and the property of several of their oppressors consigned to the flames—An English fleet already in the Tagus, and one from France daily expected, to demand reparation for injuries and insult, or to

* The rapidity of change renders date necessary;—May 16th, 1831.
inflict chastisement on Portugal;—And in all this the hand of God is not seen, nor in all the changes which have been induced, is his authority at all recognized. With such characteristics of the times, can the Christian fail to perceive that he lives in "the great tribulation," or be unaware of its dangers? But rapid as have been its movements, and sanguinary as has been its character, we have only witnessed its commencement, and ere the vial has been drained, there is reason to fear that some who now reject this interpretation, will be compelled to acknowledge it "the greatest tribulation that ever was or shall be," and thus have forced upon them the conviction, that "immediately after" will be the celestial signs of his approach, when they shall "see the Son of man Coming in the Clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

The language used by our Lord, as descriptive of His Coming, must at once recall to the recollection of those acquainted with the Old Testament prophets, the prediction by Daniel of the Coming of "one like the Son of man," of whom it is also said, He "came with the clouds of heaven." Dan. vii. 13. Now, the correspondence between the language used by the prophet, and that employed by our Lord, is so striking as not only to seem to refer to the same event, but to warrant the idea that our Lord, in foretelling the time of his Return in answer to the question of His disciples, makes a direct quotation from the prophet to lead their attention to him.* In another part of the prediction, the

* It must be regarded as one of the most singular perversions of which an eminent Critic could be capable, that Macknight, who, with you, applies our Lord's prediction of his coming to the destruction of Jerusalem, actually makes the same application of Daniel's prophecy quoted above, of the coming of one like unto the Son of man with the clouds of heaven, at the destruction of the papal horn, when "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High," of which prediction Macknight says our Lord's is "an explanation." After such an interpretation it will not, perhaps, appear surprising that he should ask, whether there can be any doubt that the apostles "by their Master's coming, and by the end of all things, which they represent as at hand, meant his coming to destroy Jerusalem, and to put an end to the institutions of Moses?" Nor, however absurd his view, can he be charged with inconsistency when he asserts, that, "with the greatest propriety," we may give a similar interpretation to "every passage of their epistles in which the apostles have spoken of these things as at hand."
Saviour not only refers to Daniel, but leaves a caution that we should "understand" him; and it is not unreasonable to suppose, that by the quotation concerning his coming he more particularly refers to the prediction of that prophet.

But similar as the prediction appears, you will not deny that Daniel here refers to the period when "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," after which Luke places the Coming of the Lord. It is at the destruction of the Papal horn immediately before the Millennium, which confirms the view that our Lord intimated His coming in the clouds of heaven to be, not at the destruction of Jerusalem, but as foretold by the prophet, at the overthrow of Antichrist.

However well Mr. Faber and you may agree with respect to the nature of our Lord's coming in the clouds of heaven, he differs from you entirely respecting the time of it. He fully admits, nay, lays it down as indisputable, that Dan. vii. 13, (already quoted,) 2 Thess. ii. 8, Dan. xii. 1, Joel iii. and Rev. xix. 11—21, all relate to the same period with Mat. xxiv. 30. To these passages he refers, as severally according with our Lord's own prediction of his coming again, although, as he states, they foretell "the coming of one like the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, to receive dominion, and glory, and royalty"—of "the standing up of the great prince Michael for the children of Judah"—of "the bright coming of the Lord foretold by St. Paul, in his prophecy of the Man of sin"—and of "the coming of the Word of God, foretold by St. John in the Apocalypse." Sac. Cal. vol. I. pp. 218, 219. vol. III. p. 494.

This, you are aware, is precisely the view which I entertain of the time of the Coming of the Lord. These all refer to the commencement of the Millennium, and not to the destruction of Jerusalem. The correctness of this application in reference to time may, I think, be established from many considerations besides the chronology already referred to, as embodied in the prediction itself, and confirmed as we have seen by its correspondence with Daniel's vision. Before arriving in the narrative to the end of the age, the Saviour has pointed out various circumstances as first to occur. Among these, and among the earliest of them, does he evidently refer, as already shown, to those events which brought destruction on Jerusalem, adding emphatically, and in the way of particular caution, "but the
end is not yet." In Luke it is, "But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by." Luke xxxi. 9. The word rendered "by and by" would have been more perspicuously translated "immediately," as it is by Matthew in another part of the same prediction, when he places the coming of the Lord "immediately after" the great tribulation. Mat. xxiv. 29. "The end is not immediately;" and the Saviour afterwards pointed out many important circumstances which had first to occur.

Now, it is remarkable that such various notes of order did not arrest your attention, when imagining the time of the end to be that of the destruction of the Jewish polity. Important as that event was to the Jews, the time of "the end" is one of much more general interest to the world, whether viewed as a calamity to those involved, or contemplated as a blessing to the world thereafter. As formerly noticed, we are furnished by the prophet Daniel with the chronology both of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the time of the end. From his prediction we are clearly taught the distinction between them; for while the destruction of "the city and the Sanctuary" are plainly mentioned, that destruction is expressly placed anterior to the end. Their desolation, indeed, instead of beginning only, really ceases then; for they continue desolate "until the Consummation." This term "consummation" here clearly refers to some great chronological epoch, as the termination of their desolation. It is emphatically denominated "The end," or consummation. It is not an end merely, nor the end of some one event previously referred to, but is one of such note and magnitude as could not fail to be recognized as "the" end,—it is in fact the end of the age.

But the passage of the prophet contains another chronological mark by which the period of the end may be ascertained. It is when "that determined shall be poured upon the desolate;" or, as corrected in the margin, "upon the desolator." Now, so far from this having been effected at the destruction of Jerusalem, that very event proved the power, and formed one of the triumphs of the desolator, which was no other than the Roman empire. This empire still stands, and though now in the divided form of the European kingdoms, (as predicted, Dan. ii. 44.) continued undivided, and in its gigantic might, long after the destruction
of Jerusalem. It is not till at the very commencement of the Millennium that "that which is determined shall be poured upon the desolator." It is at the very time, as we have already seen, when the prophet beheld, and "one like unto the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven" at the destruction of the fourth great beast. Dan. vii.13. Accordingly, concerning the Papal horn the prophet says, "the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom, and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." ver. 26, 27. And in the Apocalypse this period is marked as the end of time. At the sounding of the seventh angel it is proclaimed, that "time should be no longer." Rev. x. 7. This then is "the end of the age." A new era shall now arise upon the world; for when the same seventh angel has sounded, then shall "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ." Rev. xi. 15.

As then "the City and the Sanctuary" are to be made desolate, only until "the consummation," that consummation cannot yet have arrived, (although you referred to the passage as if this end expressly applied to the destruction of Jerusalem merely,) for both Jerusalem and its Sanctuary still continue desolate; and if they are to continue desolate only until the consummation or end, the simple fact of their being still in that state proves that end to be still future. But so certainly as evidence is thus afforded that the end has not yet arrived, so surely will it be evidenced that it has arrived when the city and the Sanctuary are rebuilt, which, as predicted by the prophets, will be at the Restoration of Israel. Zech. xiv. 11. Ezek. xliv. 1—3. xlviii. 8.

But there is more than the mere similarity of the language, descriptive of the Son of Man, to mark the correspondence in point of time between Daniel's prophecy of that event, and the prediction of our Lord. I have already shown that the prophet refers to the commencement of the Millennium, and in the verse which immediately follows, it is added, "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him." In like manner, our Lord having described his coming with power and great glory, adds, "When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that
the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Now between these two statements there is a very obvious and remarkable harmony, which would at least appear to intimate a correspondence in point of time, and which would lead us to regard both as still future. But although you have sometimes referred to the passage in the prediction of the Saviour as to an unfulfilled promise, yet in your exposition of the prophecy it was applied to the period of the destruction of Jerusalem, and as referring to the merely spiritual Kingdom. Among the numerous checks which the prediction contains, however, I regard this as one of the most difficult to accommodate upon your system of interpretation. You suppose this to be the merely Spiritual kingdom. And at the destruction of Jerusalem, was the Spiritual kingdom really only "nigh at hand"? Was it not established by our Lord during his personal ministry on the earth? Before this he had said to the Pharisees who came inquiring about the external kingdom, "the kingdom of God is within you" or among you, and others he had taught it was come unto them. Yet, if your view be correct concerning the coming of the Lord and the Kingdom spoken of, it could not have been established till after the destruction of Jerusalem, for at the coming of the Son of man it is only "nigh at hand." What! was it not even established, when at the day of Pentecost the Spirit was given in miraculous manifestations to the disciples? This display of Christ's power, bestowed upon him by the Father, and exercised through the Spirit, I certainly regard as belonging to the period of the spiritual Kingdom of Christ, and that it had then done more than drawn nigh, that it had now, at least, fully come unto them. Still you say, no; for as the coming of the Son of man was at the destruction of Jerusalem, and as, when this event occurred, the Kingdom of God is only "nigh at hand," it could not have been established till long after the wonders of Pentecost.

Farther, if the Coming of the Son of man was at the destruction of Jerusalem, and the Kingdom of God was then only nigh at hand, and if this was indeed the Spiritual Kingdom, then, necessarily, was that spiritual kingdom not established by the apostles themselves. Then all their labours, mental and bodily, were performed—all the gifts with which they were endowed were exercised—all their
churches were planted and watered—all their epistles were written, and read, and in circulation—and, with the exception of John, all of them consigned to the tomb—all before the erection of the Spiritual Kingdom of Christ! ! And if so, I may surely be allowed to ask at what time, and by whom was it afterwards erected? If the twelve disciples, with one exception, had finished their labour on earth before the destruction of Jerusalem, and if, as you affirm, the spiritual kingdom was at that destruction only “nigh at hand,” by whom was it afterwards erected, and what demonstration was subsequently given of the fact, which had not previously been made? The plain answer to this question is that the spiritual Kingdom of Christ, instead of being only nigh at hand at the destruction of Jerusalem, was erected long before, and that therefore the interpretation which fixes the coming of the Son of man, to have been at the destruction of Jerusalem, since it involves such consequences, must be erroneous.

From these various circumstances I think it evident that “the kingdom of God,” referred to by our Lord, is no other than the Millennial Kingdom predicted by Daniel, and that, as it is only “nigh at hand,” when the Son of Man is seen coming in the clouds of heaven, that this is also the same coming, witnessed by the prophet, which he similarly describes; and as this coming immediately precedes the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom, that this is the period to which our Lord refers. And thus is confirmed the view already given from His prediction that the coming of the Son of man, is subsequent to the fulfilment of the times of the Gentiles, and at the Restoration of Israel.

This view is also farther strengthened by another of our Lord’s statements, which yet remains to be noticed. After having predicted his coming, he immediately adds, “And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.” Luke xxii. 28. Of whom does our Lord thus speak, and to what does he refer? Is this redemption any thing that took place at or after the destruction of Jerusalem, either as regarded Jews or Gentiles, believers or unbelievers? I think not. To no class was that event a “redemption” of any kind, nor has it ever yet been followed by any thing which could be so regarded, without manifest impropriety. Appli-
ed to that period, it cannot be referred to the Jews as a nation, for they afterwards suffered more than before, and subsequently Jerusalem came to be trodden down of the Gentiles, and continues so until this day. Neither can it be applied to believing Jews, in reference to that period. The destruction of Jerusalem itself brought them no "redemption." They suffered in it the loss of their property, and instead of its being followed by, or bringing nigh, a redemption for them, it was succeeded by severe and unrelenting persecutions. How many Jewish Christians were afterwards subjected to the power of heathen hatred for their adherence to the cause of the crucified Nazarene! All the apostles are supposed to have been martyred for his name, with the exception of John, who was punished with banishment to Patmos, after having escaped unhurt from the boiling oil. If it refers to Jews particularly, it must be to believing Jews; yet to them it will in no way apply, if the destruction of Jerusalem is to be considered as the Coming of the Son of man. In the prospect of that "redemption," those addressed are called to look up and lift up their heads, since, by those events, the promised redemption would be brought nigh. But oh, with what other feelings than those of rejoicing, did believing Jews regard that destruction! When predicted by the Saviour, what solicitude did his disciples display for its preservation! And are we to forget the repeated cautions of our Lord, that instead of their redemption being brought nigh by that event, that it was only "the beginning of sorrows," even to them?

To a different period than the destruction of Jerusalem therefore must this "redemption" refer; and you yourself have since quoted the words, applying them to the glory which awaits believers at our Lord's return. This I regard as the proper application, although, by some who have given considerable attention to the subject, it has been applied to the Restoration of Israel. The contrast between their dispersed, oppressed, and captive state might be well expressed by their "redemption." But the expression "your redemption draweth nigh," is put, apparently, in Luke's gospel, in place of the gathering of the elect, in the other two. For where in Matthew and Mark this is mentioned, there is nothing about the "redemption;" so, in Luke, who intimates the redemption as drawing nigh when these things
begin to come to pass, there is nothing about the angels being sent to gather together the elect from the four winds. The promised redemption at the Coming of the Son of man, is therefore utterly irreconcileable with your idea of that Coming having been at the destruction of Jerusalem. And on the grounds mentioned, the interpretation by which it is applied to the glorification of the Saints at their Lord's return appears preferable. This, Paul expressly calls "the adoption, the redemption of our bodies," for which he says the whole creation waits. Rom. viii. 22.

Desiring the participation of its blessings, may we seek a juster appreciation of its glory, and hail with joy every event which more clearly indicates that our redemption indeed draweth nigh. This is an exercise in which every Christian should be engaged, and which is especially incumbent on those whose attention is particularly called to the contemplation of passing events. That you may thus be enabled "to discern the signs of the times," is the unfeigned prayer of,

Reverend Sir,
Yours in Christian love, &c.

LETTER VI.

ON THE FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE OF PROPHECY, AND THE IDEA OF A DOUBLE REFERENCE IN THE PREDICTION.

Reverend Sir,

In previous Letters, I trust I have established the impossibility of understanding our Lord to affirm that his Coming would take place at the destruction of Jerusalem, and have proved that event to be at the Restoration of Israel. It yet remains, however, that I now examine the nature of that Coming. This is necessary, not merely for farther demonstrating that your interpretation of our Lord's prediction is erroneous, but also for its vindication from the views of some who place that coming correctly enough at the close of the Times of the Gentiles.

You not only referred our Lord's prediction of his coming in the clouds of heaven to an improper time; but having
done so, you necessarily maintained that it was not the prediction of a personal, but of a figurative coming. In this last idea you have Mr. Faber's support, who, although he rejects as a "vulgar error" the opinion of its being a figurative coming at the destruction of Jerusalem, yet regards it as a figurative coming at the Restoration of Israel. You both appeal to the language of ancient prophecy as a warrant for such an interpretation—although even in this you differ widely in your views and application of the different passages from which it is inferred. Our Lord's prediction Mr. Faber applies absolutely to the destruction of Christ's enemies before the Millennium, although he considers the language borrowed from that of the personal Return of Christ; on the other hand, while you applied it directly to the destruction of Jerusalem, and as then completely fulfilled, you also considered it as referring in some way to the personal return of Christ, to which you said the prediction has a leaning and a looking forward.

This last mentioned idea I shall consider fully; but proceed in the first place to examine the argument urged by both from the figurative language of ancient prophecy. "The literal future judgment," says Mr. Faber, "both of the quick and of the dead, and the literal Second Advent of Christ with the clouds of heaven, are poetically, though appropriately, used as a type, or symbol, or hieroglyphic of any eminent judgment, inflicted here below, upon any impious nation or community, through the instrumentality of those secondary causes which God may be pleased to call into effective action."

"Of this remarkable phraseology," he continues, "instances occur perpetually in the mystic volume of Prophecy. And respecting its true import we cannot doubt; because the requisite explanation has been afforded by the occurrence of the predicted event itself." Sac. Cal. vol. I. p. 227.

Now, with those who deny the premillennial Return of the Redeemer, this is a most important point; and one which, if at all open to dispute, will necessarily affect materially the arguments on which their cause principally rests. When, therefore so much depends upon its truth, it would require to be clearly exhibited and well defended. But although frequently asserted by you, and laid down by Mr. Faber with the utmost confidence, as a proposition which
"we cannot doubt," I must be allowed not merely to express dubiety, but also to take the liberty of expressly controverting it, and of calling for the proof. So far fromceeding the point thus assumed, some of the passages cited in its support, I claim as clear and distinct intimations of the future but premillennial coming of Christ.

Yet, as if wholly incontrovertible, you both simply refer to the passages as all fulfilled in former ages, and appeal to the nature of their fulfilment, as fitted to illustrate other predictions relating to future times, "because the requisite explanation has been afforded by the occurrence of the predicted event."

"Thus," Mr. Faber continues with unfaltering confidence, "if Babylon is to be destroyed by the instrumentality of the Medes and Persians: the great day of the Lord is said to come, the sun and the moon and the stars are darkened, the heavens are shaken, and the earth is removed out of its place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger. Thus if Egypt is to be judicially visited: Behold the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence; and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. Thus if Assyria is to be punished: Behold the Name of the Lord cometh from afar, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy; he causeth his glorious Voice to be heard, and showeth the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire and with scattering and tempest and hailstones; through the Voice of the Lord, the Assyrian is beaten down; Tophet is ordained of old; yea for the King it is prepared; he has made it deep and large; the pile thereof is much wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it."

"In all this, and in numerous parallel cases," Mr. Faber asserts, "the language is purely figurative. God's temporal judgments upon the nations are abroad; and therefore of such temporal judgments, the literal future day of judgment, and the literal second advent of the Lord, are employed as the conventional fixed symbol or hieroglyphic. When Babylon, and Egypt, and Assyria were respectively visited; it is clear, that nothing supernatural occurred." Sac. Cal. vol. I. pp. 227, 228.
It is, therefore, on the assumption that the predictions quoted have already been fulfilled, that the burden of proof is supposed to rest, that our Lord himself, in predicting his coming with power and great glory, does not foretell his personal return. But it is sufficiently obvious, that although it were conceded, that these predictions had long ago been fulfilled, and although it were admitted that these refer to times when the nations specified "were respectively visited," rather than to times yet future, and that "nothing supernatural occurred," this would not prove that in no other prophecy of the coming of the Lord is a literal advent foretold. For it is not to be forgotten, that both you and Mr. Faber do expect the Lord Jesus to return personally at some period; and unless we be willing to rest in a vague unproveable expectation of this, it must be supposed to be somewhere foretold. In point of fact you both regard the personal return of the Redeemer to be a predicted truth; but if it is any where predicted, then must we examine in what particular prophecy it is revealed. The fact, that in some predictions concerning the coming of the Lord nothing more had been meant than temporal judgments, if of itself sufficient proof that one other prediction was of the same nature, would equally apply to others, and thus by being so adduced in reference to all predictions of Christ's coming, would leave that glorious event absolutely unproveable. Yet, if, without examination of the circumstances which gave rise to any particular prophecy, and to the circumstances which that prophecy itself embraces, we should simply affirm, that since certain other predictions concerning the coming of the Lord were figurative, that this must therefore necessarily be so also, we should establish a principle by which it would manifestly be impossible to prove that there was a single prediction of his ever returning otherwise. If, then, the personal coming of Christ be matter of revelation, the circumstance of certain figurative comings having previously been predicted, if that were the case, would not determine that every other is of the same nature; and the inquiry will still remain whether by that revelation the personal return is before or after the Millennium.

Now, this is a point which neither you nor Mr. Faber have attempted to decide, by direct reference to express
prediction. You make not an effort to prove, from the Word of God, that a coming of the Lord, even of any kind, is expressly foretold, as to be subsequent to the Millennium. Having found certain predictions of the coming of the Lord, which you conceive to refer to a figurative coming, these are appealed to as proof that when our Lord himself foretells his coming in the clouds of heaven, he meant a figurative coming at the destruction of Jerusalem, you suppose; while Mr. Faber, regarding that coming as future, attributes to it the same figurative character at the close of the times of the Gentiles. Surely before such a conclusion be drawn—a conclusion which would render proof of the personal return of the Saviour impossible—more regard should be given to the circumstances which occasion the prophecy, to the nature of the events foretold, to the language and the views of those addressed, to the characters they bear, and the work for which they were selected—circumstances, all of which conspire to prove that it is his real personal return of which our Lord so speaks.

But let me now examine for a little the nature of your evidence for the supposed figurative advent in temporal judgments on the nations. Often did you assume, and Mr. Faber, in the pages already quoted, expressly asserts, that of the true import of the phraseology employed in the predictions referred to, we cannot doubt, "because the requisite explanation has been afforded by the occurrence of the predicted event itself." Without seeking for the unquoted "numerous parallel passages," of which Mr. Faber speaks, let me then request your attention for a little to the consideration of those cited, taking it for granted, that if they are not in his own estimation most in point, that they are at least equally strong with any he has omitted. The examination may perhaps prove, that they do not bear out his assertion, and that they at least do not entitle any one to assume even the possibility of any predicted coming, meaning merely a figurative advent at any time whatever.

The following are the passages adduced by Mr. Faber, although the citations are not given by him: Is. xiii. 1—13. Is. xix. 1. Is. xxx. 27—33. Of these three, the one concerning the coming of the Lord upon a swift cloud to Egypt, is the most direct,—indeed it is, in some important respects, perhaps the most precise of any contained in the
Scripture. When thus adduced by Mr. Faber as a prophecy of which, without doubt, "the requisite explanation has been afforded by the occurrence of the predicted event itself," it is, however, of no small importance in the argument, to know that however we may differ with respect to the meaning of the prophecy, you do not regard it as having hitherto received its accomplishment. For if it really be an unfulfilled prediction, certainly no one is at liberty to assume that the coming of the Lord which it foretells, will not be personal, and then to turn round and say, since this does not refer to a personal coming, so will that predicted by the Saviour himself be only figurative. The first point, therefore, to be ascertained, is the period to which the prophecy relates, and then to inquire into the nature of the coming it foretells. I cannot quote at length, but it is much to be wished that it were carefully examined in its connection; for I am persuaded that investigation will prove, not only that the whole chapter remains unaccomplished, but that a more extended context is so also.

"The burden of Egypt. Behold the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt; and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it." Is. xix. 1. The prophet proceeds to describe minutely a scene of awful confusion and perplexity, of civil war and foreign invasion, to which they shall be subjected; next predicts some providential dispensation, and also human interference, by which "the waters shall fail from the sea, and the rivers shall be wasted and dried up. And they shall turn the rivers far away, and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up; the reeds and flags shall wither." ver. 2—6. Another consequence of this drought and change in the channel of the Nile, is described as the lamentation of the fishermen; and also "they that work in fine flax, and they that weave net works, shall be confounded. And they shall be broken in the purposes thereof, all that make sluices and ponds for fish.... Neither shall there be any work for Egypt, which the head or tail, branch or rush may do." ver. 7—15.

In all this, it will readily be conceded, there is nothing which may not refer to the future; and although in the whole prophetic description, there is the most obvious and
pointed allusion to the peculiarities of Egyptian circumstances, I am not aware that any attempt has ever been made to exhibit its real accomplishment. All attempts of this kind must indeed prove abortive, by its inseparable connection with what immediately follows, which it is my happiness to know you regard as referring to the commencement of the Millennium. Its importance will warrant more lengthened quotation. "In that day shall Egypt be like unto women; and it shall be afraid and fear, because of the shaking of the hand of the Lord of hosts, which he shaketh over it. And the land of Judah shall be a terror unto Egypt: every one that maketh mention thereof shall be afraid in himself; because of the counsel of the Lord of hosts which he hath determined against it. In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; one shall be called the city of Destruction, [or of Heres, or of the Sun. marg.] In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts, in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the Lord, because of the oppressors; and He shall send them a Saviour, and a Great One, and He shall deliver them. And the Lord shall be known to Egypt; and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day; and shall do sacrifice and oblation; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. And the Lord shall smite Egypt; he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even unto the Lord; and He shall be entreated of them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be an highway out of Egypt to Assyria; and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria; and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt, and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance." ver. 16—25.

Any farther remark to prove this to be an unfulfilled prediction, and one which clearly relates to the commencement of the Millennium, is quite unnecessary, and we are only left to wonder where Mr. Faber has ever yet found
"the occurrence" of all or any of these predicted events, which thus stand connected with the Coming of the Lord.

Such then is the connection of this prediction, that "the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt," disproving completely Mr. Faber's opinion of the time stated, even as sanctioned by your own former expositions. But it is of too much consequence not to avail myself of a direct argument from it in support of the view already presented of the Saviour's prediction of His Return "in a cloud," as narrated by Luke. The prophet and evangelist place His Coming at the same time; both intimate it as to be in the same manner; and if there be any proof that Luke refers to a personal coming, this seems not less explicitly declared by Isaiah. In quoting the words of the prophet, you said such a view would involve an absurdity. Instead of retorting the charge on your view of a figurative coming, let me simply ask, which is most accordant with the statements given? That the Saviour will come from heaven to the earth at some period, is evident from the assurance of Job, that "he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." But if he ever comes to earth, it must be to some place; and as there is not in the whole Scriptures a single intimation of his coming direct to any other place, where is the absurdity in believing that he will come to Egypt; the manner of his coming here declared, being the only one also in which His Return is predicted?

Again, when "the Lord rideth upon a swift cloud, and shall come into Egypt," it is in answer to the prayer of the Egyptians. "They shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and He shall send them a Saviour, and a Great One." How is such language consistent with any idea which denies his personal presence? It is not God the Father, for the cry of the oppressed is addressed to Him; and He cometh not himself; but "shall send them a Saviour." Equally inconsistent is this language to Christ, except as possessed of human nature. In his divine nature He is already everywhere present, and needs not to be sent, and having assumed our nature, in it alone can He be sent. Even before His incarnation, the Son was often sent to our world on missions of mercy; on these occasions he appeared in human form, though not possessed of human nature. But having become incarnate, after His resurrection He
left this world in a cloud, and so shall He come in like manner; and as it is here expressly promised that he shall so come to Egypt, and as the Scriptures speak not of his so coming to any where else, I trust you will yet see reason to acknowledge that the charge of absurdity was made unadvisedly, as you already reject Mr. Faber's interpretation of the past fulfilment of the prediction.

Another of the passages cited by Mr. Faber as proof of his view of the figurative language of prophecy was also quoted by you for the same purpose. Although less evidently a prediction concerning the future, I believe it to be not less really so. "Howl ye," says the same prophet, "for the day of the Lord is at hand: it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt: and they shall be afraid; pangs and sorrows shall take hold of them; they shall be in pain as a woman that travaileth; they shall be amazed, one at another; their faces shall be as flames. Behold the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger to lay the land desolate; and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir." Is. xiii. 6—12.

That in this passage the prophet refers to the same period of which our Lord in his prediction speaks, I have no doubt, and I know no reason to question that the celestial signs are to be interpreted in the same way. But at present it is less my object to examine into the nature of these signs, than to ascertain the time to which this prophecy relates. It is one of the three on which Mr. Faber rests his proof of the statements contained in our Lord's prediction, being merely the figurative language of prophecy, which, he asserts, is so common in Old Testament prediction. Let us therefore attend a little to the circumstances foretold.

The prophet clearly refers to a time of great destruction and calamity to men—not of a limited, but of a general
nature: "therefore shall all hands be faint, and every man's heart shall melt;" God "will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity;" and so extensive will be these overwhelming judgments, that a man will be "more precious than fine gold."

But it is upon the title, I have no doubt, that Mr. Faber grounds his opinion of the prediction being already fulfilled: "The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amoz did see." ver. 1. But in the Apocalypse, John also saw the burden of Babylon, of the same mystic Babylon, I apprehend, that is here referred to. Its overthrow under the outpouring of the 7th vial, is in a period of tribulation such as is here described. This day of wrath Isaiah repeatedly calls "the day of the Lord," and "the Lord of hosts mustereth the host of the battle;" ver. 4, 6, 9. And in the Apocalyptic vision, John saw the nations muster against Messiah; "these shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings." Rev. xvii. 14.

But instead of pointing farther to circumstances of minute coincidence, it is sufficient to overthrow Mr. Faber's view of the prophecy having been already accomplished, to notice how clearly it is limited to Israel's future and final restoration. The 13th and 14th chapters are unquestionably connected, the latter being merely a continuation of the former. It begins with the reason of this Babylon's overthrow, "For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land." Is xiv. 1. It is not merely their return to their land, but their restoration to power which they have never yet possessed since this prediction was uttered. Not only shall their captivity cease, but they shall then have the ascendency over the Gentiles; and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and for handmaids; and they shall take them captives whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors." ver. 2. Before either you or Mr. Faber draw inferences concerning the nature of the celestial appearances described by the prophet,

* In my "Connected View of the Scriptural Evidence of the Redeemer's Speedy Personal Return," (p. 259, 4th edition,) I have exhibited evidence in proof of the identity of the Babylon denounced by John, and that described in the above and in other Old Testament predictions.
it will yet be necessary to show that the prophecy has really received its accomplishment, and that not in some particulars only, but in all—for that in many things, the fate of the real and of the mystic Babylon will be the same, is obviously intimated. In the circumstances already referred to, as well as in others which might be specified, the prophecy is inapplicable to the overthrow of ancient Babylon. This is, therefore, the destruction which awaits the great enemy of Israel when he comes against them after their restoration: "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed so shall it stand; that I will break the Assyrian in my land, and upon my mountains tread him under foot; then shall his yoke depart from off them, and his burden depart from off their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth; and, this is the hand that is stretched out upon all nations. For the Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?" ver. 24—17. Let nothing more be said then of "the occurrence of the predicted event," as if it were past, until a fulfilment be found corresponding with the prophecy in these its particulars, for it is not more obvious that nothing supernatural occurred in the events to which Mr. Faber would refer the prediction, than that all which he would call natural here foretold has never yet been accomplished.

The only remaining evidence cited by Mr. Faber in support of his view of the figurative language of prophecy, is one which I regard as strictly parallel to that last quoted. If the evidence be rather less direct in support of the view already exhibited, I still think it sufficient, while there is certainly nothing from which the opinion of its past accomplishment can be at all established: "Behold the Name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger, and the burden thereof is heavy; his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire: and his breath as an overflowing stream, shall reach to the midst of the neck, to sift the nations with the sieve of vanity: and there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people, causing them to err. Ye shall have a song; as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the Mighty
One of Israel. And the Lord shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall show the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones. For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down which smote with a rod. And in every place where the grounded staff [the rod of correction, Lowth.] shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps: and in battles of shaking will he fight with it. For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the King it is prepared: he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord like a stream of brimstone doth kindle it." Is. xxx. 27—33.

Such is the third passage cited by Mr. Faber, as not only fulfilled, but as so obviously accomplished, as to furnish a clear illustration that Christ's prediction of the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, is merely the annunciation of temporal judgments. But certainly there is nothing in the above prophecy itself, from which it can be ascertained, that there has ever yet been any "occurrence of the predicted event." Where, I ask, is the evidence that the coming of the Name of the Lord from far, means merely the infliction of his wrath through human agency? The circumstances described do not, you must acknowledge, accord fully with those which have ever attended the overthrow of any Assyrian foe which Israel has yet encountered; and seems, like the former passage, to refer to the utter discomfiture of the great enemy with whom they have to contend after their future return to their own land. It is immediately connected with the Millennium in the context: "And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound." ver. 25, 26. From this it appears that this day of dreadful slaughter is to be just at the time when the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, &c. which is universally understood to refer to the Millennial era. This is further confirmed by its being also connected with the
conversion of Israel, God's chosen people, and their restoration to the favour of God, "when the Lord bindeth up the breach of his people." And, in the midst of all the evil by which their enemy shall be overtaken, a period of " rejoicing and gladness of heart" is promised them. Notwithstanding the peculiarly awful nature of the means employed,—" the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones," (which means, also, prove the prophecy to be unaccomplished,) it shall be with tabrets and harps, employed in praise to the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, "The Mighty One of Israel."

From these various circumstances I conclude, that this passage, like the other two adduced by Mr. Faber, is an unfulfilled prediction, and that instead of presenting evidence in support of his views, that it farther exhibits the uniformity with which the Old Testament prophecies, as well as those of the New, concur in stating and enforcing the premillennial advent of the Redeemer.

Before closing this part of the inquiry, however, I must yet refer to the declaration of Peter on the day of Pentecost, including a quotation from the prophecies of Joel, which the more requires examination, that it has been supposed to exhibit strong figurative language and the idea of a double reference, by some who altogether reject such a view of our Lord's prediction.

The wonder which was excited by the first communication of spiritual gifts, when the disciples "were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance," was extreme. "The multitude came together and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language." It was unaccountable, and "they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words; For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my
Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come." Acts ii. 13—20.

This quotation you applied partly to the manifestations of the Spirit in those miraculous gifts bestowed upon the church; and partly to the destruction of Jerusalem, which afterwards took place. You thence argued that the sun’s being darkened, and the moon’s being turned into blood, was figurative; and that being parallel to our Lord’s prediction, the passage confirmed your application of it. There are, however, several things to be noticed, which you wholly overlooked on that occasion. First, there is no necessary connection between the view taken of the first part of the quotation as being a direct prediction of the bestowal of miraculous gifts, and the idea that the latter part is a figurative prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. It certainly might be an intimation of the signs which shall precede the personal coming of the Lord,—which I believe it to be. Not only is this view confirmed, but yours is directly opposed, by the express statement that these things are to take place "before that great and notable day of the Lord come." If the destruction of Jerusalem be the day of the Lord, then the darkening of the sun, or the blood-coloured appearance of the moon, cannot be a figurative expression of the same thing; for these celestial phenomena are represented as taking place "before" that day. Besides, if the great tribulation spoken of by our Lord, in his own prediction of His coming, be the destruction of Jerusalem, as you affirm it was, then the celestial signs foretold by the Saviour, instead of being "before" that day, were to be "immediately after" it.

But while thus meeting you on your own supposition, and showing its inconsistencies, I have farther to remark that I do not consider the language of the apostle as warranting the idea that he affirmed Joel’s prediction to have at that time received its accomplishment. An examination of the con-
text will show that Joel in the passage cited clearly refers to the period of Israel's Restoration, at the commencement of the Millennium: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered; for in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call. For, behold, in those days and in that time. when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land." Joel ii. 31, 32. iii. 1, 2. Clearly, therefore, does the prophet refer to events still future. Accordingly Mr. Faber regards the passage as an express prediction of the ultimate destruction of the great Antichristian confederation before the Millennium, saying, "Joel clearly predicts those identical events which St. John arranges under the Seventh Vial." Sac. Cal. vol. iii. p. 308. Nay, although, when illustrating our Lord's prediction of His coming, you yourself quoted Joel as fulfilled; yet on the very Sabbath following, in explaining the prophecy without having that idea in view, you admitted the connection between the 2d and 3d chapters of Joel, and stated the latter to be evidently yet unfulfilled. How then you could quote the words as an instance of highly figurative language, corresponding to your view of our Lord's prediction, was what I cannot explain.

But if the prediction refer to signs preceding the "day of the Lord," and of the general possession of miraculous gifts during His Millennial Reign, when the Spirit shall be poured "upon all flesh," the apostle's quotation of the passage yet remains to be explained. In doing so, the first thing to be attended to, is Peter's obvious design at the time. That design, then, was the correction of those who mockingly said the wonders they witnessed were the effects of intoxication. No question had been raised concerning the prophecy of Joel, or the period to which it applied; and although the apostle affirms that the Christians were now influenced by the same Spirit of whom Joel had prophesied, he does not say that the prophecy itself was ful-
filled. The context shows, that it was not then accomplished; and your own admission you will accept as evidence, that such a statement could not be reconciled with truth. The apostle meets the mockers on the only ground which as objectors they had chosen to occupy, denying and disproving the charge preferred against his brethren. "These men," said they, "are full of new wine." (ver. 13.) Peter's object is therefore to vindicate them from the malicious aspersion. From the early hour, he first reminds them of the high improbability of their being already intoxicated, and next asserts that it is the result of a power with which they ought not to have been ignorant: "These are not drunken as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day; but this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." The question is thus made to turn on the nature of those influences by which they were moved, and not on the time of which Joel had spoken. No inquiry had been made or argument advanced concerning the period at which this or any other prophecy should be fulfilled. The people of various nations were amazed to hear unlearned Galileans speak a variety of languages, so that each was addressed in his own tongue. (ver. 7.) They were not only amazed, but they "were in doubt" as to the origin of so wonderful a power, and said one to another, "what meaneth this?" (ver. 12.) This then is the ground of the apostle's statement, and attention to it will obviate all the difficulty about the quotation made. This object was not to settle any dispute, or correct any mistake about the time of which the prophet spake, but to remove the doubts of those of the amazed auditors, and to vindicate from calumny the character of those whom God had honoured. He exculpates them from the injurious charge of being "full of new wine," and declares the nature of that inspiration of which they were thus made the subjects, witnessing to these being produced by the outpouring of the Spirit. That which they affirmed to be the effects of intoxication, was the result of those influences of the Holy Spirit which Joel predicts shall yet be poured upon all flesh, and which Christ, being now "exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost," had shed forth upon his church that which they now saw and heard. (ver. 33.) The nature of the celestial signs stated by Joel as to occur "before
the great and the terrible day of the Lord come," therefore remains wholly undetermined by the apostle's quotation, and in no way proves that the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven is any thing less than his Personal Return.

Having thus shown how little countenance such passages give to the idea of mere temporal judgments on the Jews, or any other nation, being considered a Coming of the Lord, it may not be without advantage now to examine some of the Old Testament prophecies which do relate to the destruction of Jerusalem. A minute examination would, in all probability, prove a profitable exercise for those who embrace your view of the Coming of the Son of man. For, if you apply our Lord's prediction of his Coming with the clouds of heaven to that event on the express ground of such statements being merely the figurative language of Old Testament predictions, it would be well to ascertain the evidence that such figurative language is really employed. Nay, if it be so common as the nature of your remarks would intimate, we may expect to find it employed frequently in those Old Testament predictions which foretold that event. In order, therefore, more completely to show how far this is from being the case, I quote a few predictions relative unto it. Be it remembered also, that notwithstanding the frequency with which language of a really figurative nature is used in ancient prophecy, and that sometimes in predicting the destruction of Jerusalem, under the conquering power both of Babylon and Rome, neither you nor Mr. Faber have produced one single instance in which that event is called the Coming of the Lord, or in which terms any thing like these are so employed.

The first prediction of the evils with which God's ancient people should be visited, was given by Moses, which, although delivered before the children of Israel had any city of their own, describes with minuteness the siege of their future capital and its consequences. It is not, however, called "the Coming of the Lord" by the prophet, "The Lord shall bring a nation," "a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand," "a nation of fierce countenance," and their "enemies," is the language employed. Deut. xxviii. 49, 50, 53. Precisely similar is that used by Jeremiah, "Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far,
O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say." Jer. v. 15. Again, by the same prophet, "Thus saith the Lord concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land; they shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven and for the beasts of the earth.... I cast you out of this land into a land that ye know not, neither ye nor your fathers; and there shall ye serve other gods day and night, where I will not show you favour." Jer. xvi. 3, 4, 13. "And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss, because of all the plagues thereof. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons, and the flesh of their daughters; and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friends in the siege, and straitness wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives shall straiten them." Jer. xix. 8, 9. Still in all this statement of misery, there is not any intimation of its being the coming of the Lord, although inflicted by God on account of their guilt, who expressly says, "Behold I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth his ears shall tingle." ver. 3.

In the prediction already referred to, by Daniel, of the destruction of the city and Sanctuary, the language is most explicit: "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the Sanctuary." Dan. ix. 26. Here there is no confusion, no confounding of the Messiah with the people of the prince by whom Jerusalem was overthrown. Their enemies are repeatedly mentioned in the following prediction also, while there is not the most remote allusion to the Coming of the Lord, as synonymous: "I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life; and their dead bodies shall be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth. And Zedekiah
king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you. Behold I will command, saith the Lord, and cause them to return to this city, and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant." Jer. xxxiv. 20—22.

Such are a few of the most explicit predictions concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the sufferings of her people; and it is unnecessary to add, they afford no evidence whatever of the coming of the Lord being commonly used in Old Testament prophecy, to intitle the temporal judgments in which they were involved. But although some of the passages just cited are among the strongest of the predictions which foretold their overthrow, there are others of a more figurative nature. But still the figures used have not the most distant resemblance to the language descriptive of the Saviour's Return. Thus the Lord addressing Israel, by the prophet Ezekiel, says, "Ye have multiplied your slain in this city, and ye have filled the streets thereof with the slain. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Your slain whom ye have laid in the midst of it, they are the flesh, and this city is the caldron; but I will bring you forth out of the midst of it. Ye have feared the sword, and I will bring a sword upon you, saith the Lord God. And I will bring you out of the midst thereof, and deliver you into the hands of strangers, and I will execute judgments upon you." Ezek. xi. 6—9. Again, by the same prophet, "Thus saith the Lord God, Set on a pot, set it on, and also pour water into it. Gather the pieces thereof into it, even every good piece, the thigh, and the shoulder; fill it with the choice bones. Take the choice of the flock, and burn also the bones under it, and make it boil well, and let them seethe the bones of it therein. Wherefore thus saith the Lord God, Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose scum is therein, and whose scum is not gone out of it, bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it. For her blood is in the midst of her." Ezek. xxiv. 3—7. This figure is carried out at considerable length in the following verses, and others are used in different predictions; but, in so far as considerable examina-
tion warrants me to say, there is nothing in all the figu-
rate language of Old Testament prophecies, concerning the
destruction of Jerusalem, which gives the slightest counte-
nance to the idea of that event being called or considered
the coming of the Lord.

It is not less remarkable, in opposition to your view of
the figurative nature of our Lord’s prediction, and in per-
fected harmony with that maintained above, that when the
Saviour really foretold the destruction of Jerusalem in other
cases, he did so in terms which could not be mistaken,
whether it were delivered in the form of a parable, or in
the pathetic language of prophetic expostulation. This is
well exemplified in his parable of the marriage of the king’s
son, and in his address, when for the last time approaching
to Jerusalem. Those first bidden to the wedding, slighted
the gracious invitation, “but when the King heard thereof,
he was wroth; and he sent forth his armies and destroyed
those murderers, and burnt up their city.” Mat. xxii. 7.
There is no intimation here, (where it would be reasonable
most to expect it, if your idea were correct,) of the coming
of the Son of man for this purpose. “And when He was
come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If
thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the
things which belong unto thy peace! but now are they hid
from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that
thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass
thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay
thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee;
and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another;
because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” Luke
xix. 41—44. Instead of saying He should come for this work
of destruction, the Saviour informs the Jews that their “en-
emies” should do so, with whom he does not identify himself.

These various passages are a fair specimen of Scriptural
prediction concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and I
am at no small loss to discover the evidence on which you
and Mr. Faber conclude, that “of such temporal judgments
the literal future day of judgment, and the literal Second
Advent of the Lord, are employed as the conventional
fixed symbol or hieroglyphic.” It is not the destruction of
Jerusalem assuredly, which is so symbolized in Old Testa-
ment prophecy. Numerous as are its predictions of the
coming of the Lord, they are, in almost every instance, clearly referable to the period immediately preceding the Millennium; and therefore, instead of supporting in the least the notion of our Lord’s coming in the clouds of heaven, being either figurative or past, they contribute valuable evidence in proof of the accuracy of that interpretation, which regards it as the Saviour’s personal Return for the establishment of his promised Millennial Kingdom.

But conveniently as the Literal Second Advent is understood by you as a conventional fixed symbol in our Lord’s prophecy, it is also made to serve another important purpose in the interpretation. Besides your application of it to the Destruction of Jerusalem, and Mr. Faber’s application of it to the overthrow of Antichristian powers before the Millennium, you both regard it as having somehow another reference to the Personal Return of the Redeemer. While you frequently asserted the entire fulfilment of the prophecy during the existence of some of those alive when it was delivered, you still intimated, on several occasions, a conviction of its having a leaning and a looking to an event which you regard as near 3000 years after; Mr. Faber, while he treats your primary application as “a vulgar error,” and generally refers the prediction of the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven to the time immediately preceding the Millennium, finding circumstances in the prediction which he cannot reconcile to his own conviction to any thing but the Personal Advent, also departs from his own general interpretation. Exposing himself to all the charges of inconsistency brought against others, he says—“while the general context of our Lord’s prediction requires us to suppose that the Coming of the Son of Man, thus preluded by infidelity, and anarchy, and licentiousness, is his figurative coming to destroy the Antichristian faction at the close of the seven times of the Gentiles; we have reason, I think, agreeably to the double sense of many prophecies, to believe that his final coming at the literal day of judgment, is also not obscurely alluded to. This opinion I am led to adopt, from a remarkable parenthetic clause inserted in the midst of the prophecy.

“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but my Father only. Take ye heed: watch and pray; for ye
know not when the time is. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and stand before the Son of man."

"The day and the hour," he remarks, "unknown to all save the Divinity himself, unknown even to the human soul of the Son, which (we are told, Luke ii. 52,) admitted of a growth in wisdom, can only be the literal day of judgment at the final consummation of all things." Sac. Cal. vol. i. pp. 258, 259.

Now, what is the amount of this statement? It is just this; that the very day which "the general context of our Lord's prediction requires us to suppose" will be before the Millennium, "can only be the literal day of judgment at the final consummation of all things!" It is of that very "day" which our Lord says is unknown, and for which he requires us to "watch and pray," that he had previously been speaking, and the signs of whose approach he has specified with so much minuteness: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man." Of what day and hour? Of the very day and hour of the Coming of the Son of man with the clouds of heaven, which Mr. Faber strenuously maintains will be at the Restoration of Israel, and when he himself expects men to have sunk into all the security and all the wickedness of the antediluvians. These are Mr. Faber's own admissions; and it is not without singular inconsistency, that when convinced our Lord is really predicting His personal return, that instead of placing it where required by "the general context," he should arbitrarily depart from it to put that coming 1000 years beyond. This inconsistency is the more remarkable, since the character of the times, the nearer we approach the event, intimates the peculiar need of the Saviour's cautioning his disciples against the "surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life," and when the increasing infidelity shows too plainly how His Return will be "as a snare."

But Mr. Faber's reason for adopting the view of a "double sense" of the prophecy, and for supposing that a third
or "final coming at the literal day of judgment is also not obscurely alluded to," is very far from being satisfactory. It is because he conceives "this character of absolute darkness and uncertainty answers not to the close of the latter three times and a half," before the Millennium. But if this be the case, instead of talking of a "double sense" to evade the inapplicability of the prophecy, he ought to have felt bound to refer it entirely to that period to which alone he thought it could apply. If it really "answers not" to the former period, then it absolutely is not a prophecy of "double sense:" and if it will apply to that period, then Mr. Faber's own reason for such an interpretation is destroyed; and it yet remains to be shown what necessity—that authority there is, for carrying away the Coming of the Son of man from the only time to which "the general context of our Lord's prediction requires us to suppose" it was applied by its author.

In the interpretation of Scripture, there are few subjects on which more inconsistency has been displayed, than in upholding the idea of a double reference in our Lord's prediction. Direct authority for such a view is never pretended,—all necessity for it is generally removed, as might at least be supposed, by those who affirm that the prediction was entirely fulfilled, in every particular, before some of those living contemporaneously with the Saviour had ceased to exist—and, from circumstances introduced in the prediction, such a scheme of interpretation necessarily involves the whole in inextricable confusion. Some Expositors apply to the close of this mundane system statements which others regard as totally inapplicable to any other period than the destruction of Jerusalem; and as both acknowledge the want of a standard for the regulation of their double sense, the fancy of each is made the only criterion. Henry indeed, expressly says that our Lord, from speaking of the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds as the destruction of Jerusalem, afterwards speaks of it as His Second Coming at the end of time, which, he says, the Saviour "insensibly slides into a discourse of,"—thus leaving it of course for the ingenuity of men to determine what is, of itself, undistinguishable.

Notwithstanding that you repeatedly asserted in the most express and positive terms that our Lord's prediction of His
Coming was all fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem,—you on other occasions affirmed that it is an erroneous view to take of Scripture to refer only to one period this coming of Christ. Such an idea appears remarkable; and, in reply, I must be allowed to say, that to place an event which our Lord himself has so confined to a particular time—be that time when it may—an event confined expressly by "immediately after the tribulation of those days,"—to apply it to as many events as we may think fit, is a liberty for which some warrant should be ascertained; for it cannot be derived from a prediction which is asserted to have been all fulfilled many centuries ago. But without even professing to have express authority for so doing, you again and again spoke of the prediction, "pointing forward to the grand consummation" or end of time, for a more splendid accomplishment. If such a glory has already been displayed in their accomplishment, what a glory shall be seen, you on one occasion exclaimed, "when they shall have their full and entire fulfilment"! Such an expression certainly does convey the idea that its full and entire accomplishment the prediction had not yet received; and, as afraid of the consequences of such a statement, you immediately added, (with what consistency it must be left for you to explain,) "not that I would say that they have not had their proper application to the event of Jerusalem's destruction, but Christ's coming shall be progressive." As I cannot comprehend the meaning of a progressive coming of the Son of man with the clouds of heaven, especially when expressly declared to be immediately after an event which is particularized, I make no farther attempt at reply.

But your view of our Lord's prediction of his Coming having a leaning and looking forward beyond the period to which you suppose it to be directly applied, is of sufficient importance to merit more attentive examination. Unwilling as you may be to admit the fact, this is indeed to say that all has not been fulfilled; for the change of expression does not in the least alter the idea conveyed. To say that the prophecy has a leaning or looking forward to the end of time, is certainly to say that it does predict something concerning the end of time. This therefore is in direct opposition to the view of all having been absolutely fulfilled before the then living generation had ceased to exist. The
consequence of the establishment of this principle, if it could be maintained, would therefore be the subversion of your more general interpretation. But on what authority is it advanced? It is derived from no statement contained in either of the gospels. The prediction itself affords not the least countenance to the idea of its having a leaning or looking forward to any event besides that to which it is directly applied. The very express terms by which it is restricted to one particular period absolutely excludes its reference to any other. The expressions "in those days," "immediately after the tribulation of those days," "that day," and "then," frequently employed, are too definite and precise to admit of loose or varying interpretation—or of application to different and dissimilar events.

On what then is the opinion of the prophecy having a double reference founded? Is it not on the very circumstance that the sublimities of the prediction do not appear to have been really exhausted? After all you have said of the entire fulfilment of the prediction before that generation had died, I still suspect that your view of double reference arises from a conviction, (however unwillingly entertained,) that the destruction of Jerusalem is not an event to which the expressions properly apply.

But whatever may be the reason on which such an interpretation is founded, the idea of the prophecy having a second reference to the Saviour's personal Return, virtually destroys the foundation on which the primary reference is supposed to rest, namely, that the whole prediction was fulfilled before the generation then living had ceased to exist. If the prophecy has a reference to any event still future, then it was not all fulfilled, but only a part of it at the time fixed by the Saviour himself. Not only so, indeed; but if the intimation of the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, be a prophecy both of the destruction of Jerusalem and of the personal Return of the Redeemer, besides your thus supposing it only in part fulfilled before that generation had died, you suppose by far the most important part as still remaining to be accomplished—just in as far as the Return of the Redeemer will transcend in importance the destruction of Jerusalem. And yet with such an opinion you still affirm that the fulfilment of that minor part of the prophecy was its entire accomplishment.
But this view of a double reference, even if fully admitted affects not the question concerning the period of Christ's real return. For if, as is supposed, the first reference be to the destruction of Jerusalem, and if this be the only one having the time fixed, then may the second reference, (by which is meant Christ's personal return,) be applied to any other time, as properly at least as that to which you and those taking the same view are pleased to apply it. If no time be fixed in the prophecy itself for the accomplishment of its second reference, then have Antimillenarians no more warrant for fixing it subsequent to the Millennium, than Millenarians would have to presume that it will precede that glorious day, independently of all other evidence. And accordingly, among those who hold the opinion of double reference, there are some who do believe in the premillennial Return of the Saviour. And certainly if the idea of a double reference be at all entertained, this view is of the two by far the most consistent with the declarations of our Lord. It is the unquestionable fact, whatever may be the correct interpretation, that, in the narration at least, the evangelist Luke (xxi. 24—27,) places the Coming of the Son of man subsequent to the close of the times of the Gentiles, and consequently at the beginning of the Millennium. If then in the prediction some must suppose from Matthew's gospel a first reference of that coming to be at the destruction of Jerusalem, it certainly appears more reasonable to place the second reference at the close of the times of the Gentiles with Luke, than arbitrarily to postpone it beyond the Millennium altogether, to a time to which it is not pretended there is in the prediction itself the most remote allusion.

But I must now observe that no assurance of a real personal return of the Son of man ever taking place can be obtained from the prophecy, if the idea of a double reference is allowed. For if the prophecy was all fulfilled before the generation in whose life it was uttered had passed away, then was it all once fulfilled without any personal return. And if the first reference was thus accomplished, then may the Second be so also, without any personal coming. If a prediction of Christ's coming in the clouds of heaven was once really and actually fulfilled without any indication of such an event—if a prediction of His being seen so coming by all the tribes of the earth was once accomplished without any
of them having been actual witnesses—if the angels have once been sent forth, and have really gathered together God’s elect from one end of heaven to the other, without either the saints dead being rescued from the tomb or those alive being removed from their habitations—if all this has once taken place without its being known, or believed, or suspected, then what warrant is there that it ever will be otherwise at any future period? This argument acquires additional strength when we observe that the time past for the fulfilment of the prophecy—the time of the first reference, as is supposed—is that to which alone the prophecy itself is believed directly to apply. If there is only one time in the prediction itself, and this be considered as undoubtedly the period of Jerusalem’s destruction, there is certainly no reason to conclude that it will be more truly fulfilled, at a time concerning which the prophecy is altogether silent. If any second reference there be, the probability certainly is, that its manifestation, instead of being much more specific than what took place at the time directly promised, will be still less obvious and distinct. Thus the natural consequence of supposing, without direct authority, the idea of a double reference in the prediction, is to destroy altogether the assurance from it of our Lord’s personal return.

Having thus examined at so much length the idea of the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven being expressive of mere temporal judgments, and having endeavoured to exhibit the inconsistencies and untenable nature of the opinion of our Lord’s prediction containing a double reference, permit me to indulge the hope, that as the inquiry has been useful to myself, it may also be blessed to you, which is the sincere desire of,

Reverend Sir,

Yours with Christian affection, &c.
LETTER VII.

ON THE VIEWS AND QUESTIONS OF THE DISCIPLES, AND THE PRECEDING PREDICTION OF OUR LORD DELIVERED IN THE TEMPLE, (Mat. xxiii. 37—39,) AS CONFIRMATORY OF HIS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN BEING HIS PERSONAL RETURN.

Reverend Sir,

Although in previous Letters, numerous arguments have been adduced which might be regarded as sufficient to determine the question concerning the nature of the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, the evidence is by no means exhausted. In every aspect in which our Lord’s prediction can be viewed it appears in a light which renders your interpretation inadmissibile. In no point of view, however, does this more conspicuously appear, than when considering the circumstances which gave rise to the prediction of our Lord, the character and views of those to whom it was addressed, and the nature of the questions to which it is professedly the reply.

It is certainly of considerable importance to attend to the circumstances which prompted the inquiry of the disciples concerning the Coming of the Lord. By what circumstance or event then was it immediately suggested? This question admits of easy solution. They had just before been with Him in the Temple when He said unto the Jews, “Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Mat. xxiii. 39. From this statement, which it will be proper more particularly to examine, the disciples had been taught that He would be personally absent for a certain time; and it was evidently under this impression that they addressed to Him the question concerning His Coming. When therefore our Lord made answer in such terms as must have confirmed them in the view which they had already taken of His personal absence, can we doubt that it was really of this and of his subsequent return that the Saviour spake? And again it is to be noticed that here the period of absence corresponds exactly with the time he afterwards
fixed for His Return. It is at the conversion of the Jews:
"Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed
is He that cometh in the name of the Lord;" that is, till
they should acknowledge him their Messiah. This the
Saviour must have said, not of the Priests and Pharisees
whom he then more particularly addressed, but of the nation
of which they were the representatives, just as his disci-
iples were next addressed as the representatives of the
Christian church. Jesus had just accused their nation of
the most heinous crimes, and had also denounced his judg-
ments upon them, as those who should kill and crucify
the prophets, and wise men, and scribes, whom he should
send unto them. In this he predicted the sufferings be-
lievers afterwards endured at the hands of the Jews gen-
erally, and not merely of those whom he now addressed.
In the same representative character he said unto them,
"Behold your House is left unto you desolate." The Tem-
ple was not their private property, but the glory of their na-
tion; and to them it was left desolate or deserted. When,
therefore, our Lord adds, "For I say unto you, Ye shall
not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that
cometh in the name of the Lord" it must also be of the
Jews, as such, that He speaks.

Thus then Christ was not again to be seen by the Jewish
nation, till they call him "Blessed." This, however, they
never yet have done. Certainly they did not at the de-
struction of Jerusalem; nor will they do so till the period
of their conversion, at the commencement of the Millen-
nium,—when therefore our Lord thus taught them to ex-
pect His Return.

This very distinct and important prediction always has
perplexed, and ever must, those commentators who deny
the premillennial Return of Christ. As the easiest method
of getting rid of the difficulty, Grotius altered the text—
making it "till ye would be glad to say, or wish you had
said, Blessed is He that cometh." This reading Dr. Dod-
ridge would gladly have adopted, "could the version be
justified," but this he could not do for himself, and I am
not aware of any other having yet attempted to do it. In-
separable as is the connection between this prediction and
that afterwards delivered in reply to the questions to which
it gave rise, and important as it therefore must be for deter-
mining the nature of the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, it is remarkable that it should not have occupied more of Mr. Faber's attention. Containing as it does statements calculated much to illustrate our Lord's enlarged prediction of His Return, I must hold that Exposition materially defective which embraces not a consideration of the one which led to it; and consider as essentially incorrect, that interpretation with which it does not coincide. Yet Mr. Faber who has dwelt at much length on Mat. xxiv, dismisses this prediction in the 23d chapter, by simply calling it an announcement concerning the Jews, that "their House or Temple should be left unto them desolate." vol. I. p. 197. Scott also passes over it with the single observation, "no doubt but their present dispersion, and unbelief, and their future conversion to Christ are here predicted," as if it contained not the slightest intimation of our Lord's Return.* It is, however, very evident, that in our Lord's estimation, His absence is the most important point; and, in our inquiry, the duration of that absence is the most prominent question. And must not the nature of his absence and that of his coming be the same? And that as the former has been personal, so must be the latter? If, when He said, ye shall not see me till a certain time, he intimated his personal departure for a specified period, it necessarily follows that his coming then will be personal also. Now that it was his corporeal absence of which the Saviour spoke is obvious, not only from his expressly declaring, "ye shall not see me," but from the connection in which he has placed it with their then present perception of him as a man. "Ye shall not see me henceforth," clearly implies his being then seen, and to the Jews, this is what he was not in any other sense than with the bodily organs of vision. In the same sense therefore will He be again seen when the Jews recognize Him as their Redeemer. They will then hail him with the welcome, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord."

But Christ also predicts the desolation of the Temple

* Having mislaid my notes of your discourse on the passage, I do not refer particularly to your own interpretation.
during His absence: "Behold your House is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh." In this He does not merely speak of the desolation afterwards brought upon the Temple by the Romans, and of its being laid in ruins. Before that time it had been left desolate. It became so when Christ himself left it. The desolation predicted, consisted, indeed, in his very absence. It was left desolate, for they would not see Him. The word, you know, means deserted, and this desertion was that which resulted from His departure. But Christ also states a period for the termination of this desolation or desertion of the Temple. It will not always continue in this state, but only till His Return at their conversion. It is left desolate only "till" they shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh." The desolation of the Temple is coeval with Christ's absence, and both are limited in their duration,—continuing only until the submission of the Jews to Jesus as their Messiah, which we know will be before the Millennium. Now I have already noticed, (p. 52,) that the prophet Daniel predicts the continued destruction of both the city and the Sanctuary till the same time, till "the consumma-
tion" or end of the age,—till the great outpouring, when "that determined shall be poured upon the desolator," just at the commencement of the Millennium. If, therefore, my interpretation concerning our Lord's absence and coming be correct, the Temple must also be re-erected before the Millennium. Were there indeed no other evidence of the fact than this prediction of the Saviour, I think that from it this is the legitimate deduction. But the evidence of this is neither scanty nor ambiguous. Little as the matter is attended to by those who deny the premillennial Return of Christ, it is very distinctly foretold by several of the prophets, although I mean not to enter into farther examination of it here.* Suffice it to observe,

* That the Temple will be rebuilt, I have in the 13th Section of my "Connected View," endeavoured to demonstrate. Till the arguments there advanced are fairly met, it is unnecessary to resume the discussion. You may assert, as you did yesterday, (July 10th,) that "altars will no more smoke, nor victims bleed;" but turn the period ever so smoothly, it will not extenuate in the least, the sin of putting a negation on God's revealed will. I can tell you on the
that not only is the re-erection of the Temple predicted, but of that Temple the east or front gate is solely appropriated to the Lord. "This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord, the God of Israel, hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. It is for the Prince." Ezek. xlii. 2, 3. It was on account of their sins that the Temple was at all left desolate or deserted; for the connection in which very highest authority, that after Israel's Restoration to their land, Heaven has prescribed "ordinances of the altar, in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon." Ezek. xliii. 18. Be it as repugnant as it may to your ideas or your wishes, I must tell you, that God has expressly commanded, (and He will not be gainsayed,) "Thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok, which approach unto me to minister unto me, saith the Lord God, a young bullock, for a sin-offering. And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put it on the four horns of it, and on the four horns of the settle, and upon the border thereof round about; thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it. Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin-offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the House, without the Sanctuary. And on the second day, thou shalt offer a kid of the goats, without blemish, for a sin-offering; and they shall cleanse the altar, as they did cleanse it with the bullock. When thou hast made an end of cleansing it, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish. And thou shalt offer them before the Lord; and the priests shall cast salt upon them; and they shall offer them up for a burnt-offering unto the Lord. Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat, for a sin-offering: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock without blemish. Seven days shall they purge the altar, and purify it." Ezek. xliii. 19—26. Receive it as you may, there shall then be devoted, as it is expressly demanded, "one lamb out of the flock out of two hundred, out of the fat pastures of Israel, for a meat-offering, and for a burnt-offering, and for peace-offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord God. All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the Prince in Israel." Ezek. xlv. 15, 16. Deny it as you dare, God has said, "Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt-offering unto the Lord, of a lamb of the first year, without blemish; thou shalt prepare it every morning," Ezek. xlvii. 13. "And the burnt-offering that the Prince shall offer unto the Lord in the Sabbath-day, shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish." Ezek. xlvi. 4. While these, the institutions of Heaven, given unto his ancient people to be observed after their Restoration and Conversion, remain a part of God's revealed will, and thus brought fully under notice, think you, can he be guiltless of the awful charge of wilful rejection of His truth, who can himself believe, or teach to others, that "altars will no more smoke, nor victims bleed"?
this is placed by the Saviour, is that of its being a punish-
ment for their rejection of Himself, and their persecution of
his people. But when they shall be converted, and re-
stored to their land, that Temple, in which was formerly
the manifested presence of the living God, and which con-
stituted their highest honour in their holiest days, will be
re-erected, and here the Son of man shall receive the hom-
age of an adoring world. Yes, "Blessed is He that com-
eth in the name of the Lord!"

What I now wish particularly to notice is, the connec-
tion between this prediction of our Lord of his personal
absence and return, with the views of His disciples when
they shortly after put the question,—"What shall be the
sign of thy coming?" It was this prediction in the Tem-
ple, evidently, which immediately suggested the inquiry.
And the inquiry itself was concerning that coming which
he had promised in the temple would take place when He
was acknowledged by the Jews in his true character and
worth, and work. This coming, which the Saviour him-
self had thus taught them to regard as personal, and to be
at the conversion of their nation, was therefore that which
in his answer to their question, He informed them would
be "in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory."

Independently, however, of the connection between our
Lord’s prediction to the Jews, and the question put to Him
by the disciples on Mount Olivet, they did expect Him
gloriously to appear for the erection of His Kingdom on
the earth. This is a fact which admits of ample proof, and
which no one attempts to deny. However much their
views have been stigmatized as carnal, it is admitted that
this hope they did entertain from first to last, during their
Master’s ministry, unaffected as it would seem by the
many reproofs He is asserted to have administered, and
the many intimations of the contrary He is supposed to
have given. Disposed as I may be to call for the proof of
a single instance in which our Lord has so rebuked their ex-
pectations, this is not my present purpose; but rather to al-
lude to the fact, in the way of farther accounting for the ques-
tions put by them on this occasion. The circumstance by
which they were more immediately suggested, I shall again
notice, but confine myself meanwhile to this general expec-
tation, as illustrative of their views in the inquiry concern-
ing the sign of His coming. They at least, it will be admitted, had no notion, previously, of a figurative coming of Christ. "Perhaps they had a general idea," Scott remarks, "that He would go from them for a time, before He set up His Kingdom; that He would at length come in a very glorious manner, according to several intimations which He had given them; that He would then execute the predicted vengeance on His enemies, destroy the temple, terminate that dispensation, and introduce His own glorious reign as the Messiah." This is a point of no small importance. For if it was His personal return to which they referred, when He should come "in a very glorious manner," the Saviour was not ignorant of their views, and our ideas of his prediction ought to be formed under this impression. The first question which suggests itself with regard to the error or accuracy of their views, will then be, Does Christ say anything calculated to destroy their cherished hopes, and to intimate to them that although they inquire concerning His personal Return, He now answers them rather concerning a figurative coming? If their expectations concerning his personal coming in a very glorious manner was, as Scott supposes, founded on "several intimations which He had given them," this correction was the more necessary had these expectations been erroneous. Our Lord, however, gives them no intimation of their being in error concerning the nature of his coming, but without any such intimation, proceeds to answer their questions as if they were correct, while you suppose He in reality speaks of something entirely different from that about which they inquire. The inference which I therefore deduce from this fact is, that it is indeed His personal coming He predicts as being "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." For if such impressions were on their minds, our Lord's whole prediction was calculated to confirm these as giving them his utmost countenance,—and as we cannot believe our Lord designed either to lead them into error or to confirm them in it, I feel that His integrity demands the rejection of your interpretation of His having foretold, without acknowledgment, a figurative coming, in answer to an inquiry about a personal one.

It still remains that I examine more particularly the questions of the disciples, in order to ascertain their pre-
exercise import in relation to our inquiry as to whether the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven will be figurative or personal. In all the three Gospels in which our Lord's prediction is recorded, it is represented as an answer to the two questions addressed to Him by the disciples. Matthew narrates it thus: "And Jesus went out, and departed from the Temple; and His disciples came to him, for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world" or age? Mat. xxiv. 1—3.

Concerning the questions themselves, as well as the views of those by whom they were put, there has been very considerable diversity of opinion. Mr. Faber considers the disciples as combining in one question the coming of the Lord with the destruction of Jerusalem; and supposes them to have made this combination from a recollection of the prophecy, Zech. xiv. 1—9, in connection with Christ's present prediction of the destruction of the Temple. Sac. Cal. vol. I. p. 209. But where is there any evidence that the disciples did so connect the coming of the Lord with the destruction of the city, or of the temple? No such evidence can I perceive. On the contrary, they appear entirely to disconnect them, presenting their inquiries concerning both in distinct and separate questions. In reference to the Saviour's prediction of the destruction of the temple, when one stone should not be left upon another, they ask, "When shall these things be?" while in their next inquiry, they connect His coming with the end of the age: "And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" They do not regard these last events as belonging to different periods, and requiring distinct signs, to be separately ascertained; but intimate their sense of a subsisting connection, by which one sign shall serve the purpose of foreshowing both—the single "sign" answering the purpose of premonition both "of thy coming and of the end of the world," or age.

The propriety of my adopted rendering of the last word
in this question, it is not now necessary to vindicate. "Age," it is admitted on all hands, is the real meaning of the word used in the original; and the necessity of adopting it is greater on your interpretation than it is on mine. However inconsistently you apply to the period of Jerusalem's destruction, that part of our Lord's prediction, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come;" that application renders unnecessary any other authority, since it proves that "the end of the world" in the question of the disciples would, in your estimation, be better rendered "the end of the age."

With this slight correction, for the sake of others rather than for yourself,—yet really of considerable importance to the proper understanding both of the question and the answer—let me now examine a little more minutely the questions themselves, and the views given of them, and see how these may bear in the illustration of a personal or figurative Coming of the Son of Man in the clouds of heaven. "I cannot believe," says Mr. Faber, "as some commentators appear to have imagined, that the combination of these two inquiries, on the part of the disciples, arose from their recollection of Christ's antecedently delivered prophecy respecting his figurative advent, to destroy Jerusalem through the secondary human agency of Titus and the Romans, as detailed in Luke xvii. 22—37, and as referred to in Mat. xvi. 27, 28. Mark viii. 38. ix. 1. Luke ix. 26, 27." Sac. Cal. vol. i. p. 211. Authority for such an application of these texts he does not even attempt to produce, while he wholly overlooks the more recent prediction in the Temple. It is not, however, necessary for me again to enter into a consideration of the unwarranted idea of the Coming of the Son of man being either through Titus, or the Romans, or "through the secondary human agency" of any other.* But the combination of these

* The inconsistencies of great and good men in this controversy, and the nature of many of the interpretations into which they have been driven to avoid the unwelcome truth, have excited my astonishment beyond any thing else I have ever witnessed which either claims or obtains a place among the fruits of piety or the efforts of intellect. Mr. Faber, as I have already noticed, rejects as a "vulgar error" your interpretation of our Lord's prediction of his com.
questions was doubtless suggested by some circumstance which may perhaps be ascertained. Having rejected that particular prediction and the recollection of it by the disciples, as the ground of combination, Mr. Faber, however, supposes an explanation of the "peculiar mode of putting the question" adopted by the disciples, is afforded "by the writings of two of the most ancient Hebrew prophets, Zechariah and Daniel," referring to Zech. xiv. 1—5, Dan. vii. 13, 14. Sac. Cal. vol. I. p. 207.

Besides the evidence I have already adduced in the consideration of the circumstances and previous prediction of our Lord, I think Mr. Faber mistaken in supposing such a connection. In both of these passages, there is indeed an express prediction of the premillennial coming of the Lord, but in neither of them is there any intimation of the end of the age; and although the first cited contains a prediction of the future sacking of Jerusalem after the Restoration of Israel to their land, nothing is there said of the overthrow or the desolation of the Temple; and, so far as appears at least, our Lord had not said a word concerning the destruction of Jerusalem as a city, previous to the disciples having asked their complex question. There is also this important circumstance to be attended to, which Mr. Faber wholly overlooks, that Zechariah does not predict Christ's "figurative advent to destroy Jerusalem." If it be a figurative advent at all of which this prophet speaks, it is for a very different purpose. Whatever "secondary human agency" is to effect that destruction, it is for the overthrow of that agency the coming of the Lord is then announced. In his righteous indignation against the sin of his ancient people, God will, indeed, "gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle;" but when they shall have accomplished his work of judgment in the sacking of the city, the Redeemer himself will avenge their cause on those who have unjustly attacked them, for "then shall

ing in the clouds of heaven, as having been fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem; while, in the extract made above, with you he applies as unquestionable a perfectly parallel passage to that very event. Let me recommend to your attention, and to that of Mr. Faber, the masterly remarks of the Rev. W. Anderson on Luke xvii. in Part Second of his "Apology for Millennial Doctrine in the Form in which it was entertained in the Primitive Church." pp. 72—75.
the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east." Zech. xiv. 1—4. It is not for the destruction of Jerusalem, therefore, that the Lord doth come, but for its rescue, by the destruction of those nations which shall destroy Jerusalem; and thus, so far is the Redeemer from identifying his advent with this "secondary human agency," that he makes the distinction perfectly obvious. The same distinction is, I think, evidently made by his disciples also, when they put first the question concerning the destruction of the Temple, which the Saviour had intimated just before, "When shall these things be?" and then inquire, "And what shall be the sign of thy Coming and of the end of the age?"

On examining the parallel passages however, we find that the questions of the disciples are not given in the same form by the different evangelists. Mark and Luke seem as if they had wholly omitted the question concerning the Coming of Christ and the end of the age. From this it has even been supposed, and was given as your own opinion on one occasion, that the only object of the disciples was to inquire regarding the destruction of Jerusalem or the Temple, and the sign of it. But supposing that this had been the only point of inquiry in the questions of the disciples, as recorded by the two evangelists named, this would by no means prove that no inquiry had been made concerning the coming of the Lord. Matthew informs us expressly, that besides asking, "When shall these things be?" referring to what the Saviour had repeated respecting the overthrow of the Temple, they did also ask, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?"

Instead therefore of supposing that the only question the disciples put was relative to the destruction of Jerusalem, it had been more reasonable to think they had put three. And this is the conclusion to which Mr. Cuninghame has come. Understanding the disciples not only to ask the sign of Christ's coming, but also the sign when the Temple should be destroyed, he arranges the questions thus,— "When shall these things be? What sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?" Dissert. on
Apocalypse, p. 220. Still, this supposed second question, I apprehend, is founded on a mistake of Mark's meaning, which perhaps accords more nearly with that of Matthew than is generally supposed. The latter is the only one of the evangelists who states the precise question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?" but the same thing is, I think, implied in the Second question of all the three, "When shall these things be? And what shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" Mark xiii. 4. "When shall these things be? And what sign will there be when these things come to pass?" Luke xxi. 7.

I do not understand the evangelists Mark and Luke to intimate an expressed desire on the part of the disciples to obtain a sign when the destruction of the Temple is about to commence, which is Mr. Cuninghame's view; but rather when its desolation should be completed. The last question actually is, as expressed by Mark, "What shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" Yet it cannot be supposed that the disciples merely ask a sign by which to ascertain when it has been laid in ruins, or when one stone shall cease to lie upon another. No sign could be required to intimate that it had been destroyed. The fact itself would be the evidence of its accomplishment, after the prediction was "fulfilled." Yet the question really is not concerning the commencement or progress of the predicted event; but, "What shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" The question as stated by Luke, "What sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" is apparently to be understood also in the same way of the entire completion of the things spoken of—not when they begin to take place, but when they have "come to pass." Attention to this circumstance may perhaps add much to the perspicuity of the questions as stated by these evangelists. For it is to be noticed that in both Mark and Luke, as well as in Matthew, there is a preceding question concerning the destruction of the Temple, "When shall these things be?" The second question we might therefore expect to be of the same import, as recorded by the different evangelists, even if the expression should be varied by either. And so I believe it to be. For, as Matthew records that question to have been concerning the
sign of the coming of Christ and the end of the age, so I think that, as stated by Mark and Luke, the desire of the disciples is to obtain the sign of the completion or fulfilment of all that term of the Temple's desolation which is to precede the coming of Christ and the end of the age; or, being aware that His coming will be preceded by a sign, they ask, "What shall be the sign when all these things shall be fulfilled?" Remembering his prediction recently delivered in the Temple that He should be absent for a time, the duration of which would be coeval with the desolation of that Temple, in putting the question concerning the sign of the completion or fulfilment of its desolation, they do virtually ask concerning the sign of the coming of the Son of man, inserted distinctly in the question, as recorded by Matthew. From our Lord's repeatedly warning them in the progress of his prediction that "the end is not immediately," we may infer that they really had been inquiring about it, which they certainly would be, if asking when the desolation of the Temple should "be fulfilled." And what is the next great event, as detailed in our Lord's prediction, as immediately subsequent to the termination of Jewish desolation, about the sign of which they were so solicitous? It is just "the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." Jerusalem shall be trodden under foot of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled; but when Gentile oppressions shall cease,—"when all these things shall be fulfilled," the celestial signs appear which precede the coming of our Lord. Assured by the Saviour of his absence during the Temple's desolation before he left the precincts of that hallowed building, the earnest inquiry of the disciples was directed to ascertain the sign which should intimate the full accomplishment of God's wrath—when all the purposes of His vengeance should be fulfilled, and the more auspicious era of his favour be restored; and thus they embrace in the single question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?"

But what a marvellous change has been effected in the course of our argument! Why the disciples themselves have now become the abettors of a Figurative Coming! With all their absurd and fanciful notions about a temporal Kingdom and a Divine King, when they would inquire about the destruction of Jerusalem, they ask the Saviour
in all good faith, "What shall be the sign of thy Coming?" So for once they have become orthodox even on this subject in the estimation of those modern Antimillenarians who would accommodate the question as recorded by Matthew to their own notions of it as stated by Mark and Luke. This, however, was ground which, though you once took, you did not attempt to keep. On the contrary, you held them to be full of prejudices at the very time they addressed their Lord concerning His Coming. But if the disciples were then labouring under the influence of prejudice concerning their Master's coming, He himself contributed largely to their adopting and continuing in that error. Their questions, as I have shown, were naturally suggested by his former prediction in the Temple, and every word of his present magnificent prediction must have confirmed the views they had adopted on the subject, or rather which they had ever entertained. It is admitted, indeed, in Henry's Commentary, that Christ in his answer, "doth not expressly rectify the mistakes of his disciples. That," it is added, "must be done by the pouring out of the Spirit." I have yet to show what was the nature of their mistakes which the Spirit rectified, as also the manner in which this was done. But was the Spirit to correct their Master's discourse also? According to the interpretation put upon it, this seems equally necessary, if not for the then illuminated disciples, at least for all who came after them. As it stands, it has all the evidence which could possibly be required of being a direct and deliberate statement concerning a personal coming, to a plain and distinct question concerning a coming of that nature. Any correction, therefore, of the views of those by whom the question was put, made afterwards upon their minds by the Holy Spirit, affects not in the least the morality which you impute to our Lord in giving for the time a deceitful answer, nor does it even exhibit to others the prediction itself in any different light.

But neither you nor any one holding similar views, have yet shown why the rectification of this mistake must be left to be effected by the Holy Spirit afterwards, rather than be done by Christ himself. And certainly no one ever will succeed in showing why the Saviour, instead of rectifying it, should have done much—should have done
every thing, in fact—to confirm them in that error! Nor has any one yet attempted to show why all the evangelists should have conspired in this instance also to conceal from all their readers the great mistake into which they had fallen on the subject of the Kingdom; or why the author of the Acts of the Apostles should likewise have failed to record the subversion of all their views, when Pentecost had shed its illumination on their minds.

But is it really possible to conceive, under all the circumstances, that our blessed Lord did not speak of His personal Return, but of a figurative Coming? That with the perfect knowledge that his disciples were come to inquire concerning a personal Coming, He should, instead of objecting to their views, proceed immediately to answer their question as if all was perfectly right—that he should not only gratify them, for the time at least, by declaring minutely the manner of his coming, but in the most strict accordance with their request, should give them the sign of that coming, by enumerating the various important circumstances by which it should be preceded, and by the fulfilment of which its approach might be discerned; the earliest of which signs, experience soon proved to have been literally stated, as time has since demonstrated the same concerning those which followed,—to believe all this, and still to suppose the disciples altogether wrong in their expectations, and the Saviour as intimating something very different from that about which they inquired, requires a kind and degree of credulity which I am not ashamed to avow I do not possess.

It is not a little remarkable, moreover, if our Lord really did not mean to intimate his personal return but the destruction of Jerusalem, that his language was not more adapted to lead to the idea he must have wished to suppress, than it was unfitted to communicate the knowledge he desired to convey. Can we believe, that if the event the disciples were really to expect was the destruction of Jerusalem alone, that the Saviour would not, by the choice of his language, have more distinctly shown this to be the case. The most effectual method of suppressing their notions of a personal coming, would have been to have simply set before them that destruction in its native horrors, to do in short as on other occasions he did when the foretelling
of that event was his sole object. The simple quotation of any of the Old Testament prophecies concerning it, or the use of similar language—highly figurative as those prophecies are said to be—would have been sufficient at once to annihilate these fallacious hopes. The language of Moses on the subject, or of any one of his successors, would not only have been better fitted for bringing into subjection their high imaginations, but would more obviously have expressed the capture of their city and the overthrow of their venerated polity, than any prediction of the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven. They would thus have learned that "a nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favour to the young," would come against them and subdue them. If Christ had even continued to use such language as he has employed in that part of this very prediction in which he does speak of the destruction of Jerusalem, when it should be "compassed with armies," and of its being "trodden down of the Gentiles," the very possibility of mistake had been removed. But our Lord, in speaking of His coming, uses very different language, and language conveying very different ideas. His every word must have convinced the disciples that it was of his real and proper return He now spake. The prediction exhibits no proof of the Saviour's displeasure—it conveys no reproof of the carnal notions of his disciples—it contains no corrective of their deep-rooted prejudices in favour of a glorious Messiah—it presented no information requisite for men who had, upon the subject, greatly mistaken their Master's meaning. If, by his declaration to their rulers, they had been led to believe that He would absent himself from them till they manifested towards Him a very different spirit, and were willing to welcome Him as their long-desired Messiah, every word He now uttered in reply to their own inquiry concerning his return was calculated to lead them to the conviction that his prediction was really a reply to their question, and that his personal return at the Conversion of the Jews would be "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." The conclusion therefore at which I am again under the necessity of arriving is, that this was the glorious event which he so magnificently predicts.

The force of these remarks is much increased when we
consider the character of the persons by whom our Lord was addressed, and to whom His prediction was given. These were not his enemies set to entrap him, but his disciples—his real and devoted friends. It was not even in the presence of a mixed multitude, some of whom might have misconstrued his words;—the prediction was delivered to them "privately." Mat. xxiv. 3. His Return was not a matter of little consequence to them, and about which they had merely dropped a question casually;—it was a case in which they felt particularly interested, and about which they thoughtfully and formally inquire. If their ignorance had rendered it necessary, such circumstances must have induced the Saviour carefully to correct the views of the inquirers, and to have warned them most distinctly that he now, in speaking of his "Coming," used the word in a very different sense from that in which it had been employed by them. Even his most implacable enemies the Saviour never deceived. If at any time he declined gratifying their impertinent curiosity,—or rejected the claims of their usurped authority,—or refused new signs to their want of faith,—if he corrected their mistakes or exposed their sins, all was done in openness and in candour. They knew when the Redeemer refused compliance with their wishes; they were perfectly aware when corrected or reproved; they ran no hazard of mistaking his meaning, though they may have been denied the information requested, or have been frustrated in their ensnaring designs. And if the Saviour was thus open in his dealings with his determined foes; if to them his language was distinct and unambiguous, can we suppose that to his bosom friends—his most-beloved of the number—it should be the very opposite? Are we really to believe that these friends, to whom He had made known his design of leaving the world for a time, when they had chosen for themselves an opportunity to inquire privately concerning his return, instead of receiving an answer to their inquiry, should be told only of something else, and that too without the slightest hint that it was so, while all the language employed, and the circumstances mentioned, must have led them to conclude that he truly spake of His Return?

The importance of a distinct understanding by the disciples, of the Saviour's meaning, is farther evident, when we
consider that the answer to their questions was not to be by them kept a profound secret, and hushed in silence so soon as they left their present retirement. It would be told to all their friends; it would be threatened to their enemies; and it was to be put on record by inspired men, as the answer to these questions, by which future generations, of friends and of foes, up to the very hour, whencesoever this may be, when the Son of man shall be revealed from heaven in glory and in majesty.

The dangers arising from their being deceived would not even in a direct way be confined to these disciples. They were to be the future teachers of others: and to be intrusted with the institutions of their Master. It was therefore of the utmost importance that their views should be rightly directed. And during their whole journeyings with Jesus, have we not perceived his tender solicitude for their instruction, and watchful care for the correctness of their opinions. His love would not admit of his allowing them to remain in error. This they well knew, from frequent experience; and upon it they could calculate with safety. They could reason from their knowledge of Christ that not only would he abhor directly to deceive them by speaking of a figurative coming in language which they could only apply to a coming that is personal, or in the way of answering their inquiries concerning a personal coming by concealed intimations concerning a figurative coming; but, from intimate acquaintance with His character, they could infer the accuracy of their own understanding of his prediction, since he had never blamed them for misunderstanding it. They would call to remembrance how on other occasions he had corrected their mistaken ideas, divulging for this purpose the unexpressed thoughts of the heart. Luke ix. 47. They could remember that when they had at a certain time pressed Him to eat, and had been answered that He had meat to eat of which they knew not, when they thence supposed some man had brought him bread in their absence, "Jesus saith unto them, my meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work." John iv. 31—34.

There were indeed occasions on which we are informed they did not understand their Master. "For He taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is de-
livered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him, and after that he is killed he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him." Mark ix. 31, 32. Although our Lord spake to them in the plainest terms of his sufferings and death, their minds had been perverted by those false views or expositions of prophecy by which the humiliation of the Messiah was explained away. The difficulties thus experienced in understanding the above prediction by their Master did not arise from any ambiguity or mystery in his language; but, by the adoption of a system of inconsistent interpretation, they had been taught to reject the literal meaning of the predictions of Messiah's sufferings, while they willingly received in its proper sense the language of those which related to his glory. By the same error which now leads the Christian church to explain away one class of predictions, while they receive literally the other, the disciples could not comprehend the Saviour when he spake of his sufferings as predicted by the prophets, although he spake in terms than which plainer could not have been employed. This was yet more remarkably exemplified when "He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge him, and put him to death; and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things." Luke xvi. 31—34. This shows very clearly how the plainest and most distinct statement may be incomprehensible when the prejudices of men are opposed. Their difficulty arose neither from obscurity in the language, nor from any concealed sense being intended; but was the result of refusal to understand the words in their proper meaning. These predictions of our Lord were exactly fulfilled in the sufferings He endured, and nothing can justify the disbelief of the disciples,—although the conduct of the Christian church enables us more fully to account for it. Nor was it seldom that the disciples, by their prejudices, were prevented from receiving the statements communicated by the Saviour concerning His humiliation, nor have the evangelists been backward to testify
the fact. Again and again the same unjustifiable ignorance is displayed, while, on the part of the evangelists, it is thus frequently, and with perfect readiness, exposed; thus affording by each successive instance, an additional argument against the opinion of those who maintain that our Lord predicts a figurative coming, while the disciples expected one that is personal. The day after that of the Transfiguration, when Jesus had cast out an unclean spirit, the people "were all amazed at the mighty power of God. But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, He said unto his disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears; for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." Luke ix. 43, 44. What could be plainer than such a statement? Surely if it be not comprehended by those to whom it is addressed, the fault must be theirs. Yet in this instance also does the evangelist add, "But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them that they perceived it not; and they feared to ask him of that saying." ver. 45.

On an occasion when Jesus had said unto his disciples, "Take heed, and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees; and they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread," the Saviour at once corrected their mistake as to the bread he meant, without waiting for their asking an explanation. And we are informed that "then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees." Mat. xvi. 5—12.

How careful was our Lord on a former occasion that He should not be misunderstood by His disciples, when speaking in reference to the very question before us. He illustrated, by parable, His coming at the end of the age, sending his angels to "gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and those which do iniquity," adding, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father." The intimation of these glorious events was delivered to the multitude in parables. The disciples afterwards came privately seeking more particular information concerning them. And in his solicitude for their instruction, not only did the Saviour readily comply with their request, by minute explanations; but, by several additional parables, He furnished them with information which must have fitted
them for more readily comprehending the magnificent proph-ecy which has occupied so much of our attention in these sheets. The blessed Saviour was by no means indifferent as to whether or not they comprehended his instructions, but on the occasion alluded to, with condescension ineffable, "Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then said He unto them, therefore every scribe which is instructed into the Kingdom of heaven, is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old." ver. 51, 52. It was no part of our Lord's design to conceal the fact of His Glorious Return, nor of the events by which it should either be preceded or attended. He not only taught it with pains-taking care to his disciples, but inculcated upon them the duty of making it known unto others, by imparting unto them things both new and old. Far, far indeed, from the Saviour, was the desire to deceive or mislead on the subject of his coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And when great ignorance on this subject is attributed to the disciples, in their finally putting the question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" it seems to be utterly forgot with what fulness and precision our Lord had previously instructed them regarding these matters, until they acknowledged their entire acquaintance with the circumstances foretold, saying, "Yea, Lord." Their progress in such knowledge, and this attestation to the fact, is wholly overlooked; and when at length, to complete their information on the point, they ask for the sign of their Lord's Return, they are branded with incurable ignorance, and stigmatized as inveterately carnal.

Ignorant indeed the disciples were in many things; but they were not so wedded to their ignorance as we are sometimes taught to suppose. That may be said of them, which cannot be said of many of their defamers in the present day: they really desired information concerning the Glorious Advent at least, and were not reluctant to receive it. In the prospect of his absence, which the love of his disciples rendered more difficult for them to bear, the Saviour, with peculiar tenderness, consoled them with the briefness of his absence, evidently as contrasted with the duration of his abode among them at His Return. "A
little while and ye shall not see me, and again, a little while and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." They, however, perceived not his meaning, but were completely perplexed. Did the Saviour then leave them in their ignorance? No: although they did not ask him for an explanation, desirous as they were of doing so, He explained Himself fully, that He was to leave them for a time, during which His people would be persecuted by the world, but that He should return in triumph, to their joy. And what was the result upon the minds of those addressed? "His disciples said unto Him, Lo, speakest thou now plainly, and speakest no proverb." John xvi. 16—29. Above all things was our blessed Lord careful for the instruction of those who were to be the future instructors of his church, as was often evinced by the private instructions they received relative to the topics previously illustrated in discourses addressed to the less favoured multitude. And rarely are we left to conjecture what was the result on the minds of his friends. In most cases we have the Saviour's direct correction, and there are instances in which although this is not put on record, or where, from the circumstances, no correction could have been given by Him, it has been furnished by the evangelists. This care for the preservation of the Saviour's meaning is on one occasion extended even to a general rumour, founded on a misapprehension of his words. Reproving Peter's unwarrantable curiosity concerning John, "Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: Yet," adds John himself, "Jesus said not unto him he shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true." John xxi. 21—24.

Very different, you will perceive, was the reception given to the Saviour's prediction of His return in glory, to that given to the predictions of his sufferings, although related in language certainly not more obvious. They evidently recognised at once his allusion to those prophecies of Messiah which they delighted to contemplate. We read nothing now of their want of comprehension. In the ac-
counts of the prediction given at length by the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, not a word of reflection against themselves is introduced. Yet as faithful historians, they have not hesitated when in error to acknowledge it. In the present case, therefore, their views must have been correct enough. Not the most distant hint of surprise had been expressed; not a single question for explanation was addressed; not the slightest symptom of mistake is allowed to appear in the record. No prejudices now prevent them from discerning what their Master means.

Those who charge misapprehension of all that concerns the Saviour's Kingdom against the apostles, appear to consider themselves sufficiently liberal in allowing their views to have been corrected on the day of Pentecost, when they received of the outpouring of the Spirit. The charge of ignorance on this subject, (except in so far as relates to the time of the establishment of the Kingdom,) is of itself only an unsupported assumption. While the evangelists themselves notice that spiritual darkness which prevented their comprehending the prophecies concerning Christ's humiliation, they never once intimate such difficulty in comprehending those of his glory when the Saviour discoursed on the subject, nor does he ever intimate that their views regarding it were altogether erroneous. Nay, if there were the slightest ground to believe in a variety of Comings of the Son of man, we should have had little reason to wonder if they had experienced difficulty in understanding to what coming our Lord now, or on any particular occasion, referred. There is reason to conclude the apostles were better informed upon the subject, than many who bestow upon them unqualified censure. But even if the contrary were admitted, it cannot, in the present case, in the least affect the matter. With whatever ignorance they may have been chargeable, we have here the statements of our Lord himself. We are not considering, nor are we required to expound, their erroneous creed, but have simply to consider their Master's reply to a plain and intelligible question. This reply does, however, reflect satisfactory evidence of the correctness of the opinions condemned by you. These had been explicitly uttered in the presence of their Lord; and if, when they were wrong on other occasions, He corrected their mistakes, we are bound to believe that when,
instead of doing so, he answers them as if they were correct, they were so in truth. His language relative to His coming in glory is not less explicit than was that concerning his sufferings; and when viewed, as it must be, as the answer to a direct question, it is impossible to conceive how the nature of the language is to be so entirely changed by the presumed mistakes of his disciples.

But the views which it is supposed were now so erroneous, and which the Saviour certainly did nothing to correct, were all rectified, it is alleged, at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was shed forth on those who believed upon his name. The Spirit had been promised to his apostles long before. And what was the Spirit's particular work in reference to what our Lord had previously foretold? It was that of a Remembrancer. "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said, unto you." John xiv. 26. When the Saviour in lowliness rode into Jerusalem on an ass, his friends thought not of the clear and distinct prediction which was then exactly and literally fulfilled: "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold thy King cometh sitting on an ass's colt." That they were ignorant of it we are expressly told, while the work of the Spirit in recalling it to recollection, is well exemplified. "These things understood not his disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto Him." John xii. 15, 16. With respect to what they had seen or heard, to bring to their remembrance, was the chief work of the Spirit. In the instructions communicated by the Saviour, there was nothing mystical, requiring a new revelation by the Spirit to render them intelligible. All that was necessary with respect to these, was their being recalled distinctly to recollection, with the circumstances in which they were spoken, and the connection in which they were uttered. To bring to their remembrance all that He had already told them, the Saviour therefore promised the aids of the Holy Spirit. And this gracious promise was indeed completely fulfilled; and our Lord's important prediction concerning his return was, among others, brought distinctly to their recollection.

The remembrance, however, could supply nothing capa-
ble of leading them to the opinion that Christ meant a fig-
urative coming, at the destruction of Jerusalem. They
would remember that in the Temple He had declared that
from "henceforth," or from that time, till the predicted
desolation should cease, He should not again be seen of
the Jews,—they would remember that it is predicted by
the prophet Daniel, that the Temple and the city shall
continue desolate until the end or "consummation," and
that this period will arrive only when that determined is
poured upon the "desolator" of Judea;—they would prob-
ably remember that, in another prediction by Daniel, the
Coming of the Son of man with the clouds of heaven, in-
stead of being placed at the destruction of Jerusalem, was
at the overthrow of the blasphemous little horn, or Papal
man of sin, at the commencement of the Millennium;—they
might perhaps remember, that with their views directed to
these more ancient predictions of the prophet, and also to
the more recent declaration of their Master, and with anx-
ious thoughts about his absence, they implored of Him the
sign of His Coming and of the predicted "consummation"
or end of the age;—they would moreover remember their
Lord's condescending reply to their interesting inquiry about
His Return. They would remember it as at once an an-
swer direct and satisfactory, equally confirming them in
their belief that His Coming would be at the end of the
age, and, by furnishing them with intimations the most di-
rect of the time and nature and manner of His Return,
dispelling all doubt, if it is possible to suppose the Saviour's
language capable of creating dubiety, that in either the one
or the other they could have been mistaken;—they would
likewise remember that on other occasions, and on far less
important subjects, He had not suffered them to remain in
error when they had misunderstood his meaning, and that
if it had been possible for them to question the correctness
of their ideas concerning his glorious return, his acquies-
cence on this occasion would confirm their hopes;—they
would remember too, that his whole language could only
convey the idea of a personal return, when, as the Son of
man, he should be seen of all the tribes and kindreds of the
earth, "coming in a cloud,"—the very manner of his return
they would also remember, announced by the angel atten-
dant on his ascension. Such must have been the result of
that work of the blessed Spirit in bringing to their Remem-
brane all things which Christ himself had told them. It
enabled them to remember distinctly the prediction He had
delivered, with all the circumstances which gave it illustra-
tion, rather than suggested unto them new ideas which
could not have been deduced from that combination.

By the evangelists these things were not only all brought
to remembrance, but they were also put on record for
the information of the church in all ages. And we have,
in their case, the clearest evidence that the receiving
of the Holy Ghost did not change their ideas of the sig-
nificance of the language of their Lord, or their views of
the nature of his return. Their Gospels were written
after the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit were made,
yet in the record of Christ's prediction they have given no
intimation whatever, nor left any thing from which it could
be inferred, that they ever had any other opinion than that
the Saviour foretold his real personal return, or that he
was to be understood in any other than the natural sense
of his words. The same important truth is evident from
the testimony of the apostle James, called by Paul "the
Lord's brother," and in Jerusalem surnamed The Just.
When urged to impugn the cause of his blessed Master
before the people, he on the contrary made honourable
confession, exclaiming, "Why do ye inquire of me con-
cerning Jesus, the Son of man? He sits in heaven, at the
right hand of the Majesty on high, and will come in the
clouds of heaven;" and for this he immediately after re-
ceived the crown of martyrdom.—Eusebius' Eccles. Hist.
Book 2d. chap. 23, or History of the Church of Christ,
published by the London Tract Society, vol. I. p. 68. The
receiving of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost did not, therefore,
change this apostle's idea, that Christ had foretold his per-
sonal return as in the clouds of heaven, since this attesta-
tion to its truth was 24 years after the ascension of Christ.
The same truth was also attested at a still later date by
John, another of the Apostles, and one deeply interested
in the matter, being one of the four who immediately put
the question to the Saviour concerning His Coming,—if in-
deed the Lord's brother was not that James who also was
of the inquiring four. Even after the destruction of Jer-
usalem, did John prophetically exclaim, "Behold He
cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." Rev. i. 7.

But there is evidence that not only the apostles, but the whole primitive church did regard our Lord's prediction of His "Coming in the clouds of heaven," as his Second and glorious coming. I have already referred to the use which Gibbon has attempted to make of the prediction; but having vindicated our Lord from the opinion of his having fixed that coming to be before the then-living generation had ceased to exist, I now avail myself of the universal belief of the church concerning this prediction, to prove that if the apostles had been wrong in regarding it as Christ's personal return, their views cannot have been corrected at the day of Pentecost, since that still continued to be the belief of the church. Nor was it a mere barren speculation; but, on the testimony of the Infidel himself, a doctrine "productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians." And in point of fact, however much Christians may have erred in their minute exposition of our Lord's prediction, "the church," as Mede remarks, "hath always grounded her faith of the Second Coming of Christ, upon those passages in the Gospels which speak of his coming in the clouds of heaven."

Even yet, I believe that there are thousands in the church who never doubt for a moment, that in this important prediction delivered by our Lord, He declares His personal return, and who derive from it their knowledge of the circumstances by which it will be attended, who have never observed the time at which that Coming is placed. This was long the case with,

Reverend Sir,

Yours in love sincere, &c.

LETTER VIII.

THAT OUR LORD IN HIS PREDICTION REFERRED TO HIS PERSONAL RETURN, PROVED FROM THE LANGUAGE EMPLOYED AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES FORETOLD.

Reverend Sir,

In all your Expositions of our Lord's prediction concerning his coming with the clouds of heaven, it
was assumed that there are a variety of Comings of the Son of man. Here you said it is applied to the destruction of Jerusalem—that it is sometimes applied to the destruction of Antichristian nations—to His final Coming,—and to the day of death. This enumeration I regard as utterly unsupported by proof, and it is an unwarrantable assumption in argument to assert that here it is the destruction of Jerusalem, and then adduce this as a fact which proves the variety you maintain. But multiply as you may the comings of the Lord, still you will not deny that there is one coming which is of transcendant importance to the Christian; and which, if in any case particularized, may with greater propriety than in the mere infliction of judgment be called emphatically "the coming of the Lord." Now if this be the case, it is no small presumption in favour of the view already offered, and now maintained, that our Lord in his illustrations of his coming in the clouds of heaven repeatedly gives unto it this emphatic character of "the coming of the Son of man," Mat. xxiv. 27, 37, 39. If there were really a variety of comings, similar in character, and equal in importance, we cannot suppose that in speaking of any one of these, while there was yet one peculiar in every respect, and vastly more important than all the others, the Saviour should speak of any one of these subordinate comings in this emphatic language of the coming. If amidst a variety of comings such language might be used concerning the one of vastly greatest importance and of peculiar characteristics, in speaking of any one of the others it would be necessary to use the less definite language of "a coming," or concerning the one more particularly specified to say "this coming" or "that coming."

I however go farther and say, that the use of the definite article seems altogether to set aside the idea of there being a variety of comings. It intimates such a singleness of event as to render specification unnecessary. To use this form of speech, in referring to one particular event from among a class of similar events would be altogether improper, since it would convey an idea of definiteness regarding an object wholly indefinite. "The coming of the Son of man," I therefore consider as in itself an evidence that our Lord was speaking of the only event which could be so called, even his personal return.
The same argument may with equal propriety be deduced from the form in which the question was put by the disciples. They do not assume—they do not seem at all to have supposed—that there would be a variety of comings of their Master, for they do not prefer a request that they may obtain the sign of his first, or second, or twentieth coming. Instead of putting their question in a form to distinguish some particular coming, they simply ask, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the age?" Nor does our Lord remind them that since there are a number of Comings it is necessary that they be more specific in their question. He does not interrogate them as to the particular coming they mean—whether that at death? or that at the destruction of Jerusalem? or that at the overthrow of the Antichristian Apostasy? or that at the termination of this mundane system? or that at whatever other time men may have been pleased to fancy or invent a coming. The disciples, by the very nature of their question, assume that from the time at which they spoke there would be only one coming of Christ, an idea which the Saviour's answer amply confirms.

But even the character in which our Lord predicts his coming in the clouds of heaven, of itself necessarily implies his personal presence. It is the Coming of "The Son of man." Is this term at all applicable to Him except as having the human nature in union with his divine? A comparison of the passages in which the term occurs, and where it has no reference to his coming, would probably be of service to you in determining the meaning of those which are disputed. A near and beloved relative in his regular course of reading through the Greek New Testament, in the way of comparison for his own satisfaction, marked down every instance in which this term is used extending also the connection in which it occurs. This list he has put into my hands, but the number of these passages, (82,) prevents their quotation; still for the sake of those who desire due investigation, I subjoin the references. Except in one case in the Acts, and another in the book of the Revelation, the term is confined to the Gospels, never being used but by the Saviour himself. If, however, we may form a judgment of the meaning of those relating to his coming, by the nature of those which do not, then I must
say that in every instance, except one which Griesbach in his "Various Readings" says is omitted in some MSS., "the Son of man" is absolutely restricted to the actions of the Son of God as clothed with the nature of Man; never being applied to the operations of the Holy Spirit, nor to God's execution of judgment on wicked nations, nor in any case in which there is not the palpable presence of Him who was made in the likeness of men.* You yourself, indeed, when discoursing on the 31st verse of the following chapter, actually drew an argument for its being the Son of God in human nature, that is there spoken of, when He "shall come in His glory," and surely if your argument, from the mere use of this term, be worth any thing in Mat. xxv. its value should not be greatly less when used by me concerning Mat. xxiv. It is admitted by all, that He will yet come in that nature in which alone he is the Son of man, and it should be some very strong reason which would occasion any doubt that the Saviour referred to His return in that character when he spake of His Coming as the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. It is not the execution of his purposes through human agency that will be a coming of the Son of man, but a real corporeal presence visible to the eyes of men, and actually to be seen by them.

The distinction between his coming and the presence of the Roman army is made perfectly obvious by the Saviour himself. The one is "the abomination of desolation," the other is "the Son of man." How different are the terms employed by the Saviour to designate the two! In the one case they are the language of endearment, in the other they excite indignation, and convey the expression of re-probation. The approach of the Romans was the prelude

* The term "The Son of man," occurs in Mat. viii. 20. ix. 6. x. 23. xi. 19. xii. 8, 32. 40. xiii. 37. 41. xvi. 13, 27, 28. xvii. 9, 12, 22. xviii. 11. xix. 28. xx. 18, 28. xxiv. 27, 30. (twice.) 37, 39, 44. xxv. 13, 31. xxvi. 2, 24, 45, 64.

Mark ii. 10, 28. viii. 31, 38. ix. 9, 12, 31. x. 33, 45. xiii. 26. xiv. 21, 41, 62.

Luke v. 24. vi. 5. 22. vii. 34. ix. 22, 26, 44, 56, 58. xi. 30. xii. 8, 10, 40. xvii. 22, 24, 26, 30. xviii. 8. xix. 10. xx. 27, 36. xii. 22, 48, 69. xxiv. 7.

to their being "led away captive into all nations;" on the contrary, the signs of the Coming of the Son of man will intimate that "their redemption draweth nigh." When the time of the destruction of Jerusalem arrived, believers were to "flee into the mountains;" when the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven, "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Is it then his own coming, think you, that the Saviour calls an "abomination"? He who is worthy of all admiration in heaven and in earth, who claims and receives the homage of the highest of created intelligences to represent himself as an abomination! No, no. The work of destruction was indeed in execution of the righteous purposes of the Most High, but there is surely a wide distinction between the instrument and Him whose designs they execute. These instruments are often the guiltiest of men, and the very acts by which God's holiness may be most conspicuously vindicated and his wrath against sin most eminently displayed, may be the most aggravated guilt of those instruments by whom it is immediately inflicted. In the very case of the destruction of Jerusalem, the Romans are therefore called "the abomination of desolation," but never would Christ call his own coming an abomination—that coming which will be in "great glory."

Those to whom the Saviour spake could easily recognise an enemy to their nation in this "abomination of desolation;" but this they certainly did not in the Coming of the Son of man. With them, this was evidently an object of great desire. The very danger of their deception indeed lay in the eager desire they had for his return. On false representations they would be ready to go forth to seek him. They therefore needed to be warned of the hazard to which they were exposed on this ground. "Wherefore," says the Saviour, "if they say unto you, behold He is in the desert, go not forth; behold, He is in the secret chambers, believe it not." So eager would they be for the Coming of the Son of man, that false pretenders would find it easy to deceive many, and that without special warning all would be in danger. Was it of "the abomination of desolation," the enemy they hated, they could be mistaken in the heat of their zeal for his "coming"? or
was it of the real, true, and personal coming of the Son of man as their glorious Messiah?

But this warning against "false Christs" is in its very nature utterly irreconcilable with any other idea than that the coming which they expected, and desired, and inquired about, and which Jesus described, was his Personal Return. When he would guard them against the danger of mistake, it is not by telling them that there will be no personal manifestation of himself, but a mere display of his power and his wrath, by the agency of the Romans. The ground of caution is very different, and applicable only to a personal coming. It is, that the promised manifestation will be altogether inimitable by imposters, for it will be no secret, but a bright visible appearance, "as the lightning."*

But not only does the term "Son of man" necessarily imply his personal presence, while there is also a clear distinction drawn between his coming and the destruction of

* It has been well said by Mr. Cuninghame, that "there is no end to the vagaries of Commentators." To a person desirous of really ascertaining the meaning of the Scriptures, there can be few things more annoying than the "vagaries" which are offered as explanations in approved Commentaries. A striking instance of this occurs in Henry on this comparison of our Lord's coming to the lightning, which he says "seems primarily to be meant of His coming to set up his spiritual kingdom in the world: where the gospel came in its light and power, there the Son of man came, "as the lightning"!! So the gospel came not any where in its light and power till the destruction of Jerusalem; not even to the thousands of Jews who believed long previously, in that city itself. (Acts xxi. 20.) Transcendantly important has that event become by "the vagaries of Commentators," in other respects than in the sufferings which it occasioned.

The same explanation is extended to the following verse, "for wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together," being also understood of the successful preaching of the gospel, which it is said "gathered in multitudes, not by external compulsion, but as it were by such a natural instinct and inclination as brings the birds of prey to their preys"!! Notwithstanding of this explanation, however, since "some understand these verses of the Coming of the Son of man, to destroy Jerusalem," the author, in the most accommodating manner, proceeds to show that these things were "intimated concerning it" also. And after all this, he yet says, "it is very applicable to the day of judgment, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in that day, and our gathering together unto him." Can we wonder that the vagaries of Commentators should have induced the discerning infidel to regard the Scriptures, so treated, as a nose of wax, to be moulded and fashioned at pleasure?
Jerusalem; but the minuteness with which the intimations concerning the latter were literally fulfilled, presents a strong argument that in a similar manner, at the appointed time, will all the tribes of the earth "see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The very fact of the events of a certain character having received their fulfilment in the proper sense of the words used in the prediction, is certainly a warrant for the expectation that the other will be so also. Now Jerusalem was to be "compassed with armies;" (Luke xxi. 20,) and was not this the very method adopted by Titus to reduce the city? When this took place the disciples were to "know that the desolation thereof is nigh," and the event soon verified the accuracy of the prediction. "Then let them which are in Judea, flee to the mountains," said the Saviour, "and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto." This is a case which, if in any, it might certainly have been expected was not meant to be understood to the letter of the statement. It might have been thought and said, that if Jerusalem was really to be compassed with armies, that the proper time of escape instead of being "then," when it had been so compassed, should have been before it. But the circumstances fully vindicate the minuteness of the prophecy, and testify how very literally it has been fulfilled, in so far as hitherto accomplished. For when the city was compassed by the Roman army under Cestius, in the 68th year of our Lord, when, as appears from all testimony, it might easily have been taken, he suddenly "retired from the city," as Josephus narrates, "without any reason in the world;" and thus gave the Jewish disciples an opportunity of obeying their Lord's command, and effecting their escape. They had been enjoined to flee to the mountains, and accordingly they fled principally to Pella, a town situated in the mountains of Perea, beyond Jordan, where they were allowed to remain for the time in safety.

Our Lord declared concerning the temple, that not one stone of it should be left upon another that should not be thrown down. Luke xxi. 6. And this also was accom-
plished in the minutest manner, when Titus ordered his soldiers to dig up the foundations both of the city and temple, orders which they obeyed with alacrity, in expectation of much treasure; and the foundations were afterwards turned up entirely with a ploughshare, by order of Turnus Rufus, who was left to command the army.

The Jews were to be led captive into all nations; and their present dispersion continues to testify to the literal fulfilment of the Saviour's prophecy. Their capital was also to be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled; and frequently as for seventeen centuries it has changed masters, it has invariably been in the hands of Gentiles, and has almost invariably been trodden down, or kept in degradation and in thraldom by them. The disciples themselves were to endure much persecution, both before and after the destruction of Jerusalem. Let the history of the church bear witness whether this was literally or figuratively accomplished. And let the same record be searched, in order to ascertain the nature of his language in the prediction of false Christs, by the kind of accomplishment it has received.

In all of these particulars, that our Lord's language is to be understood in its plain and obvious sense, is perfectly evident; and indeed the supposition of our Lord's prediction concerning his coming in the clouds of heaven being merely figurative, is a supposition entirely at variance with the whole tenor of his ordinary discourse. Parable was with him a very common mode of instruction, but the use of figurative language, at least figures elaborately carried out to their utmost length, is exceedingly rare with him, —even if it could at all be proved that there was any thing like a figure in this prediction of his coming in the clouds of heaven.

But if, as I have formerly shown, our Lord had already predicted the destruction of Jerusalem in the plainest language,—in a way which it was impossible could be misunderstood,—what plausible reason can be devised for supposing that he afterwards, under promise of the coming of the Son of man, merely tells the same thing, even though it be called language of a figurative nature? No figurative language could render more intelligible the awful fate which awaited Jerusalem and the House of the Lord, than that
he had already uttered; while, to suppose that what Christ afterwards said concerning his own coming was also applied to that event, involves the whole in inextricable confusion. He had, very shortly before, informed them that their House was left unto them "desolate,"—He had afterwards assured them that "there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down,"—He had warned them that they should "hear of wars and rumours of wars," and that they should "see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the Holy place,"—and he had informed them that they might, when they saw "Jerusalem compassed about with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh;"—All these plain and distinct intimations concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, he had given previous to his speaking at all of his "coming in the clouds of heaven." And can we suppose that such a prediction as that of his coming with all the attendant circumstances, was meant merely to elucidate or illustrate those concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, already declared with so much plainness? If applied to the same event, the only possible effect they could produce would be to render it obscure and confused; and this just has been the effect of all interpretations of that nature. But no where has Christ confounded the two. He has on the contrary kept them perfectly distinct; and this, the slightest examination, in the way of comparison between the very circumstances predicted and the nature of Antimillenarian Expositions, will amply demonstrate.

Observe then that our Lord expressly says that when the sign of the Son of man has appeared in heaven, "then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." The tribes of the earth, you say, are the tribes of the Jews, who, you farther say, did see the Son of man coming at the destruction of Jerusalem. Now observe how directly opposed this is to the express statement of the Saviour himself to the Jews, just before he left the Temple, "I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;" that is, that He would not be seen of them, in whatever sense you are pleased to understand it—and the argument will admit of my allowing you to choose your particular application—he
would not be seen of them till their conversion. No vision of him did they enjoy, either personal or gracious, at the destruction of Jerusalem; and therefore to assert that it was of that event the Saviour spake, when he said he should be seen coming in the clouds of heaven, is to set prophecy against prophecy, or Christ against himself.

Again, when the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, "He shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." This you also refer to events at the destruction of Jerusalem, with what consistency, let me again inquire. The "angels," you say, are the ministers of the gospel, and the gathered elect are those converted to the faith through their instrumentality. And would this be a gathering of the elect "together"? and if so, would it be then so very extensive as to be from "the one end of heaven to the other?" But farther, was it only at the destruction of Jerusalem that the ministers of the gospel were sent on their mission of mercy? Had they not long before engaged in their work? had not eleven of the apostles finished their labours before that time? The 14th verse of this very chapter, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come," you asserted to have been fulfilled before the destruction of Jerusalem, before the end of the Jewish polity. How then can the angels sent out at the coming of the Lord, and that "after the tribulation" which you regard as the destruction of Jerusalem, have been the preachers of the gospel sent forth only at that time? They would thus be made to have accomplished their work before it was begun.

Mr. Faber, though he places the Coming of the Son of man immediately before the Millennium, still regards it as a figurative Coming, and therefore gives the same interpretation of the mission and work of the angels. This exposition is, however, not less inconsistent with his ideas of other parts of the prediction than I have already shown it to be with yours. For he understands "the end" before which our Lord declares the gospel will be preached in all the world to be at the close of the times of the Gentiles. Now, as Mr. Faber places his figurative Coming of the
Son of man after these times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, how does the Son of man only send forth his angels at his Coming after these times, if this meant the preachers of the gospel offering salvation before their accomplishment? It is only when He shall come, that the angels are sent forth; then only do they receive their commission to gather the elect. This, therefore, is something that is to take place, not before, but after the Coming of Christ, and can in no way accord with the idea of its being a preaching of the gospel which is to be begun—nay, which is to be completely accomplished—before those times be fulfilled which precede the coming of the Lord.

Observe also, that as it is the same Son of man who is to come in the clouds of heaven, that is to send forth his angels to gather together his elect, it necessarily follows that if that Coming was the coming of the Romans, so also must it be this avenging and desolating people who, at the very destruction of Jerusalem, were to send forth the angels to gather the elect, or, as you expound it, the ministers to preach the gospel. Was it then the Romans by whom these preachers were missioned to proclaim the name of Jesus? The very opposite was the fact; and, as it was indeed expressly foretold by our Lord in this very prediction, they persecuted to the death those commissioned by his church.

Again, the destruction of Jerusalem, you say, was itself “the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven.” You also assert, however, that the “greatest tribulation that ever was or shall be,” was likewise that at the destruction of Jerusalem. Now, these interpretations are mutually destructive; for our Lord expressly informs us that His coming is not this great tribulation. I have already shown, as maintained by Mr. Faber, that this tribulation, instead of being at the destruction of Jerusalem, is at the close of the times of the Gentiles; but if you had been correct in asserting that this great tribulation was the destruction of Jerusalem, you would necessarily destroy your other assertion—for the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven is “immediately after” that tribulation.

But the coming of the Son of man is to be preceded by certain “signs in the sun, moon, and stars,” &c.; these signs are still more “immediately after” the great tribu-
lation; consequently neither are they to be confounded with it. Yet you do confound these "signs," not only with the "tribulation," which in the prophecy they are thus made to succeed, but you also confound them with the coming itself, which they really precede. The signs you symbolize to mean the overthrow of the Jewish polity, civil and ecclesiastical; but if they precede the coming of the Lord, and if that coming be the destruction of Jerusalem, and if both be the great tribulation, there is an utter and entire confusion of the sign with that which it announces, and of the event itself with what is to take place "after" it. Evidently feeling involved in this dilemma, you again said the Coming of the Son of man was his coming in the establishment of his spiritual kingdom. The spiritual kingdom had been established, however, long before the destruction of Jerusalem; it had madelarge progress, indeed; you yourself said the gospel had been preached in all the world before it; and how then could the coming of the Son of man, if after the destruction of Jerusalem, be the establishment of the spiritual kingdom? Besides, His coming is in the clouds of heaven; and how this will accord with its being in the establishment of the spiritual Kingdom, it is difficult to perceive,—nor is the difficulty lessened, but increased, when we observe that "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn" when they witness His coming. The supposition, moreover, is in complete oversight of your having already converted the angels into the preachers of the gospel, for the very purpose of establishing the spiritual Kingdom, whose mission is not to be confounded with the coming of the Son of man, by whom they are sent out.

These various circumstances demonstrate your exposition of our Lord's prediction of his coming to be altogether erroneous, and therefore confirm much the view already given of that being his real, proper, personal return, at the close of the times of the Gentiles and restoration of Israel. Mr. Faber, as I have frequently noticed, places this coming of the Son of man immediately before the Millennium. The time to which the prophecy refers, he has endeavoured with much care to ascertain; although his views of the nature of Christ's coming have led him into various singular inconsistencies. Little of that critical acumen which so strongly
marks some of his prophetic investigations has been displayed in the interpretation of the most important parts of this prediction. He seems indeed to have entirely overlooked the circumstances which occasioned the prediction, and the most marked and obvious distinctions which it presents. He readily perceives, however, the impression which must be produced upon the mind of the unprejudiced, or, as he is pleased to say, the "careless reader," by the nature of the language in which the prophecy is couched, and by the connection of the circumstances foretold.

"This epoch," he says, of the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, "This epoch is not identical with the epoch of the literal day of judgment: for although the poetical imagery of that figurative judgment-day is borrowed from the awful realities of the literal judgment-day, and although such a circumstance may easily mislead a careless reader to confound the one day with the other day; yet we shall always find some chronological mark or circumstance associated with the former, which will clearly and effectually distinguish it from the latter." Sac. Cal. vol. I. p. 221. It will only be "a careless reader," and not a careful student of our Lord's prediction, whose attention is thus to be diverted from its obvious meaning and design. How easily Mr. Faber, by the gratuitous assumption of a different chronology for our Lord's return, disposes of all the circumstances in which it originated; of the nature of the questions put by the disciples; and of the numerous minute details in the prediction, which it would require all the extent of his ingenuity, if "borrowed," to restore to their rightful owner. But if the sublime language so magnificently descriptive of the Coming of the Son of man, instead of referring to his personal return, be merely borrowed from some one descriptive of the real event, it will be difficult, I fear, to find that account of "the awful realities" of his coming from which it is so borrowed. Is there a single passage, which is not clearly referable by its chronology to the very same period, that is equally full, sublime, or circumstantial? There is not one. In different passages, as we shall afterwards find, indisputably referring to the personal coming of Christ, the same circumstances are introduced, but these are in detail.
The particulars which are here enumerated in combination, though they may all be found in other passages, are contained in no other single prediction. Instead, therefore, of this description being "borrowed" from some other prediction, other passages evidently refer to this description of the Coming of the Son of man and its various concomitants. Had there even been nothing in the circumstances in which it originated, or in the views and questions of those to whose inquiry it is professedly a reply, the statements here contained plainly forbid any one to assume that it is merely the adornings of a picture with borrowed scenery, and not rather "the awful realities" of his glorious coming of which the Son of man thus speaks.

Indeed, Mr. Faber himself seems sometimes to admit, that his notion is really destitute of Scriptural proof. Speaking of the celestial signs here predicted, he says they are "images all borrowed from the expected occurrences attendant upon the literal day of judgment." Sac. Cal. vol. I. p. 250. It is therefore, in his own estimation, not a truth which may be proved, but something which is only "expected," that such signs will precede the literal coming of Christ; and yet our Lord's sublime description of these signs, as preceding his Coming, is declared to be "borrowed," without question, from these "expected occurrences"! We have thus the singular logical inconsistency of an unqualified assertion of the most magnificent description of certain events being absolutely borrowed from other events which are only expected to occur!! If the reality be matter only of probability or peradventure, where is the ground of assurance that any thing can be borrowed from it?

But however insecure such a foundation may be for faith to rest upon, in a matter of the greatest importance, those who deny that such passages as this refer to the proper coming of Christ, deprive themselves of all evidence by which it can be established; and thus render it necessary to lower down the certain assurance derived from God's word into an unsupported expectation. But even after having thus despoiled our Lord's prediction of its literal meaning, Mr. Faber can still speak of "the literal Second Advent of Christ with the clouds of heaven," as if he were nevertheless at liberty to assume that his coming will be in the very manner here described. Sac. Cal. vol. I. p. 226.
It is indeed perfectly evident, that if the manner of Christ's coming is not declared in this prediction, it must still remain a matter of uncertainty; and Mr. Faber is bound to return to his former proposition, and to replace the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven in his list of "expected occurrences." Yet after all he has said of "borrowed" scenery and a "figurative coming," we have already seen, in a preceding Letter, that Mr. Faber could not fully reconcile his own mind to the idea of this sublime prediction being entirely so, and found it necessary to take shelter in the notion, "that His final coming at the literal day of judgment is also not obscurely alluded to." But it is not a little remarkable that while he has often argued strongly, in some instances I might say pertinaciously, from the very words of Scripture prophecy, he should here set aside the whole tenor of the Saviour's discourse, so as to find nothing like evidence in the clearest language that could possibly be employed.

But this argument may yet be put in another form to advantage, in considering the nature of our Lord's prediction. You yourself admit that the Lord Jesus will at some time return in person—you will farther admit (take your evidence from what source you may,) that his Coming will then be with the clouds of heaven—you do not question that, when he so comes, all his elect will be gathered from the earth, at the sound of the archangel's trumpet—now, with these admissions, connect a supposition that our Lord on the present occasion had truly desired to communicate to his disciples, who contemplated with sorrow his departure, an account of his real return—making for a moment such a supposition of the Saviour's design of informing his disciples of these events, tell me, whether language more appropriate, direct, and perspicuous, could possibly have been selected for the purpose; or what circumstances would warrant more the idea of its being his personal advent, of which the Saviour at any time spake? But if the language was so fitted to convey such an impression; and if these ideas be those which connect themselves with the personal return of Christ, then not only would the disciples have been most completely deceived, unless it was of that coming of which He spake; but every reader of the narrative would have been exposed to the same hazard.
Scott indeed confesses, that "the language of these verses is suited, and probably was intended, to lead the mind of the reader to the consideration of the end of the world and the coming of Christ to judgment; yet," he nevertheless asserts, "the clause 'immediately after the tribulation of those days,' restricts the primary sense of them to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the events which were consequent to it." That the coming of the Son of man is not restricted by that clause to the destruction of Jerusalem but to the great tribulation at the close of the times of the Gentiles, I have often shown; but whatever restriction that clause puts upon the time of the coming of the Son of man to it we are bound to adhere. If our Lord restrict the sense in which his prediction is to be understood, it certainly becomes not his people, without his authority, to extend it. Yet this eminent commentator hesitates not to assert, that "the whole passage will have a more literal, and far more august accomplishment, at the day of judgment."

"Ere long," says he, in his reflections on this part of the prediction, "the expected end shall come: then 'the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, the stars shall fall from heaven,' and nature shall seem to expire in convulsions. The tokens of the Saviour's coming will be perceived. He will come with divine power and glory in the clouds of heaven; and 'all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of Him' whom now they despise and disobey. But before He executes his righteous vengeance on his enemies, He will employ his holy 'angels to gather his elect' from every part of the earth, as with the sound of a mighty trumpet, that they may 'be for ever with the Lord.'" But notwithstanding of this correct exhibition of the fulfilment of the prediction, he immediately neutralizes all the effect of our Lord's following exhortations to watchfulness, so forcibly inculcated both by direct precept and parabolic illustration. Scott thus continues after the quotation just made: "It is not for us 'to know the times and seasons' of this grand event; but we may easily perceive the tokens of our own approaching dissolution." Under the guise of a retiring modesty, which fears the charge of presumption, the signs which our Lord gives of his coming, and attention to which he urges for the ex-
press purpose of ascertaining the time, are thus supplanted by the tokens of our own approaching dissolution, which, (to prove our ignorance of the times and seasons, I suppose,) it is assumed as infallibly certain will take place before the coming of the Lord. Mark now the perfect contrast between the inference drawn by the Saviour from this our ignorance of the time of his return, with that deduced from it by his Commentator; "Watch, therefore," is the injunction of Jesus, "for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come." Henry himself, while he states the views of those "who think this is to be understood only of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the Jewish nation," yet acknowledges that "it seems rather to refer to Christ's Second Coming," and asks "What need we put such strained constructions as some do upon these verses, which speak of it so clearly and so agreeably to other Scriptures, especially," he very well adds, "when Christ is here answering an inquiry concerning his coming at the end of the world, [or age,] which Christ was never shy of speaking of to his disciples?"

Its agreeableness to other Scriptures which do confessedly refer to the personal return of Christ is a matter of vast importance, and this correspondence we will find to hold in every particular. I say nothing at present of Daniel's placing the resurrection of "many of them who sleep in the dust of the earth" immediately after the great tribulation, (Dan. xii. 1, 2,) since I know not what acknowledgment you would make concerning that prophecy. Neither do I appeal to the evidence of Zechariah, who exhibits the coming of the Lord with all his saints just when the nations have assembled against Jerusalem to battle and the city has been taken, after its repossession by the Restored tribes of Israel. Zech. xiv. 1—5. I rather confine myself entirely to New Testament evidence, and to passages the application of which you will not question. According to our Lord's own prediction, his coming will be "in the clouds of heaven," or "in a cloud," and this corresponds with the announcement of the angelic attendant on his ascension. While the disciples beheld, "he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight;" when to the astonished witnesses it was declared, that "this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven,
shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go." And, twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, when therefore the apostle could not refer to that event, John still exclaims, "Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him." And as Christ himself said that "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn," when they see him coming, so John also adds, "and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him"—the word "tribes," used by our Lord, being in the original the very word rendered "kindreds," by John.* Acts i. 9—11. Rev. i. 7. Our Lord declares that He will then have a retinue of "angels;" and Paul also testifies of his personal return, that "he shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels." 2 Thess. i. 7.

The Son of man shall send his angels "with a great sound of a trumpet;" and Paul again informs us that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God;" "the last trump," he again says, "for the trumpet shall sound." 1 Thess. iv. 16. 1 Cor. xv. 52. When the Son of man comes with his angels, "they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other;" and the apostle farther testifies that "the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." 1 Thess. iv. 17.

In every particular, therefore, do we find our Lord's statement fully corroborated by those in the epistles, where

* Mr. Faber, in his General and Connected View of the Prophecies, has the following remarks on this passage: "These words contain an evident allusion to a prophecy of Zechariah, relative to the Restoration and Conversion of the Jews. (Zech. xii. 10.) Like that prediction, they certainly give us reason to believe, that there will be a visible manifestation of the Lord at the period when Antichrist is overthrown, and the Jews are re-settled in their own land. This awful manifestation St. John afterwards describes at large. (Rev. xiv. 17—20. xix. 11—21.) Here he briefly tells us that all the kindreds of the earth, meaning, I suppose, the great confederacy of the Latin earth or Roman empire, shall wail because of the Messiah; that every eye shall see him; and that they also which pierced him, the lately unbelieving but now penitent Jews shall look upon him. Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus." Vol. II. p. 337. I do not remember that Mr. Faber has taken any notice of this verse in his Sacred Calendar of Prophecy; but, if he has, I doubt it will be in very different terms.
there cannot be a doubt that the Saviour's personal return is referred to, thus also confirming the interpretation given. The fact of this being the personal return, has, by these very coincidences, compelled the acknowledgment of those who wholly disregard the express statements of the time to which it is fixed. From the questions of the disciples, the circumstances introduced, and the language employed, the Rev. Mr. Mason regards our Lord as here predicting his personal return, although by a too close adherence to the word "world" in our translation, he places this Coming of Christ after the Millennium. "Having informed his disciples of the total desolations which should come on the temple, he forcibly observes, "they were induced to ask him, 'Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy Coming, and of the end of the world?" Mat. xxiv. 3. In the latter question, the disciples connect Christ's Second Coming with the end of the world, [or age,] importing plainly that they had no idea of this advent till the conclusion of time, [or of this dispensation.] As Christ does not correct this opinion, we may be assured it was no mistake. In answer to this part of their request, He says, in verse 30, 'And they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.'" Gentiles' Fulness, p. 198. The single correction of "age" for world, which even you would make, and attention to the time at which it is expressly fixed by the Saviour himself, but which Mr. Mason has wholly overlooked, this single extract would overthrow many a page its venerable author has written upon the subject. It also testifies strongly to the conviction which forced itself upon his mind, that the Coming of Christ with the clouds of heaven can only apply to His personal return.

Indeed, although most Antimillenarians, in the present day, have become too wary to make such an admission, it does not appear to have been so in former times. Thus Dr. Cressener remarks, as quoted by Mr. Cuninghame, "it found an almost unanimous consent among all sorts of interpreters, that this coming of the Son of man (Mat. xxiv. 30,) must be His Second Coming in glory. Grotius himself in this is forced to be of the same mind with the rest." I have already referred to the testimony of the Historian of its having been universally so understood by the prim-
itive church; and, I may now add also by the collective representatives of the Church in different ages. The passage is cited in the Creeds and Confessions of different countries in proof of Christ's Second Coming, when they have attended little to the time at which it is placed by the Saviour himself. The prediction is so cited in the Geneva Confession of Faith, in proof that Christ "will come in the same visible form in the which he ascended, with an unspeakable majesty, power, and company." Collection of Confessions, p. 6. It is also cited in the Scots Confession of Faith, as an encouragement to present duty, by the glories it presents, since "we certainly believe that the same our Lord Jesus shall as visibly return as that he was seen to ascend; and then we firmly believe, that the Time of Refreshing and Restitution of all things shall come, insomuch that those that from the beginning have suffered violence, injury, and wrong, for righteousness' sake, shall inherit that blessed immortality promised from the beginning;" whence they pledge themselves not to be moved "to renounce and forsake that blessed society which we, the members, have with our head and only Mediator Christ Jesus, whom we confess and avow to be the Messias promised." Ibid. p. 22. The compilers of the Westminster Confession, also,—one of the most eminent of whom, (Goodwin,) we know to have been a staunch Millenarian,—although they have said nothing in the Confession itself of the Millennium, by which their precise views concerning it can be ascertained, appear evidently to have regarded it as preceded by the Coming of Christ. They have had no idea of 1000 years as certainly to intervene, for they cite our Lord's prediction to prove the personal return of the Redeemer as sudden and unexpected; and that Christ will have the day of judgment "unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come; and may ever be prepared to say, 'Come Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen.'" Ibid. p. 274, or common edition, p. 174. They again cite this prediction in their Larger Catechism, (Quest. 56,) in proof that Christ shall personally "come again at the last day, in great power, and in the full manifestation of his own glory, and of His Father's, with all his holy angels."

These are clear and unequivocal testimonies as to the
LETTER IX.

THAT THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN WILL BE PERSONAL, PROVED FROM THE VARIOUS PARABLES GIVEN IN ILLUSTRATION OF THE PREDICTION.

Reverend Sir,

The Parables continued in our Lord's Prophetic Discourse supply, in my opinion, additional and important evidence in favour of the interpretation formerly given. They have proved another source of serious difficulty to all Antimillenarian Expositors, who, while they readily admit the proper application of one or more, according to their several fancies or caprice, strenuously resist every attempt to extend to all the same application to the personal return of Christ, as declared to be the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven. While almost all of them agree in maintaining, that the Saviour, from speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem as the coming of the Son of man, proceeds somewhere in his discourse to speak of his real return—there is yet an utter want of harmony in de-
termining at what particular point he ceases to refer to the one and begins to predict the other. One admits that all the parables are meant as illustrations of His Second Coming, while others suppose that only a part are to be so understood; and of those who do so, scarcely two agree as to where the division is to be made, nor afterwards adhere with consistency to the distinction they themselves have drawn.

This confusion may, I think, be easily traced to the same fertile cause of inconsistency already so often alluded to—the refusal to recognise the real nature of the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, when He shall send his angels to gather together his elect from the one end of heaven to the other. It is only by the acknowledgment you are so willing to make concerning that coming, that a consistent view of these parables can ever be obtained, for it is in illustration of that coming they were all spoken, and with regard to nothing else will they all harmonise. They were not delivered on different occasions, and for different purposes. There is no intimation given of their being partly in illustration of a figurative coming, and partly in illustration of one that is personal. They were all uttered at one time, and for one specific purpose—the illustration of the prediction just before delivered concerning the coming of the Son of man. With it they stand intimately connected; and they are inseparably related, each to the other, as the several parts of one great whole. The Coming of Christ in glory is in itself an important event, and in the eyes of the disciples, to whose inquiries our Lord's prediction was delivered as a reply, one of deepest interest; and circumstantial as was the prediction itself, Jesus added seven distinct illustrations in this parabolic form, all to exhibit the state of the church and the world in relation to his return. Several of the parables are recorded fully by Matthew only; but by him some of them are narrated at considerable length—the 25th chapter being entirely occupied by the account of three. In all of them, observation of the progress of events in the fulfilment of the numerous signs Jesus had given is enjoined.

The duty of watching for his coming in the clouds of heaven is first inculcated by the parable of the fig-tree. Mat. xxiv. 32, 33. The state of the world at the time of
his coming, in their insidial disregard of all the signs of its approach, and their contempt for the warnings of his word, is next compared to that of the antediluvians, whose fate is also set forth as the example of what shall again befall a rebellious world. ver. 36—41. This is followed by a comparison of his coming to that of a "thief" in its unexpectedness to those whom its awful realities will surprise. There is next an especial admonition to watchfulness and fidelity, on the part of ministers of the gospel, contained in the parable of the "faithful and wise servant whom his lord hath made ruler over his household" in his absence, and an exhibition of the consequences which will ensue to others awfully unfaithful, who, in the depth of their infidelity regarding the coming of the Lord, will act a cruel and unjust part towards their brethren in the ministry. ver. 42—51. The state of the church generally, as it respects the expectation of this coming of her Lord, is next set before us in the parable of the Bridegroom and the marriage. Mat. xxv. 1—13. The duty of a careful occupation and diligent use of the talents with which Christians are endowed, and the several rewards to be bestowed according to the improvement made by them respectively, is then illustrated by the distribution of various sums by the nobleman to his servants, prior to his taking a long journey, and his reckoning with them at his return. ver. 14—30. And, lastly, the termination of the Gentile dispensation, and the judgment of Jesus upon the quick at his return, bestowing rewards upon his people and inflicting punishment upon his enemies, are displayed by the illustration of the sheep and the goats. ver. 31—46.

All of these, it is to be observed, form one series, and are all meant to serve one important purpose—the more full elucidation of the prediction of the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven. They follow each other in regular and unbroken succession, having ever interwoven into their composition the particular references which they severally possess to the great event to which they relate. The parable of the fig-tree follows in the very next verse, the mission of the angels to gather together the elect, and the object of it is declared to be that when the preceding signs are accomplished, it may be known that the Son of man "is near even at the doors." But as the precise time of his coming
was left unknown, the case of the antediluvians and their unexpected destruction in the midst of their wickedness, is set forth, when its relation to the Saviour's return is once more distinctly intimated by its being twice again expressly declared, "so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." ver. 37, 39. The same relation is farther repeatedly introduced in the illustrations both of the thief and the steward. The inferences in the former case are, "Watch, therefore, for ye know not at what hour your Lord doth come;" and "therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." ver. 42, 44. In the case of the steward, or ruler over the household, a blessing is pronounced on him who continues faithful to his trust, and "whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing;" and it is when the "evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth his Coming," that he begins to exercise cruelty towards his fellow-servants, when "the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of." Again when the Kingdom of heaven, or the Church, is likened unto ten virgins, it is "while the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept;" and the admonition from this is, "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Farther, in the case of the man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods, the lesson taught still is, that "after a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them." And, finally, the separation of the sheep from the goats is "when the Son of shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him."

Nothing can be more obvious than the perfect unity of design which runs through the whole. How various soever the circumstances stated may be, still they all centre and terminate in the one great event of the coming of the Son of man. Looking at them in their natural and regular connection, a person ignorant of the present state of the case might naturally suppose that nothing but the greatest perversity could have induced any individual to attempt a separation of the one from the other, or of any or all from that coming to which they are so indissolubly united. Yet not only has this been done, but is done by every Antimillenarian Expositor. It is essential to the very being of
his interpretation of a figurative coming of the Son of man in the destruction of Jerusalem, that this coming be disjoined from his real proper coming whenever it may occur. And as there is at least one of these illustrations which all Antimillenarians apply to Christ's personal return, and several others of which the majority make a similar application, that disjunction must be effected at whatever expense of consistency and propriety. And, as in all other cases in which the fancies or caprice of men is the only regulating standard, the mode of treatment has been exceedingly various.

Let me now more particularly call your attention to the obvious connection which the one parable has with the other, and the relation in which they all stand to the prediction of the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, with the view of farther demonstrating that that is the personal return of Christ, and no figurative coming, either at the destruction of Jerusalem, or at the overthrow of the Antichristian Apostasy.

The first parable, or simile, that of the fig-tree, relates entirely to the indications of His coming, intimating the duty of habitual attention unto them, and the capability of their being distinctly understood when perceived, as the approach of summer is discerned by the putting forth of leaves, "So, likewise, ye," says the blessed Saviour, "when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near. [He is near, marg.] even at the doors." Mat. xxiv. 33. This has, therefore, an evident reference to what has previously been said, in the verses immediately preceding, of the coming of the Son of man. The correction of "He" for "it," made from the margin of some of our bibles, is adopted by Scott from Whithy, who justifies it as more agreeable to the original to understand "He, the Son of man, mentioned ver. 30, stands at the doors."

To the 34th and 35th verses I have already devoted the whole of my 3d Letter, and make no farther reference to them here, but proceed to the 36th, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." Henry adopts the view given by Grotius, and still entertained by some, of there being a distinction between the time of "all these things," in the 34th verse, and "that day and hour," in the 36th, by
which the former is understood to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the latter to the personal coming of the Lord. This is the view which you had adopted when you delivered your first Lecture on the chapter, but which you avowedly abandoned when you reached the verse for exposition. But notwithstanding of the supposed distinction which Henry thus admits, with an inconsistency rarely equalled except in Scripture exposition, in which a license unknown in other departments of criticism seems claimed, he immediately proceeds to apply the 36th verse equally to both events. It is not, however, necessary that I should farther insist on the inseparable connection between "all these things," and on "that day and hour" of the coming of the Son of man as unknown, the character of which the Saviour immediately compares with that of the Antediluvians.

Besides the celestial and terrestrial signs given by our Lord of that glorious day, He has also furnished us with great moral signs by which its approach may be discerned. "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be," ver. 37—39. Thus it is plainly predicted that immediately before our Lord's return mankind will have sunk into a state of degrading sensuality. Amid all the palpable tokens by which it is preceded, unimpressed by the denunciations of his wrath, they will be as insensible to their danger as were the antediluvians. The same awful features of ungodliness which characterized our race in the days of Noah shall prevail at the coming of the Lord. Regardless of the glory of God, and heedless of their souls' salvation, men shall have given themselves up to licentiousness and violence, to irreligion and to vice, in their most hideous forms. Wickedness as abandoned as ever vexed the soul of holy saint, shall have acquired a fearful ascendance. And, oh! who does not, in the present aspects of society, perceive the rapid degeneracy which may soon, very soon, realize in all its horrors, the frightful demoralization thus depicted by our Lord! Sins of a nature too hideous to be mentioned even
by a licentious press, itself the organ of impurity, are daily perpetrated without exciting on the part of a large proportion of the population, one feeling of disgust, or one expression of holy grief. It may indeed be questioned, which is the most alarming?—the direful prevalence of grossest sin, or the awful apathy with which its commission is regarded. Let those whose powers of moral perception have not become dreadfully diseased say, whether there be not in the aspects of society something approaching to that state described by the Saviour. And let them consider whether it does not more correctly apply to present times, than it did to that of Jerusalem's destruction.

But as in the days of antediluvian guilt, men "knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." What a state of awful ignorance! Ignorant of the value of Christ as a Saviour—ignorant of His design as an Avenger—ignorant of His purpose as a King,—they will be surprised in their self-willed ignorance, and overwhelmed in the midst of their sin. How awful is the criminality of the ignorance of those to whom God has so long proffered instruction! There is no cause for their ignorance but their own neglect or contempt of divine information—there is no palliation of that ignorance in which men obstinately remain—there is no cure for ignorance which despises all knowledge. And as it was in the days before the flood, the overflowing of divine indignation will sweep away ungodly scoffers, "walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that, by the word of God, the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." 2 Pet. iii. 3—6. Well may all the tribes or kindreds of the earth mourn, when they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory: for, like the men before the flood, they reject the counsel of God against themselves. "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." But this heavenly witness will be disregarded, the threatenings of God's word will be gene-
rally despised, as was the warning voice of faithful Noah; and the world will again be exposed to the fate of those who "knew not until the flood came, and took them all away." But perfectly safe shall those be, even in the day of his wrath, who by faith repose their trust on Him who is able to save, although we are taught that the number will be few; for "when the Son of man cometh shall He find faith upon the earth?" However they may be engaged, the angels sent forth to gather the elect will find and transport them to meet their coming Lord. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken and the other left. Watch therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." ver. 40—42. The day of Christ will find ungodly men in a state little thinking of such a visitation. Engaged in the business of life, they shall be found in the field and at the mill. His own people, safe in every situation, will be found at their duties, till the hour when they "shall be taken" to himself.

These are characteristics which, though all applied by you to the destruction of Jerusalem, I can regard only as applicable to the personal return of Christ. Henry, with his usual facility, applies them first "to the success of the gospel," in its reception by some and rejection by others, and also "to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, and the separation which will be made in that day." Thus it is, that by disjoining circumstances which our Lord has inseparably united, an explanation is sought for statements which in their proper and connected form can find no solution but in the personal coming of the Redeemer. Thus, notwithstanding of these applications of our Lord's injunction, "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come," Henry, without scruple, makes his first interpretation to the death of men. The duty of being always prepared for death is unquestionable, and I know no preparation more effectual than an abiding sense of the Coming of the Son of man, and habitual watchfulness for it. But familiarized as Christians have long been to call death the coming of the Lord, to admit that the death of either saint or sinner is the great event which the Saviour compares with that deluge which overwhelmed a guilty world, is a proposition which it seems impossible for a reflecting mind to admit.
The next comparison illustrative of the coming of the Son of man is that of a midnight thief. "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come: But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore, be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." ver. 42—44. Still the object is to furnish information concerning the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, and to inculcate watchfulness concerning it. The comparison here made is the same with that applied by Peter to the personal Coming of Christ, when that apostle, in the passage already quoted, comparing it to the deluge, says, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief." 2 Pet. iii. 10. The same simile is again used by Paul, when writing to the church at Thessalonica. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch, and be sober." 1 Thes. v. 2—6. Not only is the comparison the same, but the same inference of watchfulness drawn by the Saviour, is here repeated by the apostle. It is the very argument deduced from their not being in darkness, "Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch, and be sober." So Christ, concerning His coming in the clouds of heaven, and its being as a thief, says, "Therefore, be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

The next parable in our Lord's discourse is one which more particularly applies to those having office in his church, still in reference to His Return. Connecting it with those he had already uttered, as each is related to that by which it is preceded, in this parable He says, "Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh,
shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, that he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delaeth His coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for Him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” ver. 43—51. In the preceding verses, our Lord tenders injunctions of watchfulness to all his followers; but, in the present case, the admonition is more immediately addressed to those in office. The servant is one whom the Lord has “made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season.” This therefore, must represent the ministers of the gospel, whose office and duty it is to furnish their flocks with provision from the Master’s stores. Theirs it is not only to wield the terrors of the law in arousing the careless and secure, or to exhibit the cross of Christ as the appointed and only way of salvation, but they are required to exhort all to watchfulness for the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds, and to supply them from the heavenly treasure with information concerning the purposes of God. It is their duty not merely to teach them the doctrines of salvation, but to unlock for their edification all the treasures of divine inspiration. They are, or ought to be, “ministers and stewards of the mysteries of God.” 1 Cor. iv. 1. Neglect is a breach of trust, in whatever department it may be. But here, the duty spoken of is especially connected with the glorious coming of Christ. Their watchfulness with regard to it, is that which is inculcated by the parable. And if they are thus placed under obligation to their flocks, “to give them meat in due season,” what will be the reflections of those by whom the duty is neglected, should the Son of man be revealed without their having at all testified of his approach? If ever it was a duty to exhort to watchfulness, and the example of holy apostles even 1800 years ago show that it was, surely the obligation must be mightily increased, when almost the last sign has been fulfilled, and the glorious event is about to be realized. Let it not be forgotten that a blessing is pronounced on him “whom his Lord when He cometh shall
find so doing." To my utter astonishment, you applied this parable, like the preceding, to the destruction of Jerusalem; but as you did nothing in the way of supporting that application, I have assumed, in these remarks, that the preceding arguments have established the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven to be his personal return, and on this part of the parable will only farther add, that how the blessing here pronounced upon the faithful steward was in any way fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem, is what I cannot perceive. Scott’s exposition is again different from yours. “Our Lord,” he says, “at length more clearly speaks of his coming to take men away by death, and of his Second Advent to judge the world;”—for wonderful as it may seem, he thus applies the parable to both. It will not, however, be farther necessary to disprove such an inconsistent and contradictory proposition, or again to say that the parable is merely another illustration of the one great and grand event concerning which the whole of the latter part of this chapter and the entire of the following one is occupied.

But our Lord presents the contrast to the faithful steward, and exhibits the practical effect of men’s entertaining the idea that the coming of the Lord is a distant event. “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants.” This still represents the professing Christian, it is even the Christian minister that is supposed; and fearful it is to think that such should be found among the persecutors of Christ’s people,—of Christian ministers, their fellow-servants.” But such, you perceive, is represented as the result of their views concerning the coming of Christ. Not that they question, not that they doubt, that He will come at some time. He is a “servant” of Christ that is mentioned, though an “evil servant;” and he acknowledges Christ as his “Lord.” But he says, “ my Lord delayeth his coming.” This is the cause of his smiting his fellow-servants. From the parable I am thus distinctly taught that before the coming of Christ, Christians, and Christian ministers, will have the opposition, the absolute persecution of false brethren; and that this will be the case at the very time of Christ’s return in glory, for when he “shall begin” to do so, “the Lord of that servant shall
come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of." It is an awful thought, but I confess the impression is strong upon my mind, however reluctantly entertained, that in the proceedings of some late church courts, there has been evidence of too unequivocal a nature to admit of much doubt, that we already approach to the period more particularly referred to in the parable. Without seeking to vindicate all the doctrines condemned, I do think it ominous that while ministers openly preaching Arminian and Socinian doctrines are left unquestioned—while ministers neglectful of the most important duties of their office are tolerated in indolence and indifference—while ministers whose lives are flagrantly immoral remain unimpeached—the Church of Scotland, upon a charge of heresy, has lately cast from her communion men of holiest lives and ardent zeal for the glory of the Redeemer; and in one case, I am convinced a most unrighteous decision has been pronounced against a Scriptural doctrine, miserably misunderstood, and into the real nature of which little inquiry was made by many who hesitated not to pass judgment of condemnation upon their more faithful fellow-servant.

But under the impression that their Lord "delayeth his coming," the parable farther represents some of these rulers in his household, as not only beginning to smite their fellow-servants, but as also beginning "to eat and drink with the drunken." The awful sin of intemperance, though it has swept through the length and breadth of the land like a desolating pestilence, destroying its thousands and its tens of

* In these days of religious calumny I am not unaware of the obloquy to which I may probably be subjected, by thus voluntarily associating my belief with that of one against whom public clamour is already loudly raised, and who has been authoritatively branded as a heretic. It is, however, my prayer to the God of truth, that I may be kept from that fear of man which bringeth a snare, and although I would have preferred silence where opportunity is wanting of unfolding fully my views, I am not very solicitous to escape all risk of unjust imputations, if the interests of injured truth demand such acknowledgment. On this subject, much has been written which I do not approve; but every sentence of Mr. M'Lean's remarkably distinct answers to the very absurd hypothetical questions of the Irvine Presbytery, (published entire in an explanatory Letter to Dr. Rodman, by Warrand Carlile, Esq. Paisley,) I freely adopt as a confession of my faith concerning the perfect sinlessness of the fallen humanity of our blessed Lord.
thousands, does not appear to me to have yet assumed the aspect in which it is represented in the parable. Alarmingly general as drunkenness is, I regard the peculiar feature here represented as one which intimates a more advanced era. When, with such a degree of frequency as can mark it as a sign, ministers of the gospel shall begin to eat and to drink with the drunken, I shall regard it as additional and clearer evidence, that the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. For "if that evil servant shall say in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Such is the awful fate which awaiteth the unfaithful, unbelieving, and persecuting minister of the gospel, in the day "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe." Dreadful it is to think that such should be the condemnation of any who minister in sacred things. But this is represented as actually the sin and the fate of some at the coming of the Lord. And although it cannot be regarded as a present portrait of ministerial character, soon the e may be witnessed, in the progress of immorality, such indifference to companionship among those who ought to be ensamples to their flocks, when they shall associate with the worthless, and learn of them their way.

Let those who watch the moral signs of Christ's return observe the connection in which it is here and elsewhere placed in relation to a dissolute state of society. In the 38th verse, our Lord compares the time of His coming to "the days that were before the flood." Regardless of their impending fate, "they were eating and drinking;" and in the 49th verse, He farther intimates, not only the prevalence of drunkenness, but the awful implication in its guilt of those who ought most loudly to testify against it. As the coming
of Christ is ever urged by himself and his apostles as a motive to holiness, so would I wish particularly to call attention to the sins which are here represented as then to be prevailing, and implore of men to consider the dangers they incur. "The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." 1 Pet. iv. 7. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night ... Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch, and be sober." 1 Thess. v. 2, 6. These cautions against the degrading vice of intemperance, although at no period unseasonable or uncalled for, still seem from the connection in which they are placed to imply increased temptations and extreme indulgence just before the coming of the Lord. While, therefore, such exertions are made for the Prevention and Cure of Intemperance by the combined efforts of associated men, let me suggest to Christian advocates for Temperance, a more frequent use of the Scriptural weapon provided by Christ and his apostles, against this growing and rampant sin. The coming of the Lord, in all its array of terror to the drunkard, is the argument to be urged in immediate bearing against its seductive influence. Let me then repeat it in admonition for the continued temperance of those who, in enjoined "moderation," are waiting for their Lord—let me urge it, in the language of solemn warning, on those who may be yielding to the seductive power of this abounding immorality—let me thunder it in the ears of others going headlessly down the gulph of ruin, victims of this debasing and fatal vice—"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Luke xxi. 34—36. Unwilling to weaken the impression of a warning so solemn and appropriate, I leave it without farther comment, to the consciences of all.

In the next parable, the church is exhibited in a different point of view. This is one of an historical nature, in so far as the history bears upon the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven. In the preceding illustra-
tions of that glorious event, I have shown that there is a constant reference to it, and that the one great purpose for which they were spoken, is the exhibition of circumstances relating unto it. In the parable last considered, the consequence of the disbelief of Christ's speedy coming is exhibited, and in the present one the long and general neglect of this truth in the church is foretold. This was to continue till near the very time of Christ's return. "Then," says the Saviour, "shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels, with their lamps. While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He answered and said, Verily I say unto you I know you not. Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh." Mat. xxv. 1—13. Still the same reiterated warning to watchfulness for the Coming of the Son of man,—a warning repeated with such frequency and earnestness as to leave the absolute neglect with which it is treated awfully criminal. It is the same important coming, and the connection of the parable with the preceding prediction is distinctly expressed. It is not to be applied to a multitude of times nor to more than one. It stands in inseparable connection with the preceding prediction, for it is "then" the kingdom of heaven shall be likened unto ten virgins.

This with you was a point of the greatest difficulty. You would separate what Christ has joined, but where that disjunction could be most easily effected you were evidently at a loss to determine. The whole of the parables in the
24th chapter you applied absolutely to the destruction of Jerusalem; and how this, therefore, could be otherwise applied was a difficulty of which you could in no way get rid, without doing the utmost violence to the language. Rather, however than submit that the Coming of the Son of man is his personal coming, you committed that violence, although in a manner which sufficiently exposed itself. At one time you said you understood our Lord to refer here to the Christian church, after the coming of the Lord at the destruction of Jerusalem, spoken of in the preceding chapter, to which you conceived Him to refer by the word "then." Again, however, you said that in it the Saviour looks forward to the very end, to the consummation of the Kingdom, when you affirmed He also looks forward in the same manner in the two parables which precede it, notwithstanding of the view you had previously given. Again, you regarded it as a didactic address; then as a prophetic parable. Afterwards you viewed it as referring to the union of believers with Christ, as if no particular time had been intimated by the "then." Farther, you affirmed with confidence that it was the gospel dispensation in its finishing state; and lastly applied it to individuals at death. But amid all this variety of comings of the Bridegroom, presented at different times as the explanation of our Lord's one parable, there was a special care to exclude all view of the Bridegroom coming immediately after the great tribulation at the close of the times of the Gentiles. What is, however, the most remarkable is, that you should not have felt bound to confine it to the destruction of Jerusalem, as you did the coming of the Son of man, of the circumstances of which it is only an additional illustration. If our Saviour has restricted it by the word "then" to that period, no one is at liberty to remove it thence. And if that person find that his interpretation will not admit of the application of the Saviour's own illustration, he may receive this as evidence that his interpretation is wrong. Its utter inapplicability I shall therefore attempt to show, while I endeavour to demonstrate its confirmation of the view already exhibited.

The character of a Bridegroom, and the circumstances of a Marriage, it will be admitted, are of joyful and happy significance. And if so, the appropriateness with which they are used in reference to the destruction of Jerusalem is not
very obvious. It cannot be supposed that our Lord spake
of an event of the most melancholy interest to his disciples
under such a joyous figure. But to the personal return of
Christ, both are happily applicable. It is an event for which
the whole creation groans, longing to be delivered from the
corruption under which it has been placed. But not only
is the coming of the Bridegroom an event which by its very
nature is inapplicable to the destruction of Jerusalem, but
which may, from other passages, be proved to refer to the
personal return of Christ. You yourself admitted on one
occasion that the absence of the Bridegroom meant his per-
sonal absence, quoting in proof, Mat. ix. 15. Let us there-
fore examine this text. "Then came to Him the disciples
of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees of John fast
off, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them,
Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the
Bridegroom is with them? but the days will come when
the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall
they fast." From this it is indeed perfectly evident, that
Christ speaks of his personal presence and absence, as that
of the Bridegroom. In his human nature he was then
"with" the children of the bride-chamber, and not either in
his providence, or by his Spirit merely. It was in that na-
ture also he was "taken from them," and therefore, his com-
ing again as the Bridegroom must be his personal return.

But it is also of the highest importance to observe that dur-
ing the whole period of the Bridegroom's absence, the chil-
dren of the bride-chamber, or his disciples, are to fast, for
they cannot mourn"as long as the Bridegroom is with them." His return must therefore be before the Millennium, and
just at its commencement, for during that happy time they
shall rejoice and not mourn. As the church will therefore
have then ceased from her mourning the Bridegroom must
have then returned, for in his absence, or while taken from
them, they cannot rejoice. There is therefore an obvious
and happy application of the Bridegroom's coming, to that
of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, at the close of
the times of the Gentiles, at the commencement of the Mil-
lenium; while it is altogether inapplicable to the destruc-
tion of Jerusalem. The return of the Bridegroom is distinct-
ly exhibited in the book of the Revelation, and there also
it is placed at the commencement of the Millennium. The
language of exultation there is, "Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Rev. xix. 7, 9. Now the celebration of a marriage necessarily supposes the presence of the Bridegroom. And this is immediately before His Millennial reign with his arisen saints is declared. Rev. xx. 4.

In the parable the Lord represents the condition of the church at the time of his coming in the clouds of heaven, and the views previously entertained concerning it "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins." Of this number, five were wise, and five were foolish; yet the Bridegroom having "tarried" beyond their expectations, "they all slumbered and slept." In this state they continued till, "at midnight, there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him." What a faithful History of the church's feelings and views on the subject of Christ's return! With the minuteness of a Historian does the Saviour state the fact, and with more than Historian's skill assigns the reason. Notwithstanding of all his warnings for watchfulness, because they knew not at what hour their Lord would come, the Saviour distinctly foretold that they would fall asleep upon the subject, and this was when, in the disappointment of their minds they thought "the Bridegroom tarried." This it is which explains the present heedlessness of the church to the time of His coming, even of many of the wise virgins, Christ's dear saints—it furnishes those who are looking for "that blessed hope" with an explanation which serves to console under all the opposition of brethren on a subject which radiates so delightfully the glory of God—it accounts equally for the opposition, often bitter, and sometimes profane, of others, seen among the "virgins" indeed, but giving little evidence of their being of the number of the "wise." In an early stage of my own investigations, ere yet the Scriptural Evidence had wrought its work of complete conviction, when my mind was occasionally in danger of being overpowered by the angry opposition of those I was bound to love, the renewed consideration of this parable solaced my soul, restoring and increasing that settled trust on God's own word which it then seemed as if the church had conspired to suppress. And it is gratifying to reflect, and it may be useful to state, that not
a few of those friends whose opposition I had early to encounter, but who now receive and bear testimony to the truth, regard this parable as affording the only proper explanation they can give for their former rejection of a doctrine attested by evidence so full, so varied, and so wonderfully precise.

This parable will not, however, apply to the conduct of the church, the real and hypocritical friends of Immanuel, at the destruction of Jerusalem. Had all the professors of the name of Jesus, the wise as well as foolish virgins of the kingdom of heaven, ceased to expect the destruction of Jerusalem? There was no relaxation on the part of Jewish Christians in expecting the overthrow of the city which they loved, and to which they clung with the ardour of devoted patriotism—a patriotism modified alone by their Master's denunciations of its desolation until His return. From the time the Saviour uttered his prediction of its doom, till the Romans laid Jerusalem in heaps, His afflicted disciples watched for its fate with certain assurance. It was not with respect to that event certainly that the wise virgins as well as the foolish had fallen asleep; and we have sometimes wondered what could be the nature of that wisdom which is attributed to all the followers of Jesus, when the coming of the Bridegroom in the parable is explained to be their own death, which they had all ceased to expect.

This is clearly the personal return of the Son of man, who now comes in the character of Bridegroom; not as when formerly he appeared in our world, but in a manner and with an attendance suited to his rank—with power and great glory, having angels obedient to his will, and ready in his service towards those who form his bride. Reluctant as Christians may still be to receive this truth, the parable itself had predicted the fact; but not less explicitly does it declare the awakening of all before our Lord arrive. Small as the church may then be, by the increased infidelity of the times, we are told of those then professing his name, not only the wise but the foolish, "all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps." Destitute as they are of the grace of God, deceiving or being deceived, some will be found professedly looking for his appearing who shall yet be excluded from his presence, and be denied participation in the honours and enjoyments of the marriage supper. Let me
then call on all to examine themselves, and ascertain for certain that they have really obtained that oil for which there will not be opportunity to seek when Jesus shall be revealed from heaven.

The next parable inculcates upon the friends of the Redeemer the right occupation of the various talents with which they are severally intrusted. It informs us of the rewards to be bestowed upon the faithful at His Coming, and the punishment to be inflicted on the unfaithful. "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one He gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents, went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one, went and digged in the earth, and hid his Lord's money. After a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents; behold, I have gained besides them five talents more. His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. He also that had received two talents, came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents; behold I have gained two other talents besides them. His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sowed, and gathering where thou hast not strawed; and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth; lo there thou hast that is thine. His Lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with
usury. Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’’ ver. 14—30.

In this, as in all the preceding parables, the great event still is the coming of the Lord as the period when his servants shall render an account of the manner in which they have improved their talents. As the parable of the Bridegroom is connected with those of the preceding chapter concerning the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven by the particle “then,” so the present is again connected with that of the Bridegroom by the particle “for,” with which it commences. I fully agree with you in preferring the supplement He, for the more lengthened, but certainly not more perspicuous one, “the kingdom of heaven is,” which has been introduced in our translation. By this substitution, the parable is thus connected with the preceding context, “Watch, therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. For He is as a man travelling into a far country.” But you afterwards spake of its reference to Christ’s coming ultimately—of His coming to individuals, which you were again pleased to say He does to every one—and of His dispensations, as to the Jews. And in a subsequent discourse you said, whether we are to understand the reckoning here referred to, of the conscience—of God’s providence—of the soul at death—or the final judgment—it is equally applicable. In the following discourse, you said, that in the close of this parable we see the reward bestowed upon two, and the awful punishment of the third at the day of death, and at the last great day, when the Lord Jesus shall judge the world. The doom of the last, you continued, refers to the awful sufferings of the world to come, although it may also refer to the visible judgments sometimes inflicted on the wicked before they leave this state; and you concluded by applying it to the end of the world. With such a diversity of interpretations, what becomes of the unity of the Saviour’s Discourse, on which you formerly insisted so strenuously as to deny all succession in the first part of the prediction? If the com-
ing of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven really was the mere infliction of God's wrath upon the Jews through the agency of second causes, then must this parable also have had its application at the same time, being merely an illustration of circumstances attending that event. These several parables, I have already shown, are united not only to each other, but through that connection they are all related to the prediction itself, through the first parable which is inseparably connected with the coming of the Son of man. This relationship is still maintained in the parable under consideration, commencing as it does with another reason or argument for watchfulness.

“For He is as a man travelling into a far country.” It is thus evidently a discourse relating to what has already been spoken. It is just another inference from it, and one which furnishes new evidence against your idea of a figurative coming of Christ. Instead of being before the then living generation had died, “He is as a man travelling into a far country,” consequently he cannot very speedily be back; and thus his coming is not till “after a long time.” Besides, the Jews as a nation rejected the Saviour, and it does not therefore appear to be to them, or any such, that our Lord represents himself as committing the talents, but to those who are “his own servants” avowedly. The country into which the Traveller has gone, is heaven—his departure was his ascension in the clouds—the “long time” of his absence, is that of his session at the Father's right hand—the servants are those who profess themselves his disciples—the talents with which they are entrusted, are the various means and opportunities with which they are favoured, and which they are required to improve to his glory—and when, “after a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them,” his personal return must as really be meant as his personal departure and continued abode in heaven, realized the taking of his journey and continued absence—the reward of royal authority over cities bestowed upon his faithful servants, intimates the enjoyment of power and glory proportioned to their zeal and fidelity, when they shall live and reign with Christ 1000 years; and the punishment of the slothful servant, is that condemnation which shall be assigned to the merely
nominal Christian, when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him.

And oh, let it be observed as matter of fear to the professing church, that here the ground of condemnation is slothfulness. Let it be observed with due attention, with serious consideration, with deep alarm. Who can look abroad upon the great Christian community without seeing in fearful prevalence this ground of condemnation. Spiritual sloth is indeed a common disease, and its fatally desolating effects on the part of many cannot be concealed. It pervades all their thoughts, it is uttered in their words, it is visible in their conduct. They profess to believe in the existence of God, yet seem not to think of His omniscience—they read His word, but meditate not on its contents—they hear His gospel, and it is to them as an idle tale, or at best as a very lovely song, fitted only to please—they witness His judgments, while yet they are taught not righteousness—they can even hear unmoved, or with little apprehension, the thundered annunciation, that at length "the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckon-eth with them." Infatuation unparalleled! Professing to believe the word of God, they wholly neglect for themselves its proclamations of mercy and denunciations of woe, till aroused by the command, never to be recalled, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Oh, let me seek to arouse from a stupor which, if not soon shaken off, must prove the everlasting destruction of those who indulge in its guilt. Ere their coming Lord arrives, let them seek by His blood and assistance of His Spirit to be found among those on whom is pronounced the benediction, "Well done good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

The last of the seven parabolic illustrations delivered by our Lord in connection with the prediction of His coming in the clouds of heaven, now demands our consideration. It is introduced in language so similar, as at once to intimate the identity of the coming spoken of, with that in the prediction itself: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one
from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on his right hand; but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, When saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal.” ver. 31—46.

Whatever diversity of opinion there may be among Antimillenarian Expositors with regard to the meaning of our Lord’s direct prediction, or the application of all the other parabolic illustrations, there is on this a perfect harmony—with respect to the time, at least, to which it refers. All ideas of a figurative coming are now rejected; all the former variety of comings is dispensed with, and this stands forth, in the estimation of all, as a full declaration of his real personal return, and is by many accounted an exact representation of the attendant circumstances. Now it is not a little surprising, that when our Lord, in his prediction, should have so expressly stated the time of his com-
ing, there should be such difficulty in fixing that time, while here, when, if our Lord does not speak of the very same time, he refers to none at all, so little difficulty should be experienced in relation to it.

I have already shown the connection of this and all the parables with the prediction contained in the preceding chapter, but you spake of this being a distinct paragraph, and of its not being to be regarded as a parable. Although the appellation "sheep and goats" is figurative, you remarked, this is immediately departed from; and since it is not called a parable by the Spirit of God, you would not treat it as such. With respect to the use of the word parable, did any one better descriptive of its nature occur to me, I should be sorry to give you any unnecessary uneasiness by its use, although you yourself admit that it has some of the characteristics. But to refuse to recognize it as a parable, because the Spirit has not expressly called it such, is to refuse to do so on grounds which are utterly untenable. Do you refuse to recognize the illustration of the "virgins," or that of the Traveller, or that of the "talents," as parabolic, although the word is not used in either of them? Or is it more really "a distinct paragraph" than any one of these? Was it not equally spoken in answer to the questions of the disciples? Does it not equally tell of the coming of Christ? We have no intimation of there having been even the slightest interruption during the delivery of the whole discourse of which it forms a part. We have no information of His Coming being here something different from what it is in his direct prediction, or in any of the preceding parabolic illustrations.

The Saviour again takes to himself the same designation which he had done in his prediction, "the Son of man," which you said is characteristic of his personality, uniting the human and divine natures. In contrast to his former humiliation, you said, he would here seem to speak of his Second Coming, "when he shall come in his glory." Now is it not very remarkable that in his direct prediction you could not equally recognize his Second Coming, as that which is "with power and great glory." Is not the reference to these words very distinct, when the Saviour now says, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory?" He had already foretold distinctly the time of his coming,
and without unnecessary repetition of the time, he now tells farther what shall be done "when" he shall come. Here, again, his attendants are "all the holy angels;" now these he had previously declared shall be with him when he comes in the clouds of heaven, for then "He shall send his angels, and they shall gather together his elect." Once more, He here appears in the character of a "King," and "then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory," and at his coming in the clouds of heaven, he had already predicted, "the Kingdom of God is nigh at hand." He shall then judge "all the nations," or "all the Gentiles," and he had previously declared not only the gathering of the elect, but also that "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn," when they see him coming. And the fate of both righteous and wicked, as here declared, is in exact accordance with the statements of preceding parables. Every circumstance concurs to prove, that our Lord is still referring to the same great event of his coming, and that this is another illustration of the circumstances which in preceding parables have already been in various important respects so minutely exhibited.

But if this were really an exact representation of the final judgment, and the preceding prediction of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven merely the declaration of a figurative coming, it is not a little remarkable, that while both Mark and Luke give pretty full accounts of the prediction itself—and the argument against you is rather strengthened than weakened by interpreting the prediction as applicable only to the destruction of Jerusalem—that they should wholly have abstained from here saying a single word of this important prediction of the final judgment, as you suppose, spoken on the same mount of Olives, to the same persons, and on the same occasion. If brevity were the reason of the omission, we should rather expect the more important event to have been the absorbing one, in their narratives. Yet these Sacred Historians have both entirely omitted in its place, that part of our Lord's Discourse which you regard as a very important and distinct prediction of the personal coming of Christ, while you consider they have both given a full account of a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, under the name of the coming of the Son of man. Say whether such an explanation
do not seem unnatural? Viewed, however, as an illustration of our Lord's prediction concerning his coming, the entire omission of the parable by these two evangelists, gives perfect harmony to the view we are naturally led to take of the record they have left. For while it must have appeared remarkable that when recording somewhat fully their Lord's Discourse concerning minor matters, they should both wholly overlook his prediction of an event of such stupendous magnitude, delivered at the same time, it appears perfectly natural when considered in the way in which it is now exhibited. Viewing this and the preceding parables recorded by Matthew as mere illustrations of the prediction so minutely recorded in the preceding chapter, and also by the other two evangelists, when we consider the greater brevity of their accounts of the prediction, it is precisely what was to be anticipated, that although they give fully the prediction itself, they should wholly omit this and other lengthened illustrations.

The partialities and prejudices of Expositors, in the very different reception which they give to certain portions of the word of God, as they may accord with, or seem in opposition to their peculiar views, is, however, remarkably illustrated in the instance before us. Even if every thing here narrated had had the clearest marks of an unfigured prediction, it could not be treated in a manner more direct than it is. Its statements are believed and cordially received, and greatly insisted on, while, as has been pretty fully exhibited in former Letters, all the statements in the preceding chapter, concerning the coming of the Son of man, are lowered down, and shadowed off with the utmost care. Now what is the reason of such diversity of treatment in these two cases, supposing that the verses now before us, instead of being a parabolic illustration of the previous prediction, were really in themselves a separate and distinct prediction? The reason, I suspect, is simply this, that in the former case, the Coming of the Son of man is fixed to a time which accords not with the views entertained upon the subject; while in the latter, it is supposed, no time is specified, and that consequently it may more easily be placed where it is wished.

The late Bishop of Landaff has well said, "When men are desirous of forming systems, they are apt to collect to-
gather a number of texts, which, being taken as abstract propositions, seem to establish the point; but which, when interpreted by the context, appear to have no relation to it. There is no greater source of error than this practice; it has prevailed in the Christian church from the earliest ages, and it still prevails. We owe to it the corruptions of Popery, and that infinity of heresies which have so much debased the simplicity of gospel truth, and driven so many men of sense from embracing Christianity." Bishop Watson's two Sermons and Charge, p. 70. With every circumstance in the occasion which led to the prediction of the Saviour's coming in the former chapter;—in the views of those to whom it was addressed;—of the statements it contains, and the language in which they are conveyed;—all intimating our Lord to be foretelling his personal return at the close of the times of the Gentiles, and the restoration of Israel, the prediction itself has been denied to mean more than the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, or the still future destruction of the divided Roman empire by some other power. And while this has been most confidently affirmed, simply on the ground of some difficulties, created without cause and adhered to in the face of disproving evidence, the illustration of that prediction has not only been affirmed to refer to his personal return, but has been magnified into undue importance, as if it were the only prediction our Lord had left concerning his coming.

Not only so, indeed, but having with so much ease disposed of all the obvious evidence, direct and collateral, adduced in proof of the real meaning of the prediction of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, it is then made matter of complaint that demonstration of our views has not been given by the advocates of the premillennial return of the Redeemer. Such a reception of evidence, and such inattention to all the circumstances calculated to throw light on the meaning of the prediction, will sufficiently account for the fact, however amazing, of Mr. Faber's want of success in our desperate cause, when prompted by a superabundance of generosity himself to become the advocate of views he found so miserably defended. This manner of disposing of evidence will easily explain how it is that with all his professional skill and Millenarian zeal,—with all the candour which such impartiality
implies, and with all the industry to which his interest in the Millenarian cause could incite—Mr. Faber has to enter his complaint, that "the sole apparent evidence which, after long thought on the subject, I have been able to discover," is the second chapter of the second epistle to the Thessalonians. Sac. Cal. vol. III. p. 434. The above remarks will, perhaps, readily suggest to the reader the means by which that author, when he happened to stumble on any passage which opposed his views, could easily extricate himself from all supposed difficulties, and will exhibit how easily, and how much to his own satisfaction, he could also dispose of our "sole apparent evidence."

But with all this demand for demonstration from us, and with all this inability to perceive its force when presented,—that with so strong a desire to do justice to our cause, it might naturally be expected that Mr. Faber will be jealous of whatever might unduly prejudice it, nor readily assume any position of hostility without that demonstration which he requires at our hand. Are we then allowed these advantages? Is all his opposition characterized by this cautious search for truth? And does his evidence always approach to demonstration? No; the most important points are assumed, without the shadow of proof; and positions which never could be proved, are laid down as incontrovertibly true. When the question is concerning the premillennial coming of Christ, he seems to consider it sufficient to secure the assent of rational and Christian men simply to affirm, that in Mat. xxiv. the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven is only a figurative coming; and that in Mat. xxv. we have, in contradistinction, "our Lord's own account of His literal Second Advent," and that this coming is after the Millennium. Sac. Cal. vol. I. p. 438.

Let me now call your attention more particularly to the verses cited: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him." Although you twice admitted that the coming here spoken of must just be that alluded to repeatedly in the preceding part of the chapter, you yet more generally proceeded as if it were not inseparably connected with a direct prediction, having a specified time, but were merely an isolated passage, to which no chronology was attached. On the last of the occasions
already mentioned, you said the time here referred to by the "when," might be ascertained either from the context or from other passages. If to either the decision of the question be submitted, I have little reason to fear the issue. To both points your attention has already been repeatedly called. I have especially fully shown that this "when" He shall come in his glory, must refer to his personal return, immediately after the great tribulation at the close of the times of the Gentiles. In "the context," he had already declared this as the time of His coming "in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." To the various parabolic illustrations of that event, he is about to add another, and therefore with perfect distinctness does He say, "when the Son of man shall come in his glory," he shall sit upon his throne. It was not necessary, on each occasion of his stating some new particular concerning his coming, that he should repeat the time, which he had already given with so much minuteness in the preceding chapter. All that was required was to mark the fact that he really did refer to that coming in "great glory," and this he does fully by simply stating it to be "when the Son of man shall come in his glory." But should the identity of this coming not be discerned by its character of "glory," nor even by its being the coming of "the Son of man," the prophecy and the illustration of it again correspond in another of its characteristics, "and all the holy angels with him." The perfect correspondence which there is between them in this respect also, is so marked that it is really astonishing how you could fail to recognize the identity of that coming which it is the object of both to exhibit. But one of the grounds of diversity alleged by you is still more remarkable. Here, you observed, our Lord predicts his being attended at his coming with "all the holy angels;" while, you stated, that of the predicted angelic attendants on his coming, in the preceding chapter, the adjective "holy" was not introduced. From this you inferred that in the one case the term "angel" was to be received in its usual acceptance, while in the other you considered it more naturally to be referred to the messengers of the gospel. I cannot help regarding this as a very wonderful distinction, and one which, if applied in other cases relating to angels—angels whose holiness you yourself would not question—
would humble many of these pure spirits from the elevated rank in which God has placed them. But can it not be inferred that in the preceding chapter the *angels* spoken of as being sent forth by the Son of man at his coming to "gather together *His* elect," are "holy," although they are not expressly so called? Is there no such information supplied either in the character of Him by whom they are sent, or in the nature of the mission on which they are employed? Are we not in reality taught expressly by our Lord the *holiness* of these angelic beings? Surely it may in this case be regarded as sufficient evidence of their being "holy angels," that Christ himself acknowledges them to be "*His* angels."

To proceed, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations;"—or rather, as it is in the original, "*all the nations.*" From this it has been inferred, that Christ's coming will not be till the consummation of all things, because He is represented as gathering "*all nations*" before Him—and consequently, it is supposed, the whole human race. It is generally assumed that "*all nations,*" here, includes not only the whole of mankind alive at the time, but also the whole of the human family who have ever lived, or ever will. This is, however, an unwarrantable assumption. *Ta óm,* translated "*nations,*" is never in any way, applied to the dead, so far as we can discover. Even in English, the word *nations* is only applied to men in their earthly relations—such distinctions being lost in the future state. But the term here used in the Original, although it signifies "*the nations*" in a general sense, has also a more limited signification, being very frequently restricted to *the Gentiles* only, as distinguished from the Jews. Thus, in these very predictions it is so used when the Saviour says, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of *the Gentiles,* until the times of *the Gentiles* be fulfilled." Luke xxi. 24. Again, when He sent forth the apostles, he said unto them, "Go not into the way of *the Gentiles*... but go rather to the lost sheep of the *House of Israel.*" Mat. x. 5, 6. It is used in the same sense in the blessing of the aged Simeon, "A light to lighten *the Gentiles,* and the glory of thy people Israel." Luke ii. 32. It
is often so used by Paul: "Wherefore remember," says he to the Ephesians, "that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision." Ephes. ii. 11. Again, speaking of the mystery of the gospel, he says, "it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets, by the Spirit, that the Gentiles* should be fellow-heirs." Ephes. iii. 6. In the parable, it might therefore be rendered, "and before Him shall be gathered all the Gentiles."

In the prophecies also, the expression "all nations," is sometimes used where the whole human family alive are evidently not included. It is the very expression used by the prophet Zechariah, in reference to the destruction of Antichristian nations at the coming of the Lord before the Millennium; to which prophecy our Lord probably alluded: "Behold the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle." Zech. xiv. 1—3. This is repeated, Joel iii. 1, 2: "For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people, and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land." And again, the Lord threatens the utter destruction of "all nations," when, it will be admitted, it cannot be understood absolutely of the whole human family. "Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people; let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies; he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the

* Of Eighty-seven times in which the "Gentiles" are mentioned in our translation of the New Testament, in above Eighty the original Greek has this very word.
slaughter.” Is. xxxiv. 1, 2. To this dreadful event our Lord appears to refer, in the parable, when he shall destroy the nations which have so long been favoured with the blessings of his gospel without availing themselves of its privileges; and when his own people shall be made participants of the joy and honour of his millennial kingdom.

In stating the different significations of the word “nations,” in the original, you admitted that it is indeed used for “Gentiles” as distinguished from the Jews, but observed, what I freely admit, that it is also used in a more extensive sense, as when, in Rev. vii. 9, John “beheld and lo a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.” And again, God “hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” Acts xvii. 26. Here, you remarked, all are included, both Jews and Gentiles. This is indeed true, and that the word rendered “nations” is used in this extensive sense is unquestionable, but you will observe that in neither of the passages just cited is the article “the” introduced in the original, which, in the parable, I think limits it to “the Gentiles.” Our Lord in a preceding part of his Discourse had predicted that “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” These Gentiles appear to be those of Christendom, whose times are fulfilled just before the Millennium, and are, I conceive, “the nations” here referred to. In Rom. xi. 25, τὰν ἐθνῶν must mean the Gentile nations of Christendom; for the nation of Israel is not to be converted, “until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.” Now this cannot mean all the nations of the world, for it is not till after the conversion of Israel that many of these nations are to be brought into subjection to Christ—the children of Israel being employed in their conversion. Instead therefore of the conversion of all nations preceding the in-gathering of the Jews, their conversion must precede that of many of the Gentiles, and therefore, the reference must be to those Gentile nations which have been favoured with the gospel of the grace of God, and who have so awfully undervalued the privilege; whose fulness of the saved shall have come in before the coming of the Lord. On these grounds do I believe, that the Saviour instead of giving an exact representation of the final judgment, after the Millennium, here
presents us with another parabolic illustration of his coming, immediately after the great tribulation, which will be farther evident from a more particular examination of its statements.

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with Him, THEN shall He sit upon the throne of his glory." From this it is evident that the Son of man is not yet seated upon the throne of his glory. This he shall attain only when he "shall come in his glory." It is "then," and not before. After his ascension to heaven, Christ speaks of being seated on his Father's throne, between which and his own he draws a marked distinction. Unto the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans, John was commanded to write the Saviour's promise, "To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Rev. iii. 21. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," which, it is farther stated, will be when "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Ps. cx. 3. It is therefore in His Millennial Kingdom that the Son of man "shall sit upon the throne of his glory." Accordingly Paul represents "his appearing and his kingdom" as being at the same time." (2 Tim. iv. 1.) And Christ himself in this very Discourse, as already noticed, in speaking of his coming in the clouds of heaven, says, "So, likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Luke xxi. 31. How distinctly does this again express the identity of the Coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory with this additional parabolic illustration of it!

"Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left." Now this I consider to be as really parabolic as the admission of the virgins to the marriage in the beginning of the chapter, and think this manner of separation no more to be literally understood than the entry of the wise by a door, or the similar exclusion of the foolish. Not only indeed is it found among parables, forming one of a series—having the ap-
pearance and serving the purpose of a parable,—but if viewed literally, its statements will be found in opposition to those of whose meaning no doubt can be entertained. Henry, while he regards this as a description of the process of the last judgment, makes a distinction which you never acknowledged, and which you appeared afraid to make. He admits that "some passages there are in it that are parabolical, as the separating between the sheep and the goats, and the dialogues between the judge and the persons judged." You, however, regarded both as literally descriptive. Such a view is indeed essential to your general interpretation; and the person who can make and adhere to such an admission as that just quoted, may be easily convinced that the whole is merely an additional illustration of the previous prediction of the coming of the Son of man. For if the representation of such a separation be "parabolical," is it not evident that the previous representation of their being all "gathered before Him," in order to their being so separated will be of the same character? That it must be so I shall farther endeavour to prove.

Your explanation of the whole passage was entirely literal. Can this then be sustained? In the representation, literally understood, we have the whole assembled species at once arraigned before the judgment-seat; and, in the first instance, brought promiscuously together. Now it is not to be questioned, from other passages, that in the order of the resurrection, the righteous will have some precedence over the wicked. You yourself on one occasion spoke of the righteous and the wicked rising near together. This implies the fact of their not doing so at the same time. If so, it is not necessary for my present purpose to determine the length of time which is to elapse between—whether one day or one thousand years. But the fact itself is universally admitted, that the righteous do rise before the wicked. Now for what purpose is such a precedence obtained, if they are immediately after to be again mixed together? Is it to be supposed that in the resurrection itself these two classes are entirely separated by the very act of the righteous rising before the wicked, only to be again mingled together whenever they shall be placed before the judgment-seat—and this second jumbling together being for no other purpose than that they may again be immediately separated, to be placed
the one on the right hand and the other on the left. You speak of the propriety and fitness of such a judgment as you represent the parable to exhibit; but where is the propriety, where the fitness, of such a separation, and re-uniting, and subsequent division, as your view necessarily implies?

Again, in the parable before us, all nations are represented as being gathered together—then separated into two great companies,—and as having judgment pronounced upon the whole of each division simultaneously. But, by interpreting literally another of the parables considered. (ver. 14—30,) we have a very different view of the procedure of judgment. In it, each individual is called forward, singly; and successively, to give account of the improvement he has made of the talents intrusted to him; and, individually, they receive rewards proportioned to the zeal they have severally displayed in the occupation of the talents committed to them. Thus the consequence of interpreting literally the language of these parables, is to set Scripture against itself, by applying it to purposes it was never designed to serve.

But that it does not refer to the general judgment is farther evident from the rule of procedure. It is not applicable to the whole, but to a particular class. All "the nations" here spoken of must have been favoured with the gospel among them. The ground of acquittal or condemnation, respects only the love which has been displayed towards the saints. This rule of judgment is therefore inapplicable to those of heathen nations who have gone down to the dust, without having ever heard the Saviour's name, or known one poor disciple. Moreover, this representation cannot be literally understood as applicable to all individuals, even in the nations called Christian, without setting the parable in direct opposition to the plain statements of Scripture. These nations are represented as divided into only two classes. All, therefore, who are not found on the right hand must be included among those on the left. But none are received to the right except such as have testified their love to Christ by deeds of benevolence to his saints, in circumstances of distress; although we have full assurance that all who rely by faith on the merits of the Redeemer's blood shall be saved, even if grace has been bestowed when under such circumstances as may deprive
them of all opportunity of displaying their love by the deeds to which it prompts, as in the case of the penitent thief on the cross.

You here discoursed largely on the duties of benevolence as arising from principles implanted in the human mind,—as being enjoined by the law, and inculcated in the gospel. And viewing them to be here exhibited as the fruit and the evidence of faith, you appeared to consider you had taken up the argument by which it is supposed to be limited to the coming of Christ at the commencement of the Millennium. But you entirely failed in showing how a judgment proceeding upon either the fruit or the evidence of "faith" could apply to those who never heard of Christ; or how this could be the general judgment, including all who had died without being placed in any situation affording them an opportunity of performing acts of kindness to believers. You however remarked that Christ specifies these as duties most apt to be neglected, but that it is not his design to include every particular, and that those must be excepted who have not had the means. But having made this exception, are we to suppose that to be the representation of the general judgment, in the terms of which there is no reference whatever to rules applicable to so large a portion of accountable men?

Bishop Porteus says, our Lord here "questions them on one most important branch of their duty, as a specimen of the manner in which the inquiry into the whole of their behaviour will be conducted." This however is mere assumption, and cannot be admitted as evidence that all are included in the judgment thus represented, while the Saviour himself has given no such information. "A specimen" it never can be of the manner in which other duties have been performed by those who never enjoyed the privileges which the "specimen" necessarily supposes—access unto, and knowledge of, the saints of Jesus.

"No doubt," says Scott, on the other hand, "impenitent sinners of every age and nation will then be judged; but those to whom the Scriptures are sent," he continues, "are chiefly concerned in this previous delineation of the final judgment, and its process and event; and therefore," he affirms, "our Lord represents nothing more than the ground on which false professors of Christianity will be
condemned.” Now this is really one of the most convenient modes of theorizing which could possibly be adopted. It is at once assumed that we have here a literal “delineation of the final judgment”—and assumed, too, with the very acknowledgment of important discrepancies in the description when applied to that event—then as “those to whom the Scriptures are sent,” are alone introduced in the Saviour’s representation, this is at once accounted for, on the ground of their “being chiefly concerned,” although absolutely no other has found a place in the scene, not even the most subordinate. This entire want of accordance between the representation given by Christ, and the interpretation put upon it by his Commentator, is however in his estimation easily rectified. The great defect in the Scripture statement is at once supplied by the latter; for he has “no doubt, impenitent sinners of every age and nation will then be judged,” although he finds no proof of the fact. Truly the marvellous ease with which our Lord’s direct prediction of his coming is itself disposed of, is not more remarkable than the manner in which its illustrations are magnified into an importance sufficient to occupy its place. We must not, however, forget that it is our Lord’s statement which we are bound to receive, nor are we to overlook the fact that in it only a certain class are specified.

It is therefore the judgment of the Gentiles who have been favoured with God’s word, and who, in point of fact, have professed themselves his friends. Even those on the left hand, the heirs of condemnation, recognise the Son of man as their “Lord,” and address him as such. ver. 44: You yourself, on one occasion, acknowledged, indeed, that they are evidently Christ’s false professing friends.” He left with his disciples a “new commandment” to cultivate mutual love, and has said, “by this all men shall know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another.” At his return, their obedience to, or disregard of this new commandment, will form a criterion of their real discipleship.

But the manner in which this criterion is applied, as here represented, is evidently parabolic. Christ first addresses the righteous, by stating their love to himself, as evidenced in their conduct. They are next represented as replying to Him—not one, but all; not individually, but collectively. Yet even this you interpreted literally. Can
you really suppose this literally to take place? Or was it a fear that to admit the speech put into their mouths not to have been really spoken would have destroyed the evidence for an actual separation in the specified form, and the distinct arrangement of the two classes?

Of the reply of the righteous, Henry says, "the expressions are parabolical, designed to introduce and impress these great truths that Christ has a mighty regard to works of charity, and is especially pleased with kindesses done to his people for his sake." Now this is precisely the view which I take of the entire representation; and there is no good ground on which a part of it can be so understood that may not be equally extended to the whole. But you said, "these words may be interpreted literally, or they may be considered as the import of what will then take place—the passage seems to intimate that the King will indeed speak." Now if you think it may be interpreted literally, and that the King will indeed speak the words here used, then you must be bound also to admit that both the righteous and the wicked will speak likewise. They are equally represented as speaking; and indeed you afterwards said that we could not suppose that the righteous put the questions here stated in a spirit of contradiction; and so likewise that neither can we suppose the wicked endeavouring to practise upon and deceive the Judge,—that we cannot suppose they charge the Judge with falsehood when they reply, "When saw we thee an hungered," &c. Their questions, you added, must therefore be viewed as arising from their blindness, ignorance, and stupidity; that unacquainted with the spirituality of the law they put these questions. Can you really imagine then, that all this vast assemblage of righteous persons simultaneously or successively put the questions here intimated? And that all this vast assemblage of wicked persons also follow their example? To suppose that the words here stated as really spoken by Christ, and really replied to by an assembled world, collectively or individually, is an idea which I could not easily have supposed you would adopt. Your preference of such an interpretation to that which would regard the passage as parabolic, and as expressive of the import of Christ's judgment on a certain class at his coming, admits indeed of easy explanation. But however necessary it may be for
the preservation of your literal interpretation of the parable, I am persuaded that in this few will follow you; and it may be of service that you have so exhibited the consequences of such an exposition—consequences which I have little doubt will occasion its entire rejection by many who may not hitherto have fully attended to them.

The last thing to be here noticed is the result of the whole; "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels." "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal," ver. 34, 41, 46. Such is the result of this judgment, the exhibition and inculeation of which is the Saviour's object in the whole representation. This you considered it impossible to apply to any thing else than the general judgment. I know no reason why it should be so restricted. Strong and decisive as the language is, it exactly corresponds with that used in the other parables. Can any thing be more dreadful than exclusion from the marriage-supper of the Lamb? Yet to the importunity of the foolish virgins, the Bridegroom's appalling reply is, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not." Look again at the reward assigned to the faithful steward, and the condemnation pronounced on him who is unfaithful; and say whether the language is not equally strong and explicit. He who is faithful to the cause of his Master, shall at his coming be made "ruler over all his goods;" while he who is unfaithful shall be cut asunder, and have "his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Mat. xxiv. 47, 51. The language thus employed is little less strong than that with which the present illustration is closed, although by you applied directly to the destruction of Jerusalem. In the parable of the talents, the approbation expressed of those who had profitably employed what was committed to their care, and the condemnation of him who had been slothful is not less decided. "His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."
"And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Mat. xxv. 21, 30. If to the representations in which such language occurs, you do not refuse to apply the term parabolic, (and we have seen you do not and can not,) it will be difficult on this ground to object to the same application in the instance under consideration.

Once more, "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but, while men slept, his enemy came, and sowed tares among the wheat." Here, also, as in the separation of the nations as sheep from the goats, it is the purpose and promise of Christ, "In the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." Now observe how our Lord's explanation confirms the connection which I have been endeavouring to establish between the prediction of his coming in the clouds of heaven at the end of the age (Mat. xxiv. 3, 30,) and the illustration of that event, in the separation of the righteous and the wicked, now under consideration. The result is, "these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire," says our blessed Lord, in this parable, "so shall it be in the end of the world [or age,] the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Matt. xiii. 24, 30, 40—43. You will not question that this is a parable; yet the result to the righteous and the wicked, which it is designed to exhibit, is precisely the same with that under notice. Still the same view is given, and the same doctrine taught, by another parable delivered in the same discourse, and recorded in the same chapter with that of the tares; for, "again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea and gathered of every kind; which when it was full they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good unto vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the age. The angels shall come forth, and sever the
wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.’” ver. 47—50.

These clear parabolic statements, perfectly similar as they are in every respect, should remove your objections on the nature of the sentence pronounced. Nor is the formality of judgment, here represented, inconsistent with the view already given, when compared with other Scriptures. Thus, for example, we have in Dan. vii. 9, 10, the destruction of Antichrist before the Millennium, part of which has been already executed, set forth under the representation of a judgment—the thrones being placed, the books opened, &c. “I beheld,” says the prophet, “till the thrones were cast down, [set or placed,] and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened.” No one doubts that this is before the Millennium, whatever interpretation they may put upon it. Living, as we now are, in the scene referred to, without witnessing in form the solemnities here described, the language of the prophecy may serve to illustrate that of the parable. Both refer to times before the Millennium; and the objector to our view of the latter should be prepared to explain on his own principles the statements of the former.

Lastly, the “Kingdom” which the righteous are called to inherit is evidently that kingdom which is “nigh at hand” when the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven, at the close of the times of the Gentiles, corresponding exactly with that Kingdom in the parable of the tares, out of which are to be gathered “all things that offend,” and “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Thus again have we evidence of this being only another illustration of the preceding prediction. The “Kingdom” has been “prepared” for the righteous; when the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven, it is “nigh at hand,” and when He “shall sit upon the throne of his glory” they shall be invited to “inherit” it.

The wicked are sent away into “everlasting fire prepared
for the Devil and his angels;” and it is a fact worthy of notice, that when the Antichristian confederation is destroyed, immediately before the Millennium observe, the Apocalyptic “beast” was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worship his image; these both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.” xix. 20. And that this lake of fire is that “prepared” for the devil and his angels is obvious from the fact, that after the Millennium, when the final confederation of the nations, against the camp of the saints and the beloved city, is destroyed by fire from heaven, “the Devil that deceived them was cast into the [same] lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are,” previously. Rev. xx. 10. Here therefore, as in every other instance, we have a striking coincidence, favouring the view already offered of the representation which you consider an exact delineation of the process of the final judgment being only an additional illustration of the more direct prediction of Christ’s return in glory, at the close of the times of the Gentiles.

In concluding this lengthened examination of these parables, I trust their real meaning and connection with our Lord’s prediction of his coming has been rendered more obvious. If so, you will admit that coming to be personal, since this interpretation, and this alone, you give to part of what is thus proved to be merely illustrative of it. That these remarks may be blessed of God to your advantage, is the heartfelt desire of one who with a sense of his own unworthiness desires to be instrumental in promoting the glory of Him to whose grace he is wholly indebted, and who unfeignedly acknowledges himself with much respect,

Reverend Sir,

Your ever obliged servant in Christ, &c.
LETTER X.

ON THE SIGNS, CELESTIAL AND TERRESTRIAL, WHICH PRECEDE THE COMING OF CHRIST IN THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN.

Reverend Sir,

I have hitherto abstained from saying much relative to certain signs given by our Lord as the immediate precursors of his return. This is however matter of considerable importance; for if the Saviour has vouchsafed to furnish us with what is suitable for premonition, by neglect we incur guilt, and deprive ourselves of information he has been pleased to impart. The question of the disciples relative to their Lord's return, was respecting "the sign," rather than concerning the event itself. Much of his answer is also to be regarded in the same light, as a sign or signs given with the view of forewarning the disciples of what had first to take place. Viewing the several parts as individual signs they are numerous, clear, and easily understood. These signs are both of a moral and physical kind. They are, however, principally of a moral nature; and, therefore, most easily discerned by those who being renewed in the spirit of their minds are more alive to the impressions of moral susceptibility. Of those of a physical kind, some are rare, stupendous, and at all times uninfluenced by the intervention of human agency. From their very nature and extensive prevalence, both are within the range of ordinary observation, and beyond the reach of imposture to effect, and therefore perfectly adapted for the great purpose they are designed to serve.

I do not farther revert to those of which I have formerly spoken, as having been already fulfilled; but would now solicit for a little your attention to some which yet remain unaccomplished, but which precede the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven. Before that event we are taught by the Saviour himself to expect the Restoration of the Jews to their own land. Jerusalem shall first be "trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." This "until" clearly intimates that
so long as Jerusalem is trodden down of the Gentiles, their times will not be fulfilled; and it is not until after Jerusalem has ceased to be so trodden down, or till it shall again enjoy the occupancy of those whose capital it was, and shall again be, that the coming of the Son of man will be realized. From Old Testament prophecies I infer, that their Restoration will be effected in the confusion of the nations which takes place in the great tribulation, under the outpouring of the seventh vial. This therefore is one great sign which I regard as still unfulfilled.

But great and important as the Restoration of Israel is, if the Lord will, it may very speedily be effected. At this moment, there is less in the way than there has been since their first expulsion by the Romans. By the outpouring of the sixth vial, in the drying up of the Euphrates, the Lord has been preparing their way; and in the present state of Turkey, the sovereignty of Palestine might probably be procured on easy terms from the Sultan of the Sublime Porte;—to whose revenue it in fact yields little, and to whom, in his present emergency, money is of vast importance. A few months back this project was said to be seriously entertained, the greatest capitalist living being then regarded as the future sovereign of Judea. But while I thus speak of mere natural appearances, in so far as concerns the probability of a speedy restoration of the Jews, it is not thus I expect the fulfilment of Jehovah’s pledge to the seed of Abraham. Feasible as the scheme might appear, I said at the time, the redemption of Zion from Gentile oppression was to be obtained otherwise than by pecuniary purchase. Having respect to the authority which declares that “Zion will be redeemed with judgments,” and which gives promise to the captive daughter of Zion, “Ye shall be redeemed without money,” (Is. i. 27. lii. 3.) such speculations only called forth more marked attention to the purpose of God. But this does not in the least abate my confidence that their Restoration is near, nearer than their national conversion. God has for a length of time been preparing their way, and among themselves the expectation becomes general that the covenant made with their fathers will in this respect be speedily fulfilled. Hath not the Lord said unto Zion, “Thy children shall make haste, and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee”? Is. xlix.
17. And is it not their national restoration, rather than their conversion, (and certainly the promise is to them alone,) which for its suddenness is compared to birth pangs: "Who hath heard such a thing? Who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children." Is. lxvi. 8. The present state of the nations may soon open a way of which the Jews will readily avail themselves for returning to the beloved land of their fathers. Reasoning even from analogy, events of greatest moment, and prodigies in their magnitude, would now excite less admiration than would formerly have been created by those of much less importance. And certainly the rapidity with which, of late, revolution has followed revolution, leaves us little room to calculate on the Restoration of Israel as a distant event.

But another of the signs given by our Lord, as preceding his return is the universal preaching of "the gospel of the Kingdom." The coming of Christ forms the commencement of a new age, the announcement of which is to be made, and invitations to its honour given, before the close of the present age. "This gospel of the Kingdom," said the Saviour, "shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." Mat. xxiv.

14. In no sense do I regard this sign as yet fulfilled. Extensive regions have never heard of the name of Christ; and to whom access has not hitherto been obtained. But the language of our Lord appears to intimate more than the preaching of salvation through his name. It is "the gospel of the kingdom" which is the message; and refers apparently to that wondrous condescension of the Son of God in ruling over our regenerated world. It is called the "gospel of the Kingdom," and even to misgoverned nations it ought certainly to be regarded as "good news." This gospel being that of the "Kingdom," the term naturally suggests it to be the annunciation of the Redeemer's Royalty. But this view is farther strengthened by attending to the fact that the Saviour calls it "this gospel of the Kingdom." It is therefore of the Kingdom about which he then spake. And of what Kingdom did he then discourse but of that "Kingdom of God" which is "nigh at hand," when the Son of man comes in the clouds of heaven with power and
great glory? Its establishment is to be viewed as matter of gratitude, for it is the gospel or good news of the Kingdom, and thus corresponds with what Christ farther says concerning his coming, “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.”

This sign you may also think distant; but judging of the progress which the proclamation of the Redeemer’s Speedy Personal Return has already made within so short a time, not merely in this country, but on the Continents both of Europe and America, I consider its fulfilment as in all probability much nearer than many may consider practicable. And as the shaking of the nations makes progress, the importance of the duty will more obviously appear; and as the Lord opens up a way, he may also endow men peculiarly fitted for the work, until with the rapidity of the eagle’s flight that be fully realized which was exhibited in symbol, when in Apocalyptic vision, John “saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying, with a loud voice, Fear God and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgments is come.” Rev. xiv. 7.

Another sign which I consider as unfulfilled, is the appearance of false Christs and false prophets. Besides those pretenders predicted by our Lord as at the destruction of Jerusalem, and of which History furnishes us with account, a second class of these Impostors appear to be foretold by Christ as yet to appear. Concerning that greatest tribulation which ever was or shall be, it is said, “Except those days should be shortened there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo here is Christ or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.” Here the appearance of these impostors is fixed by the word “then” to the great tribulation. And again reasoning from analogy, this in itself seems very probable. The Jews, I have already remarked, return to their own land in an unconverted state. They disbelieve in Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah; they know...
not and care not about his warnings; they look for another Messiah, and will thus be more easily deceived. In the difficulties they experience in their escape from the nations, and in the emergencies which arise, it is highly probable that bold and ambitious men may blasphemously assume the sacred title, and be acknowledged by their nation.

As the expected return of Christ himself becomes general in the church, there is much reason to fear that even professed Christians may be deceived. By "great signs and wonders" many may be seduced. There is exceeding strength in the Saviour's language, "insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect." There is therefore need for this being insisted on. It is impossible to tell or conceive by what artifice Satan may contrive to abuse this doctrine, as he has done every other; but Christians have their Lord's express caution, and let them see to it that it be not neglected.

There is one class of people in this country by whom these warnings are already much needed; I mean the Southcotites. They are far prepared for the reception of a false Messiah; and probably ere long they will receive one. In England they are numerous, and are already under the guidance of a "false prophet," who seems to have in some measure realized the character here predicted by our Lord, showing "great signs and wonders" of a certain description. Should the Lord be pleased to put these letters into the hands of any one who believes in the existence and re-appearance of Johanna's son, let me address to him the caution, and prescribe for him the test of Jesus, in whose prophetic character he professes to believe; "Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold He is in the desert; go not forth: behold he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Mat. xxiv. 26, 27. He is not the Messiah who comes otherwise than in the clouds of heaven. He is not to be followed or sought unto, who instead of making a bright and glorious manifestation of himself, visible to all and demonstrative of his proper character, should court the privacy of the chamber, or the retirement of the desert.

These cautions concerning false Christs and false
prophets, are farther necessary to guard against another species of imposition upon those professing their belief in the Redeemer's Speedy Return. Infidelity is not only extending with fearful rapidity, but its champions are becoming more bold in their blasphemies, and more impious in the display of their malice. Whatever can derogate from the honour of the Saviour, or which may mar the peace or endanger the safety of his saints, they eagerly improve, and with devilish ingenuity prepare devices of seduction. They are organizing systematically into Societies which scruple not at the use of any means, however monstrous, for effecting their purposes. An instance of this kind has lately been exhibited by the London Infidel Society, which is said to have lately sent two of their number to Ashton-under-line among the deluded votaries of Southcote, to assume the character of their Messiah. They were caressed until the imposture was detected. The dreadful success of deceivers as predicted by our Lord, render necessary the urging of his cautions on all who look for his appearing.

These remarks on False Christs may be closed by an extract which suggests the probability of another appearing in Palestine. The Drusses who at present inhabit some of the mountainous districts of Judea, are supposed to be the descendants of some of those Christian Crusaders who sought to rescue the Holy Land from the hands of the Infidels. "They believe that the Deity was incarnated in the person of Hakem, Caliph of Egypt; and that he will shortly appear again. He is to come, they think from China; and to meet, fight with, and utterly destroy all his enemies at a place called the 'Black Stone.'" Jowett's Christian Researches in the Mediterranean. Vol. I. p. 444. Is there not much reason to fear that some Impostor may deceive them by blasphemously usurping the name of Christ, the only Incarnated One?

I proceed, however, to the consideration of those signs more immediately given by our Lord in connection with his coming. "Jerusalem," says the evangelist Luke, "shall be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking
after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.’ Luke xxi. 24—27. In discoursing on the parallel passage, in Matthew’s gospel, you regarded the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, as only the bold figurative language of prophecy. This you considered to be evident from the statement of Luke quoted above. The evangelist, you said, in the latter clause of the verse explained the celestial signs to be the distress of nations on earth.

That the sun, moon, and stars, are used symbolically in Scripture is undeniable. “Thus saith the Lord, concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths they even prepare war against him: therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded; yea they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.” Micah iii. 5—7. “She that hath born seven languisheth; she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down, while it is yet day; she hath been ashamed and confounded; and the residue of them will I deliver to the sword before their enemies, saith the Lord.” Jer. xv. 9. These are indeed instances of figurative language concerning the heavenly host, and others there are in Scripture. But having acknowledged the use of such symbols, I am very far from admitting that this in the least militates against the view by which in any particular case the sun, moon, and stars, are to be understood in their literal sense. As signs in these luminaries is no way impossible, they may certainly occur, and if in the purpose of God it is designed they shall occur, then also may they be the subject of Scripture prophecy. If such admissions be made, and I see not how the positions can be questioned, then must we in every case inquire what is the true meaning of such declarations, and therefore what is meant by our Lord when he says, “there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars.”

It has indeed been generally supposed that these signs are not in the natural heavens, but that they symbolize
events which occur among the nations of the earth. This view, although I think it in opposition to the whole tenor of our Lord's language on other occasions, as well as throughout this discourse, has not been confined to those who deny the personal coming of Christ to be here predicted. A similar interpretation has been given even by the most eminent Millenarian expositors. "It is manifest," says that acute interpreter of Prophecy, Mr. Cunningham of Lainshaw, "that the signs spoken of by our Lord, are in the symbolical, and not the natural heavens; for we are informed in the subsequent part of our Lord's discourse, that during the occurrence of these signs, the world in general shall be immersed in carnal security and anxious occupation about the things of this life, which could hardly be the case if the signs described were in the natural heavens. Indeed," he adds, "these signs have never been understood in a literal sense by any person conversant in the language of sacred prophecy." *Dissertation on the Seals and Trumpets*, p. 231.

It is not my present object to inquire (even if I had the means of ascertaining,) whether or not they have ever been so understood by competent judges; it shall rather be my aim to prove that they ought so to be received. This I believe to be capable of proof, and if so, some explanation may possibly be found to account for their not being so recognized. But Mr. Cunningham's supposition, that if these signs were in the natural heavens, the world could not at the time be immersed in carnal security and anxious occupation about the things of this life, can easily be admitted. In point of fact it is expressly stated that the contrary will be the case; yet that men may be so engrossed before and after the occurrence of the signs, and yet be in alarm at the precise time, is in no way inconsistent with the feelings of the unregenerate heart. Accordingly I believe that the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven will itself be *as a snare* to all them that dwell on the face of the earth, while I yet believe that they will be greatly startled by the signs which immediately precede it. Conjecture in the case is indeed unnecessary; the signs whatever they may be, do arrest attention and create alarm. Deep as they may be sunk in carnal security, the passage expressly foretells at least a momentary awakening, since
it predicts "men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Luke xxi. 26. This alarm is occasioned by these very signs, as is added in the following clause of the verse; they form the reason expressed, "for the powers of the heaven shall be shaken." There is, therefore, at the time when these signs are witnessed, no such tranquility as to render it "manifest that the signs spoken of by our Lord are in the symbolical and not the natural heavens." But terrified as the world may be, in the first instance, Infidel Philosophy may soon find some natural cause by which to account for the fearful portents, and men may soon return to their wonted security, not again to be disturbed until the heavens open for the descent of the incarnate Judge.

But the very terms employed, appear to me necessarily to imply that the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, are signs in the natural heavens. For it is to be observed that Luke besides these intimates the "distress of nations, with perplexity." If the signs previously mentioned were in the symbolical heavens, they would of themselves imply distress of nations, and they also would be "upon the earth." But the evangelist states this to be something additional. The latter is not merely an explanation of the former. By the introduction of the conjunction "and," they are shown to be perfectly distinct and different, and not explanatory the one of the other. Not only so, but the evangelist by mentioning one class of these signs to be "on the earth," in contradistinction to the other, leads us to infer that both are not. "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars, and upon the earth, distress of nations." The mere mention of the sun, moon, and stars, suggests their place to be in the heavens; but besides these celestial signs, there are others of a terrestrial nature. Had the one been merely a repetition of the other in unsymbolized language, the words "upon the earth," in reference only to the last, would have been unnecessary, would indeed have been improper. They suppose the former not to be on the earth, while if they referred to the symbolical heaven they would in reality be on the literal earth—they would constitute the distress of nations.

This combination of celestial and terrestrial signs, Luke
places at the close of the times of the Gentiles. He does not however specify minutely whether they shall be exactly at the same time; or, if otherwise, which shall be first in order. This information is fully supplied by Matthew and Mark. The "distress of nations," spoken of by Luke, is not mentioned by them in the same form, but is introduced in terms still more expressive: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." Mat. xxiv. 21, 22. This is indeed "distress of nations," and is "upon the earth." Mark also gives a similar enlarged statement of unparalleled tribulation, and this, with both, seems to stand in place of Luke's "distress of nations," since it is not otherwise spoken of by either of these evangelists. In Luke, on the other hand, there is no notice of any other tribulation immediately before the coming of the Son of man, than the predicted "distress of nations with perplexity." In the narrative of all the three evangelists, the coming of Christ immediately follow these terrestrial and celestial signs; but their relative order, omitted by Luke, is stated by Matthew and Mark. We thus learn that the heavenly signs follow the great distress among the nations. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days," Matthew informs us, "shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Mat. xxiv. 29. Luke intimates, as we have seen, signs both in the heavens and on the earth, without specifying particularly which shall be first; but here we are taught not only that the celestial signs succeed the terrestrial,—and that "immediately,"—but we are also informed of the nature of those signs which Luke had merely intimated shall be "in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." "The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light." It is not the destruction of these great bodies, but their obscuration, which takes place. By what means this shall be effected, I do not now inquire, although perhaps some information on the subject, may be obtained from the word of God.

It is farther added, "the stars shall fall from heaven." This cannot possibly mean their falling to our earth.
Their greater magnitude renders this impossible. The explanation is supplied by Luke who informs us that the appearances predicted of the stars, as of the other two luminaries, are merely signs. The stars shall seem to fall, as the appearance of the moon will be that of blood. By immediate interference with the arrangement by which the solar system is at present regulated, the Lord will give a sign which nothing but the absolute and awful infidelity which shall then prevail, will prevent the world from recognizing. The supposition of Ben Ezra, that this will be effected by a sudden wrenching of the earth from its present polarity, does appear to present a very natural explanation of the sign, while, I think, it will satisfactorily account for many of the prophecies of celestial phenomena at the Restoration of Israel. It may indeed be said that this would not be a falling of the stars, but the fact would as really correspond with the language as does that concerning the sun standing still at the command of Joshua. From our advanced acquaintance with astronomical science, we know that the language of neither is philosophically correct. But the Scriptures being meant for the use of men in all ages, the historical fact is narrated in terms which are generally understood by unlearned men, as well as by those of higher attainments. But if we now know that the fact mentioned, Josh. x. 12,13, must have been occasioned by a suspension of the earth’s diurnal motion, while yet it is called a stopping of the sun, so can we also believe that a sudden changing of the earth’s motion may be called, what to men it would really seem, a falling of the stars from heaven. This one movement of the earth’s motion would indeed affect the appearance of more than the stars; it would similarly affect the appearance of all the other heavenly bodies. And this seems also distinctly implied in the words “the powers of the heavens,” or as stated by Mark, “the powers in heaven—shall be shaken.”

One other fact connected with these signs, literally understood, appears farther to confirm this view of the prediction. Any interference with the movements of the earth must affect immediately the state of the sea. The regulation of the tides, it is well known, is wholly dependant on these movements, and the relations which the planets and their satellites bear to each other, and that in which they
stand to the sun. Such an interruption, then, as that which I have supposed, would produce an instantaneous impression upon the waters which cover the face of the globe. This I think is distinctly referred to by Luke, when in connection with the predicted signs, he adds, "the sea and the waves roaring."

Between the powers of the heavens being shaken and the actual Coming of the Son of man, Matthew interposes a circumstance not mentioned by any of the other evangelists: "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven." These words may either be used to signify some sign pertaining to the Son of man,—as a sign of his coming, or something else relating to Him,—or they may be understood of the Son of man being himself a sign. Thus viewed, the expression would be, that after the shaking of the heavenly bodies, there shall be another sign, and that sign will be "the Son of man in heaven." Henry thus understands the sign of "the Son of man, himself;" and a similar view has been given by others in more modern times. Indeed, after the various signs already noticed, which, in the sense first mentioned, were all signs of the Son of man, I can scarcely suppose that a new one of any thing like the same nature would be called "the sign of the Son of man." It may therefore possibly refer to a visible display of the glorious Redeemer "in the heavens" before he descends to our earth; but as the statement is so brief I say nothing more at present on the subject.

To only one single circumstance do I farther advert in relation to these celestial signs; they are "immediately after" the great tribulation, on which, I believe, we have already entered. This plainly implies that before the coming of Christ—before the signs by which that coming is preceded—there will be an interval, however short, of restored tranquility. The signs cannot be "after" the tribulation, until the tribulation has really ceased. When the Lord shall have scourged the nations by the sword, by famines, by pestilences, and by earthquakes, there shall be a momentary respite from agitation and alarm; and we can conceive of men refusing to see the hand of God in all that has been done, pleasing themselves perhaps with mutual treaties or with the "new order of things," and indulging the hope of lengthened tranquillity, suddenly awakened from their
dream of peace by the appalling sign of the darkened heavens. Still even with "hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth," they see it not as the doing of the Lord, nor acknowledge it as the operation of his hand. Able to explain, or to imagine the proximate cause by which the wonder is produced—and having determined that any explanation supplied by "Revelation" which they reject, is inadmissible—again may they sink into all their wonted carnality, and continue, amid the tokens of impending destruction, heedless of their coming fate.

I say not that this is an exact picture of what will take place, but it is readily suggested by attention to the present increase of Philosophical Infidelity, the disrelish of every thing which has the semblance of what is called "miraculous" both within and without the church, and the late disregard or unscriptural explanation of recent occurrences in the natural and moral world, by which God seems to be preparing for those mightier displays of His power and of His indignation, which usher in the Millennial triumphs of His Son.

Mr. Faber not only supposes the signs in the sun, moon, and stars to be symbolical, but maintains a theory of their occurring at two distinct periods—the one "in" the great tribulation, and the other "immediately after" it. This view he endeavours to support by what has certainly the appearance of a disingenuous use of our Lord's words as recorded by two different evangelists. Again and again, page after page, does he speak of "those earlier political revolutions which," he says, "our Lord foretells as occurring in the days of the Jewish tribulation;"—revolutions which he affirms "will be followed by others which our Lord places immediately after the close of the Jewish tribulation"—for he confidently and repeatedly asserts that "the signs in question are to occur not only immediately after the tribulation, but likewise in the days of the tribulation," Sac. Cal. Vol. 1. pp. 203, 237, 250. But how necessary so ever such a distinction may be for the general theory which Mr. Faber on this subject upholds—and for him it is really necessary, important conclusions being founded on the mistaken assumption—assuredly it has no countenance whatever from our Lord's prediction.
Not only in the gospel by Matthew, (xxiv. 29,) are the celestial signs, which Mr. Faber understands to signify "revolutions," most distinctly placed "immediately after the tribulation of those days;" but in the parallel gospel by Mark also, (xiii. 24.) cited as his proof of those "revolutions which occur in the days of the Jewish tribulation," these signs are not less explicitly declared to be "after" the great tribulation. It is indeed "in those days;" but in what days is the question. Is it in the days of the tribulation, as Mr. Faber affirms? No such thing. This evangelist states these signs to be "in those days after that tribulation, and therefore gives not the shadow of countenance to the idea his words are so often cited to prove. So far from it indeed that he affirms the very contrary, expressing precisely the idea declared by Matthew, when he says the signs will be "immediately after the tribulation of those days." It is truly surprising to witness with what pertinacity Mr. Faber continues to do such violence to the language of our Lord, reiterating the misinterpretation with a frequency that would be tiresome were it even true, but which must be afflicting to every one who perceives it to be utterly incorrect.* And although he uniformly understands the signs themselves as merely intimating changes among the nations, and the overturn of kingdoms, he does nothing to show that they are not rather to be understood literally of signs in the natural heavens. He does not seem to have

* We have another singular misapprehension of the language of our Lord in the view given by Mr. Faber of the rebuke addressed to Peter on his improper inquiry concerning the fate of the beloved apostle. "When it was promised," he says, "to St. John, that he should tarry until the coming of the Lord; the promise was fulfilled, not by the Apostle's living to the day of the literal Second Advent, and consequently (as the saying went erroneously abroad among the brethren,) by his exemption from the death of the body; but by his living to witness the figurative coming of the Lord to destroy Jerusalem, and to dissolve the Jewish polity, through the merely human agency of Titus and the Romans," Sac. Cal. Vol. I. p. 229. Here he not only asserts in the most positive terms that "it was promised to St. John that he should tarry until the coming of the Lord," but also that "the promise was fulfilled." I say nothing farther on the figurative coming so strangely supported, but as an express contradiction to the above assertions, merely quote the apostle's own statement on the subject: "yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will, that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee." John xxi. 23.
considered it necessary either to examine minutely the text itself of any one of the gospels, or to have sought the reflective light to be obtained by careful comparison of their harmonies.

The origin of the symbolical interpretation of these signs, I am persuaded, is to be found in the interpretation given of the great event they are designed to fore-show. Denying that event to be the literal coming of the Son of man, and substituting for it mere temporal judgments either at the destruction of Jerusalem or the pre-millennial overthrow of Antichristian nations, calling it a figurative coming of the Son of man that is predicted, it has been conceived that the literal obscuration of the sun, and the strange discolouration of the moon, and the apparent fall of stars from heaven would be signs too stupendous for the annunciation of such an event. Nor is it, perhaps, very surprising that both opinions should not have been corrected together, and that the idea of symbolical signs should not have been immediately discarded on the real nature of the coming of Christ being perceived. But the statements on the subject are so very precise, that further attention to the question must exhibit more clearly their proper meaning. These very signs are explicitly declared in many of the Old Testament prophecies which furnish us with descriptions of the concluding wonders of this world's history, as preparatory to the reign of the Son of God on earth.

"I beheld the earth," says Jeremiah, "and lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the Lord said, the whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black; because I have spoken it, I have purposèd it, and will not repent, neither will turn back from it." Jer. iv. 23—28.

I cannot believe that the want of light in the heavens, here predicted, is merely a symbolical expression for the
distress in which the earth is involved. It is very different from the instances of a really symbolical nature formerly quoted. In the one of those cases, if we are told that to the prophets it should be night, we have at the same time the explanation in the fact, that they "shall not have a vision;" if to them it is to be dark, it is also added in illustration, that they "shall not divine." Micah iii. 5, 7. In the other instance, if of Zion it is figuratively said, "that her sun is gone down," it is evidently something not of a general but of a peculiar nature. It is not the sun but "her sun" which sets. This is farther explained by her having "given up the ghost," (Jer. xv. 9.) Very different, however, is the language in the above prediction. It is "the heavens" which are there spoken of; it is even "the heavens above." This also stands in such a connection as proves it to be the natural heavens of which the prophet speaks. It is contrasted with the earth, the mountains, and the hills, nay, even with "the birds of the heavens;" and if the one class of objects are to be understood in their usual signification, and if the natural "heavens" are referred to as the element of "birds," on what ground must we cease to understand them in the same sense when the heavens shall have no light—when the "heavens above" shall be black? 

Nor is this a solitary instance from the prophets. The same fact is introduced again and again in a variety of forms which wholly preclude symbolical interpretation. God, by Isaiah, speaking also of the day of the Lord being at hand, says, "I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger," Is. xiii. 10. Here again, it is not some particular thing which may symbolically be called its heavens, but it is "the heavens" which shall be shaken, and this again in contrast with the earth, which also is to be moved out of its place or position. Farther, this great sign is more particularly stated in the same chapter: "For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." ver. 10. Here again it is "the stars of heaven" that are spoken of; the very "constellations thereof" are referred to; and it is "in his going forth" the
sun shall be darkened, language quite inapplicable to any thing else than the natural luminaries named.

Very frequently indeed do such statements occur in Old Testament predictions concerning the great destruction of ungodly men at the commencement of the Millennium. Isaiah contemplating the Millennial glory when "the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord," says, "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner." Is. li. 3, 6. "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth; and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come." Here also we have "the heavens and the earth" shaken, including both "the sea and the dry land;" and these as altogether distinct from the nations of the earth, "all nations" being expressly mentioned in addition. In the epistle to the Hebrews this passage is adduced, and affirmed by the apostle to be future: "But now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more, I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." Heb. xii. 26—29. Here then the very purpose of the predicted change in the heavens and the earth, is the establishment of the Kingdom which we shall receive. That it is the natural heavens and earth that are spoken of, and nothing merely symbolical, is evident from the contrast drawn: "Whose voice then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only." If it was the real earth formerly, it will be so again; but "not the earth only, but also heaven," implying as clearly as language could express it, something celestial in addition to what formerly took place. As the earth alone was then shaken, so now also are both earth and heaven to be so.
Once and again are the celestial phenomena introduced in connection with the Millennium in the short book of Joel: The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark; and the stars shall withdraw their shining." Joel ii. 10. And in the conclusion of the same chapter is the passage formerly referred to, "I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth." Not only in the one but in the other are these wonders to be seen; nor is it that the one is explanatory of the other, but they are both "in the heavens, and in the earth." And what are these wonders? They are expressly mentioned: "blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke; the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come." ver. 30, 31. Thus then have we again the celestial phenomena (once more repeated in the following chapter, Joel iii. 15,) and with these certain other signs "in the earth," namely, "blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke."

But we are even furnished with more particular information concerning the celestial signs. "It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." Amos viii. 9. To the circumstance declared in this remarkable prediction, Jeremiah appears to allude in the following passage concerning the attack upon Jerusalem: "O ye children of Benjamin, gather yourselves to flee out of the midst of Jerusalem, and blow the trumpet in Tekoah, and set up a sign of fire in Beth-haccerem; for evil appeareth out of the north, and great destruction. I have likened the daughter of Zion to a comely and delicate woman. The shepherds with their flocks shall come unto her; they shall pitch their tents against her round about; they shall feed every one in his place. Prepare ye war against her; arise and let us go up at noon. Woe unto us! for the day goeth away, for the shadows of the evening are stretched out." Jer. vi. 1—5. This will indeed be a phenomenon, that the sun shall go down at noon, and that instead of meridian brightness there shall be the shadows of the evening.

This farther illustrates another prediction by Zechariah, which embraces with remarkable distinctness some other events connected with the commencement of the Millen-
nium. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear nor dark; but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night; but it shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light." Zech. xiv. 6, 7. It will be a day altogether peculiar, not day nor night, for, in the language of Jeremiah, "the shadows of the evening are stretched out."

The particular epoch when these celestial signs shall occur, is farther particularized in another prediction by the prophet Ezekiel. Intimately connected is the fate of Egypt with the last great scene of the present age. Interwoven with its circumstances is the winding up of the history of oppressed Israel; and to that land the Saviour cometh, riding upon a swift cloud. Dreadful bloodshed is foretold among the people, and with this stands connected the grand events which I have just been illustrating: "Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee. And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the valleys with thy height. I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee. And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud; and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God." Ezek. xxxii. 4—8.

Such are some of the proofs contained in Old Testament Prophecy of premillennial signs in the sun, moon, and stars. Corresponding as they do with those recorded in our Saviour's own prediction, I must again infer that the coming of the Lord which immediately succeeds the appearance of these signs, instead of being at the destruction of Jerusalem is just at the commencement of the Millennium, to which the contexts of the passages adduced clearly refer.

After the examination already made, I think I am also fairly entitled to conclude that these signs will be literal. Nothing else can at all explain the circumstances foretold, nor accord with the connection in which they occur. And why may not they be so understood? Surely there is nothing
in the facts predicted which should lead us to put a symbolical interpretation upon the language. Is there any thing unreasonable in supposing that our Lord's return will be preceded by such signs as are here described? Can any thing be too magnificent to usher in the day of Jesus' glory? Is it incredible that the laws of nature, so called, which have often been interrupted in answer to the prayer of faith, should be suspended to intimate the speedy advent of Him who is really Nature's God? No; the importance of the event is fully equal to the pomp of circumstance by which it is preceded. The beauties of the natural sun may well be shrouded in darkness, and the bright loveliness of the moon be exchanged for the ensanguined hue, before the more glorious rise of the Sun of righteousness.

But magnificent as such signs appear, and well calculated as they are, if any thing less than the grace of God could, to arrest men in the midst of their secularities and their sins, they will all prove too little to effect so desirable a result. To believers studying God's Prophetic word they will indeed appear the clear and certain indications of the Saviour's coming, to take up his abode with men, and rule in righteousness a world so long misgoverned. Those in the attitude of watching for their Lord's Return, and who give attention to His own intimations of this his purpose, will be thus prepared for his immediate appearance, although generally they be otherwise regarded. In the unscriptural dreams of men of universal peace flowing from amended institutions, he who should point to the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, as the immediate precursors of an avenging God, will probably be regarded as an idle alarmist.

The very systems of interpretation by which these signs are all referred to civil and ecclesiastical changes have completely diverted the attention even of the church from these declarations, at least as the prediction of atmospheric phenomena. And appear when they may, it is not difficult to imagine how they will be explained, on principles very different from the acknowledgement of their being miraculous attestations of Christ's near return. Who among us that looks around him with an observant eye, does not perceive the spirit already in operation by which the most stupendous works of the omnipotent God will be witnessed and accounted for, without reference to his purpose, and
without acknowledgement of his hand? Infidel Philosophy has long exercised its ingenuity in discovering natural causes, sufficient to account for Jehovah's mighty acts, without regard to himself, and has laboured by its sophistries to put discredit on the divine testimony in which they have been recorded. And in this it has been but too successful. The spirit has spread into the church; and men high in office and in influence are found frittering down the inspired narrative of Heaven's brightest interpositions in behalf of his people, by accounting for its wonders on the known laws and unchanging principles by which they affirm all matter to be regulated. And if the suspension of these in former times be referred to second causes; and if all the preceding signs given by the Saviour—and we have now reached the last in his enumeration—have all passed unobserved, can we doubt that an explanation will yet be found, which will by men be deemed satisfactory in accounting for the celestial signs specified.

I am scarcely more convinced that these signs will be witnessed—and not a doubt rests on my mind of the certainty of this—than I unhesitatingly express it as my conviction that by the infidelity of the age they will pass unappreciated, and that after all, the return of Christ will come as a snare on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth, who are not previously prepared for that event. Christ will have indeed a little flock who know his will, and who "love his appearing;" but there is much reason to fear it will be very small. It will, however, it is to be hoped, be greatly purified. As infidelity acquires the ascendancy, temptations to hypocrisy will diminish. The world's hatred, and the ridicule which may attach to the cause and name of Christ, will separate more fully those who are his friends, although it may leave them few in number.

There is a certain intimation of this, and a degree of universal infidelity clearly intimated in the soul-searching question of the Redeemer, "Nevertheless, when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith upon the earth?" Although usually explained by Millenarian writers to be "faith in the advent of the Redeemer, I understand the word in its usual acceptation. And the want of faith to a very large extent, which the question implies, is a moral sign which the aspects of society lead me to infer may be
at no great distance. Has not infidelity in the present day
a more daring effrontery among all ranks than has hitherto
been seen? In our own and other lands it has entered into
the councils of nations, and the authority of Him by whom
kings reign and princes decree justice, is wholly disregard-
ed. The monster rears its crest in unrestrained audacity,
where, till very recently, it would have hid its guilty head.
Judging from the progress it has lately made, we may well
conceive how soon infidelity may have left but few believers
in lands where Christianity is still professed. Every effort
is made, covertly and openly, to undermine the faith of the
gospel; and under the influence of open ridicule, and of
more insidious means, thousands who once had a name to
live have fallen into the ranks of Christ’s avowed foes, and
thousands more who have not yet reached so far, seem even
now to follow fast in the same dread road to ruin. These
are facts which are perfectly demonstrable, and which
must be obvious to the observant whose moral sensibilities
have not been sadly impaired by the contaminating influ-
ence of an ungodly world. Signs, even the most stupen-
dous, must cease in such a case to operate upon the mind
the effect they are designed to produce. The power of the
wonder-working God is so little thought of, that the fact of
a miracle being supposed in the interpretation of a Scripture
statement, is by many reckoned sufficient to stamp ridicule
upon it. By spiritual interpretations, its meaning must be
changed to suit the taste of an age which brooks not in-
fringement upon the laws it has been pleased to assign for
the Almighty’s regulation. What ignorance as well as pre-
sumption is often displayed upon this subject! As if Je-
ovah had merely impressed upon matter and mind certain
principles which he thenceforth left without controul! God’s
operations are ever conducted on the wisest principles;
and as the ultimate end in view is his own glory and his
people’s good, these principles embrace all that is necessary
for the accomplishment of this end, whether that be the
unwonted separation of a rolling sea, or the instantaneous
and total overthrow of a city’s wall; the removal of a long-
standing mountain, or the new creation of a fertilizing river;
drowning the world with water, or raining upon it fire from
heaven. With or without means, his purpose will be ef-
fected—by means sufficient in human estimation, or by
means regarded as inadequate. Defective indeed are that man's views of the character and works of God, who stumbles at a statement of his word because its reception implies a miracle performed, or as still to be accomplished— which must interpret figuratively the signs in the sun, moon, and stars, solely on account of the marvel's magnitude! Such a principle I impute not to you, but it characterizes too well the general views of the church.

Modern Neologists find explanations, in natural causes, as they term them, for all the wonders performed of old in behalf of God's chosen people, and the same principle may be applied to events of similar character in future times. No place for miracles to come, is to be found in the schemes of systematic theology, but in God's word they abound. It is not merely the men of the world that laugh to scorn all idea of God's direct interposition by miraculous manifestations of his power and of his love; the church herself in awful unbelief, rather than confess a miracle of any sort as possibly to occur before her eyes, seeks by every means to find some interpretation by which such an admission may be evaded. Pitiful display of ill-concealed want of faith! It is not in the celestial signs alone that God will give miraculous attestations of himself in the continued regulation and control of this world's movements, and for effecting his own gracious purposes. As in the days of former years, for the return of his ancient people from Egypt, on the south, to their promised Land, "the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea;" (Is. xi. 15,) and what will it avail that some theory of tides may be devised to furnish the requisite explanation of the wonder? A similar miracle will be wrought for their return from the east also, "and, with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the River [Euphrates,] and shall smite it in the seven streams ['into seven streams,' Louth.] and make men go over dry shod;" (Is. xi. 15, 16. Zech. xi. 10, 11. Is. xix. 4—7.) and what will it matter that some newly discovered local peculiarity may afford in the estimation of an unbelieving world, sufficient explanation of the wondrous circumstance of which, it may then be affirmed, "the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria," shall merely have availed themselves in returning to the Land of Palestine.
Again, God has said, "Behold I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls, because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, my chosen;" (Is. xliii. 19, 20. xxxv. 6, 7,) but whatever honour God may receive from the inferior creation, men, in their guilty ignorance of His purpose, may transfer to others the acknowledgements due to the Great Supreme.

Indeed, although God has promised to Israel, that "according to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt, will I show unto him marvellous things;" (Micah vii. 15.) yet is there reason to believe that, disregarding the mighty purpose and signal interpositions of God in behalf of his ancient people, the nations will probably consider their Restoration as nothing more than the result of human ambition, for the gratification of which, favourable opportunities were embraced with success. The word of the eternal God is infinitely more sure than any event, in human view, depending merely upon the relations of men, or the alleged fixed laws of nature. Men neglectful of Scripture Prophecy, knowing not what God has promised to do, reject alike doctrines and declarations which humble human pride and exclude guilty men from that controul they seek to exercise, and are thus awfully ignorant of their own destiny.

Let those who doubt the occurrence of premillennial miracles, explain how "the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof, toward the east and toward the west; and there shall be a very great valley, and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." Zech. xiv. 4. Let them tell how "it shall be in that day that living [or springing] waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former [or eastern] sea, and half of them toward the hinder [or western] sea; in summer and in winter shall it be." Zech. xiv. 8. If the age of miracles be past, let them explain how it will be that in Judea "all the land shall be turned into a plain, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem." Zech. xiv. 10.

Although God has expressly foretold the fate of those who shall come up against his people, when re-established in the
land of their fathers—even remonstrating with this formidable foe, "Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?" (Ezek. xxxviii. 17.) yet with awful infatuation, and in criminal ignorance of their impending fate, Gog, the chief prince of Meshach and Tubal, "Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet; Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands, and many people with thee," will attempt the overthrow of Heaven's preserved nation. "Thus saith the Lord God, In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company and a mighty army. And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel as a cloud, to cover the land; (it shall be in the latter days,) and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy, and in the fire of my wrath, have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence; and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am the Lord." Ezek. xxxviii. 1—23.

The appalling and miraculous discomfiture of Jerusalem's foes is strongly expressed by Isaiah: "Moreover the mul-
titude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away; yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly. Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire. And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision. It shall even be as when an hungry man dreameth, and, behold, he eateth; but he awaketh, and his soul is empty: or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and, behold, he drinketh; but he awaketh, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul hath appetite: so shall the multitude of all the nations be that fight against mount Zion.” Is. xxix. 5—8.

I do not make these citations with the design of entering upon any illustration. They are clear, distinct, and remarkably minute. Yet how little are they known, and how little attention do they excite! The particularity of prophecy, in very many cases, in regard to the times immediately before the Millennium, is indeed remarkable. It is a bright display of the wisdom of the inspiring Spirit, that predictions of such a nature could be given without their intimations being acted upon. But while the world was in a state when such warnings were at all likely to be attended to, their meaning was overlooked; and now when their meaning is elucidated, infidelity has steeled the nations against their truth.

In the midst of the fearful desolations of that eventful day, when there shall be one wide waste of devastation, when heaven’s windows shall be opened to pour upon guilty men the red-hot vials of Jehovah’s wrath, we find a few saved in the very midst of the fires, glorifying the name of the Lord God of Israel, and these in the isles of the sea; “Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. And it shall be, as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the taker of usury, so with the giver of usury to him. The land shall be utterly
emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away; the world languisheth and fadeth away; the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant.  

"Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left. The new wine mourneth, the vine languisheth, all the merry-hearted do sigh. The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth. They shall not drink wine with a song; strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it. The city of confusion is broken down; every house is shut up, that no man may come in. There is a crying for wine in the streets; all joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone. In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction. When thus it shall be in the midst of the land among the people, there shall be as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the Lord, they shall cry aloud from the sea. Wherefore glorify ye the Lord in the fires, even the name of the Lord God of Israel in the isles of the sea. From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs, even glory to the Righteous. But I said, My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously.  

"Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth
upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously.” Is. xxiv. 1—28.

It is not my intention to offer any definition of the term, but it is difficult to conceive what is meant by a miracle, if in such descriptions there be nothing miraculous. If the cleaving of mountains, and the formation of rivers—if the opening a path through mighty rivers and through rolling seas—if visitations of thunder, and earthquake, and great noise; with storm, and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire, sent by God for the very purpose of destruction, be not so regarded, I require to be told what would. Those who see not the hand of God in these, are not likely to perceive it in any signs which may occur in the sun, moon, or stars. If the Scriptures declare that a time approaches when “fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon the inhabitant of the earth; and it shall come to pass that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare; for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake;” if these are not to be regarded as any thing more than natural events, we again require to be told what is supernatural. Is there nothing miraculous in the predicted commotion among “the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth? Will men still continue refusing to see and acknowledge the providence of God when he pleads with pestilence and blood; when he shall cause an overflowing rain to descend, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone?

Similar statements are repeatedly given by the Psalmist, as connected with, and preceding the coming of the Lord. A prayer of Israel, if I mistake not, for deliverance from their enemies, records these petitions: “Bow thy heavens, O Lord, and come down; touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. Cast forth lightning, and scatter them; shoot out thine arrows and destroy them.” Ps. cxxxiv. 5, 6.

Several psalms appear designed to celebrate the answer
to their prayer. In that which follows, very express reference is made to this, and the fulfilment of the various petitions is distinctly stated: "In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God; he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devour'd: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed; hailstones and coals of fire. The Lord also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice, hail-stones, and coals of fire. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me, for they were too strong for me." Ps. xviii. 6—17.

The following psalm perfectly corresponds: "Thou art the God that dost wonders," it is there declared, however men may shun making the acknowledgement, "Thou art the God that dost wonders; thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid; the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound; thine arrows also went abroad; the voice of thy thunder was in the heaven; the lightnings lightened the world; the earth trembled and shook." Ps. lxxvii. 14—18.

It is indeed difficult to conceive how such declarations should be so totally overlooked. But men have been so much in the habit of explaining them as wholly metaphorical, or have so long regarded them as already fulfilled, that they are seldom thought of as just about to be realized.
And fearful as will be the result, I believe they will have far advanced ere men resign their infidelity and acknowledge the hand of God to be displayed. We see already the principle in operation, and applied towards judgments such as some of those described. *The pestilence* at this moment traverses the earth with giant strides: and who looks upon it as God's visitation for sin? Such a thought seems not to enter into the minds of those most conversant with the miseries it inflicts, or who are employed in *legislating* for its arrestment and its cure. They speculate on its origin, its nature, and its effects, as if Jehovah had nothing to do in the matter. Their hopes of escape lie only in the strictness of their quarantine regulations and in their *sanatory cordons*, and in these they trust with atheistic confidence, defying the disease they so much dread. Vain hope and unfounded confidence! If God thereby designs for us a vial of wrath, the unsanctified wisdom and worldly prudence of men will not prevail to avert it. As well might Sennacherib have thought to save the Assyrian host by the formation of a trench or the erection of a rampart, when the Angel of Death received his commission for destruction.

The proper remedy is of a moral nature. The disease yields not to the specifics of physicians who think not of the end for which it is sent. The repentance and holiness of our people is the means to secure the object sought to be obtained. Without this, there is little ground to hope for escape from that pestilence which God sends forth as a punishment for sin. Unstayed by all the arts which men devise, it will progress till God in his long-suffering subject it to control. It is a sign in its nature calculated to humble the pride of men and bring them to the acknowledgement of the Most High as he who presides over the destinies of men. If repentance and reformation follow not, we have only to anticipate the infliction of judgment after judgment, until the Lord Jesus himself be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on his impenitent foes.

In this investigation I have almost entirely confined myself to remarks of an expository nature, but I know not a subject more fitted to excite the interest of a Christian mind.
With reluctance have I often dwelt on evidence, when I would have much preferred expatiating in those rich pastures the existence of which alone I was at liberty to prove. We have little of the spirit manifested by some whose history is recorded for our imitation, if we feel not animated by the prospects which thus open on our view. Once you seemed to delight greatly in the contemplation of Millennial bliss; and why is it that since it has been proved that Christ himself shall reign in glory, and that all his saints shall partake of the honours then to be conferred, your interest in it has so much diminished? If erroneous representations have been given of the nature of that happy era, that is no reason for your retiring from the exhibition of its real character. On the contrary, if you be still satisfied that your general system of prophetic interpretation is correct, there is the more reason for exhibiting the evidence that Christ himself will not be resident on earth in Millennial times.

I cannot suppose, I do not believe, you to be indifferent about our Lord's return, although charity itself will not allow me to make a similar admission for many who assume the name of Christian. Even to some professed friends the thought of this event ministers not consolation, animates not with higher hopes. But, to the real Christian, what event ought to be so inspiring? Oh how languid that faith which joys not in a coming Redeemer! How cold that bosom which has never felt emotion in the contemplation of the glory which shall be revealed! How feeble the aspirations of him who never in faith responds the church's joyous exclamation, "Even so come, Lord Jesus. Of what pleasure and what peace do believers deprive themselves by neglect of God's prophetic word! Taking shame to myself for having so long neglected such a precious treasure, I seek to redeem the time lost. Now rejoicing in the views it unfolds, I would consider any attempt to divest me of them, except by a Scriptural refutation of the arguments on which they rest, as robbing me of a treasure inestimably dear. Amid the turmoils and tumults of ungodly men, amid the fall and crash of nations, I can contemplate the issue without dread, nay, rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. These doctrines impart consolation under present affliction, and irradiate futurity with the beams of heavenly glory. Like the cloud of separation between the Egyptians and the
Israelites, which while it frowned darkness and death upon the one, gave light and direction to the other, Prophecy while it lours destruction and desolation on the foes of the Redeemer, is bright with the visions of mercy, love, and joy, to his faithful people. It speaks to them of safety, even while it tells of a world's overthrow. The very angels who are employed in launching the thunderbolts of Jehovah's wrath, may be commissioned to bear away unscathed the saints redeemed, to meet in joy their returning Lord.

It is indeed difficult to account on any principle consistent with the duty of a Christian for the indifference manifested by many as to whether the doctrines here maintained are revealed in the word of God or not. Surely it is not unreasonable to require from them some examination of those portions of God's word which relate to the most important era of the church's history. For their own comfort they ought to examine with care whether their present views of prophecy in general, if they have really formed any, and of the time of the Saviour's advent in particular, have the foundation of that authority which is alone infallible.

It is a fearful thing, and one of the most ominous of signs, that many whom charity forbids our ranking with the world, treat this doctrine, under its every aspect, as if it were one of trivial importance. Whatever tends to their temporal aggrandisement is pursued and embraced with an eagerness and avidity which could not be surpassed even were the world in all its present forms and fashions designed to endure for aye. Thus things pertaining to the glory of God are neglected. No leisure can be afforded for the study of his word, and the mind is altogether pre-occupied with attention to the business of the world. They strive to think that Christ returns not yet, while they know not what himself has taught. With such, no accumulation of evidence can ever produce conviction, for it remains unexamined, and every thing which can be contrived to form an objection is embraced as a pretext for their own indifference.

Against such engrossing concern with "the cares of this life," be it remembered, the Saviour has left his special testimony. He has expressly classed it with drunkenness, as one of the ensnaring circumstances which render men unaware of his approach, when He comes in the clouds of
heaven with power and great glory. If you would be furnished with an argument against such unchristian secularity, where is one to be found so well suited for the purpose as that which our Lord himself has provided? Or if you would seek another sign that the day of the Lord is near, that it hastens greatly, could one more obvious be given than is presented in the state of men in regard to the sin thus particularly referred to? Let me urge on all this warning. The coming of the Lord will be as a thief in the night. It is the part ascribed to scoffers, to “scoffers in the last days” too, to ask, “Where is the promise of his Coming?” “The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” It is the spirit of unbelief and disregard to the word of God, which lead men to suppose that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” It is the feeling and the language of the scoffer, although it has not unfrequently been ignorantly adopted by the Christian. A change, a violent change is at hand—a change more extensive by far than is contemplated by the mere politician in his Utopian dream of a world improved by ungodly men. An overthrow, a dreadful overthrow, of all who refuse allegiance to the Son of God, prepares the way for that happiness which God himself designs for a regenerated world. That is a happiness to be conferred and immediately administered by Christ himself, as “King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

Let not any one then “say in his heart, my Lord delayeth His Coming.” Although his own assurances on the subject have long been neglected, the cry has at length arisen upon a slumbering church, not again to be quelled, however it may be disregarded, until the eventful day when the parting heavens shall disclose the descending Judge. In this, God has not left himself without a witness. The opening cry which was at first but feebly heard, has gathered strength from the increased number of combining voices, till against its power the deafest ear can no more be shut. It has gone over Christendom with a rapidity which excites the astonishment even of those who know it to be the truth of God, and has penetrated into countries and kingdoms far beyond these bounds. It has been heard
on the banks of the Ganges, and is re-echoed from the most southern point of Africa. That voice, distinct and clear, which, sounding forth from South America, was early wafted o'er the ocean, to mingle with that of Britain's honoured sons, which rose in sweet accord, has since re-crossed the Atlantic, to the North, and now is heard in louder strains along the shores and by the lakes of the great Columbian confederation. And, to the praise of divine grace be it spoken, the preparatory note for Jesus' coming begins at length to break in upon the stillness of that false security which had settled down upon our own much favoured but greatly guilty land.

Since the first agitation of the question among us within these six years past, the prejudices of numbers have given way. Many of our Scottish pulpits in different parts of the country do now testify to the truth; and in the southern part of the kingdom, as well as in the sister island, the number of ministers who publicly proclaim the near approach of the Son of man has prodigiously increased. The hostility of many who at first stood forward in the ranks of opposition has since subsided, although for the increasing bitterness of others, we are by prophecy itself prepared. To those who already feel convinced, but who may be afraid of consequences, let me even tell for their weakness that wherever this doctrine has been faithfully preached, it has been preached with effect. The common people hear it gladly, and I know not an instance in which the minister of any charge has not thereby become more endeared to his people, who are very easily taught both to look and to long for the glorious appearance of their returning Lord.

It will however be an awful thing should any of the real friends of Jesus be found obstinately rejecting the truth of God. What bitterness would it occasion them to know that the Scriptures had largely testified to a great and important doctrine—had enforced it by every variety of consideration—and shed over it the light of a thousand harmonizing texts—and that after all they continued blind to every argument, and deaf to every entreaty!

As you would not be guilty of such a sin, and as you would be found a faithful servant,—a ruler over the Master's household, giving them meat in due season—let me implore your full consideration of the multifarious evidence
for the Speedy Personal Return of our blessed Lord. This I desire not for your sake only, but for that of those over whom God hath made you overseer, who may also by your instrumentality be prepared for their coming Lord. And in that eventful day, when the angels are sent forth to gather together the elect, may it not be that the “one shall be taken and the other left;” but that whether they shall have fallen asleep, or be alive and remain unto the Coming of the Lord, all may be made the partakers of his glory. That God may hasten the happy time, and make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, is the sincere prayer of,

Reverend Sir,
Yours in unfeigned love, &c.

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